

The  
Door *of*  
Faith  
*is* Always  
Open

*A Novena to Prepare for  
the Year of Faith*

# Welcome

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“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.”

So begins the announcement of Pope Benedict XVI proclaiming a Year of Faith. This year begins on October 11, 2012. This will be a year of great grace. The year begins on the fiftieth anniversary of opening of the Second Vatican Council, and on the twentieth anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, two great gifts to the Church. The year gives us special reason to pause and reflect on the ways we encounter Christ Jesus. It is a year to intercede for those who lack faith. It is a year for us to strengthen our own witness.

The following novena begins nine days before the Year of Faith. Each day we begin with prayer. We pray the same opening prayer each day, and then the unique prayer for each day. Next, we read from the Holy Father’s Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*. Daily reading enables us to read this letter from beginning to end, which was a special request of the Holy Father. There is a reflection question based on the reading that can be used to help direct your thinking, or you may choose to reflect on your own. Then, there is an action step that we can take as we beg the Lord to “order our steps” in response to His calling. We also have a small section for notes.

We are indebted to the Division of Catechetical and Pastoral Formation of the Department of Evangelization in the Archdiocese of Baltimore for their work in preparing this Novena. Our hope and prayer is that this Year of Faith will spark greater desire in each of us for the New Evangelization and the transmission of faith!

*May God bless you on this journey!*



## OPENING PRAYER

*O God, our Loving Father,*

*Open our hearts to receive every grace that you  
offer to us in this Year of Faith.*

*Grant us the grace*

*to follow your Son,*

*to trust in your mercy,*

*and to bear witness to your loving kindness.*

*Make our hearts faithful to you,*

*our minds set on knowing you,*

*our mouths ever ready to praise you,*

*our very being proclaiming our love for you.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Our Father ...*

*Hail Mary ...*

*Glory be to the Father ...*

## DATE

Oct. 2,  
Tuesday  
2012

## PRAYER

### Memorial of the Guardian Angels

Today, on this Memorial of the Guardian Angels, we pray the prayer many of us learned as children.

*Angel of God,  
my guardian dear,  
to whom God's love  
commits me here,  
ever this day,  
be at my side  
to light and guard,  
to rule and guide.*

*Amen.*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

1. 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. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. It begins with baptism (cf. *Rom 6:4*), through which we can address God as Father, and it ends with the passage through death to eternal life, fruit of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, whose will it was, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, to draw those who believe in him into his own glory (cf. *Jn 17:22*). To profess faith in the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — is to believe in one God who is Love (cf. *1 Jn 4:8*): the Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation; Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world; the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church across the centuries as we await the Lord’s glorious return.
2. Ever since the start of my ministry as Successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ. During the homily at the Mass marking the inauguration of my pontificate I said: “The Church as a whole and all her Pastors, like Christ, must set out to lead people out of the desert, towards the place of life, towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance.” [1] It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied. [2] Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people.
3. We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. *Mt 5:13-16*). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. *Jn 4:14*). We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. *Jn 6:51*). Indeed, the teaching of Jesus still resounds in our day with the same power: “Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life” (*Jn 6:27*). The question posed by his listeners is the same that we ask today: “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” (*Jn 6:28*). We know Jesus’ reply: “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent” (*Jn 6:29*). Belief in Jesus Christ, then, is the way to arrive definitively at salvation.



## REFLECTION QUESTION

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† The Holy Father begins this beautiful letter by writing, “The ‘door of faith’ is always open for us.” How have you encountered the open door of faith?

## ACTION STEP

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What are some actions that you can take to help you prepare for the Year of Faith?

A commitment to reading and meditating on this letter each day is a good start. But what is God asking of you? Today, simply pray that each of us can ask God, “Help me *to want* to want what You want.”

We ask the Holy Spirit to stir up a desire in us to have hearts that reflect the very heart of God.

What is it that you believe God wants of you? Do you desire that with all of your being?

Help me to want to want what God wants! ■

## IMPORTANT NOTES

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## DATE

Oct. 3,  
Wednesday  
2012

## PRAYER

### Prayer of the Council Fathers

Today, as we begin to prepare for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it would be good to pray this *Prayer of the Council Fathers*.

It is a prayer composed by Isidore of Seville in 619, and was prayed again at the Second Vatican Council each morning before different commission gatherings.

*We are here before You, O Holy Spirit, conscious of our innumerable sins, but united in a special way in Your Holy Name. Come and abide with us. Deign to penetrate our hearts. Be the guide of our actions, indicate the path we should take, and show us what we must do so that, with Your help, our work may be in all things pleasing to You.*

*(Continued on page 7)*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

4. In the light of all this, I have decided to announce a Year of Faith. It will begin on 11 October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and it will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on 24 November 2013. The starting date of 11 October 2012 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, a text promulgated by my Predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, [3] with a view to illustrating for all the faithful the power and beauty of the faith. This document, an authentic fruit of the Second Vatican Council, was requested by the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 as an instrument at the service of catechesis [4] and it was produced in collaboration with all the bishops of the Catholic Church. Moreover, the theme of the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that I have convoked for October 2012 is “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith”. This will be a good opportunity to usher the whole Church into a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith. It is not the first time that the Church has been called to celebrate a Year of Faith. My venerable Predecessor the Servant of God Paul VI announced one in 1967, to commemorate the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul on the 19<sup>th</sup> centenary of their supreme act of witness. He thought of it as a solemn moment for the whole Church to make “an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith”; moreover, he wanted this to be confirmed in a way that was “individual and collective, free and conscious, inward and outward, humble and frank”. [5] He thought that in this way the whole Church could reappropriate “exact knowledge of the faith, so as to reinvigorate it, purify it, confirm it, and confess it”. [6] The great upheavals of that year made even more evident the need for a celebration of this kind. It concluded with the *Credo of the People of God*, [7] intended to show how much the essential content that for centuries has formed the heritage of all believers needs to be confirmed, understood and explored ever anew, so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past.

5. In some respects, my venerable predecessor saw this Year as a “consequence and a necessity of the postconciliar period”, [8] fully conscious of the grave difficulties of the time, especially with regard to the profession of the true faith and its correct interpretation. It seemed to me that timing the launch of the Year of Faith to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council would provide a good opportunity to help people understand that the texts bequeathed by the Council Fathers, in the words of Blessed John Paul II, “*have lost nothing of their value or brilliance*. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church’s Tradition ... I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as *the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.” [9] I would also like to emphasize strongly what I had occasion to

*May You be our only inspiration and the overseer of our intentions, for You alone possess a glorious name together with the Father and the Son.*

*May You, who are infinite justice, never permit that we be disturbers of justice. Let not our ignorance induce us to evil, nor flattery sway us, nor moral and material interest corrupt us. But unite our hearts to You alone, and do it strongly, so that, with the gift of Your grace, we may be one in You and may nothing depart from the truth.*

*Thus, united in Your name, may we in our every action follow the dictates of Your mercy and justice, so that today and always our judgments may not be alien to You and in eternity we may obtain the unending reward of our actions.*

*Amen.*

say concerning the Council a few months after my election as Successor of Peter: “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.” [10]

## REFLECTION QUESTION

† The Year of Faith marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary for the Second Vatican Council and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. How familiar are you with the documents of Vatican II or the *Catechism*? What ways can you advance your understanding?

## ACTION STEP

Can you commit to reading the four constitutions of Vatican II?

The four constitutions of Vatican II are:

*Dei Verbum* — Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651118\\_dei-verbum\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html)

*Lumen Gentium* — Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19641121\\_lumen-gentium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html)

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* — Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19631204\\_sacrosanctum-concilium\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html)

*Gaudium et Spes* — Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) ■

## IMPORTANT NOTES

## DATE

Oct. 4,  
Thursday  
2012

## PRAYER

### Memorial of Saint Francis of Assisi, religious

*Lord, make me an  
instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred,  
let me sow love;  
where there is injury,  
pardon; where there  
is doubt, faith; where  
there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness,  
light; and where there is  
sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant  
that I may not so much  
seek to be consoled as to  
console; to be understood  
as to understand; to be  
loved as to love. For it is  
in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we  
are pardoned; and it is in  
dying that we are born to  
eternal life.*

*Amen*


## THE DOOR OF FAITH

6. The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us. The Council itself, in the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, said this: While “Christ, ‘holy, innocent and undefiled’ (*Heb* 7:26) knew nothing of sin (cf. *2 Cor* 5:21), but came only to expiate the sins of the people (cf. *Heb* 2:17)... the Church ... clasping sinners to its bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal. The Church, ‘like a stranger in a foreign land, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God’, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes (cf. *1 Cor* 11:26). But by the power of the risen Lord it is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, its sorrow and its difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are from without, so that it may reveal in the world, faithfully, although with shadows, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it shall be manifested in full light.” [11]

The Year of Faith, from this perspective, is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Saviour of the world. In the mystery of his death and resurrection, God has revealed in its fullness the Love that saves and calls us to conversion of life through the forgiveness of sins (cf. *Acts* 5:31). For Saint Paul, this Love ushers us into a new life: “We were buried ... with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (*Rom* 6:4). 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 (cf. *Rom* 12:2; *Col* 3:9-10; *Eph* 4:20-29; *2 Cor* 5:17).

7. “*Caritas Christi urget nos*” (*2 Cor* 5:14): it is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize. Today as in the past, he sends us through the highways of the world to proclaim his Gospel to all the peoples of the earth (cf. *Mt* 28:19). Through his love, Jesus Christ attracts to himself the people of every generation: in every age he convokes the Church, entrusting her with the proclamation of the Gospel by a mandate that is ever new. Today too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away. 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. Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, “strengthen themselves by believing”. [12] The saintly Bishop of Hippo had good reason to express himself in this way. As we know, his life was a continual search for the beauty of the faith until such time as his heart would find rest in God. [13] His extensive writings, in which he explains the importance of believing and the truth of the faith, continue even now to form a heritage of incomparable riches, and they still help many people in search of God to find the right path towards the “door of faith”.

Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one’s life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

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† How do you “radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left to us?”  
How have you been Christ to people that you have encountered this past week?

### ACTION STEP

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The Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation gives us the grace to “live a life worthy of the Gospel.” Through this sacrament, we have the opportunity to experience the healing power of Christ in areas of our lives that need transformation. Are you open to this change?

Some of us have been away from the sacrament for a long time. If that is the case, know as the Holy Father says, that “the door of faith is open!” This week:

- ◆ Pray about approaching the Sacrament of Penance.
- ◆ Find out when it is offered.
- ◆ Look up a guide to the sacrament and prepare to receive it in this Year of Faith. You can find a guide at <http://www.thelightison.org/guide.html>.

If you are someone who regularly participates in this great sacrament of healing, take time to ask yourself how God is calling you to on-going conversion and purification. ■

### IMPORTANT NOTES

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## DATE

Oct. 5,  
Friday  
2012

## PRAYER

What is it that we believe?  
The Catechism of the Catholic Church has a beautiful expression about the Creed. It states:

“Our profession of faith begins with God, for God is the First and the Last, the beginning and the end of everything. The Credo begins with God the Father, for the Father is the first divine person of the Most Holy Trinity; our Creed begins with the creation of heaven and earth, for creation is the beginning and the foundation of all God’s works.”

~ the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 198

**And so, let us pray what we believe...**

**The Nicene Creed**

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

(Continued on page 11)

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

8. On this happy occasion, I wish to invite my brother bishops from all over the world to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, in recalling the precious gift of faith. We want to celebrate this Year in a worthy and fruitful manner. Reflection on the faith will have to be intensified, so as to help all believers in Christ to 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. Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this Year, to make a public profession of the *Credo*.

9. We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to *profess* the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope. It will also be a good opportunity to intensify the *celebration* of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, which is “the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed; ... and also the source from which all its power flows.”

[14] At the same time, we make it our prayer that believers’ *witness* of life may grow in credibility. To rediscover the content of the faith that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed, [15] and to reflect on the act of faith, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year.

Not without reason, Christians in the early centuries were required to learn the creed from memory. It served them as a daily prayer not to forget the commitment they had undertaken in baptism. With words rich in meaning, Saint Augustine speaks of this in a homily on the *redditio symboli*, the handing over of the creed: “the symbol of the holy mystery that you have all received together and that today you have recited one by one, are the words on which the faith of Mother Church is firmly built above the stable foundation that is Christ the Lord. You have received it and recited it, but in your minds and hearts you must keep it ever present, you must repeat it in your beds, recall it in the public squares and not forget it during meals: even when your body is asleep, you must watch over it with your hearts.” [16]

## REFLECTION QUESTION

† The Creed is a beautiful prayer. And yet, we sometimes pray it so quickly that we fail to pause and notice each word. Pray the Creed slowly. Ask what each line means. If you are unsure, go to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which is searchable and on-line, (<http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm>) or ask your parish priest or someone who works at the Church. Here is the Apostles’ Creed:

*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 proceeds from the Father and the*

*(Continued on page 12)*

*I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come 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.*

### **ACTION STEP**

Today, find on-line the searchable catechism, which can be found at [www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm](http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc.htm). If you order one, you can have your own copy to mark up.

Begin to familiarize yourself with the *Catechism* and map out a way of study that fits your needs for the following year. ■

### **IMPORTANT NOTES**

*Son, 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*

## DATE

Oct. 6,  
Saturday  
2012

## PRAYER

In this section of the Holy Father's letter, he speaks about a disciple named Lydia. He quotes from the Acts of the Apostles.

Praying with Scripture is a good way for us to pray. We have included that reading here. Please take the time to pray with Scripture.

### A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

*“On the sabbath we went outside the city gate along the river where we thought there would be a place of prayer. We sat and spoke with the women who had gathered there. One of them, a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth, from the city of Thyatira, a worshiper of God,” listened, and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. After she and her household*

*(Continued on page 14)*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

10. At this point I would like to sketch a path intended to help us understand more profoundly not only the content of the faith, but also the act by which we choose to entrust ourselves fully to God, in complete freedom. In fact, there exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent. Saint Paul helps us to enter into this reality when he writes: “Man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved” (*Rom 10:10*). The heart indicates that the first act by which one comes to faith is God’s gift and the action of grace which acts and transforms the person deep within.

The example of Lydia is particularly eloquent in this regard. Saint Luke recounts that, while he was at Philippi, Paul went on the Sabbath to proclaim the Gospel to some women; among them was Lydia and “the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul” (*Acts 16:14*). There is an important meaning contained within this expression. Saint Luke teaches that knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart, the authentic sacred space within the person, is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God. Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment. A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. This “standing with him” points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing. Faith, precisely because it is a free act, also demands social responsibility for what one believes. The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one’s faith fearlessly to every person. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous.

Profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian. It is the Church that is the primary subject of faith. In the faith of the Christian community, each individual receives baptism, an effective sign of entry into the people of believers in order to obtain salvation. As we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “‘I believe’ is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during baptism. ‘We believe’ is the faith of the Church confessed by the bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. ‘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.’” [17]

Evidently, knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one’s own assent, that is to say for adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes. Knowledge of faith opens a door into the fullness of the saving mystery revealed by God. The giving of assent implies that, when we believe, we freely accept the whole mystery of faith, because the guarantor of its truth is

*had been baptized, she offered us an invitation, “If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my home,” and she prevailed on us.”*

*The Word of the Lord.*

God who reveals himself and allows us to know his mystery of love. [18]

On the other hand, we must not forget that in our cultural context, very many people, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless sincerely searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of their lives and of the world. This search is an authentic “preamble” to the faith, because it guides people onto the path that leads to the mystery of God. Human reason, in fact, bears within itself a demand for “what is perennially valid and lasting.” [19] This demand constitutes a permanent summons, indelibly written into the human heart, to set out to find the One whom we would not be seeking had he not already set out to meet us. [20] To this encounter, faith invites us and it opens us in fullness.

11. In order to arrive at a systematic knowledge of the content of the faith, all can find in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* a precious and indispensable tool. It is one of the most important fruits of the [Second Vatican Council](#). In the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, signed, not by accident, on the thirtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, Blessed John Paul II wrote: “this catechism will make a very important contribution to that work of renewing the whole life of the Church ... I declare it to be a valid and legitimate instrument for ecclesial communion and a sure norm for teaching the faith.” [21]

It is in this sense that that the Year of Faith will have to see a concerted effort to rediscover and study the fundamental content of the faith that receives its systematic and organic synthesis in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Here, in fact, we see the wealth of teaching that the Church has received, safeguarded and proposed in her two thousand years of history. From Sacred Scripture to the Fathers of the Church, from theological masters to the saints across the centuries, the *Catechism* provides a permanent record of the many ways in which the Church has meditated on the faith and made progress in doctrine so as to offer certitude to believers in their lives of faith.

In its very structure, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* follows the development of the faith right up to the great themes of daily life. On page after page, we find that what is presented here is no theory, but an encounter with a Person who lives within the Church. The profession of faith is followed by an account of sacramental life, in which Christ is present, operative and continues to build his Church. Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy, because it would lack the grace which supports Christian witness. By the same criterion, the teaching of the *Catechism* on the moral life acquires its full meaning if placed in relationship with faith, liturgy and prayer.



## REFLECTION QUESTION

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† The Holy Father talks about the importance of an open heart. Have you ever encountered a closed heart? What are some of the things that can cause a person's heart to close? What can open a closed heart?

## ACTION STEP

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*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us “Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father — every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.” (CCC 1437)

As you prepare for the Year of Faith, what does that look like in terms of prayer and worship? Can you examine daily prayer in your life? Are you ready to pray and meditate on the Our Father? Will you increase your reading of the Bible, or learn to pray with great devotion the Liturgy of the Hours?

What are you willing to do in this Year of Faith to build up your own faith? ■

## IMPORTANT NOTES

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## DATE

Oct. 7,  
Sunday  
2012

## PRAYER

Blessed John Paul wrote this in an encyclical entitled *Fides et Ratio, Faith and Reason*:

“In their respective worlds, God and the human being are set within a unique relationship. In God there lies the origin of all things, in him is found the fullness of the mystery, and in this his glory consists; to men and women there falls the task of exploring truth with their reason, and in this their nobility consists. The Psalmist adds one final piece to this mosaic when he says in prayer: “How deep to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I try to count them, they are more than the sand. If I come to the end, I am still with you” (139:17-18). The desire for knowledge is so great and it works in such a way that the human heart, despite its experience of insurmountable limitation, yearns for the infinite riches which lie beyond, knowing that there is to be found the satisfying answer to every question as yet unanswered.”

(Continued on page 17)

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

12. In this Year, then, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will serve as a tool providing real support for the faith, especially for those concerned with the formation of Christians, so crucial in our cultural context. To this end, I have invited the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, by agreement with the competent Dicasteries of the Holy See, to draw up a *Note*, providing the Church and individual believers with some guidelines on how to live this Year of Faith in the most effective and appropriate ways, at the service of belief and evangelization.

To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth. [22]

## REFLECTION QUESTION

† What are some of the ways you would like to celebrate the Year of Faith?

## ACTION STEP

The Church values prayer, fasting, almsgiving, works of charity, works of mercy: the list is endless. There are so many ways to love God and love our neighbor. What are some concrete ways you can love God and love neighbor in this Year of Faith? Write them down. ■

## IMPORTANT NOTES



## DATE

Oct. 8,  
Monday  
2012

## PRAYER

This day marks the anniversary of a visit from a holy man who walked among us. For on this date in 1995, Blessed John Paul II came to Baltimore. He ate at Our Daily Bread; he visited our co-Cathedrals and a seminary; he rode the streets of Baltimore; and he celebrated Mass at Camden Yards. That day, Oriole Park truly was a “field of dreams” for the faithful. Today, we pray a prayer of Blessed John Paul II, in gratitude for the example that he gave the Church, and Baltimore.

*“O God, You are our Creator. You are good and Your mercy knows no bounds. To You arises the praise of every creature. O God, You have given us an inner law by which we must live. To do Your will is our task. To follow Your ways is to know peace of heart. To You we offer our homage. Guide us on all the paths we travel upon*

*(Continued on page 18)*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

13. One thing that will be of decisive importance in this Year is retracing the history of our faith, marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin. While the former highlights the great contribution that men and women have made to the growth and development of the community through the witness of their lives, the latter must provoke in each person a sincere and continuing work of conversion in order to experience the mercy of the Father which is held out to everyone.

During this time we will need to keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ, the “pioneer and perfecter of our faith” (*Heb 12:2*): in him, all the anguish and all the longing of the human heart finds fulfillment. The joy of love, the answer to the drama of suffering and pain, the power of forgiveness in the face of an offence received and the victory of life over the emptiness of death: all this finds fulfillment in the mystery of his Incarnation, in his becoming man, in his sharing our human weakness so as to transform it by the power of his resurrection. In him who died and rose again for our salvation, the examples of faith that have marked these two thousand years of our salvation history are brought into the fullness of light.

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*). Visiting Elizabeth, she raised her hymn of praise to the Most High for the marvels he worked in those who trust him (cf. *Lk 1:46-55*). With joy and trepidation she gave birth to her only son, keeping her virginity intact (cf. *Lk 2:6-7*). Trusting in Joseph, her husband, she took Jesus to Egypt to save him from Herod’s persecution (cf. *Mt 2:13-15*). With the same faith, she followed the Lord in his preaching and remained with him all the way to Golgotha (cf. *Jn 19:25-27*). 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*).

By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow their Master (cf. *Mk 10:28*). They believed the words with which he proclaimed the Kingdom of God present and fulfilled in his person (cf. *Lk 11:20*). They lived in communion of life with Jesus who instructed them with his teaching, leaving them a new rule of life, by which they would be recognized as his disciples after his death (cf. *Jn 13:34-35*). 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*).

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

*this earth. Free us from all the evil tendencies which lead our hearts away from Your will. Never allow us to stray from You. O God, judge of all humankind, help us to be included among Your chosen ones on the last day. O God, Author of peace and justice, give us true joy and authentic love, and a lasting solidarity among peoples. Give us Your everlasting gifts."*

*Amen!*

*May the God of mercy, the God of love, the God of peace bless each of you and all the members of your families!*

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 obedience, poverty and chastity with Gospel simplicity, concrete signs of waiting for the Lord who comes without delay. 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 favour 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.

By faith, we too live: by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus, present in our lives and in our history.

### REFLECTION QUESTION

† Who are the holy men and women who have contributed to your life by their witness? What did they say or do to witness to you?

### ACTION STEP

This part of the Holy Father's writing talks about the holiness of people in our history. The Archdiocese of Baltimore has a number of historic houses of worship and has hosted those who have been declared saints. Would you be willing to make a pilgrimage to one of those sites or commit to learn about them? If you would like to know a little more about the history of the archdiocese, go to <http://www.archbalt.org/about-us/the-archdiocese/our-history/>. ■

### IMPORTANT NOTES

## DATE

Oct. 9,  
Tuesday  
2012

## PRAYER

In today's passage, the Holy Father quotes Saint Paul on love. This is a passage that is often read at weddings. Let us read it today in the context of all those we are called to love and all those we are challenged to see as sisters or brothers.

### **A reading from Paul's first letter to the Church at Corinth:**

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*Love never fails."*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

14. The Year of Faith will also be a good opportunity to intensify the witness of charity. As Saint Paul reminds us: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love" (1 Cor 13:13). With even stronger words — which have always placed Christians under obligation — Saint James said: "What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith" (Jas 2:14-18).

Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt. Faith and charity each require the other, in such a way that each allows the other to set out along its respective path. Indeed, many Christians dedicate their lives with love to those who are lonely, marginalized or excluded, as to those who are the first with a claim on our attention and the most important for us to support, because it is in them that the reflection of Christ's own face is seen. Through faith, we can recognize the face of the risen Lord in those who ask for our love. "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). These words are a warning that must not be forgotten and a perennial invitation to return the love by which he takes care of us. It is faith that enables us to recognize Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbor along the journey of life. Supported by faith, let us look with hope at our commitment in the world, as we await "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13; cf. Rev 21:1).

## REFLECTION QUESTION

† The Holy Father states, "Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt." What does this mean? Can you give examples of "faith without charity?" Can you explain why charity without faith would be "constantly at the mercy of doubt?"

## ACTION STEP

Pray the reading from 1 Corinthians as an Examination of Conscience, preparing you for this Year of Faith. There is a blank below where the word "love" normally appears in this Scripture passage. Substitute your name for Love, and see how well you are doing. Discover areas where you would like to improve:



- \_\_\_\_\_ is patient,
- \_\_\_\_\_ is kind.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is not jealous,
- \_\_\_\_\_ is not pompous,
- \_\_\_\_\_ is not inflated,
- \_\_\_\_\_ is not rude,
- \_\_\_\_\_ does not seek \_\_\_\_\_ own interests,
- \_\_\_\_\_ is not quick-tempered,
- \_\_\_\_\_ does not brood over injury,
- \_\_\_\_\_ does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things,  
endures all things.
- \_\_\_\_\_ never fails.

Ask God's grace in discovering where you miss the mark, and pray for all of those who are also praying this examination. ■

### IMPORTANT NOTES



## DATE

Oct. 10,  
Wednesday  
2012

## PRAYER

Today, we will reach the end of the encyclical, where the Holy Father asks us to entrust this coming year of grace to Mary, the Mother of God.

**And so we pray in the words of Luke's Gospel:**

*Hail Mary, Full of Grace,  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among  
women and blessed is the  
fruit of thy womb, Jesus.*

*Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners now,  
and at the hour of death.*

*Amen.*

## THE DOOR OF FAITH

15. Having reached the end of his life, Saint Paul asks 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 none of us grow lazy in the faith. It is the lifelong companion that makes it possible to perceive, ever anew, the marvels that God works for us. Intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history, 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.

“That the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph” (2 *Th* 3:1): 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. The words of Saint Peter shed one final ray of light on faith: “In this you rejoice, though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold which though perishable is tested by fire, may redound to praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy. As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls” (1 *Pet* 1:6-9). The life of Christians knows the experience of joy as well as the experience of suffering. How many of the saints have lived in solitude! How many believers, even in our own day, are tested by God's silence when they would rather hear his consoling voice! The trials of life, while helping us to understand the mystery of the Cross and to participate in the sufferings of Christ (cf. *Col* 1:24), are a prelude to the joy and hope to which faith leads: “when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 *Cor* 12:10). We believe with firm certitude that the Lord Jesus has conquered evil and death. With this sure confidence we entrust ourselves to him: he, present in our midst, overcomes the power of the evil one (cf. *Lk* 11:20); and the Church, the visible community of his mercy, abides in him as a sign of definitive reconciliation with the Father.

Let us entrust this time of grace to the Mother of God, proclaimed “blessed because she believed” (*Lk* 1:45).

*Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 11 October in the year 2011, the seventh of my Pontificate.*

*BENEDICTUS PP. XVI*



## REFLECTION QUESTION

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† The Holy Father quotes St. Paul advising Timothy to “aim at faith.” Where are you aiming?

## ACTION STEP

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We have, so far, been invited to a commitment to learning from the documents of Vatican II and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. We have been called to experience forgiveness, prayer and fasting. We have been challenged to participate in the Sacrament of Penance during this Year of Faith.

How else can we celebrate? What about bringing a new commitment to the Eucharist? What about attending a great concert of Church music, or taking in an exhibit of sacred art? How about treating yourself to a conference or listening to a recording where you can just relax and be ministered to by the speaker? Write down a list of three ways that you would celebrate this Year of Faith, and review that list on a regular basis.

Let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

*Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.*


*Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*Amen. ■*

## IMPORTANT NOTES

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- [1] *Homily for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome* (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 710.
  - [2] Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily at Holy Mass in Lisbon's "Terreiro do Paço"* (11 May 2010): *Insegnamenti VI:1* (2010), 673.
  - [3] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* (11 October 1992): AAS 86 (1994), 113-118.
  - [4] Cf. *Final Report of the Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops* (7 December 1985), II, B, a, 4 in *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, ix, n. 1797.
  - [5] Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Petrum et Paulum Apostolos on the XIX centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul* (22 February 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 196.
  - [6] *Ibid.*, 198.
  - [7] Paul VI, *Credo of the People of God*, cf. *Homily at Mass on the XIX centenary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul at the conclusion of the "Year of Faith"* (30 June 1968): AAS 60 (1968), 433-445.
  - [8] Paul VI, *General Audience* (14 June 1967): *Insegnamenti V* (1967), 801.
  - [9] John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 57: AAS 93 (2001), 308.
  - [10] *Address to the Roman Curia* (22 December 2005): AAS 98 (2006), 52.
  - [11] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium*, 8.
  - [12] *De Utilitate Credendi*, I:2.
  - [13] Cf. *Saint Augustine, Confessions*, I:1.
  - [14] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.
  - [15] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* (11 October 1992): AAS 86 (1994), 116.
  - [16] *Sermo 215:1*.
  - [17] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 167.
  - [18] Cf. First Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith Dei Filius*, chap. III: DS 3008-3009; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum*, 5.
  - [19] Benedict XVI, *Address at the Collège des Bernardins, Paris* (12 September 2008): AAS 100 (2008), 722.
  - [20] Cf. *Saint Augustine, Confessions*, XIII:1.
  - [21] John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* (11 October 1992): AAS 86 (1994), 115 and 117.
  - [22] Cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998), 34, 106: AAS 91 (1999), 31-32, 86-87.



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