



## Reflections on Lent in the Year of Faith

Lent 2013 is Lent in the Year of Faith. How can these forty days of prayer, fasting, and works of mercy help us live our faith at a deeper level?

The Church prays in a different way liturgically during Lent, and so should we personally. For example, I've made it a practice to say the 900-year-old Prayer of St. Ephrem every day of Lent; and I've learned why Eastern Christians esteem it so highly. (text on page 4). Pope Benedict has urged us to include the Profession of Faith from Sunday Mass (the Creed) in our daily prayer throughout the Year of Faith. Lent would be a good time to take up this practice. The same goes for the Holy Father's encouragement of praying the Rosary. And families might take a few minutes each day to say together the Family Prayer for the Year of Faith (text on page 4). "I believe, Lord," the man says to Jesus in the Gospel; "help my unbelief." If we want to live out of deeper faith, we must pray for it.

This Lent television offers an unusually imaginative way to deepen faith by opening up the Scriptures right in the living room. The Bible premieres March 3rd on the History Channel - a ten-part miniseries that tells the story of salvation from Genesis through Revelation. It's a very high-quality production from

some very talented Catholic professionals. A half-hour preview at a recent bishops' meeting left me imagining familiar scenes in an entirely new way. Go to [BibleSeriesResources.com](http://BibleSeriesResources.com) and consider adding The Bible to your Lenten schedule.

Each Sunday we profess our faith in "the forgiveness of sins," and we enact that belief in the confessional. Penance is a sacrament of faith from start to finish. Going to confession is saying we believe that God is merciful, that He wants to forgive us our sins. It's saying we believe that Jesus is God, because "who can forgive sins but God alone?" It's saying we believe in the Church as the vehicle of God's mercy and in the priest as Christ's chosen vessel to bring His mercy home to us. And finally we must believe (how else could we know?) that we really are forgiven, that this brief conversation has changed our life.

It is no surprise, then, that Pope Benedict calls us to approach this great sacrament frequently in the Year of Faith - and especially in this season of penance. Make a good Lenten confession. Your faith will be the better for it.

As it will if you consciously set out to perform one act of mercy each week of Lent. Follow the advice of Blessed Frederick Ozanam, founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and "put your faith under the protection of charity." For faith tells us that Jesus hides Himself in the "distressing disguise of the poor," as Mother Theresa put it. "The poor you have always with you," Our Lord assures us; we have only to open our eyes and

look around. Lent in the Year of Faith is a hallowed time to find our way to the poor and put ourselves at their service as best we can. There is no better or quicker way to grow in faith.