

Rev. Gregory Keosaian – Statement of Faith

“Everyone has got to die, but I always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what?” [William Saroyan (1908-1981)]

As human beings, we are mortal, fallible, and finite. Our sin, first and foremost, is that we refuse to believe that, and assume that an “exception” *will* be made in our case. We cling to what Henri Nouwen referred to as “the illusion of immortality,” we surround ourselves with lots of “things,” and proceed to live our lives in alienation and separation from God – who is the *only* source of authentic life, full, creative life, Everlasting Life – thinking, instead, that we have the resources to make it on our own. And if, as is invariably the result, we find ourselves feeling “distant” from God, we have only to pause and ask ourselves just who it is who has *moved!*

Our salvation is that, by God’s Grace – wholly undeserved – whoever and whatever we are, we are deemed acceptable in God’s sight, accounted righteous, as the Apostle Paul would say.

God loves each one of us, not just equally, but *uniquely*. God has revealed that amazing love for us, *while we were yet sinners*, in the person of Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, in whom God has lived and walked in our midst, suffered with us and for us, and died on our behalf. But because of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ – God’s final victory over all that would hurt or destroy us, even over that “last enemy,” death itself – the final word can never be defeat and hopelessness, but rather a life filled with hope and new meaning, *for all of eternity*, for everyone who trusts in God’s steadfast love and continuing graciousness toward humankind.

When Jesus returned to his place in eternity, at the “right hand of God,” the Church – the Body of Christ – was born by the power of the promised Holy Spirit, that mysterious, awesome presence of God in our midst, whom we know as Advocate, Comforter, and Counselor; the **Paraclete**, literally, the one summoned to our side.

The words of the Bible, which are the work of Spiritually Inspired human minds and hearts, uniquely and authoritatively bear witness to the Revelation of God’s redeeming Love in Jesus Christ. In preaching and worship, we proclaim and celebrate God in Jesus Christ, and acknowledge our dependence upon God. In the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which are the visible signs of God’s invisible Grace, we experience Christ’s living presence among us, we remember how our Lord suffered and died on our behalf, and yet rose triumphant, we hear his summons to faithful discipleship, and we are reminded that God’s acceptance of us is solely a matter of God’s own prerogative and initiative.

The Church is the unique community of people, called into being by God, nurtured, sustained, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, whose purpose it is to study, to share, to serve together, in the world, in the name of Jesus. The Gospel does not exist in a vacuum. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called upon (“Church,” in Greek, **Ekklesia**, literally means “called out”) to become involved in the society in which we live, to become involved in the lives of the people around us. The Gospel is God’s *power*, which summons us to action: to say *NO!* To everything that brutalizes and dehumanizes people, and to say *YES!* To those who suffer injustice. Faith, therefore, manifests itself in commitment, which must be renewed constantly. The Christian life is, indeed, “*a gift to be received with gratitude, and a task to be pursued with courage.*” [The Confession of 1967] To live in response to the Gospel, to live *in the Spirit*, is to adopt a whole new posture, a new attitude, which consists of an acknowledgment of our limitations, a reliance upon God’s Grace as the only viable alternative, and an acceptance and love of ourselves and each other as children of God.

These theological perspectives and beliefs have instilled in me a deep sense of *humility and gratitude* as I go about my life and ministry. They have given direction to my preaching, teaching, and pastoral care; and to my approach to Church administration. They have helped me to risk showing something of my own vulnerability, and have made it a little less frightening to answer the question, “*Now what?*”