

One summer when I was in Junior High School, my family took a trip across the country by car. This was in the middle 1970s, so air-conditioning wasn't really an option in our 1970 green Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser station wagon. We drove around the country, pulling a large trailer behind us.

There weren't any video games or DVD players in those days. So, apart from playing "slug-bug" which usually ended up with somebody crying and somebody else in trouble, I decided at one of the souvenir stands to buy a portable chess set. It was a small wooden box with little holes where the pieces went in like pegs.

I played against my big brother, and he managed to beat me several hundred times.

I hate to state the obvious, but I wasn't very good at chess.

After our trip, I started playing chess against another kid my age, and we were more closely matched. Eventually, I learned how to maintain the upper hand, and even read a couple of books.

I'm not sure that I was ever very good, but I was at least improving.

At the end of the summer, on a rainy day, my brother and I played the last two games of chess we ever played. I used a move that was known as "lightning," it was sort of a "secret weapon." In 4 moves I won the first game. 4 more moves, I won the second game. After I beat him twice in a row, well the rest is family chess history.

In Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Paul prays that we "may know ... the hope that belongs to [God's] call."

Here, Paul talks about the Theological Virtue of Hope. The virtues that are infused in Baptism and strengthened in Confirmation and built up every time we receive the Eucharist.

Faith give us the power to know God, Hope gives us the power to look forward to spending eternity with Him, and Love gives us the ability to love Him in return.

For many of us, I would expect that we don't usually walk on the "wild side" of things. That is, we don't take many risks. Instead, we stick with what we are good at, and we stay away from what we aren't very good at.

I'm not certain, but left to our own powers, I would guess that none of us are "masters" at Faith, Hope, or Love. But, when we reach out to God ... in Jesus Christ, we find that He meets us at our own level, and while we may never be very good due to our fallen human nature, at this Faith, Hope, and Love stuff ... we can at least show some improvement.

Yet, engaging those virtues involves a measure of risk. But no matter how many times we may fail in Faith, Hope, or Love ... it is important that we allow Christ to meet us where we are ... in prayer ... and only then can we begin to grow, in some way, in these virtues.

Further along in the Letter to the Ephesians, Saint Paul says that God has seated Jesus Christ “at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet ...”

Can you see the picture? Jesus seated at God’s right hand? Far above every principality, authority, power and dominion? With all things beneath his feet?

We are members of the Mystical Body of Christ. And if Christ is above all of these heavenly powers ... and if all things are beneath his feet ...

Well, even if we are just the big toe of the Mystical Body of Christ ... so long as we remain united to Jesus Christ through our Baptism and the Sacraments ...

**WE ARE RIGHT THERE WITH HIM!**

And as Saint Paul says, elsewhere in Scripture – **NOTHING CAN TAKE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD IN JESUS CHRIST.**

And only because of this are we able to “go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” It is only in knowing our **CONNECTION TO JESUS** that we “will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon” us. It is only united to Jesus Christ that we can be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth.”

So, this week, let us take as our assignment, to ask God in prayer to strengthen our Faith, Hope, and Love ... we don’t need to be masters at any of this ... but only need to be strengthened ... to grow ... to move forward ... in Faith, Hope, and Love ...

Then we can realize more and more that we are **UNITED WITH JESUS CHRIST** in all of his glory ... and know in a deeper way that with **ALL THINGS BENEATH HIS FEET** ... that **NOTHING** can take us from **HIS LOVE.**