

By Faith, We Open The Door To Christ

A Five-Part Study On The Apostolic Letter, "Porta Fidei"

“The ‘door of faith’ (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into His Church. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime” (Porta Fidei #1).

“The world needs Jesus Christ now more than ever. The world needs the church now more than ever”.

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL.

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http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei_en.html

Session 1: Introducing the Year of Faith

Opening Prayer:

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love,

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.

And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit You have taught the hearts of Your faithful.

In the same Spirit, help us to grow what is truly right and always to rejoice in Your consolation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Read aloud:

This is not the first time that the Church has called for a Year of Faith. At certain times in the history of the Church, popes have called upon the faithful to dedicate themselves to deepening their understanding of a particular aspect of the faith.¹ Pope Paul VI, for example, in 1967 announced a year to commemorate the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul “to recall the supreme act of witness by these two saints so that their martyrdom might inspire the present day Church to collectively and individually make a sincere profession of faith”².

The “Year of Faith” begins on October 11, 2012 and ends on the feast of Christ the King on November 24, 2013. The upcoming Year of Faith declared by Pope Benedict XVI is a “summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (Porta Fidei 6). The “Year of Faith” coincides with the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and also the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

¹ <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/questions-answers-year-of-faith-2012.cfm>

² <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/questions-answers-year-of-faith-2012.cfm>

What does the “Year of Faith” mean for me?



Every baptized Catholic is called through baptism to be a disciple of Christ and proclaim the Gospel. The Year of Faith is an opportunity for each and every Catholic to renew their baptismal call by living out the everyday moments of their life with faith, hope and love. This everyday witness is necessary for proclaiming the Gospel to family, friends, neighbors and society. In order to witness to the Gospel, Catholics must be strengthened through celebrating weekly Sunday Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Pastors are encouraged to provide their parishioners with opportunities to deepen their faith during the Year of Faith through retreats, special liturgies, Bible studies, service opportunities and formation sessions on the catechism and sacraments.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/questions-answers-year-of-faith-2012.cfm>

It is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into an ever deeper relationship with Him. This conversion has been described as opening the “door of faith” (see Acts 14:27) by Pope Benedict XVI, a door opened at baptism and which we are asked to step through again in faith to rediscover and renew our relationship with Christ and with His holy Church.

Reflect:

Will the Year of Faith impact my worship and witness to my faith? In my home? In my workplace? In the world?

How might the “Year of Faith” renew and strengthen my relationship with Christ and His Church?

Who in my life do I need to especially remember in prayer this year? Are there loved ones who have fallen away from their faith? Is there someone in my family who needs grace in a special way during this time? How can I reach out to those family members and friends in my life who need to strengthen and renew their faith?

Read aloud:

Paragraph 5: The launch of the Year of Faith coincides with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council was a providential event. It is often considered as the beginning of a new era in the life of the Church. That is true, but at the same time, it is difficult to overlook the fact that the Council drew much from the experience of the immediate past, especially from the intellectual legacy left by Pius XII. In the history of the Church, the “old” and the “new” are always closely interwoven. *Blessed John Paul II, On the Coming of the Third Millennium (Tertio Millennio Adveniente, no. 18)*

In the opening address to the bishops on October 11, 1962, Blessed John XXIII articulated his vision for the Second Vatican Council, the twenty first ecumenical council. He proposed five points to make this vision a reality:

- 1. Be filled with hope and faith. Do not be prophets of doom.*
- 2. Discover new ways of teaching the faith more effectively.*
- 3. Deepen the understanding of doctrine.*
- 4. Use the medicine of mercy.*
- 5. Seek unity within the Church, with Christians separated from Catholicism, with those of non-Christian religions and with all men and women of goodwill.*

- The texts bequeathed by the Council Fathers need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and significant.
- The Council was “the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century” and is a “sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”
- “If we interpret and implement it, guided by a right hermeneutic, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church.” (*A “right hermeneutic” refers to interpreting the documents of Vatican II in continuity with the Church’s rich 2,000 years of teaching and Tradition handed on to us by the bishops as successors of the Apostles.*)

Reflect:

1. What do you know of the Second Vatican Council?
2. Have you read the documents? If so, which document is your favorite? Why? If you haven’t read them, why not?
3. What does it mean that the documents of the Second Vatican Council are supposed to be a “sure compass” for us?
4. How can interpreting correctly and implementing the documents of Vatican II be a cause for renewal?
5. Which of the five points of Blessed John XXIII made an impact upon you? How might you apply this particular principle to your life?

Closing Meditation and Prayer

By Faith: Mary Our Model

By faith, Mary accepted the Angel’s word and believed the message that she was to become the Mother of God in the obedience of her devotion (cf. *Lk 1:38*). By faith, Mary tasted the fruits of Jesus’ resurrection, and **treasuring every memory in her heart** (cf. *Lk 2:19, 51*), she passed them on to the Twelve assembled with her in the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit (cf. *Acts 1:14; 2:1-4*).

Respond: In the silence of your heart recall those women in your life who were strong in their faith. What memories of your faith are particular-treasures in your heart? How do you pass those treasured memories on to others?

Response: By faith, we step through the door to Christ.

For the entire Church, that all make “an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith.”

Response.

For the bishops from all over the world to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers in recalling the precious gift of faith. **Response.**

For all clergy and religious to intensify their reflections on the faith so as to help all believers in Christ to acquire a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel. **Response.**

For the awakening and deepening of the faith of all believers to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world. **Response.**

For all Christians, that we may radiate the word of truth that Jesus has left us. **Response.**

For the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord in our cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times. **Response.**

For our religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the faith. **Response.**

That all Christians may rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed. **Response.**

For all believers, that we continue to keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (*Heb 12:2*). **Response.**

For young people, that they may be called to follow Christ and be willing to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel to the ends of the earth." **Response.**

Together: Hail Mary

Make a pilgrimage during the Year of Faith!

Bishop Ricken has designated the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help in Champion and St. Francis Xavier Cathedral in Green Bay as official pilgrimage sites during the Year of Faith.



Session 2: Sharing the Faith: Called To Evangelize

Opening Prayer: *Act of Faith*

O my God,
I firmly believe that You are one God in Three Divine
Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
I believe that Thy Divine Son became Man, and died for our
sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the
dead.
I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic
Church teaches, because you have revealed them,
Who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Read aloud:

Paragraph 6: The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.

- The Church, holy and always in need of purification follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.
- Christ saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31).
- By the power of the risen Lord, the Church is given strength to overcome its sorrow and its difficulties so that it may reveal in the world the mystery of its Lord.
- The Year of Faith is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord.
- Through faith, this new life shapes the whole of human existence according to the radical new reality of the resurrection.
- To the extent that he freely cooperates, man's thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed, on a journey that is never completely finished in this life. "Faith working through love" (Gal 5:6) becomes a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of man's life.

"Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed in, but with what it is still possible for you to do."

Pope John XXIII

Reflect:

We are called to be witnesses to our faith in Jesus Christ and to our relationship with Him. How do you experience the joy of believing in Christ?

Conversion means a change of heart that includes a change of direction in life. Briefly relate a change that you have experienced in which you have grown in your faith.

Read aloud:

Paragraph 7: It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize.

- Jesus sends us to proclaim His Gospel to all the peoples of the earth (See Mt 28:19).
- Today, there is a need for a new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith.
- Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation to adhere to His word and become His disciples.
- The importance of believing and the riches of the truth of the faith help people to find the right path towards the "door of faith".

What Is the "New Evangelization"?

The New Evangelization is a call to each Catholic to deepen his or her own faith, have confidence in the Gospel, and possess a willingness to share the Gospel. The New Evangelization is first and foremost a personal encounter with Jesus Christ; it is an invitation to deepen one's relationship with Christ. It is also a call to each person to share his or her faith with others. The Year of Faith, just like the New Evangelization, calls Catholics to conversion in order to deepen their relationship with Christ and to share it with others.

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization>

Reflect:

6. Read aloud Matthew 28:18-19. What does it mean to "evangelize"?
7. The term. The "New Evangelization", was coined by Blessed John Paul II and means to bring the "Good News" to all people with new ardor, new methods, and new language. The "Good News" is that we were separated from God through Original Sin but Jesus opened Heaven for us and reunited us with the Father through His death and Resurrection. How does the parish participate in the New Evangelization? How can this effort be increased during the "Year of Faith"?

Respond: Practical Ways To Evangelize

Father Alvin Illig (1926-1991) of Paulist Press.

- ❖ Consider Christ's great Commission to evangelize (Matthew 28:18-20).
- ❖ Be positive and hope-filled.
- ❖ Include all paths to evangelization: Interpersonal dialogue, parish programs and diocesan direction. Of these approaches, the personal connection and invitation is the most effective. Remember, relatives, friends and neighbors account for 4 out of 5 of those who become Catholics.
- ❖ Begin with the human situation of the person. This might be every person's four basic fears: failure, rejection, pain and death.
- ❖ Build on faith experiences. Connect with people's love of beauty, music and art.
- ❖ Evangelize yourself though daily spiritual renewal in union with Christ. Convinced people convince others. Prayer is the key to personal renewal.

(Catholic Evangelization June 1991: 39-41)

Closing Meditation and Prayer:

By Faith: The Apostles Follow their Master

By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow their Master (cf. *Mk 10:28*). By faith, they went out to the whole world, following the command to bring the Gospel to all creation (cf. *Mk 16:15*) and they fearlessly proclaimed to all the joy of the resurrection, of which they were **faithful witnesses**.

By faith, the disciples formed the first community, gathered around the teaching of the Apostles, in prayer, in celebration of the Eucharist, holding their possessions in common so as to meet the needs of the brethren (cf. *Acts 2:42-47*).

Respond: In the silence of your heart consider a time in your life when you shared your faith with others. What happened? What would you change if you were to have the same experience again? How can you be a more faithful witness to Christ?

Together: The Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and in Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. On the third day, he rose again. He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Session 3: Loving the Faith: The Gift of Faith

Lord, I believe:
I wish to believe in You.
Lord, let my faith be full and unreserved,
and let it penetrate my thought,
my way of judging Divine things and human things.
Lord, let my faith be joyful
and give peace and gladness to my spirit,
and dispose it for prayer with God
and conversation with men,
so that the inner bliss of its fortunate possession
may shine forth in sacred and secular conversation.
Lord, let my faith be humble and not presume
to be based on the experience of my thought and of my
feeling;
but let it surrender to the testimony of the Holy Spirit,
and not have any better guarantee than in docility to
Tradition
and to the authority of the magisterium of the Holy Church.

Amen

Read aloud:

Paragraph 8. During this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, we want to celebrate this Year in a worthy and fruitful manner by recalling the precious gift of faith.

- Reflection on the faith will need to be intensified, so as to help all believers in Christ acquire a more conscious and vigorous adherence to the Gospel, especially at a time of profound change such as humanity is currently experiencing. We will have the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord in our cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times.

- Parish communities are to find a way, during this Year of Faith, to make a public profession of the “Credo” (*Taken from the Latin “I believe or I trust” the term usually refers to the Creed, the profession of faith*)

Reflect:

8. What is the purpose of the “Year of Faith”?
9. How will the parish community and school make a public profession of the Credo?

Pray:

Pray the Nicene Creed. Lift up in prayer all Catholics that they may have the desire and courage to be witnesses to their faith and for those who have left the Catholic Church, that their hearts may be moved and they will have the desire to return Home.

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The Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has
spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen

Reflect: *The Qualities of Faith (USCCA pages 37-38)*

1. Faith is a personal and a communal relationship.
2. Faith seeks understanding and is a friend of reason.
3. Faith is necessary for salvation.
4. Faith is a gift of grace.
5. Faith is a free, human act.
6. Faith believes with conviction in a message.

What do you understand by the term “faith”? Which quality of faith resonates most with you? Which quality do you find difficult to live out in your life?

Respond:

9. How is the Lord calling you personally to grow in your relationship with Him during the “Year of Faith”?
10. How is the Lord calling the parish and school to grow as a community in their relationship with Him during the “Year of Faith”?

Closing Meditation and Prayer

By Faith: The Martyrs Gave All

By faith, the martyrs gave their lives, bearing witness to the truth of the Gospel that had transformed them and made them capable of attaining to the greatest gift of love: the forgiveness of their persecutors.

By faith, men and women have consecrated their lives to Christ, leaving all things behind so as to live in obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity -- concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay.

Have you ever been unjustly persecuted?

Have you ever oppressed or persecuted anyone? Have you forgiven your persecutor? Have you asked forgiveness?

Together: Our Father

What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end

Porta Fidei #15

Session 4: Knowing the Faith

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful Savior of the world, we humbly beseech You, by Your most Sacred Heart, that all the sheep who stray out of Your fold may be converted to You, the Shepherd of their souls, who lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

Read Aloud Paragraph 9-12: The purpose of the Year of Faith is to help the baptized to profess, celebrate and witness the faith in a joy-filled way. It is important to:

- 1) know the faith, and
- 2) act out its teachings.

If faith is not formed within the heart, ~~the~~ knowledge will not do the person any good. Therefore, knowledge cannot stand alone, but rather should be combined with action.

Faith is not a “personal” act but a public commitment to Christ. The Church helps us to live that faith. Through baptism, an individual accepts this public faith. Knowing the faith helps us to freely “accept the whole mystery of faith”.

The seeking of meaning and truth is the door through which we invite people to faith. For, just by being human, we have it in our hearts to believe.

We need to use the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to develop a **“systematic knowledge of the content of faith”**.

“I believe” is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both “I believe” and “We believe”. (CCC, no.167)

Reflect:

1. How can I/we emphasize faith within my/our parish community – to active and non-active Catholics?
2. How do we create a conversion (heartfelt) experience without the “knowledge” base?
3. What knowledge do Catholics have of the faith? Do you think that people know what the Catechism is and how to use it?

What is the Catechism of the Catholic Church? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a publication containing articles on the official teaching of the Catholic Church in all matters of faith and morals. The principal source materials for this work are the Sacred Scriptures, the Church Fathers, the liturgy, and the Magisterium. This Catechism is intended to serve "as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries." - Extraordinary Synod of Bishops 1985, Final Report II B a, 4. *Fidei depositum* an Apostolic Constitution, states that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is for the laity in its address to all the people of God. The goal of the Catechism of the Catholic Church is to help facilitate the lifelong conversion of the whole person to the Father's call to holiness and eternal life

What is the "Compendium" of the Catechism? This is a document which originated with a request of Pope John Paul II in February 2003 and was issued by his successor Pope Benedict XVI June 28, 2005. The English version was printed at Libreria Editrice Vaticana in 2006. Unlike the larger catechism, the Compendium is similar in format to the Baltimore Catechism with 598 questions and answers, providing an easier format with only the "essential" contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as the title suggests.

What is the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults? The 1992 Vatican catechism had several aims, among them to be an "authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine and particularly for preparing local catechisms". The American bishops responded with the 2006 United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (USCCB, 2006) - similar in format to a college text book, targeting adults, contain seven elements that bring more depth to the material than the "Compendium", and providing more flexibility for diverse groups of people to study its contents. Each section or chapter contains the following: Story or lesson of faith, foundation and application, sidebars, relationship to culture, discussion questions, doctrinal statements, and meditation and prayer. The lessons of faith stories feature individuals from the United States and seeks both to affirm the positive elements in the U.S culture and to challenge the negative features. It is above all an "aid and a guide for deepening faith" (USCCA XXIV)

Read aloud:

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has written a *Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith* to help the Church celebrate this Year of Faith.

Within that Note, it calls dioceses to:

- Have a celebration to open the *Year of Faith* and a solemn conclusion

- Organize a study day on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*
- Have each bishop write a pastoral letter on the topic of faith
- Organize catechetical events helping youth discover the beauty of ecclesial faith
- Review the reception of Vatican II and the *Catechism* in its own life and mission
- Focus continuing education of the clergy on the *Year of Faith*
- Organize penitential celebrations
- Renew creative dialogue of faith and reason in the academic and artistic communities
- Promote encounters with those who are searching for ultimate meaning and definitive truth
- Pay greater attention to Catholic schools.

The *Note* also calls parishes/communities/associations/movements to:

- Read and meditate upon *Porta fidei*
- Intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist
- Devote greater attention to the study of Vatican Council II documents and the *Catechism*
- Offer a cycle of homilies on the faith
- *Have catechists hold more firmly to the doctrinal riches of the Catechism*
- Distribute the *Catechism*
- Promote mission
- Work toward the New Evangelization
- Pray for the renewal of the faith
- Promote specific initiatives which will contribute to the wider experience of the *Year of Faith*
- Promote communication of personal faith experiences with co-workers, family and friends.

Respond: Review the expectations from the *Note* for parishes. Determine what activities are currently happening in your parish that meet these expectations.

What areas of strength do you see to help people to celebrate the Year of Faith?

What deficiencies do you see? How can you help people to make a more joyful profession of the faith this year?

Closing Prayer and Meditation:

By Faith: All You Holy Men and Women

By faith, countless Christians have promoted action for justice so as to put into practice the word of the Lord, who came to proclaim deliverance from oppression and a year of favor for all (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19).

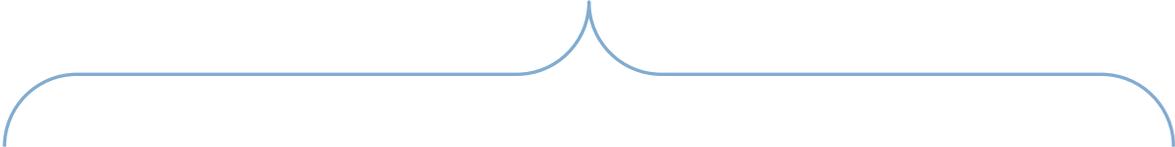
By faith, across the centuries, men and women of all ages, whose names are written in the Book of Life (cf. *Rev* 7:9, 13:8), have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus

wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called.

Reflect: How do you put into action your belief in Christ? Do you witness to the Lord in your family? Has this been difficult? What about your workplace? What are some challenges that you have encountered? Have you had any successes?

Respond: Consider taking a class either within the parish or online to deepen your understanding of the faith. Please contact Julianne Stanz, Adult Faith Formation Director for the Diocese of Green Bay at jstanz@gbdioc.org or (920) 272 8270 for more information on classes/events in your area for the Year of Faith.

Together: **The Magnificat**



The Magnificat

My soul does magnify the Lord:

And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour

Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

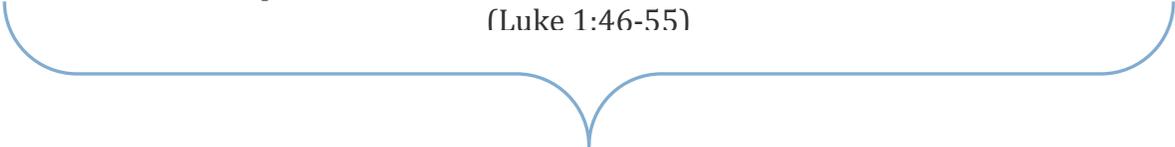
For He that is mighty has done great things to me: and holy is His Name. And His mercy is from generation until generations, to them that fear Him.

He has showed might with His arm: He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He has put down the mighty from their seat, and has exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy: As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

(Luke 1:46-55)



Session 5: The Faith Professed: Living the Faith

Lord Jesus Christ, please provide me with the discipline to set aside daily prayer time for my friendship with You, that I may grow in deeper communion with You, become the person You created me to be, and thus live in that complete joy You promised—witnessing to Your generosity, mercy and glory in the world.

Amen

Read aloud paragraph 13-15. The examples of faith that have marked these 2,000 years of Salvation History.

- Of decisive importance in the Year of Faith is retracing the history of our faith marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin.
 - Thus highlighting the great contribution of the saints, and
 - Provoking in each person a continuing work of conversion.
- In order to do this, we need to keep our gaze fixed upon **Jesus Christ**, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (Heb 12:2).
- In Jesus, “all the anguish and all the longing of the human heart finds fulfillment.”
- By faith, **Mary** accepted Gabriel’s word, visited Elizabeth, gave birth to her Son, followed Him in his preaching all the way to Golgotha, tasted the fruits of His Resurrection, and was with the Twelve in the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit.
- By faith, the **Apostles** left everything to follow their Master, living in communion of life with Him, receiving His teaching, and fearlessly proclaimed the joy of the resurrection to the whole world.
- By faith, the **disciples** formed the first community around the teaching of the Apostles in prayer, the Eucharist, and common possessions.
- By faith, the **martyrs** gave their lives, witnessing to the greatest love of forgiving their persecutors.
- By faith, **men and women** have consecrated their lives to Christ; promoted action for justice; and / or bore witness to Jesus Christ in the family, workplace, public life, etc.
- By faith, **we** too live by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus.

14. The Witness of Charity

- The Year of Faith is also an opportunity to intensify the witness of charity; “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (Jas 2).
- Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt. Through faith, we can recognize the face of the risen Lord in those who ask for our love.
 - Christ’s words in Mt. 25:40 are a warning that must not be forgotten and a perennial invitation to return the love by which he takes care of us.

Reflect:

Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ is what transforms us evermore into His image, providing us with a natural ease to see the world, our neighbors, and ourselves as He does, and to actualize His gift of charity in our lives.



15. Witnessing to the Risen Lord

- Faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world.
- What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.
- May this Year of Faith make our relationship with Christ the Lord increasingly firm, since only in Him is there the certitude for looking to the future and the guarantee of an authentic and lasting love

Respond: Faith is enhanced by prayer, and a deep sacramental life. From such a life flow inclinations and acts of charity. May we live in communion with Christ and generously respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in acts of charity.

Closing Meditation and Prayer

By Faith: I live in Christ

By faith, we too live: by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus, present in our lives and in our history. Having reached the end of his life, Saint Paul asked his disciple, Timothy, to “aim at faith” (2 Tim 2:22) with the same constancy as when he was a boy (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). We hear this invitation directed to each of us, that we do not grow lazy in the faith.

Faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the Word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.

Respond: Read, Reflect, Pray,

Each evening, consider spending 5-10 minutes recalling the happenings of the day. Select a place where you can be quiet and attentive to the presence of God during your reflection. Read a piece of Scripture. Reflect upon its meaning for your day. Resolve to examine your conscience in the light of the Scripture and make sincere changes where needed. Faithfulness to this practice will lead you to a more profound and accurate knowledge of yourself as well as a growing awareness of God's loving presence and action in your life.

Together: Glory Be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrew 11:1).



“10 Ways Catholics Can Live the Year of Faith.”

Bishop David L. Ricken DD, JCL

1. *Participate in Mass.*
2. *Go to Confession.*
3. *Learn about the lives of the saints.*
4. *Read the Bible daily.*
5. *Read the documents of Vatican II*
6. *Study the Catechism.*
7. *Volunteer in the parish.*
8. *Help those in need.*
9. *Invite a friend to Mass.*
10. *Incorporate the Beatitudes into daily life.*

Prayer for the Year of Faith

O God of life, Creator Lord, we praise you for your gracious love; give us the light of faith we pray, to thank you for each dawning day.

Lord Jesus, our Redeemer, friend, you came to take us home again; forgive our sins, your mercy share lest we fall prey to earth's despair.

Come, Holy Spirit, dwell within, give us your peace, prevent all sin; at Jordan's stream, your heavenly Dove acclaimed Mary's son the chosen one.

+Robert F. Morneau

For the full text visit:

<http://www.usccb.org/news/2012/12-150.cfm>

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*For classes/events during the Year of Faith visit:
<http://www.gbdioc.org/adult-faith-formation/classes.html>*

For resources and information related to the Year of Faith visit: <http://www.gbdioc.org/adult-faith-formation/year-of-faith.html>