

1<sup>st</sup> PLACE WINNER

Student - Făgărașan Bianca-Eliza

Teacher - Cigher Daniela

10<sup>th</sup> grade

"Andrei Șaguna" National Pedagogical College

Sibiu, Sibiu

I believed, I believe and I will always believe in God! As a child, I was guided by my parents, but mostly by my grandmother, to believe and always live with God by my side and in my soul. God helps me in the good, but also in the hard.

I have met many people so far in my life who have tried to turn me away from this belief that I have in God, saying that He does not exist. I always tried to distance myself from those people knowing that it was not good for me to be around them.

I believe that every person has the right to believe in a deity, it doesn't matter which one, but the important thing is to believe. I'm aware that if I wasn't part of a religious family, maybe I wouldn't have this opinion about faith in God either. I can say that I was very lucky to have my grandmother by my side. When I was little, she always took me to church with her and I grew up in that environment. Now she can't walk anymore. When I get to church, I think of her and her desire to go, but unfulfilled due to the weakness of old age.

In moments when I'm very stressed or I don't feel well, prayer helps me the most or actually going to a quiet place, preferably in nature, and being with God, with my thoughts and with everything that He has given - beauty, animals, flowers and everything that surrounds us.

An incident in which a Roma child appears and which marked me for life because I can no longer forgive myself for what I did is from about 2-3 years ago. I started the 7th grade and a little girl of Roma ethnicity transferred to our class, who was being taken into foster care, her biological parents abandoned her, but she was lucky, God gave her a second chance at life. When she entered the class, we all looked at her in amazement and some started laughing because her skin was darker than everyone else. During breaks, no one paid attention to her, and she always sat alone and drew in a corner of the classroom, all this for a year. We were all amazed when we saw how well she was doing at school: her German was exemplary, and that surprised us all. I reached the eighth grade, and the situation was the same, absolutely no one paid attention to her just because she was of a different ethnicity.

This was perpetuated until one day, when I had a project to do and I happened to be with her in the team. To be honest, I wasn't the happiest, but I didn't impose myself either. I got a 10 on that

project, it was by far the best in the class, everyone was shocked, because this new colleague had a natural talent for drawing. Then I also convinced my colleagues to give her a chance and we all came together. From that moment we all became friends with her, and I have remained friends with her to this day. And at the end of the 8th grade we held a "goodbye" moment, and she played a touching song on the piano that made us all cry, from young to old.

Two years after we finished secondary school, we are still friends, we go to each other's house and always help each other when we have a problem. I'm sorry I judged her by her outward appearance, by prejudices, and that was a lesson to me, not to do something like that again as long as I live.

We met again about a month ago when she was baptized at her Adventist church. She called me and I went with all my heart because she helped open my eyes in many ways. Talking to her taught me not to judge people by their religion, their faith, their ethnicity or their values. What matters is what I think and the rest is their personal choice. God understands everyone's decisions so why can't we?

2nd PLACE WINNER

Student - Frătean David

Teacher - Radu Luminița

6th grade

Secondary School Number 25

Sibiu, Sibiu

Faith - the bridge to Heaven

The words sit inert in the mind and it's as if I can't even put them on the cold sheet of paper. I want to let them go, to talk about my faith in God, to talk about the hope I have in Him, about His love, but I can't. I wonder why? Tears stream down my pale, trembling cheek, and then I realize that secret things, true values are kept in the inner corners of the soul and cannot be fully shared. Truly precious things such as faith cannot receive the luster and luster they deserve when clothed in the leaden cloak of words. And then, I wonder, how could I tell people about Him, about my Creator? Disturbed, I utter a prayer and let my thought be carried towards the cloudless sky, and from there the vibrations of my heart speak to me.

I understand that although faith cannot be expressed in strong enough words, it is an unshakable trust in things not seen, it is what helps me to have hope in a hopeless world. In a world where war wreaks havoc, in a world of massive loss, in a world without future and color, it is faith that takes me by the hand and says: "Everything will be fine, just stay by my side, my son!" Faith is the one that warms me, the one that wipes the sweat from my forehead, the one that banishes even the darkest thoughts. Although we all think that we children have nothing to worry about, saying that adults carry the burden on this earth, sometimes I feel the burden of the entire universe hangs on my despondent shoulders, sometimes I feel like the sky is falling on me. Why? Because, although it doesn't seem like it, sometimes even behind the smiles and the apparent indifference I show through play, I suffer and think about what will happen tomorrow, I think about the direction the pandemic will take, I wonder when the war will end, I'm troubled... In an increasingly troubled world, I feel that only faith in God lifts me up, and that's because, reading the Bible, I know that He is almighty, that He governs all things, that absolutely nothing on this earth happens without His will. So why worry? Every morning I learned to put my fate in His hands and I know that God, as a good Father, will not give bad things to His children and that reassures me.

Faith became my only refuge for a while. When I was younger, I thought that my family was my only pillar of stability and I leaned on it with all my conviction until my sister got married, went to her house, and since then my house has been an emptier soul. I realized that people come and go, I realized that everything that seems eternal to me can fall apart in an instant, without even realizing it, I realized that what my grandparents had told me and what I had heard in the Church, namely that we are only a handful of dust is true. I could not conceive of this when I was little, but as I became aware of the power of sickness, suffering, and even death, I realized that what makes us truly valuable is the divine breath we have within us. It differentiates us from the mere animals that surround us, it differentiates us from objects made by human hands, it gives us uniqueness. Although people come and go in our lives, faith remains an eternal beacon, a light, a spark in the density of pessimism and negativism.

I also had a period when I thought that society is the one that can give us everything we want. Seeing successful people with wealth and expensive cars on the Internet, I thought that I can't wait to grow up, become an IT-ist and get everything I need, but then I woke up to reality. I found out one evening that the house of a good friend of mine caught fire and I realized that wealth can be wasted in an instant, only then did I realize why it is written in the Bible that we must store up treasures in heaven and that everything is vanity. It is hard to understand all these things when everything is going well for you, when you are on the rock and you get everything ready from your parents, but if you start to open your eyes wide and talk to a poor person, when you walk in a hospital or nursing home and see the ill effects of disease and human depravity, you realize that, after all, our hope is not to be anchored in power, earthly glory, or wealth, but hope our full being must be put into relationship with God. He is the only one who is steadfast, the only one who does not change and does not disappoint, the only one who keeps His promises and who will stand by me even when I make mistakes. People are very quick to enjoy the good things you do for them,

but as soon as you do something that doesn't suit them, it's like they forget everything you've done up until that point. God is not like that, God is love, He is the one who calls us to Himself and welcomes us with open arms, just to be honest and give Him our souls. But do we receive Him?

I would not like to end these meditations of the soul on a melancholy note, that is precisely why I want to say that there is no more beautiful life than the life lived by faith. In the beginning you don't need a faith that can move mountains, you don't need the faith of saints, but the pure and sincere faith nestled in the heart of a 6th grader that can bring a change in the tumult of this world. It needs me and you. WE are needed.

3rd PLACE WINNER

Student - Bucur Medea Antonia

Teacher - Cigher Daniela

10<sup>th</sup> grade

"Andrei Şaguna" National Pedagogical College

Sibiu, Sibiu

It's nice to have hope, to believe that everything will be fine!

Every man needs to believe in something, to place his hopes and ideals in a divinity, in a force considered good and special. We can translate this as faith, I believe that faith is a new way to "know" ourselves and reality itself, it is a perspective that does not end in the earthly world, but opens a horizon towards the future and towards new, towards a fulfilled life. However, it does not eliminate suffering, pain or death, but it guides us and gives us hope so that we can face life's challenges without despair. Faith gives us strength to fight against any difficulty and gives us the incentive to move forward.

I could say that from childhood we are taught to believe in God. Christian values are learned and transmitted in the family. The power of example is also very important, we grow up under the influence of our parents. A family with faith and the fear of God will raise a young man, a good Christian, when you have faith, you know that you are not alone, you know that divinity is with you. God is with us all the time, without asking anything in return. If we are good to those around us, we can have faith that good will return to us. Believing that God is helping me gives me the assurance that I will succeed. Believing in God, I am more serene, calmer, I know that everything has a solution, it helps me to trust myself more.

Belief is personal, everyone has their own way of perceiving things, but in my opinion the important thing is to believe in something, because we can't stay alone forever. People come and go, they are with you only in the good, not in the bad, but I remember that God is with me and that he will not let me down, he will always be by my side in any situation in my life.

An incident that I experienced recently with a little girl of Roma ethnicity marked my faith in God. One Sunday I went with my grandparents to church, which also had an orphanage that belonged to the church. I was in the churchyard when, suddenly, a 10-year-old girl appeared, who after a few exchanges of banal words, surprises me by telling me that she is upset because no one wants to adopt her just because she is of Roma ethnicity. Surprised by what she said, I tell her to pray to God that He will send the right family for her, who will love her as she is and give her the education she deserves. When she heard what I told her, the little girl took me in her arms and thanked me for giving her a little hope. She promised to listen to my advice and come to me every Sunday to tell me the news. The following Sunday we met again and she was much more distressed. I asked her why she was upset and she told me that no one came to adopt her and that God forgot to send her a family to take her from there. I, laughing, tell her that miracles do not happen overnight and that she must be patient, because God does not sleep. A week later I see her again in front of the church, she was waiting for me and she was very happy. She told me that a family came to meet the little ones from the center that very morning and that she was very grateful that I was able to show her what faith and God mean. She was not sure that she would be the one chosen to leave that place for good, but she was confident that God answers prayers, sometimes in a different way than we expect, but he does, and for now, this certainty was enough for her. I was and still am very proud of myself for being able to show a little girl how important it is to believe in an almighty One who knows what's best for us, who loves us unconditionally and cares for us in unexpected ways!

Faith is a gift, it is the umbrella on a rainy day, it is water when you are thirsty and a lantern when you walk in the dark!

MENTION

Student - Gasner Andreea Monica

Teacher - Radu Emilia-Erika

5<sup>th</sup> grade

Brateiu Secondary School

Brateiu, Sibiu

My faith in God helps me to go to bed peacefully at night because I know that God takes care of me and wakes me up in the morning, he gives us health, but also mind and wisdom to do good things.

We must do our part to pray every night before we go to bed. I am afraid of the dark, but my grandfather told me that I should not be afraid because God stays awake all night and protects me from all kinds of harm. He showed me in the book from which the priest also reads at church where it is written in many places not to be afraid. Grandpa asked me if I knew how many days are in a year and I said 365 days. Then he told me to remember that God in that book, the Bible, has as many promises for every day of the year.

I heard many stories from my grandfather when he was young and he went through many troubles because he had many brothers and all he had was a small slice of polenta. But there were days when their neighbor came and called my grandfather's father and told him to come to the gate that he had a bucket of milk that it would spoil by tomorrow and the children had better drink it. Another time another neighbor came and gave them eggs for free saying that she had too many and her daughter who lived in the city said that she could no longer come and take the eggs and give them to whoever she wanted. There were many similar experiences and each time the grandfather and his brothers knew that God had sent those people to bring them food.

I was fascinated by everything my grandfather told me and his faith which was so great. Although there were many siblings in the family, God took care of each one of them. I wish I had faith like my grandfather. When I was in a lot of pain, he would get on his knees next to me and pray loudly that God would heal me and stop hurting me. He said that Lord Jesus does not turn his back on any prayer, especially if it is made by children.

Faith helps me every day because wherever I go I remember that I don't have to fear any harm because God protects me. Faith also helps me when I think I can't do some things because they are too hard, but I remember the words of my grandfather who read in a loud and solemn voice "I can do everything in Christ who strengthens me" and then I take courage and try again .

Faith helps anyone and every man's prayer rises to heaven and from there we get the help we need.

## MENTION

Student - Vigh Erwin

Teacher - Bâlc Denisa-Maria

6th grade

"I.L. Caragiale" Secondary School

Sibiu, Sibiu

Something unexpected or...?

My faith in God is fantastic and awesome and wonderful, but it is completely lacking. I don't think it helps me at all, because my life hasn't changed for better or worse depending on my belief or non-belief in God. I know many people who believe in God. I'm not saying that faith alone does everything, I'm just saying that if you believe, your life won't miraculously or automatically change, nor will you have more things or just happiness on your life path.

Let me take myself as an example! My life is not fair, I mean why does God need my Dad, why couldn't he leave him here with me? I would definitely need it. He was a gentle and faithful man who studied religious reform. Ironic, right? So many people are killed mercilessly and God does nothing. Wars kill so many innocent people leaving behind them much suffering and many tears. God's people, the Jews, were slaughtered in both World Wars, in the second 6 million Jews were killed out of 10 million, I mean why didn't God protect them? In total, the loss of human life was 60 million. Just because a mustache chose that he wanted to be big and strong so many people died and God allowed all these horrors to take place. We humans should have learned something from all this.

I am one of the thousands of people who are angry with God and I want to believe that He does not exist, for the simple fact that if He did, everything would be better, right? That's called hope, right? If He exists and is so big, He can handle a child's upset, and if He doesn't, who cares? Being a child, maybe 8 years old, I thought that if I prayed hard, my wish would be granted. For my birthday I wanted only this: a father! It's easier for me to stop waiting. No more faith and disappointments!

I think that some have so much and don't deserve it, and others have so little, I mean, where is the justice in this world? If God should do it, why doesn't He? Maybe it's not even His job to dispense justice? I know, we cannot judge God, and His plan is much grander and impossible to understand with the human mind.

My opinion will probably change over time, because change is guaranteed in life. But at this time, I do not believe that God is a thing or a person. That is, history contradicts religion: some say that

the earth was created 3000 years ago or 10,000 years ago and others say that 1,000,000 years ago or 10 million years ago. Perhaps future discoveries and quantum theory will make us realize that it is a primordial energy, and perhaps the theory of reincarnation that the Christian faith denies has some grain of truth. Then maybe religion and science will join hands. God could make this clear, enlightening the minds of those in faith and opening the souls of those in knowledge. But at the moment, whether I believe or not, I'm still doing better than others who believe, and I'm much happier than when I thought.

This essay is one you probably wouldn't have expected, but that's what I'm feeling right now.

A lot of people care about something other than your faith, but people come and go, so you might run into people who judge you based on your faith or not, or maybe, more wisely, appreciate you for who you are. The people in my life didn't judge me, they understood my frustration, and that's because they didn't have answers to my questions either. I would never judge a person for their faith.

Anyway, the truth is and will be for a long time unknown, from the simple fact that "some" decide to be so.

Until then, if I ever pray, I will say "Lord, help my unbelief!", just as Arghezi used to say in his beautiful Psalms. After all, faith is not a given, it is a state, a strong conviction about things not seen, a state of expectation, a void that can be filled in my soul. The thought that there might be something beyond our galaxy, beyond our limited universe, gives me hope... Hope to believe that one day all my questions will be answered, hope to believe that one day I will meet my father again, hope to believe that I am and will remain a good man. Hope...

MENTION

Student - Purcărea David

Teacher - Bâlc Denisa-Maria

6th grade

"I.L. Caragiale" Secondary School

Sibiu, Sibiu

Meeting my Father



Some say that God is the father of Jesus and that he created everything we know, that he is the one who controls hell and heaven and many other things. Some say it's a god, which was invented by the Jews to brag about it, others say it's just energy, and some even deny its existence. All these controversies have led me to question who I think God is and what I can say about Him.

For me, God is real, he is a living presence, which some people don't believe. Some people complain that God doesn't listen to their prayers and that only bad things happen to them and that's why they give up on Him, saying that He is no longer among us and that He has abandoned us, but I will share my thoughts about His existence.

God is the creator of the universe and galaxies that we humans know. He is the One who gave us life, the One who helps us day by day to survive, He is the reason why we humans still exist on this earth. God is in all places on Earth. He watches over us and sends us positive, beautiful thoughts and emotions.

I believe that God is not only somewhere in space, but He is also in all beings and things on earth. He can be a ray of sunshine or the clear sky of pure blue. He can be in a small bird, look so tiny, or in small things that delight us every time we see them.

But the most important thing is that God is in our hearts whether we hate Him or whether we love Him, whether we commit sins or not, He cares about us and wants us jealously for Himself, therefore He does not abandon us, nor forsake us. As long as we are good, He will love and respect us anytime, anywhere.

That is why I, David, love and adore my heavenly Father, God.

Student - Băila Daniela Paula

Teacher - Vasu Ovidiu – Ilie

7th grade

Chirpăr Secondary School

Chirpar, Sibiu

The native village represents to some extent the combination of the three words in an expression that I like very much, namely, the happy life. It is very nice to talk about how these three words intertwine in everyday life and how they have succeeded and continue to contribute to my formation as a person and at the same time bring me closer to God while giving me a perspective towards the future.

My childhood was and is a childhood like that of any child from the villages of Hârtibaciului Valley, without standing out with anything special, it was with good and bad, with good memories and less good memories. Although, not at a very old age, I realized that life is not all pink, although I really like the color pink.

Although I mostly try to do things the right way, I have moments when I feel powerless, and I'm afraid that I won't succeed, and in these balancing moments I bend my knees in prayer, take a deep breath and let God to put order in things that are beyond me. Thus, things become easier, the impossible becomes possible, black is no longer so black. This connection with God through the manifestation of my faith in public, by participating in religious services, then in private through personal prayers gives me the confidence that Someone loves me too, I feel that there really is a warm hand that always supports me.

I was taught from a young age that what you give is what you get, and every time I was involved in a conflict, I tried not to return evil with evil. This helped me a lot and I realized that by doing bad the relationship with God and neighbor is weakened. It is very difficult afterwards to restore the relationship and correct certain situations created knowingly or not. We have to learn something from the mistakes made, "man learns from mistakes" and yes, I think that by making mistakes, not only do you learn something but we also become stronger, "what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger".

I have no doubt that every child my age, regardless of color or ethnicity, cries when they are in pain and smiles when they are happy.

For me, there are no differences between people, because we all breathe the same air, we all live on the same earth, and we are all God's children, created in His Image.

Unfortunately, there are people in this world who treat those who are minorities differently, have an air of superiority over certain ethnicities, nationalities or colors.

These things are largely due to the community in which I live and which was divided over time from a religious point of view between the Orthodox and the Evangelicals, you can still see the Fortified Evangelical Church today, and then from the ethnic point of view, because and today Romanians, Saxons and Roma live here.

In my class, today there are people who come from Romanian, Saxon and Roma families, and our communication is not a problem, because we grew up and were educated together. The whole community is a big family that tries to coexist without emphasizing the differences of language, color or ethnicity, on the contrary, it was the differences that united the people. In our school or at different workplaces there are several similar situations like the one presented above. I think that the basis of these things was the fact that we all benefited equally from access to faith, to education, to health and finally to a normal life. Only in this way, by broadening the horizon, people manage to coexist, love and spend time with any person who opens the door for them. Perhaps the past has taught us that things work with God's help and He wants people to live in harmony, not in strife,

discord, wars, racial conflicts or envy and enmity. Egoism and individualism should preferably be replaced by altruism and devotion. It is love that helps us to accept ourselves as we are and to accept others as well.

Childhood cannot be separated from faith, no matter in what form this faith was instilled in children by their grandparents or parents. In this period the foundations of faith are laid, if we talk about the 7 years at home in terms of our formation as persons, we can also talk about the years of faith that the child acquires during childhood and as long as he is under the same roof with his parents.

I wish that in the future the inter-human relations in my native village will become even more solid, harmony will prevail and everyone will achieve everything they want in this world. Let's not forget the biblical admonition that says, "Without Me you can do nothing". The center of our success is God. People should do good whenever they can regardless of ethnicity or religion and not want more from life than they can handle.

Also, for the future students of our school, I want them to detach themselves from technology to fulfill their duties as a student and fulfill the will of God. To accept their peers and help each other whenever needed.

Student - Beldean Teodora Bianca

Teacher - Radu Emilia-Erika

5<sup>th</sup> grade

Brateiu Secondary School

Brateiu, Sibiu

I believe that the role of faith in a person's life is very important, faith in God is a gain. If I trust God, He helps me more and more and listens to my prayers. Perhaps the answer to them does not come immediately, but God is never late, He comes when the decisive moment has arrived.

Sometimes Heavenly Father's answer may be yes, sometimes no, or other times He tells you to wait. It is often difficult for me to be patient, but my parents taught me that I must trust Him because He will never let me down. Often, in the evening, my grandmother would tell me about the miracles that God had done to people in the past and that she had read from a book that she

loved very much, the Bible. She always told me to pray morning and night that God would help me and protect me. Even if some things do not come true, God does not forget our prayers.

I heard a neighbor say that prayer is the breath of the soul. I didn't understand what this meant, but my grandmother explained to me that just as our body needs to breathe, so our soul needs to pray.

I thought that the miracles that the Lord God performed in the Bible are no longer valid, but God still performs miracles today when he heals children and adults, when he saves people alive from accidents. We must have open ears to hear the word of the Lord, feet to follow His way and understand by listening with the heart.

I want to tell all children to trust God, to love him with all their heart and soul. When they find it hard to look up at the clear sky and think that their creator is there.

I see how faithful my grandmother is and I want when I grow up to be just like her, to go to church, to be faithful and kind to those around me like my dear grandmother. Since she was little, my grandmother was a gentle woman who prayed to God.

We must not think that we can become great people without God's help. If He does not give us health so that we can go to school we cannot learn to become important people in this world. That is why it is good to pray for ourselves and our family.

The man who has no faith is said to be like a leaf that is blown by the wind and which the wind blows in all directions. I think that people who do not believe in God are not happy people, because who do they pray to when they have troubles? My family and I pray to God to always take care of us.

Student - Mânjină Teodora

Teacher - Radu Emilia-Erika

5<sup>th</sup> grade

Brateiu Secondary School

Brateiu, Sibiu

To be faithful you must have God in your heart, be good, go to church, pray to God, but it also means being humble, doing God's will.

A day in a Christian's life must be centered around prayer. Let's do something daily not only for our body, but also for our soul. A typical day in my life begins with a prayer. Since I was little, I

was used to pray, my parents sometimes fast, and if it's Sunday we go to listen to the Holy Liturgy. All day I'm busy with school, playing, but in the evening I don't forget to ask for forgiveness if I've been bad or done something wrong. Prayer is essential, as is the reading of the Holy Scriptures. That's how it is in our family.

A personal relationship with the Father in heaven begins the moment we honestly admit that we are all sinners and by faith receive Jesus Christ into our hearts. He died in the place of every man and the pain He endured on the cross I believe no one else could have endured. I think every child or adult should start and end their day with prayer.

Faith helps me to be able to forgive more easily the children who misbehave with me or who offend me, so that I do not take revenge on them. When I'm very sad and angry with someone I sit alone in the room and pray, I feel like I can tell everything to Jesus because at church the priest said that the Lord Jesus never turns his back on us. I know that I also make mistakes and sometimes it's hard for me to ask for forgiveness, but my mother says to think about what the Lord Jesus Christ would do in my place.

I don't like it when I hear people or children arguing around me. I would like all people to be believers because if everyone believed in God there would be no more bad people. I feel sad when people get offended and don't talk to each other and say about them that they are fat or thin, that they are of a different religion or that they are darker in the face. My mother often says that God does not look at a person's face if he is black or white, if he is Romanian, Hungarian or Roma, He loves each of us equally. It doesn't matter if one has more money or expensive cars, for we are equal before God. At church, the priest also says to love everyone and hate no one.

I believe that faith helps me to forgive anyone faster, to love other children too, when something hurts I pray to God and I believe that people who believe in the Lord Jesus are happy.

Student - Fina Amalia Cristina

Teacher - Cigher Daniela

10th grade

"Andrei Şaguna" National Pedagogical College

Sibiu, Sibiu

For me, faith in God is not just an expression of words to the Creator, but an experience gained in life, from which I have truly seen the wonderful way in which God directs all things in our lives.

We were on the last day of school, after the end of the first grade, and the teacher told us that we must be present at the closing celebration, because at this celebration we will also receive appreciation for the good results in education. She also told us that we can be accompanied by one of the parents or both. I was impatient, I have never participated in such an event before. I was nervous because I didn't know what prize I would get. My mother, who also accompanied me to this celebration, told me that I must pray to God, that He knows everything in advance. The festivities began in the school yard, and I was eagerly waiting for my class's turn. Due to the good results and the sympathy I felt from the teacher, I considered myself the favorite for first place. And some colleagues confirmed this premonition, but my mother told me that we must pray for every important moment.

When it was my class's turn, the teacher came forward to call the best to the awards. I was waiting to be called first and I prayed to God for it.

But with emotions, as I have never seen her before, the teacher called out the name of Bogdan, a colleague of mine, of Roma ethnicity, who also had good grades, but not in all subjects, like me. I started to cry and I told my mother that if she calls me too, I will no longer go to receive either the crown or the diploma. My mother told me that she also prayed for me, and I told her then that we prayed in vain and that the teacher was doing some wrong assessments, and I decided to leave. The other colleagues were also amazed by such an estimate of the results.

After congratulating Bogdan, she also called me to offer me the first prize and to congratulate me, and I hardly agreed to go, but my mother went with me. My face was covered with tears. She also congratulated me and I wanted to leave then, but the teacher whispered to me that she wanted to talk to me. The first prize was worth nothing, I felt embarrassed. I didn't want to talk to anyone anymore, and on top of that I thought that I prayed to God in vain and that Bogdan, my colleague who didn't pray as much as I did, received the first prize before me. After the awarding of my class was over, the teacher came to me and took me in her arms and whispered why she did that: "My dear, you deserved the first prize above all, because of the excellent results obtained in the first school year. But I made this decision to congratulate Bogdan before you, because this year, Bogdan lost his father and I didn't know what greater joy to give him... But, you deserved to be the first. From now on, we go on vacation and maybe your parents want to buy you something or you will go on a trip with them, but Bogdan doesn't have a father anymore, and this can be the joy of this school year for him. She was hugging me to her chest and I was crying too, she was crying too. From that moment, I would have liked to give my colleague my prize as well; to give him more than a diploma and a crown. How good God is and how beautifully He works!

I loved the teacher, and I always tried to help Bogdan, my colleague, and bring a smile to his face. Belief in God does a lot, and putting it into practice does even more.

I want to become a teacher as good as my teacher, who knew how to approach us children and show us that all the love she has for us does not come from the education system, but it comes from God.

Regardless of the obstacles that arise in our lives, we must have faith in God because He gives us the assurance that He will be with us and protect us from harm.

Student - Dobrila Larisa

Teacher - Vasu Ovidiu – Ilie

6<sup>th</sup> grade

"Viorel Cucu Paltin" Secondary School

Arpașu de Jos, Sibiu

The answer to the question "How do you feel that faith in God helps you in your everyday life?" I will endeavor to provide it in the work before you. Of course, this is a subjective answer, based on my own experiences and religious beliefs during this first and essential period in life.

We humans believe in God because He is the Almighty who created the world and us. The most beautiful gift from God is life. God enlightens our mind to the awareness of things useful to the soul and the body in equal measure. Through prayer we approach and feel God. Every man has his sins, but through fasting and prayer, by going to Church, they can be forgiven by God. He who has faith in God is the happiest man on earth. Through prayer you get rid of all the stress, you forget all the problems and you are connected with God. This feeling is unique to the believer, but unfortunately not all people can feel it. God is the one who first loved us and who gave His only Son for us and for our salvation, and in return, we must give the same love to God. My faith in God is boundless because He is the only one who can help me in life. These things I learned from my grandparents and parents who always taught me what is good in life. I pray to God to keep everyone healthy and to spend as much time together as possible.

For me, other important role models in my life are the Saints. These are the people who believed and who through prayer climbed the stairs of Heaven and gained holiness by obeying God and their fellow men. God's way is open to all of us, it is up to us whether we choose the straight and bright road or the wide and dark road. We can confess our faith by good deeds towards our loved ones and by showing love towards our neighbor and God. Faith is an inner source that often gives us the strength to move forward. Jesus Christ rose from the dead to give us the certainty that leaving this world does not remain without a clear finality for our souls.

Suffering makes you feel alone and far from God, He doesn't come when you call him, but he sure always comes on time.

The bottom line is that faith in God in my daily life helps me to overcome any fears, to be calmer and to feel protected. Only through faith do I feel God closer to me both in joy and in trouble.

As for childhood, I like to think that every child is happy during this period of life. Even though financial situations make a difference in some people's childhood, we were taught from a young age to accept ourselves as we are and not to discriminate between ethnicities, religions, rich or poor.

My childhood was simple and happy, but the highlight was when God decided that my parents would have another child and I would become the big sister. Now my sister is already six years old and we get along great.

I also have a very nice relationship with my colleagues who are the most hardworking. Although we are a mixed class, made up of Romanians and Roma, we talk about everything and help each other. We make no distinctions of any kind. My personal opinion is that all people under the sun, left on this earth by God are beautiful in their own way. It doesn't matter the nation, religion or ethnicity. We must not be racist in any form. There is no man who is alive and does not make mistakes. Who are we to throw so much hate at other people? To our Father, we are all equal. God did not make two identical works and did not create us alike to have the opportunity to learn from each other.

In the future I want to become a policewoman, and this will be possible because I put my trust in God and my qualities. I consider myself an ambitious, resourceful and perfectionist person.

Student - Lașiță Ana Sofia

Teacher - Bâlc Denisa-Maria

6th grade

"I.L. Caragiale" Secondary School

Sibiu, Sibiu

Create in His image and likeness

How does faith in God help us in everyday life? He is wonderful, he is in everyone's life, but it depends on us how much we open our hearts to Him.



I remember that I started to believe in God when I was little, when together with my parents I went to church every Sunday. I also learned some prayers from my parents that I will never forget. The feelings of tranquility and peace always came over me when we prayed to the Lord; it was as if something mysterious was nestling in my soul and giving me confidence and hope that everything would be fine.

When I entered school I was lucky to have one of the best and most faithful teachers in the world. There wasn't a day when she didn't tell us something about how Jesus Christ lived and what he did for us to have the best possible life. My colleagues and I loved these stories that we couldn't wait to hear. Sometimes they lasted a few minutes, sometimes I sat and listened for a few hours. That's how we found out how many things God has done for us. Faith is in our soul, giving us hope, love and wisdom.

Belief in God is a matter of choice. Some people choose to believe, some don't. Those who believe can rejoice in the fact that someone will always take care of them, in the fact that someone will always listen to them when they have something to say, that someone will ease their pain when they are sad... Someone will rejoice with them when they are happy. Someone will calm them down when they are scared. Someone will love them when they feel lonely.

Every time I feel very emotional or overwhelmed, I close myself in my thoughts and tell myself that everything will be fine because God is and will always be with me. I feel that I am not alone, that He supports me and that I can trust Him, and when I pray to God, everything is possible.

Every night, before going to bed, I always make time for a prayer to thank Him for everything I have: for my family, for my healthy life and for the people around me, all of which are gifts sent by God in my life. He is always by my side, through thick and thin, being full of love, giving us the strength and courage to move on and protecting us. I know that we are all equal before God, regardless of culture or origin, precisely because He created us all. We all carry within us divine breath, the breath of life, and daily I think about the fact that I must love my neighbor as myself. Sometimes it's hard, but when I think about the fact that we are all made in His image and likeness, it all seems easier. And, after all, how would I be above the rest? We are all a handful of dust, a valuable handful of dust precisely because He loved us and placed value in us. And then how can I not love all people, how can I not love my neighbor who shows me God's creation embodied in man?

We children are God's jewels and we are sent to our families, as a verse from the Bible says: "Children are a blessing and a gift from God." (Psalms 127:3). God is in our hearts. It is and it will be!

Student - Muntean Ștefania

Teacher: Bâlc Denisa-Maria

6th grade

Secondary School "I.L. Caragiale"

Sibiu, Sibiu

I am His!

Apart from those in the afterlife, no one knows for sure what happened before we were born or after death. Everything is shrouded in a thick blanket of mystery...

When a child is born, he is introduced to the earthly world. He learns to talk, walk, write and read. These are some of the things that people think are basic when a child is born, and they really are, but after the child has learned all this and begins to understand what is going on around him, we should introduce him to religion. How did God create the earth? Why? Where? When? These are all some of the common questions we should ask ourselves in our lifetime. For some we know the answer, but for others we don't have the faintest idea how to answer them.

In all this mess of uncertainties in which the human being struggles from birth, a few more questions arise: why do we first teach children to speak? Well... so he could talk to God! Why do we introduce his gait first? Well... so that he can go to church, to worship the One who gave him life. Why do we teach the child to write from an early age? So that he can write about God. What about reading? Why do we introduce this to the child first? Well... of course, to be able to read about God. So we learn all this first and foremost to be able to be closer to God. Unfortunately, with the fall of man into sin, there was also a distancing of the being from everything that is sacred and from the noble purpose of all these actions, but for me all the vital functions are directed towards God and I try that through what I do and through what how can I thank Him for the sacrifice He made on the Cross for me.

But let's think a little before we continue: why do we call the child from birth God? When the child is baptized, he takes the Holy Spirit with him who is a "member" of the HOLY TRINITY. From then until death, the Holy Spirit is with us every day of our lives. God is with us when we are good, but also when we are bad. We still sin and pray to God only when we feel bad, but He, in His goodness, does not leave us for a moment from His arm. That is precisely why the child must know from an early age that he has a divine seed in him, and, being aware of this, his life will certainly take a different shape and have a different evolution.

What did Jesus do that is so important to us? Well, He was crucified for our sins. He suffered for us so that we may enter the Father's kingdom. He became human for us and suffered all this precisely because he loved us and loves us with an eternal love.

And he really forgives us for everything we do? Of course, but only if we apologize wholeheartedly. Even after he was scourged, spat on, booed and crucified on the cross where nails were driven into his hands and feet where he was treated as the most ordinary man, even though he was without blemish, he looked up to heaven and said : "Forgive them, Lord, because I don't know what I'm doing!"

After all he has done for us, we still refuse him to come into our lives and make things right, we refuse to try to stop sinning, we refuse to tell others about Him...

Do you know Lucifer, the most beautiful angel with a splendid voice, second only to God? He wanted pride, he wanted to be the most powerful, he wanted people to pray to him, and for this mistake he made and for his will to be the greatest he was cast out of heaven , was thrown into a place full of fire and brimstone. And we, who sin more than three times a day, are forgiven. Because he wants us jealously for himself, he doesn't want us to end up in his hands, Lucifer's. But are we worthy of all this? This is the question we must ask ourselves every day and which should guide our existence.

We need Him every moment. To tell us which way to go, to take care of how we think, to protect us from evil spirits, to guide us, to speak to us when we are alone and on the ground, to open our eyes to a more enlightened life, to help in difficult situations and be with us in joyful ones. Everything is written for us in a book up there, even the moment of birth or death. He brings us the joy that those who accepted him experience daily.

Joy, this is faith in God! The strength to move on in this world full of sorrow and loss.

Student: Purcărea Dragoș

Teacher: Bâlc Denisa-Maria

6th grade

"I.L. Caragiale" Secondary School

Sibiu, Sibiu

My faith in God

Earth: About 5 billion years ago starting with the Big Bang explosion.

or

Earth: It is our gift from God.

What I wanted to say is that there have always been two camps: science and the church. Before, all Christians believed in God, they believed everything written in the Bible, and they especially believed that all the phenomena and things on the planet were, "That's what God wanted". This happened until the "Renaissance" took place. During the Renaissance, philosophers, mathematicians, scientists wanted to know why certain things or phenomena happen, no longer satisfied with that saying: "that's what God wanted".

I believe in logical explanations for phenomena, but I also believe that God created them for us. I believe in God and I go to church because I feel that there I am closer to Him and I can understand how faith is stronger than logic. I have faith in God because if I didn't believe I would feel alone and helpless, but believing in God I always feel brave, strong and I feel that someone is around me and always helping me. God always loves us. God loves everyone because to him we are all his children.

So I urge you to believe in God even if you think that he does not help you at all and that he is not with you, in fact he is always with you and loves you like sons.

Student - Zaharie Emanuela

Teacher - Vasu Ovidiu – Ilie

7<sup>th</sup> grade

"Viorel Cucu Paltin" Secondary School

Arpașu de Jos, Sibiu

From a young age, I understood that all children should be treated the same and that we should not differentiate between ordinary people and those of Roma ethnicity. I started to know this best when I became friends with a Roma girl and to my surprise we got along very well. This was mostly due to the fact that I did not emphasize the differences between us and I realized that all people, even of Roma ethnicity, can have respect and be honest.

I became friends with my Roma friend through a group of friends at school and then we tried to go out, get to know each other better, eventually becoming best friends. After a while, I started going to a folk dance ensemble, and my friend came with her brother, where he was also enrolled.

This was a nice time because I was spending it with my girlfriend. In our free time, we used to go to each other, getting to know each other's parents, and I was left with a very good impression of her family, relatives and close ones. Although it was different traditions that separated us, I still want her to have a life as good as mine. I did not understand and did not conceive the idea that she was going to marry young and that she was not going to come to school. It was a smart thing to do but because of her situation, she couldn't prove it to anyone.

For me, the relationship with family, friends, colleagues and last but not least with God is very important. Every morning I wake up and thank God for giving me another day and I ask him to help me on this day to accomplish everything I set out to do. I also pray that he will continue to help me and give me strength and wisdom to overcome all the obstacles and trials of life, and above all I thank him for keeping me healthy. I admit, I belong to that category of believers who believe in God without practicing this faith by going to Church every Sunday. I have faith in God and I am grateful to him for everything he has done for me.

I am a 7th grade student at the school in Arpașu de Jos and soon I will be moving on to a high school of my choice. If I could see myself anywhere in 10 years, it would be in education or studying to become a lawyer. With God's help I believe that everything will be fine and I will end up exactly where I set out to be. One thing I learned in school is to not listen to everything other people say and to trust myself. I don't get along so well with some colleagues because of the existing conflicts in the class and in the school. Sometimes I felt marginalized and alone, but this could also be due to the fact that I have not always been at this school. Until the age of 4 I was in Italy, where I was born. We moved to Romania and went to a nearby school until the 4th grade, and from the 5th we ended up in the school in Arpașu de Jos.

I, however, hope that by God's mercy things will settle down as He knows. I hope it will help my family in need and protect them from life's troubles and give them health and strength throughout their life.

We owe thanks to God for creating this world and especially us humans, because thanks to Him we are who we are and where we are, and this is possible only through His great love.

From Religious Education class I learned that it is not enough to just have faith in God, but you must have this faith by showing your love for the Creator. I also understood that it is not enough to know the name of a holiday if you do not also know its meaning. At the Sacrament of Confession when the priest asks you if you sin, we must not lie, because we all make mistakes, and God knows it.

For me, Religious Education class is as important as the other subjects, because this way we can learn more about God, which will help us in life.