

### **Radio Maria 3 20.1.23 Faith as Values**

Faith is not a verb. Verb is believing. I believe you – I trust you.

I believe you are human, belief as perception – as we saw last week

I believe in, goes a step further. It is a commitment, an entry into, a taking on of something beyond me. It is a **be-live-in**. A living in something. My claim can be monitored by anyone interested in my life.

As is my custom, I will share my **believing in** across the PIES – the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual constituent parts of our life. Do phone in if you have a question. The number will be sent to you during the music break.

#### **The Physical.**

I believe in peace.

Born in 1939 Czechoslovakia just before the second world war, I was in Prague May 1945 and witnessed the street fighting as the Vlasov – by then fighting on the side of the Russians - Army advanced and the Czech Resistance rose up and fought the German soldiers into their retreat. Seeing German soldiers shot dead is still deeply etched into my then six-year old memory.

The peace Jesus taught is more than just the absence of conflict; it is taking action to restore a broken situation. It's more than a state of inner tranquillity. It's a state of wholeness and completeness. Christ's peace is not something we can create on our own; it is a fruit of the Spirit.

In my 53 years as priest I have done my best – more often a failure than success – to bring peace to families.

As head of RE and School Chaplain at The Cardinal Vaughan Memoria School for almost 12 years, I dissuaded quite a few bullies from ceasing to practice their cruelty. All it needed was a handshake.....

I believe in freedom. Of movement and thought

I believe in stewardship of our planet. Whenever possible, I walk or take public transport. My car, a Suzuki Baleno which does - the gentle way I drive - just over 70 miles to the gallon – of petrol I need to use when on holiday or visiting friends in the country.

I believe in health. Aged, 40, in two months I buried three women who died of lung cancer, I gave up smoking. I had started while at prep-school, inhaled for the first time aged 13 and, while training in my pastoral role as priest, was encouraged to offer a cigarette to bridge the gap between me and the man I was spiritually accompanying. It was relatively easy to give up, as every Lent I had ceased to smoke.

I believe in exercise. I carry out my daily, before shower though after shave, series of exercises – you can see them on my website [fathervlad.com](http://fathervlad.com). Monday, Wednesday and Friday these include 85 press-ups, and on Tuesdays, Thursday and a Saturday full squats.

Sunday is a day of rest. Why 85? I have been breathing for 83 and a half years, was alive in my mother's womb for 9 months. So, if you add these they become 84 and a quarter. Rounding that number at the next integer, we arrive at 85. While you think of your own efforts to look after your body – a gift from God. We can have some music.

Having had two kidney stones ten years apart , the last one 20 years ago, I drink plenty of water.

### **Intellectual**

I believe in unity.

The motto of Clapham College, my secondary school *alma mater*, now no longer there, was "*Concordia Res Parvae Crescunt*" (In harmony, small things grow).

"Better Together" was the principal campaign slogan for a No vote in the 2014 Scottish independence referendum, advocating Scotland continuing to be part of the United Kingdom. It worked.

*Unitate fortior* (Stronger by union) is the motto of the Army & Navy Club, London SW1Y 5JN. And, of course, The Musketeers' "All for one. One for all."

I believe in ideas, in learning, teaching, and preaching.

I believe in studying. My kindle carries a lot of history, some psychology, philosophy, sociology, and theology.

I believe in telling the truth, describing reality as I see it. Not the whole truth. Not when a female friend asks me "How do I look?"

Thanks to my engineering background, I believe in using the minimum for maximum effect and thus have a reputation for short, weighty homilies. In preaching, more is less. Less is more likely to be remembered.

On Mondays I start preparing, thinking about, next Sunday's homily.

I believe in Writing to share the lessons life has taught me. I believe it is a way of thanking God for my life. So far, there is *Life squared*, a handbook for life in an accelerating world. There are my *Memories* in three slim volumes, my life before, during and after my journey in *Opus Dei*.

Then, as people say I do not look my age, "An art of ageing gracefully".

And finally, for the moment, Generally, better together.

E.G. Select a target AND obtain motivation.

Tougher the goal, greater must be the motivation.

Longer it takes to reach the objective, the more enduring must the motivation be.

Have ambition AND yet be realistic.  
Wise to cut one's coat according to one's cloth.

Make plans and decisions that are based on what you have not what you would like. Given my height, it would have been foolish for me to aim to be an elite basketball player.

Tap into your potential or ability AND develop and use your self-discipline: the ability to push yourself forward, stay motivated, and act, regardless of how you are feeling, physically or emotionally. Lacking self-discipline, all too many people end up with a great future behind them. You need effort and endurance to convert dreams into palpable reality.

Have enough work AND enough time for family life, is vital for a healthy emotional balance.

When people and institutions have BOTH wealth and generosity great things can be achieved. However, to avoid doing damage, they also need wisdom: tapping into the advice of experts who know the facts. (So much harm has been done by well-wishing well diggers in Africa. Women, no longer needing to walk distances, had time and energy to swell the population which ended up causing poverty, conflict or migration.)

A serious drive AND ability can convert dreams into reality, no matter how challenging these may be.

Brexit has made it all too palpably clear that 'going it alone' has had – and will continue to have - massive negative impact on the UK's fiscal life and much else.

If you send me an email, I will let you have these as attachments in mine to you.

Not Life Squared, too big and it's available in hard copy. Book it on my website [Fathervlad.com](http://Fathervlad.com). Father Vlad one lowercase word.

My email address [vladimirfelzann@rcdow.org.uk](mailto:vladimirfelzann@rcdow.org.uk)

Vladimirfelzmann, all lower case, as one word, with no stop between Christian and surname rcdow Roman Catholic diocese of Westminster.

Music

### **Emotional**

I believe in Love with its constituents underpinning its reality: Respect and Appreciation of life's SONG: my Self, Others, Nature and God.

With *Yesh* (The name I use when talking with *Yeshua Ben Yosef*), my best and closest friend, I resonate with Romans, 8, 28; “ in all things God works for the good of those who love him,” and am thrilled *Yesh* called me - and indeed you - a friend. (Jn 15, 15)

A friend is an alter ego, another self with whom I can share my inner life, knowing the secrets therein will not be broadcast.

Being a Slav, I cry easily when moved by beauty or the suffering of others.

I believe in friendship. The best reality in life after health and hope.

I have many colleagues, quite a lot of allies-in-life and a few friends. Can't have many of these as time is limited and friends, with equality in harmony, need time to be sustained.

I need BOTH friends, which include my family, AND allies-in-life; colleagues and associates.

A strong and healthy relationship of love, generated by a harmony of values, is built on the three As: Attention, Appreciation and Affection AND 3Cs: Communication, Compromise and Commitment. When backed up by equality, fidelity, gratitude and honesty – and each living to make the other's life a joy – marriage can indeed be mutually, enduringly, life enhancing

Remember, both joy AND sorrow shared, unite. Bereaved? Cry AND get over it. Life is too short to waste it on moping. At times, life is BOTH beautiful AND sad. *C'est la vie*.

Sport spectators suffer, or is it enjoy, BOTH excitement AND nervousness. To be honest, and perhaps pathetic, I admit I feel nervous rather than excited when watching England play football, unless that is, they are at least two goals ahead

In love there has to be a lover AND a beloved: the "I" AND the "you" generating a "we", as in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. I am inclined to believe that the Roman Church was right to insert "*filioque*" (father and son) into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Holy Spirit is the outcome of the Father's AND the Son's mutual love. Their 'I' and 'You' generating the Holy Spirit, the 'we'.

As the song says "You're nobody unless somebody loves you. To live life to the full, we all need someone who does love us. Underpinning love are two virtues. As water, whether it is a river, an ocean, steam or ice is always a compound of hydrogen and oxygen, love - whatever its intensity and texture - is underpinned by appreciation AND respect. 'I love you; I need you - as you are – not as I might wish you to be.

We need to aim for respect AND appreciation (R&A) for self AND others AND nature if we claim to appreciate AND respect the giver of it all, the One we call God

We need to develop both our sympathy AND empathy if we want to become an attractive human being.

Empathy is shown in how much compassion AND understanding we can give to another. Sympathy is more of a feeling of pity for another. Empathy is our ability to understand how someone feels.

At work, as indeed in any part of society, there should be equality AND diversity AS WELL AS inclusion. At its core, equality means fairness: we must ensure that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their characteristics.

Equality also means equality of opportunity. We must ensure that those who may be disadvantaged can get the tools they need to access the same, fair opportunities as their peers.

Diversity is recognising, respecting and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds and mind-sets, which allows for an empowered culture of creativity AND innovation.

Inclusion allows a mix of people to come to work, feel comfortable and confident to be themselves, and work in a way that suits them and delivers what that business needs. Inclusion ensures that everyone feels valued, listened to and importantly, realises they add value, value that is recognized by the organization.

Love, like the heart and lungs, needs both to receive AND to give. My vocation to serve others, nature and God was born when, for the first time aged 15, I palpably experienced God's love.

One day on holiday in Eriskay (Outer Hebrides), August 1954, I decided to climb the hill, the highest point on Eriskay, passing on my way the skull and horns of a deceased sheep. At the top, I sat down, looked West across the Atlantic Ocean. Suddenly something utterly unexpected happened. The only way I can put it is "I fell in love with infinity". It was my Pentecostal Experience. I experienced the Divine Presence throughout my body.

I never asked for it, I never expected it. However, that moment — no idea how long it was before I climbed down that Benin Scathing peak of 185m — has stayed undiminished and fresh, glowing, solid still within my heart. Gradually, as the years went by, realised that that 'Infinity' was and is the One we tend to call 'God'.

That experience altered my life 180 degrees. Instead of trying to be naughty so as to be accepted as 'a part of the gang' I started to study hard, to strive to be good AND going to Mass every day before school.

Altruism, like a reciprocating engine, realises the joy that the more you give across the PIES, the more you receive, at least in your E and S.

Love is BOTH a noun, "You are my love" AND a verb, "I love you."

I need to love myself as I am AS WELL AS aiming to improve my PB (Persona Best), transcending my current state by becoming the best version of myself across my PIES.

The various expressions of love, each have their own balance of R & A – respect and appreciation

I remember a song from my scouting days which has helped shape my attitude to life: "What's the use of worrying? It never was worthwhile, so pack up your troubles in your old kit-bag, And smile, smile, smile."

## **Spiritual**

Beauty, coming to me through all my five senses, reveals, for me, the presence of God.

Change. St John Henry Newman wrote, “To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” Repent, change the way you think. Change the way you eat, the amount of time you sleep.

A spiritual relationship calls for a commitment. A short story I use when talking about commitment.

**The Aussie Water-Pump.** Imagine. It’s New South Wales, Australia, 1954. The road carries on into the horizon. Ditches occasionally on both sides. A car is being driven along with dust curling up behind . Suddenly it loses speed and skids into a ditch. The driver had obviously fallen asleep.

He climbs out. Sees there is no way he can get that care back on the road so he sits down and thinks.

“I have two litres of water. If I stay here I will be dead in three days max. If I start walking who knows...”

So, placing his two bottles in his army-surplus rucksack he starts walking as the sun starts setting. Suddenly silhouetted against the yellow-red-glow, he sees a small number of huts. He walks towards these. If there had been a settlement here there must be water.

Moving past the first two empty huts he spots the handle of a pump.

Scooping away the sand blown up around it, he sees a chipped-enamel notice. “To prime pump, pour in two litres of water.”

Being an optimist, he pours in his water. He starts to crank the pump handle. After half a dozen ups and downs, the water starts to flow. He survived to tell me his story.

What would you have done?

Aged eight, for my confirmation name I chose Francis – Xavier. During my time at St Peter’s, Merrow – my prep school - I had plenty of time to read the lives of the saints. Francis stood out for me by his commitment to God and happy to sail so slowly round Africa on to India. He left Portugal 7<sup>th</sup> April 1541 and arrived 6<sup>th</sup> May - my birthday – 1542. The food and drink were appalling. It motivated me to do my bit, no matter what.

Creativity. I know I should – I ought to – use the gifts I have been given to help God enhance my neighbourhood. It’s ubuntu: good for my PIES environment and good for me. It helps me feel my life is worthwhile

I believe in diversity – and feel enriched by the ‘otherness’ of others.

Forgiveness = Ubuntu. Good for my blood pressure and skin – as well as being good for the ones I have forgiven.

Generosity. Life has taught me the truth of, “Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”(Lk 6,38)

Thanks to me education – and life experiences – I try to live the ten Commandment and eight Beatitudes.

Honesty does Not mean telling the whole truth – especially is a lady friend asks “How do I look?”.

Thanks to my loyalty, I have many allies in life and a sound number of very fine friends.

Aged eight, I learned the importance of patience thanks to **Georgie’s flower**.

While a Brownie – aged perhaps six – my younger sister Georgina wanted to get her gardener badge. She was given a potted plant to look after. Concentrating on other areas of life she forgot to water it. It refused to grow. In panic, just before walking down Gwendolyn Avenue to her unit she caught the top of the plant between her index finger and thumb and pulled. Of course, the poor plant snapped. A burst of tears followed; too late to water that unlucky plant.

So, aged perhaps eight I learned that nature needs time - and care – for life to grow. Force just does not do the trick.

Hope needs patience - and application. My grace before John Studzinski’s 65<sup>th</sup> birthday lunch sums up the salient points of my values. “Beloved God, I thank you for the most precious gifts you have given me: my existence, health, friends, roles in life and hope. May I never take these for granted - for gratitude is a life-enhancing virtue. I thank you for today and all those who have made it possible for me to be here. I thank you for the food and drink. As we enjoy it, may we come closer to each other and thus closer to you.

And may I never forget people less fortunate than me - who will be hungry today. I ask this through Jesus Christ our lord. Amen. Bon appetite.”

As I was walking out, I passed Gordon Brown (PM, 27 June 2007 – 11 May 2010) still sitting down. He grabbed me by my arm and said “Thank you so much for mentioning hope. Thank you.”

Unity. Remember John Donne’s “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man’s death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.”

I have committed my life to serve others Mt 25,40 so as to have life at its best Jn 10,10.

Friends are, after health and hope, the best there is in life. Mind you, fine wines and whiskeys follow closely behind.

So far, my life has been hugely blessed.

Next week, “Faith as commitment to God.”