

## "FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT"

2 Corinthians 5:7

### **PASTORAL LETTER FALL 2012**

Pope Benedict XVI has declared a *“Year of Faith”* that will officially begin October 11, 2012. This declaration has been adopted by our diocese as our diocesan priority for this year. We will work within the universal church to explore *the meaning and importance of faith* in our lives. Last year, we explored the center of our faith, Jesus. This year, we will further discover where that person leads us as a Church, His people. Perhaps the best place to begin would be by reading the Pope’s explanation that can be found online: <http://www.vatican.va/>: *Apostolic Letter “Motu proprio – Porta Fidei.*

#### **“I have faith. Help my lack of faith!” Mk 9:24**

To begin this experience, we first must try to define in some way what faith might be. It is surely much more than the sum of doctrines and dogmas that we may know or attempt to comprehend. These inform our faith, enrich it and lend some sense to it, but it cannot be ‘all in our head or reason.’ Faith takes us where knowledge alone cannot conceive to go. “Knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart is opened by grace.” [Instrumentum Laborem, 101] Knowledge is certainly necessary and brings us to knock at the door of faith, but it is the *heart that will dare to open the door.* It is only the heart

that can grasp, though minutely, the mysteries that unfolds within. Faith is an integral part of our relationship with God. It is *this intimate personal relationship* – built on mutual trust and love – that enables us to dare enter into this sacred place – this union with the divine. The invitation must, by nature, be initiated by the infinite, to us the lesser, the finite. God takes the initiative and reaches down to raise us up to himself. Such an action we could not do on our own. *It is faith that enables us to respond, and appreciate the grace of God.* It is both a gift received and one offered. As we yearn to grow in this relationship called faith, we will experience both the mountains and

the valleys, just as all relationships usually do. However, it is that same faith that will sustain us, and grant us perseverance. Perhaps, without these struggles, we would not properly

appreciate the beauty and generosity of this marvellous gift. Therefore, our difficulties, in themselves, may be a part of the gift as well.

### **Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith? Mk 4:40**

**F**aith, though not totally dependent on knowledge, can give us some certainty in our lives that cannot be attained by any other manner. It would seem logical then that knowing and understanding “The Catechism of the Catholic Church” would definitely be advantageous to us as a church and as individuals. It is faith that allows us to venture forth with shaky hand and stumbling feet to encounter a sometimes cool and uncertain world. We follow the footsteps of the first disciples who did the same. *Our faith is not so much in what, but may better be described as “in whom.”* That it is why this theme is such a natural follow-up to our last diocesan

priority, “Jesus is ...for me.” It is this *knowledge of Christ’s abiding presence* given to us through faith, that provides courage to a heart that might prefer to be cowardly. It is faith that emboldens us to relinquish our fears, and dare the impossible. If love is the motivation of our lives, the fuel if you will; then perhaps faith can be described as it’s engine. Faith cannot be measured, nor does it need to be. We each have what we need for our purpose and mission in life. Any faith is good and sufficient, and can be very powerful. *“If you have the faith the size of this mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move.” [Mt. 17:20]*

### **“By my works, I will show you my faith.” James 2:18**

**F**aith really enriches us personally, but it is not meant to be private. Maybe faith does not always have to be preached, but it absolutely must be lived. Words without corresponding actions are

empty and make us appear hypocritical (not a category that Jesus was particularly fond of). In the baptism ceremony the text reads: *“This is our faith. This is the faith of the church.”* Faith, if it is to be sincere, compels us to reach out of

ourselves to others. It encourages us to destroy and leave our cocoons so as to fly in the light of God's grace. Faith pushes us to a love of God that concretely manifests itself in the love of neighbour. Faith turned in on itself, a faith that perceives that this is just something between me and God,

runs a severe risk of being self-limiting, possibly self-destructive and highly susceptible to tunnel vision. Faith needs to be shared and lived in community and then, and only then, reaches full maturity.

**T**his year provides us the opportunity to reflect where we have been, where we are and where we are going. It gives us the occasion to rediscover our story as persons of faith and as a people of faith. At the end of the Latin mass, the dismissal was, "*Ite, missa est.*" The reply is, "*Deo gratias.*" [*Go you are sent. – Thanks be to God*]. This faith, this relationship, sends us out to build the kingdom of God. For that privilege we render thanks to God. We are God's chosen, his beloved. God loves us, trusts us and empowers us.

**"Be not afraid!"**

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