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Deacons in the Year of Faith: Toward a Lifetime of Faithful Service  
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Lumen Fidei and Deacons

- Introduction
  - On July 5, we had Christmas in July, the gift of a great encyclical written by four hands, the two of Pope-emeritus Benedict and the two of Pope Francis. This encyclical was meant to help us to live by faith in this Year of Faith. I'd like the insights of this encyclical to be the fundamental guide of our retreat, as we seek to grow in faith in the ways the encyclical delineates.
  - In this conference and in the first tomorrow, I'd like to review the central insights of the encyclical. Beginning tomorrow afternoon, I would like to start applying them to the various staples of our Christian life so that we may experience God's grace to increase in faith in each of these areas. I would ask you prayerfully to try to read the encyclical during this retreat if you haven't do so already.
  - For our overview of the encyclical, I'd like to break it down into three parts:
    - Describe what the encyclical says faith is. It describes more than defines and it's a very rich description.
    - Cover many of the challenges to faith that are in the background to the encyclical and the response the encyclical gives. This will help us personally and pastorally, as disciples and apostles, to confront the various challenges to faith that come to us and to those we serve
    - See how those principles are applied to the contexts the document raises with regard to the contexts it mentions — prayer, the Creed, the sacraments and the ten commandments, as well as the common good, the family, the environment and suffering.
- What faith is — Eight Descriptions
  - Faith is a personal entrustment to God
    - By faith Abraham entrusts himself to the God who has spoken to him as a solid rock on which to build, as a highway on which he can travel.
    - Faith comes from the same root as Amen, which means to uphold. It's a trust in the fidelity of God.
    - Abraham trusted, with journey, with fatherhood, with sacrifice of Isaac.
    - Faith involves renouncing an immediate possession with trust that God will unveil himself personally in due time.
    - Faith undermines idolatry that places ourselves in the center and leads to polytheism, to many idols asking for our assent. By faith, we entrust ourselves to merciful love, who liberates us from the dissolution of idols.
    - Jesus — his incarnation, passion, death and resurrection — is the complete manifestation of God's reliability and love. That allows us to entrust ourselves to him.
    - We trust many others, architects, pharmacists, lawyers. Christ's way of knowing the Father and living in complete and constant relationship with him opens us the life of faith with him. We believe that what Jesus tells us he true, we accept what he reveals because he is truthful, and we believe in Jesus, welcoming him, journeying with him, clinging to him and following in his footsteps. It leads to a commitment of great intensity.
    - In this Year of Faith, we're called to respond to the Lord's gift for us to grow in faith through a deeper personal entrustment to the Lord, a renewed and told self-offering. Rom 12:1-2 is the essence of the Christian life.
    - JP II 1995: "The exercise of the diaconal ministry—like that of other ministries in the Church—requires *per se* of all deacons, celibate or married, *a spiritual attitude of total dedication*. Although in certain cases it is necessary to make the ministry of the diaconate

compatible with other obligations, to think of oneself and to act in practice as a "part-time deacon" would make no sense (cf. *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 44). The deacon is not a part-time employee or ecclesiastical official, but a minister of the Church. His is not a profession, but a mission!"

- Faith is a light
  - Urgent need to see that faith is a light, a light given by God for humanity's path. Faith is this gift of light.
  - The Light of faith can illumine "every aspect of human existence" and "all human relationships, lived in union with gentle love of Christ."
  - Faith is born of an encounter with God who calls and reveals his love, which transforms us and gives us new eyes to see. We encounter light in God that becomes a light for our way.
  - Encyclical wants to consider light of faith so that it can grow and enlighten the present, "becoming a star to brighten the horizon of our journey at a time when mankind is particularly in need of light."
  - Faith doesn't merely gaze at Jesus, but sees things as he himself sees them, it participates in his way of seeing.
  - The Christian sees with Christ's eyes, shares his mind, filial disposition and love. We receive Jesus' vision in a certain way.
  - Believers see themselves in the light of the faith they profess: Christ is the mirror in which they find their own image fully realized.
  - In this Year of Faith, each of us is called to grow in this vision by faith, to seek the eye transplant so that we might see things more and more with Christ's eyes, the way they really are, piercing even to the invisible realities.
- Faith is a new way of hearing
  - Faith is a form of hearing, *fides ex auditu* (Rom 10:17).
  - Personal knowledge of the voice, the voice of the Good Shepherd, speaking to which a person freely opens up in the obedience of faith. Words lead to discipleship, in a bond between knowledge and love.
  - Hearing emphasizes personal vocation and obedience.
  - In this Year of Faith, the Lord wants to give us an increase in our capacity to hear his voice speaking to us in prayer, in the sacraments, in the today of daily life, calling us by name, summoning us from our own Ur of the Chaldeans.
- Faith is a deep touch
  - In faith, our hearts are touched and we open ourselves to the interior presence of Christ.
  - By his taking flesh and coming among us, Jesus has touched us, and through the sacraments he continues to touch us even today, transforming our hearts.
  - In faith, we can touch him, like the woman with the hemorrhages in the Gospel, to touch him with our hearts is what it means to believe (St. Augustine). We can touch Jesus like those in the crowd or we can touch him with faith.
  - Ultimately, we're called to say with St. John, "What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life" (*1 Jn* 1:1).
  - In this Year of Faith, God wants us to grow in our capacity to feel him touching us and in our response reaching out to touch him.
- Faith is a form of memory, a memory of the future
  - The Church, like a family, passes on to children the whole store of memories.
  - Faith is a foundational memory of Jesus but also a light come from the future.
  - Faith is a remembrance of a future, a word spoken that also contains a promise of hope.
  - Hebrew word *zikkaron*.
    - *Zikkaron* translates as "memorial" or "remembrance." This is not nostalgia for the past but a mentality that considers the past actions of God — especially in terms of creation and salvation — present and immediate realities.

- One of my favorite Psalms is Ps 136, in which we remember all God has done to give us hope in the present and for the future.
  - **Psa. 136:1** Praise the LORD, who is so good; God's love endures forever; **2** Praise the God of gods; God's love endures forever; **3** Praise the Lord of lords; God's love endures forever; **4** Who alone has done great wonders, God's love endures forever; **5** Who skillfully made the heavens, God's love endures forever; **6** Who spread the earth upon the waters, God's love endures forever; **7** Who made the great lights, God's love endures forever; **8** The sun to rule the day, God's love endures forever; **9** The moon and stars to rule the night, God's love endures forever; **10** Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, God's love endures forever; **11** And led Israel from their midst, God's love endures forever; **12** With mighty hand and outstretched arm, God's love endures forever; **13** Who split in two the Red Sea, God's love endures forever; **14** And led Israel through, God's love endures forever; **15** But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, God's love endures forever; **16** Who led the people through the desert, God's love endures forever; **17** Who struck down great kings, God's love endures forever; **18** Slew powerful kings, God's love endures forever; **19** Sihon, king of the Amorites, God's love endures forever; **20** Og, king of Bashan, God's love endures forever; **21** And made their lands a heritage, God's love endures forever; **22** A heritage for Israel, God's servant, God's love endures forever. **23** The LORD remembered us in our misery, God's love endures forever; **24** Freed us from our foes, God's love endures forever; **25** And gives food to all flesh, God's love endures forever. **26** Praise the God of heaven, God's love endures forever
- We see that same type of memory in Mary's Magnificat, as she synthesizes the sayings of the great heroines of the Old Testament and sees how all of their experiences were being brought into the present in her own.
- Cardinal Ratzinger talks about Mary's faithful memory in his book *Seek That Which is Above*:
  - Luke ... stressed one particular feature of the picture of Mary that was important to him, ... when he says three times that Mary kept the word in her heart and pondered it. First of all, she is portrayed as the source of the tradition. The word is kept in her memory; therefore she is a reliable witness for what took place. But memory requires more than a merely external registering of events. We can only receive and hold fast to the uttered word if we are involved inwardly. If something does not touch me, it will not penetrate; it will dissolve in the flux of memories and lose its particular face. Above all it is a fact that understanding and preserving what is understood go together. If I have not really understood a thing, I will not be able to communicate it properly. Only by understanding do I receive reality at all; and understanding in turn, depends on a certain measure of inner identification with what is to be understood. It depends on love. I cannot really understand something for which I have no love whatsoever. So the transmission of the message needs more than the kind of memory that stores telephone numbers: what is required is a memory of the heart, in which I invest something of myself. Involvement and faithfulness are not opposites: they are interdependent. In Luke, Mary stands as the embodiment of the Church's memory. She is alert, taking events in and inwardly pondering them. Thus Luke says that she "preserved them together" in her heart, she "put them together" and "held on to them." Mary compares the words and events of faith with the ongoing experience of her life and thus discovers the full human depth of each detail, which gradually fits into the total picture. In this way faith becomes understanding and so can be handed on to others: it is no longer a merely external word but is saturated with the experience of a life, translated into human terms; now it can be translated, in turn, into the lives of others. Thus Mary becomes a model for the Church's mission, that is, that of being a

dwelling place for the Word, preserving and keeping it safe in times of confusion, protecting it, as it were, from the elements. Hence she is also the interpretation of the parable of the seed sown in good soil and yielding fruit a hundredfold. She is not the thin surface earth that cannot accommodate roots; she is not the barren earth that the sparrows have pecked bare; nor is she overgrown by the weeds of affluence that inhibit new growth. She is a human being with depth. She lets the word sink deep into her. So the process of fruitful transformation can take place in a twofold direction: she saturates the Word with her life, as it were, putting the sap and energy of her life at the Word's disposal; but as a result, conversely, her life is permeated, enriched and deepened by the energies of the Word, which gives everything its meaning. **First of all it is she who digests the Word, so to speak, transmuting it; but in doing so she herself, with her life, is in turn transmuted into the Word.** Her life becomes word and meaning. **That is how the gospel is handed on in the Church; indeed,** it is how all spiritual and intellectual growth and maturity are handed on from one person to another and within mankind as a whole. It is the only way in which men and mankind can acquire depth and maturity. In other words, it is the only way to progress.

- In this Year of Faith, we're called to grow in this type of living memory that Mary had, to put everything together like a mosaic and to grasp on to it as a great treasure.
  - Faith is a journey
    - Faith is a summons to a new life, an exodus toward an unforeseen future. Faith sees to the extent it journey's by God's words.
    - Faith is a lengthy journey leading to worship of Lord on Sinai and to the promised land.
    - We talked about this aspect of faith this morning in the image of Ezekiel's walking a thousand cubits at a time.
    - The Creed points to new life of a faith as a journey of communion with the living God.
    - In this Year of Faith, we're called to move, to advance on this journey, which occasionally is traced in worldly geography, but is always in the interior journey of the mind, heart, soul and strength.
  - Faith is a form of building
    - The OT shows that faith is not only a journey but also a process of building where human beings can dwell with one another. Noah and the ark. Abraham and tents, looking forward to a city with firm foundations.
    - Faith establishes us in a new firmness given by God, a firmness that overflows into a "city" God is preparing, with strong bonds between people. Faith does more than grant the interior firmness of steadfast conviction, but sheds light on every human relationship reflecting God's love.
    - This Year of Faith is meant to be a building project.
      - Jesus mentions that those who hear his words and act on them is like a man who builds his house on rock. The evangelists talk about Jesus as the cornerstone.
      - St. Peter talks about the image of a spiritual house, "Come to him, a **living stone**, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, **5** and, like **living stones**, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."
      - St. Paul talks in his first Letter to the Corinthians that by baptism we have been made into a temple of God and in Ephesians he expands on the image, saying, Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, **20** built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. **21** Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a

temple sacred in the Lord; **22** in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

- We're called to grow in this reality during this Year. It's a renovation of that building. Updating the electrical work, the plumbing, replacing windows, fixing the roof, pointing the masonry and so much more.
- Faith is a mother
  - Faith was a mother for the first Christians, bringing them to light and a luminous vision of existence.
  - Israel passed the faith down from one generation to the next
  - Faith leads believers to a new birth, a new creation, a new being. Life of faith is filial.
  - To talk about faith as a mother opens up to the whole discussion in the Encyclical about love.
  - We can have confidence in the reliability of the chain of witnesses because the memory of witnesses is kept alive in the one remembering subject that is the Church, a Mother who teaches us to speak the language of faith.
  - In this Year of Faith, we're called to grow in this understanding of our filiation in faith, our being spiritual children without whom we cannot enter the kingdom of God.
- Challenges to the Faith in Background of Encyclical
  - One of the things I discovered on my third read of the encyclical in preparation for several articles I wrote was that *Lumen Fidei* addresses almost every main challenge of faith in the last 500 years. There were a couple of these challenges that the encyclical addressed head on — like scientific rationalism — but for the most part, he addressed the others subtly, preferring to address what the Christian faith really is rather than addressing directly the errors in the understanding of faith that have popped up in history. But when we begin to see those challenges in the background, we understand far more how helpful this document is for us who seek to live by faith in the midst of a cultural context that still includes so many of those errors. We can see how we're called to grow in faith in contrast, like a photographic negative, to each of these challenges. I've broken the challenges down into three categories:
    - Those that come from the premise of unbelief;
    - Those that come from Protestant premises;
    - Those that come specifically from within the Catholic Church.
  - Challenges coming from the premise of unbelief
    - Faith harms the world
      - “Religion causes wars” is often posed by secularists
      - The encyclical responds by describing how faith is good for everyone, a common good, helping us build our societies to journey toward a future of hope.
      - It says that faith improves the world and serves the common good through a love that keeps men and women united. Utility can never do that, not to mention help people experience joy.
      - In this Year of Faith, we're called in a particular way not just to stipulate that faith helps, not harms, the world, but to show it, through faith working in love.
    - Faith is outdated, a refuge for the fainthearted
      - Some say that the light of faith is illusory, that it might have been sufficient for old societies, but not today with rationality and novelty.
      - The encyclical responds that faith isn't a refuge for the fainthearted, but enhances our lives. It makes us aware of the vocation of love and assures us that love is trustworthy and worth it, based on God's faithfulness that is stronger than every weakness.
      - In this Year of Faith, however, we're called to show how faith enlivens our present and makes us courageous in confronting the real problems that affect the world,

how it sends us into trouble, to poverty, to situations where peace is lacking, rather than helps us evade it.

- Faith distracts people from this world and gets them focused just on heaven, leaving world worse off
  - The encyclical responds that the hands of faith are raised to heaven as they build in charity a city based on relationships founded on love of God.
  - We need to focus more and more on pointing out the works that flow naturally from the connection between faith and love and recommit ourselves to those works, from schools, hospitals, food pantries, friendship and so much more.
- Faith doesn't matter because even if God exists and created, he's not involved in the
  - These are critiques from Deism and secularism
  - Our culture has lost its sense of God's tangible presence and activity in our world, as if he is far removed. If God is distant, faith doesn't matter. This is what happens with secularism, which is living as if God doesn't exist.
  - The encyclical responds that we encounter God's action in risen Christ. But in this Year of Faith, we need to live much more with God in the present, particularly in our prayer, and demonstrate how he is involved. I tend to think knowing the many miracles that occur regularly can be a great help here to buttress people against this type of idea that God is someone the Deists believe in.
- Faith is opposed to seeking
  - The encyclical responds that seekers who are sincerely open to love and set out with the light they have are already on the path leading to faith, striving to act as if God exists, seeking him as a sure compass, as a light in the darkness, or within the beauty where they intuit his presence.
  - Anyone who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God and sustained by his help.
  - In this Year of Faith, we must reach out in particular to those seekers, to accompany them in their search, to recognize that Jesus promised that those who seek find, and to show that we haven't lost the search, that we like the Magi are always journeying, seeking to go deeper, that we don't believe we have all the answers, but that we're being led by the One who is the answer to the deepest questions human beings have.
- Faith opposes search to truth, science and reason.
  - Faith is not a light, but a darkness, some charge. Dark ages. Leap in dark beyond light of reason
  - Some say it limits search for truth.
  - Some say faith is just a projection of a deep yearning, a lofty sentiment.
  - The encyclical says that we need to be reminded of this bond between faith and truth. We tend to reduce truth to technological and scientific know-how. This seems to be the only truth that can be certain, shared, and the basis of discussion and common understanding. We allow for subjective truths of the individual, but say they're only valid for him. Truth itself is regarded with suspicion because of its connection to totalitarianism.
  - But this just leads to relativism, which makes truth and God irrelevant. Truth and religion are severed because religion can be linked to fanaticism, oppressive for someone who doesn't share those beliefs.
  - Massive amnesia of the modern world happens through forgetting this link between the present and something prior to ourselves that can unite us. This is why the memory of faith is so important.
  - The love proper to faith can address contemporary questions about truth, which in some modern minds is linked to the intransigent demands of totalitarianism. But

because faith and truth are tied to love, it cannot be imposed by force or intransigent, but grows in respectful coexistence with others. Far from making us inflexible, security of faith leads us on a journey of witness and dialogue.

- Science benefits from faith, opening scientist to reality in all its richness, that nature is more than *formulae*, the creation fills us with wonder. Faith broadens horizon of reason to shed greater light on the world than can be discovered in scientific investigation.
- In this Year of Faith, we need to be filled with the wonder that comes from creation. We need to live by *fides quaerens intellectum* and show every more how faith is tied to love.
- Challenges coming from the premise of Christian belief
  - Faith is about my personal relationship with God (religious individualism that doesn't need a Church or *the* Church)
    - Israel learns to journey together in faith, the “we” of faith.
    - The life of a believer is a life lived in the Church. To see with the light of Christ means to see oneself as a member of Christ's body in essential relationship with other believers. A vital union with Christ and others.
    - Faith is necessarily ecclesial, professed as a concrete communion within Christ's body.
    - Faith isn't private. We can't baptize ourselves; baptism enters us into an ecclesial communion that transmits God's gift.
    - Faith is part of a common we, and children are supported by the faith of parents and godparents, the faith of the Church.
    - We receive faith by hearing, which means hearing it through the voice of others, and we in turn are called to announce it.
    - The great pilgrimage of faith is the Church's.
    - Impossible to believe on one's own; faith is communal and open to the “we” of the Church. Dialogical form of the Creed in baptism, a response to an invitation, to a word that's heard and not my own. The single “Credo” is in response to a greater communion, “We believe.” God is a communion, a We, into whom we enter.
    - Those who believe try to expand the communion. Those who receive faith are open to new relationships, to a family of brothers and sisters praying to the Father.
    - One of the most important things in this Year of Faith is to recover the sense of a common journey, a pilgrimage people, those who are united. This is something that each of us can contribute to.
  - Faith is ahistorical
    - Encyclical focuses on Abraham's and Israel's journey of faith.
    - We need to ponder the memory of our origins against those who think that God only speaks in the present, not the past. What God has said through the saints, the path on which he led the Church, is key for our growth in faith today.
  - Faith doesn't need a definitive interpreter
    - The encyclical responds that apostolic succession is gift of the Lord for the unity of faith and its integral transmission. Through it, the continuity of the Church's memory is ensured as an accessible wellspring by living persons professing the living faith the Church is called to transmit.
    - Church depends on the fidelity of witnesses chose for this task. Magisterium always speaks in obedience to the prior word on which faith is based. Thanks to the magisterium, God's whole counsel can come to us in its integrity so that joyfully we can follow it fully.

- In this Year of Faith, we're called to grow in gratitude for the gift of the Magisterium and appreciation for its relevance.
- Faith alone is sufficient for salvation (*Sola Fide* doctrine of Luther)
  - The encyclical responds that none of us is the source of our own righteousness or justification. To speak about salvation by faith means recognizing the primacy of God's gift.
  - Faith opens us to Christ's transforming light and love, which changes us, acts in us and through us. Faith changes us to such a degree that Christ begins to live in us and we become capable of living in him.
  - When there's faith, in other words, it works out through love (Gal 5:13).
  - In this Year of Faith, we need to evince this transformative dimension of faith, that those of us who live by faith live differently than the rest and live more joyously and self-sacrificially than all the rest.
- Premises coming from within the Church
  - Faith is dry and boring
    - The encyclical responds that "one believes with the heart," which shows that the heart connects truth with love and deeply transforms us. Because faith is tied to love, especially to the transforming love of God, it brings enlightenment and joy. Love engages our emotions and opens us up toward the other and aims at communion.
    - Most people don't connect love and truth and for this reason can find faith dry, because truth without love can be cold, impersonal and oppressive.
    - One of the most important things for us to do in this Year of Faith is to connect our heart to our head, to love what we believe, to love the Lord in whom we believe, to radiate the love for others that flows from the life of faith. To love the Mass. To love confession or at least love being absolved. To show how the commandments and the moral law help us to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength and to love our neighbor as God himself loves our neighbor. To counteract the sense that faith is arid or life-sucking, we're being called to realize that faith is life-giving and leads us to the perfection of love.
  - Faith is opposed to academic freedom
    - The criticism is that it's hard to conceive a unity in one truth, because it seems incompatible with freedom of thought and personal autonomy. Some say that they need to prescind from faith to do theological work, or Biblical studies, etc.
    - The encyclical responds that theology is impossible without faith because it's part of faith, seeking deeper understanding of God's self-disclosure culminating in Christ. Theology is more than a scientific analysis of human reason, because God is a subject who can be known and perceived only in relationship.
    - Theology, it goes on, participates in God's self-knowledge, not just our discourse about God but a pursuit to understand what God says to us about himself as an eternal dialogue of communion into which we enter.
    - Theology is illumined by faith of the Church and must be at the service of the faith of Christians, to protect and deep faith of everyone, especially ordinary believers. The Magisterium is not a limitation of freedom, but a constitutive dimension of theology, ensuring contact with primordial source of theology (Christ).
    - In this Year of Faith, we're called to recognize what our freedom is for, it's not to set us up in a situation of independence from the Truth with a capital T, but to help us to give ourselves to God and in God to all that he has revealed. The objectivity we're seeking is to see things as they really are, to see them as God sees them, not to prescind from God's vision given to us in faith.





- The encyclical states that the church hands down her memory through the profession of faith, which is not an assent to a body of abstract truths, but draws the whole of life toward full communion with God. Believers enter the mystery of the Trinitarian communion and the mystery of Christ's life we profess and are transformed by it.
- The believer, it says, cannot profess the Creed without being changed, without becoming part of that history of love that embraces us and expands our being, making us part of the communion of the Church.
- The Creed points to new life of a faith as a journey of communion with the living God.
- This Year of Faith is an opportunity for us to recognize that full dynamism of the profession of our faith, the confession of God's Trinitarian love in all its detail and how that for us is a call to conversion and communion. Those of us who are priests and religious are called to show how the profession of faith changes us, that it's not something light, mumbled and routine, but something that reaches the core of our reality. We should ponder how each of the 12 articles of the Creed is a *porta fidei*, a door through which we're called to enter.
  - God's Fatherhood as shown through creation, as discovered in visible and invisible reality.
  - Jesus Christ who did everything for us and our salvation, to see that every act of his life was done for us, to save us from ourselves.
  - The Holy Spirit who gives us life, who helps us to relate to the Father and to the Son, who speaks to us through the prophets, the apostles, the Church, guiding us more deeply into the mystery.
  - The one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church, which is the door into the whole mystery of God, to all the means of holiness God has given us, to communion with God through Christ's humanity and communion with others.
  - Baptism, which forgives us our sins, which raises us from the dead, which makes us temples of God, which begins as a trickle but is meant to grow a thousand cubits at a time into a fountain welling up to life eternal.
  - The resurrection of the body, pointing to the biggest door of all, the *porta coeli*.
  - The life of the world to come, into which we enter here and now in embryo.
- The more we ponder any of these realities the more we will allow these great truths that will always remain mysteries to transform us. These are truths for which so many before us have lived and died. They're not dry doctrines but constitutive predicates of who we are!
- Faith and Prayer
  - Prayer is essential in the faithful transmission of the Church's memory, *Lumen Fidei* emphatically states.
  - In the Our Father, Christians share in Christ's spiritual experience and see things in his eyes.
  - B16 used to say that prayer is faith in action.
  - We'll have a chance in the next conference to ponder this connection between faith and prayer, but to live a Year of Faith means to have a year intensely drenched in prayer, in that action in which we entrust ourselves to God, ask for what we need, thank him for what he's given, apologize for squandering his gifts and most importantly praise and bless God for who he is and how totally lovable he is.
- Faith and the Decalogue (moral life)
  - Likewise, the document says, the Ten Commandments are essential to the Church's memory, to the journey taken in encounter with the living God who rescued us and gave concrete direction for emerging from the selfish ego to enter into dialogue with God, receive his mercy and share it to others.
  - The Decalogue is a path of gratitude, a response of love, because we've received God's transforming love.



ourselves. Faith also helps us to grasp the meaning of children as a sign of the love of the Creator entrusting us with the mystery of a new person

- Faith accompanies every age of life in the family. Shared expressions of faith at home can help children gradually mature in faith.
- WYDs show young people desire a more solid and generous life of faith, to live life to the full, to encounter Christ and let themselves be caught up and guided by his love.
- In this Year of Faith, we're all called to recognize that the family is not a discardable, unimportant nexus of human interaction, but part of God's plans from the beginning, an image of who he is as a generative communion of persons in love. John the Baptist died giving witness to the truth about marriage. We're called to give that same witness by our life. And this is part of the Gospel, the Good News. To a world that hesitates to make life-long commitments especially to marriage, we're called to show how marital fidelity is based on God's covenant to us.
- Faith and the care for others and the environment
  - Faith helps us to respect nature by discerning within it God's grammar as a place entrusted to our protection and care.
  - This is something that in the Year of Faith and beyond, the world longs to hear. We're called to be faithful stewards of creation, not abusing what God gave us, but treasuring it, focusing on its purpose, and like good farmers, tending it so that it might be fruitful not just for us but for those after us. In a world in which there's the tendency either toward pollution or to pantheism, we show that creation is contained within a big mystery that, as Blessed John Paul II wrote in one of his poems in Roman Triptych, leads us back to the Source.
- Faith and Suffering
  - Faith often involves painful testing, the encyclical reminds us, but through such testing is the most convincing proclamation of the Gospel, for it reveals God's power triumphing over weakness.
  - Faith brings light to hour of trial, and suffering proclaims we do not proclaim ourselves but Christ.
  - Christians know suffering cannot be eliminated but can become an act of loving entrustment to hands of God who doesn't abandon us.
  - We can share Christ's gaze from the Cross.
  - Death becomes the ultimate call of faith, trusting in God even in our final passage.
  - In an age that doesn't know how to integrate suffering, that seeks to abort babies with genetic defects and euthanize seniors and those in pain, we need this Year of Faith to remind us of what Blessed John Paul II reminded us, that suffering is meant to unleash love in the human person, to give us the privilege to become Good Samaritans toward others, and, if we're suffering, to help us to grow in humility and allow others to serve us in the Lord's name, something that helps us to become grateful for all God's blessings for which we so often fail to thank him until it starts to ache. The Gospel of Suffering, how God brings good out of this ontological evil by allowing us to make up for what is lacking in Christ's sufferings for the sake of our salvation and others', is one of the most urgent and needed parts of the life of faith.
- Conclusion
  - Our faith, if real, must be passed on.
    - The encyclical tells us that those who have opened hearts to God's love, heard his voice and received his light cannot keep this gift to themselves but must be handed on as word and light. The word, once accepted, becomes a confession of faith inviting others to believe.
    - The Light of Christ reflected in life of Christians spreads like at the Easter vigil, from one-on-one contact, to men and women everywhere, and from one generation to the next.
    - We see face of Christ through an unbroken chain of witnesses.

- In this Year of Faith we're called to recognize that we're part of that chain, and that each of us has been ignited by Christ to set the world ablaze. The Encyclical asks the question, "Are we ashamed to call God our God, to confess him in our public life?" The Year of Faith is a chance for us to proclaim that we're not ashamed of the Gospel (Rom 1:16), but glory in it and hanker to pass it on.
  - Mary as the icon of faith
    - The encyclical began with Abraham, our father in faith and finish with Mary, our mother in faith.
    - Mary summarizes in her life so many of the points about faith made in this encyclical.
    - Mary is the image of the good soil of faith that hears the word, holds it fast and bears fruit with patient endurance.
    - The memory of her heart treasured all she had seen and heard so that the word could bear fruit. She is the perfect icon of faith, who received the word into her heart, her entire being, her womb, so that it could take flesh and be given as light for all humanity.
    - She shows us the connection between faith and the fruit of joy, the clearest sign of faith's grandeur.
    - She completed the pilgrimage of faith in the footsteps of her son, transformed by him and entering into his gaze.
    - In Mary, we see how the believer becomes a confessor of faith.
    - She assures the Son of God an authentic human history, conceiving him, accompanying him to the Cross, mothering each of his disciples, imploring the gift of the Spirit. At the center of our faith is the confession of the Son of God born of a woman. Mary is the Mother of our Faith.
    - We ask her to help our faith, to help us hear God's word and recognize his voice in call, to desire to follow in his footsteps like Abraham, to be touched by his love so that we may touch him in faith, to entrust ourselves fully to him and believe in his love especially in times of trial, to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, and to have the light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of the undying day who is Christ himself.
    - If we really want to understand what this Year of Faith is supposed to bring about, it's meant to help us become more Marian in every aspect of our life.
    - And so we finish by praying through her intercession, that we may, in imitating her faith, come to receive the same compliment she received from her cousin: "Blessed are you who believed!"