

The Year of Faith

Dear Parishioners,

As Advent begins we are now at the beginning of the new liturgical year. It is a time to begin again our cycle of worship. Two months ago marked another important beginning in the Church, as Pope Benedict XVI proclaimed a worldwide "Year of Faith." In fact it is a bit longer than one year, and will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King (November 24, 2013).

There have been other such proclamations by popes, for example, in 1967 to mark the 1900th anniversary of the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul. And now, to coincide with what is being called the "New Evangelization" we find ourselves once again summoned to renewed Faith by the Vicar of Christ.

The Holy Father has promulgated a decree to mark this time, an Apostolic Letter entitled *Porta Fidei* ("The Door of Faith"). It would be a short and worthwhile read for all.

In it Pope Benedict writes about the challenges to the Faith in our modern milieu – what was once presumed can no longer be so as large swathes of the erstwhile Christian world have grown cold toward religion and indeed, God Himself. But, as he declares, "belief in Jesus Christ...is the way to arrive definitively at salvation." And so there is an imperative for every believer to seek to spread the Faith. But first one must personally be firmly grounded in the saving doctrines of Our Lord. Herein is a call to continual conversion. The Faith must never be taken for granted. It can be gained and it can be lost. Thus each soul bears a responsibility to cultivate this gift in one's own life.

The Holy Father has urged in this document a renewed study of the Catholic Faith, principally via prayer and meditation upon the Creed itself. But he has also urged the study of the documents of Vatican II and the official Catechism of the Catholic Church, as well as studying the splendorous history of our holy Religion.

But we are also impelled to revisit our life of prayer and our service to others. There are many opportunities to grow spiritually but the one practice which is recommended above all is participation at Mass – and I would encourage, as I have always, the attendance at daily Mass.

The Mass should naturally influence the rest of one's life, and we must take a new look at our commitment to works of charity. The Pope has written that "Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt."

More needs to be said about this Year of Faith of course, yet we can at least begin here with these spiritual thoughts.

All things with Peter, through Mary, to Jesus,

Father de Rosa