

GRIST

Diocese of New Ulm Social Concerns Office December, 2011

From } **Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Letter
Announcing A Year of Faith**

http://press.catholica.va/news_services/bulletin/news/28221.php?index=28221&lang=en#TRADUZIONE%20IN%20LINGUA%20INGLESE

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...

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, 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 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 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.” 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”...

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 favor for all (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19)...

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 someone 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 neighbor 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)...

Resources for Area/Parish Social Concerns Contacts

GRIST is issued ten times per year and posted at www.dnu.org/service/resources.html. Starting in January, each issue will spotlight resources and efforts that foster participation in the Church’s social mission and ministry. The resources and efforts will be featured under four general headings:

EDUCATION (e.g., Catholic social teaching resources issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC); education and formation opportunities related to social concerns)

ADVOCACY (e.g., legislative advocacy campaigns and action alerts promoted by the USCCB, MCC, and Joint Religious Legislative Coalition/JRLC – working to extend legal protection to unborn children; defending marriage; reducing poverty; promoting comprehensive immigration reform)

WORKS OF MERCY (e.g., direct service in response to human needs – providing food, shelter and clothing; assisting women who face a crisis pregnancy; cooperating with missionary and international development projects and relief efforts)

WORKS OF JUSTICE (e.g., efforts that address the root causes of injustice or improve social structures – promoting peace, improving the education system)

Area/parish social concerns committee members are invited to contact Chris Loetscher, director of the diocesan Social Concerns Office, at 507-359-2966 or cloetscher@dnu.org, to share information about resources, or to report “best practices” in their parishes or area faith communities, related to social issues and action.