



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF FORT WORTH THE BISHOP'S OFFICE



October 11, 2012

It is with great joy that I join with Pope Benedict XVI in welcoming the opening of the Year of Faith. The year begins with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th Anniversary of the release of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, approved and propagated by Blessed Pope John Paul II. Let us join in prayer that this year may be truly blessed and a time for us to deepen our love and faith in Jesus Christ and the Church.

The Pope's vision for this year is clearly outlined in his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* or *Door of Faith*. The title of the document is an image which comes from Acts 14:27. There we read: "Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

The Pope explains: "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 (PF 1)." Faith is both a gift and something which we exercise in our lives. Faith is something which comes from God *and* reveals Him as the object of our faith.

This year offers us the opportunity to reflect upon our faith and deepen our commitment to Christ, both as individuals and as members of the Church. We do this so that we might be a better witness to Christ in the world. Those of us who are committed Christians know the peace and joy that a life dedicated to Christ can bring. Life is never without its challenges and sufferings, but with faith in Christ and the support of the Church, all things are possible.

The Year of Faith gives us the opportunity to bring this peace and joy to the world, which stands increasingly in need of Jesus Christ and the Church. The Church is not simply an organizational structure, but truly the Body of Christ and a living communion of Christ the Head and we his members. Therefore, when we bring Christ to the world as members of the Church, we do so not with a systematic solution to the world's problems, but as an encounter with the living God, Jesus Christ, who came to free us from our sins and lead us to Him.

One of the meanings of the word "belief" is "to hold dear." In this year, let us re-examine our faith and see if it is something we truly hold precious. Like a plant, our faith must be nurtured. Let us use this year to hand on that which we have received.

While there will be many activities in our parishes, our Diocese, and throughout the Church during this year, I have three pillars for our celebration in the Diocese of Fort Worth that I would like to share with you:

1. Read the Sacred Scriptures,
2. Read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,
3. And, attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation.

First, St. Jerome is often quoted as saying that ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ. Sacred Scripture is the living Word of Christ. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council teaches in the document *Dei Verbum* that “the books of Scripture, firmly, faithfully and without error, teach that truth which God, for the sake of our salvation, wished to see confided to the sacred Scriptures (*DV* 11).” Beginning with the Gospel of Matthew, make the commitment to read one chapter per day. You will be surprised how far you will go in a year, and how you will come to know Christ and the Church through the Bible.

Next, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* offers a beautiful synthesis of the Faith. In its pages we encounter Sacred Scripture, the testimony of the saints, the wisdom of Councils and true answers for the problems of life. I quote Pope Benedict at length:

[In the *Catechism*] 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 (PF 11).

You can find a link to the full text of the *Catechism* below.

Finally, I ask that you take your obligation seriously to attend Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation. We do not live our life of faith in isolation. The celebration of Mass is the source and summit of our Christian life. It is the fount from which we draw our strength and the end to which we offer our lives. Let us never forget that at the Mass we join with Catholics of all ages in offering our very selves to Christ.

I pray that God may bless you abundantly in this Year of Faith. I will begin this year in Fort Worth, but will end it in Orange, California. Wherever we may be, we are part of the one faith, joined in one baptism, made into one body in Christ. Please be assured of my prayers and may we carry Christ into the world with great faith, hope and love.

The Year of Faith is an opportunity for every Catholic—you and I—to experience a conversion, to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with Him.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

+ Kevin W. Vann

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Some useful links:

Pope Benedict's Apostolic Letter The Door of Faith:

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

The Sacred Scriptures:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/_INDEX.HTM

The Catechism of the Catholic Church:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM