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## Modern Faith

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## Modern Faith

We are modern people, living in this present age; we do not live in the past. Our faith is modern too, since whatever we believe now guides us in the present. We have come from our past, and we have learned from our past, so being modern does not disconnect us from what we have believed previously. But we have never been "here" before, and must either discover gifts of faith within us that enable us to make good decisions in our present circumstances, or else decide how to apply to our lives at this time some of the beliefs we have held unchanged for many years.

Our beliefs, whether or not we identify them as religious, are the sources of the trust we place in other persons, in our own inspirations and in our ways of making decisions. We cannot move from our home to a place of work, or pick up a phone to call someone, without trusting our capacity to make appropriate decisions. The faith we have in the meaning and purpose of life enables us to live within a world that we do not control: a world of persons and events, time and space, matter and spirit.

Having modern faith does not imply that we constantly take to ourselves brand new beliefs, as if our trust were dependent upon the continually changing words and expressions that we and others use when we talk about our beliefs. On the other hand, no matter how many persons say that their beliefs do not change, because they are identical with unchanging written formulas, we are always making new applications and interpretations of our beliefs in keeping with our ever-changing capacity and choice to love. If we shrink back from expressing love of self and others, the belief that underlies our actions has become more narrow and self-focused no matter what documents we might claim as expressing our beliefs. As we confront situations that are new to us, and respond with deeper and broader expressions of our love, we modernize our operative beliefs.

We might have believed for many years in the equality of all human persons, but might not have made the connection between such beliefs, and, for example, homeless persons we have encountered. That is, we might not have acted at all times and in all situations as believing that all persons are of equal value, no matter what we said, or told others, or told ourselves. We continually update our beliefs or downgrade them as we either put them into practice or turn away from integrating spirit and action.

Synchronizing our hearts and our minds is a life-long process. We might never have put into words some of the core beliefs that underlie the decisions we make. By reflecting on our choices, we might identify some of the beliefs we hold. If, for example, we believe that we are better than others, some of our actions will reveal our convictions, no matter which documented or written statements of faith we claim as our own. If we believe that all people are relatives of ours as children of God, our words and deeds will seldom express judgment, disdain, accusation, and outright rejection.

We have a variety of motives in selecting what we tell different people about our beliefs. Sometimes we say what we think they want to hear, to be polite or perhaps even to seem politically correct. But the degree to which we will entrust ourselves to others and how we exercise our freedom in decision-making will accurately reflect our beliefs. Even if we were to preach to others that caring for "number one" was our basic creed, but we spontaneously help someone in an immediate need, our belief that love of neighbor is the deepest form of love of self is clearly revealed.

For an accurate inventory of our most significant beliefs, an occasional conversation with God will help greatly in acknowledging in our own words and wordless concepts, our modern faith.