

1- The Journey of Faith: Trinity, Faith, & the God Who Is Love

The Door of faith is always open for us,.... To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. (Pope Benedict XVI – Porta Fidei 11 Oct 2011)

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.
For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

—Psalm 139:1–4, 13–14

We are created by God who is love – made for His love. God, The Holy Trinity, is a community of love. God one divine nature, three distinct persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Faith is our response to God who longs to make himself known to us.

God is love, and love implies threeness:

- The lover
- The beloved
- The love which binds them

Nevertheless, no image of the Trinity could ever adequately represent every aspect of the Trinity.

Faith is an assent of the mind and a personal commitment. We assent to Jesus’ call “Come follow me”, entrusting our lives to him and following his commandments in love – continuously developing our personal relationship with God.

Prayer is an expression of this love - thanksgiving, asking God for help, seeking God’s forgiveness.

Video Links:

What is the Trinity? Bp Robert Barron (2.5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMI4rA4cuiM&feature=youtu.be>

How are all Three Persons of the Trinity God? Catholic Answers (3.5 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ZYqjbnDcvo&feature=youtu.be>

Suggested Scripture readings:

Hebrews 11:1–3, 32–40 Ephesians 3:12 Hebrews 10:22 1 John 3:23

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Why God made us

294 The glory of God consists in the realization of this manifestation and communication of his goodness, for which the world was created. God made us "to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace",¹³⁸ for "the glory of God is man fully alive; moreover man's life is the vision of God: if God's revelation through creation has already obtained life for all the beings that dwell on earth, how much more will the Word's manifestation of the Father obtain life for those who see God."¹³⁹ The ultimate purpose of creation is that God "who is the creator of all things may at last become "all in all", thus simultaneously assuring his own glory and our beatitude."¹⁴⁰

The Trinity - The Father revealed by the Son

238 Many religions invoke God as "Father". The deity is often considered the "father of gods and of men". In Israel, God is called "Father" inasmuch as he is Creator of the world.⁵⁹ Even more, God is Father because of the covenant and the gift of the law to Israel, "his first-born son".⁶⁰ God is also called the Father of the king of Israel. Most especially he is "the Father of the poor", of the orphaned and the widowed, who are under his loving protection.⁶¹

239 By calling God "Father", the language of faith indicates two main things: that God is the first origin of everything and transcendent authority; and that he is at the same time goodness and loving care for all his children. God's parental tenderness can also be expressed by the image of motherhood,⁶² which emphasizes God's immanence, the intimacy between Creator and creature. The language of faith thus draws on the human experience of parents, who are in a way the first representatives of God for man. But this experience also tells us that human parents are fallible and can disfigure the face of fatherhood and motherhood. We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God. He also transcends human fatherhood and motherhood, although he is their origin and standard:⁶³ no one is father as God is Father.

240 Jesus revealed that God is Father in an unheard-of sense: he is Father not only in being Creator; he is eternally Father in relation to his only Son, who is eternally Son only in relation to his Father: "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."⁶⁴

241 For this reason the apostles confess Jesus to be the Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; as "the image of the invisible God"; as the "radiance of the glory of God and the very stamp of his nature".⁶⁵

242 Following this apostolic tradition, the Church confessed at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) that the Son is "consubstantial" with the Father, that is, one only God with him.⁶⁶ The second ecumenical council, held at Constantinople in 381, kept this expression in its formulation of the Nicene Creed and confessed "the only-begotten Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father".⁶⁷

The Father and the Son revealed by the Spirit

243 Before his Passover, Jesus announced the sending of "another Paraclete" (Advocate), the Holy Spirit. At work since creation, having previously "spoken through

the prophets", the Spirit will now be with and in the disciples, to teach them and guide them "into all the truth".⁶⁸ The Holy Spirit is thus revealed as another divine person with Jesus and the Father.

244 The eternal origin of the Holy Spirit is revealed in his mission in time. The Spirit is sent to the apostles and to the Church both by the Father in the name of the Son, and by the Son in person, once he had returned to the Father.⁶⁹ The sending of the person of the Spirit after Jesus' glorification⁷⁰ reveals in its fullness the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

245 The apostolic faith concerning the Spirit was confessed by the second ecumenical council at Constantinople (381): "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeds from the Father."⁷¹ By this confession, the Church recognizes the Father as "the source and origin of the whole divinity".⁷² But the eternal origin of the Spirit is not unconnected with the Son's origin: "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is God, one and equal with the Father and the Son, of the same substance and also of the same nature. . . Yet he is not called the Spirit of the Father alone, . . . but the Spirit of both the Father and the Son."⁷³ The Creed of the Church from the Council of Constantinople confesses: "With the Father and the Son, he is worshipped and glorified."⁷⁴

246 The Latin tradition of the Creed confesses that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father *and the Son (filioque)*". The Council of Florence in 1438 explains: "The Holy Spirit is eternally from Father and Son; He has his nature and subsistence at once (*simul*) from the Father and the Son. He proceeds eternally from both as from one principle and through one spiration. . . . And, since the Father has through generation given to the only-begotten Son everything that belongs to the Father, except being Father, the Son has also eternally from the Father, from whom he is eternally born, that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son."⁷⁵

247 The affirmation of the *filioque* does not appear in the Creed confessed in 381 at Constantinople. But Pope St. Leo I, following an ancient Latin and Alexandrian tradition, had already confessed it dogmatically in 447,⁷⁶ even before Rome, in 451 at the Council of Chalcedon, came to recognize and receive the Symbol of 381. The use of this formula in the Creed was gradually admitted into the Latin liturgy (between the eighth and eleventh centuries). The introduction of the filioque into the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed by the Latin liturgy constitutes moreover, even today, a point of disagreement with the Orthodox Churches.

248 At the outset the Eastern tradition expresses the Father's character as first origin of the Spirit. By confessing the Spirit as he "who proceeds from the Father", it affirms that he *comes from* the Father *through* the Son.⁷⁷ The Western tradition expresses first the consubstantial communion between Father and Son, by saying that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (*filioque*). It says this, "legitimately and with good reason",⁷⁸ for the eternal order of the divine persons in their consubstantial communion implies that the Father, as "the principle without principle",⁷⁹ is the first origin of the Spirit, but also that as Father of the only Son, he is, with the Son, the single principle from which the Holy Spirit proceeds.⁸⁰ This legitimate complementarity, provided it does not become rigid, does not affect the identity of faith in the reality of the same mystery confessed.

Faith as our response to God

166 Faith is a personal act - the free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals himself. But faith is not an isolated act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. You have not given yourself faith as you have not given yourself life. The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. Our love for Jesus and for our neighbor impels us to speak to others about our faith. Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith.

Prayer

2725 Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The "spiritual battle" of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.

2737 "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."²⁶ If we ask with a divided heart, we are "adulterers";²⁷ God cannot answer us, for he desires our well-being, our life. "Or do you suppose that it is in vain that the scripture says, 'He yearns jealously over the spirit which he has made to dwell in us?'"²⁸ That our God is "jealous" for us is the sign of how true his love is. If we enter into the desire of his Spirit, we shall be heard.

Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer.²⁹

God wills that our desire should be exercised in prayer, that we may be able to receive what he is prepared to give.³⁰

2742 "Pray constantly . . . always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father."³³ St. Paul adds, "Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance making supplication for all the saints."³⁴ For "we have not been commanded to work, to keep watch and to fast constantly, but it has been laid down that we are to pray without ceasing."³⁵ This tireless fervor can come only from love. Against our dullness and laziness, the battle of prayer is that of humble, trusting, and persevering love. This love opens our hearts to three enlightening and life-giving facts of faith about prayer.

2743 It is always possible to pray: The time of the Christian is that of the risen Christ who is with us always, no matter what tempests may arise.³⁶ Our time is in the hands of God:

It is possible to offer fervent prayer even while walking in public or strolling alone, or seated in your shop, . . . while buying or selling, . . . or even while cooking.³⁷

2744 Prayer is a vital necessity. Proof from the contrary is no less convincing: if we do not allow the Spirit to lead us, we fall back into the slavery of sin.³⁸ How can the Holy Spirit be our life if our heart is far from him?

Nothing is equal to prayer; for what is impossible it makes possible, what is difficult, easy. . . . For it is impossible, utterly impossible, for the man who prays eagerly and invokes God ceaselessly ever to sin.³⁹

Those who pray are certainly saved; those who do not pray are certainly damned.⁴⁰

2745 Prayer and Christian life are inseparable, for they concern the same love and the same renunciation, proceeding from love; the same filial and loving conformity with the Father's plan of love; the same transforming union in the Holy Spirit who conforms us more and more to Christ Jesus; the same love for all men, the love with which Jesus has

loved us. "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he [will] give it to you. This I command you, to love one another."⁴¹

He "prays without ceasing" who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.⁴²

APOSTOLIC LETTER
"MOTU PROPRIO DATA"

PORTA FIDEI

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI

FOR THE INDICTION OF THE YEAR 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.

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 19th 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 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]

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.

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]

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 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.

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]

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 fulfilment. 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 fulfilment 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 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.

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 some one 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 neighbour 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).

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 honour 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

[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.