*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter. If our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let Him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up.” Then Nebuchadnezzar was so filled with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego that his face was distorted. He ordered the furnace heated up seven times more than was customary and ordered some of the strongest guards in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire. So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. Because the king’s command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire. Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors: “Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?” They answered the king: “True, O king.” He replied: “But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt, and the fourth has the appearance of a God.” Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king’s counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not scorched, and not even the smell of fire came from them. Nebuchadnezzar said: “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him. They disobeyed the king’s command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.*

 Daniel 3:16-28

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when His glory is revealed. If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, a criminal, or even as a mischief maker. Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name.*

 1 Peter 4:12-16

*Little Johnny asks the teacher: "Mrs. Roberts, can I be punished for something I haven't done?"*

*Mrs. Roberts is shocked: "Of course not, Johnny, that would be very unfair!"*

*Little Johnny is relieved: "OK Mrs. Roberts, sorry, I haven't done my homework."*

The Importance of Faith.

1. What could be truer than the acknowledgment that life is filled with difficulties and frequently throws problems at us. Even if this might sound as a cliché, nobody can ever deny that we face problems is life almost every day. As Christians we too have to accept that difficulties occur and that we have to deal with them as a part of life here on earth. We are not immune to complications in life and as a matter of fact sometimes our problems derive from the very fact that we are Christians and follow certain principles which others cannot even fathom nor understand. Writing his letter Peter not only warns us of this fact but wants us to accept and to know that what our experiences are, is just a part of being a principled Christian.

2. The Book of Daniel introduces us to a story of three men punished by the king Nebuchadnezzar, for nothing else but for being faithful to God. They refused to worship the Babylonian idol, the golden statue of Nebuchadnezzar, even though he held them captive. Notwithstanding the kings order, even under the threat of death, they would rather sacrifice their life than to worship an idol. The modern man response to such an obvious injustice would be that of anger and frustration, but what we find in the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego is a quiet and yet powerful response. No fear, no anger nor arrogant defiance of the king, even though all these would be justifiable. Instead, they respond with their faith: *“If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and He will rescue us from your hand, O King. But even if He does not, we want you to know, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* What an incredible response, so contrary to the complacency of the modern Church to the whims of the society.

3. I see in the actions of thee three man their faith being mature and fully developed. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego’s affirmation of faith demonstrates how important our faith is and that we must trust God in all circumstances. They acknowledge the unlimited power of God the Creator, One that is the most powerful. Unfortunately, today many people try to deny God’s power to the point that even many believers doubt Him and His powers, doubt and His *“omnipotence.”* Every time we question God asking: “Why this is happening to me?” we focus not on God’s power but on God’s imperfection. We seem to believe in the almost *“superhuman abilities”* of the humanity but refuse to accept God’s abilities. When I was in the Divinity College, we studied a book I told you about a couple of weeks ago, in the process, I learned a new English word: *“omnipotent.”* Although this word exists also in my mother tongue, I did not know the English equivalent of it until we studied that book in the systematic theology course. In Polish as well as in English, this word applies, whether in a philosophical or a religious language, always in a reference to God, not to the mankind. It is so because God is indeed the only One who is *“omnipotent.”* It means that God combines all the power of the Universe and that He is the *“ultimate power”* in the Universe. Nobody and nothing may be called omnipotent, but only God.

4. There are people who try to argue not only the power of God but even His existence and do it because they want to undermine His power. If there is no God, there is no “God’s power.” Unfortunately, they do not understand the reality of God’s power because they are limited in their understanding of God. For them God is an abstract idea, and as every abstract it is not tangible. God, however, is not concerned whether people see Him as an abstract idea, and He is not concerned about winning the philosophic arguments with people. As a matter of fact, God’s power is not the matter for debate, but it is His ability to rescue His people from whatever oppression overwhelms them and to rescue them not in an abstract for but a practical way. This is the real and the ultimate power of the *“omnipotent”* God. Our faith allows us to fully accept and to recognize God’s power and because of that faith, He is indeed alive and *“all powerful.”* In our story, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego are unscathed because of God’s power. We can only trust God as they did through

5. God not only is able to rescue us from whatever danger we are in, but He is also willing to do so. From the Bible we know that God is willing to help us in all our needs and this knowledge helps us to understand God’s love toward us. In the Old testament God is being called the *“Everlasting Mercy”* and in the New testament this mercy became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus we speak today of the *“Amazing Grace.”* When Peter writes his letter, he tells the Church then, as well as the Church today: *“Cast all your anxiety upon Him because He cares for you.”* (I Peter 5:7) When we have come to the point that our prayers, our pleading seems not to have any impact on God; when we are told by the doctor that there is nothing they can do; when we have lost our loved ones and we are depressed, it is this confidence in God’s love that keeps us from turning away from Him. It is easy to thank God for all the victories, but it is difficult to accept the defeats. And yet, He is with us even in the darkest moments of life. He responds to Paul, facing the darkness in his life with this simple statement: *“My grace is sufficient to you.”*

6. Sometimes we think that our faith is not rewarded, our reconciliation with our loved ones never comes to happen, the healing never takes place… What is our faith worth if that’s what we think? The three men in the story from the Book of Daniel found the response to the question of the value of faith. Listen to what they have to say to the king: *“but even if not – if he will not rescue us – we want you to know, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.”* Dan. 3:18 That’s what pure faith really is. Life may be shattered and yet our faith remains as strong as ever. It may not be logical, but as one of the characters of the Stark Trek responded to Mr. Spok: *“Who said the human race is logical?”* Our faith might not be logical but here it is. Our faith is imperative for us to have a true relationship with God, for He is not an abstract idea, He is real and all powerful God.

7. Faith simply allows us to trust God no matter what happens, because in the end He is in true control, regardless what the modern society may claim. I am still going to trust God, not the society, not the philosophers, not those who regardless of their status doubt God. I believe that no matter how much my life may be out of control, even to the point of death, He is in control of it. Just as Apostle Paul said: *“we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.”* Then he added: *“I am convinced that there is nothing in death or in life, in the realm of the spirits or superhumans powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or in depths – nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.”* (Rm. 8:38-39)

8. The Book of Daniel reveals to us that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were not only taken care of by God but as the king looked into the furnace he saw all three of them along with the one who *“looked like the Son of God.”* God was there, in the midst of the fiery furnace fire; He was with them because He was taking care of His own. Through our faith we have the same certainty and knowledge of God’s presence in our lives as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and no matter what happens He takes care of His own. Nowhere in the Scriptures we will find that our life would be as a *“smooth sailing,”* but everywhere in the Scriptures we find the presence of God with His people, even in the darkest moments. As His Church we know this and it is through our faith that we cling to Him, forever.