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Triduum for the Missionaries of Charity
New Bedford, Massachusetts
August 19-21, 2013

Loving Trust

“The spirit of the Society is one of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness as lived by Jesus and Mary in the Gospel.”

- Introduction
 - Great joy to be able to accompany you during these days of prayer, examining the spirit of your Society, which is “one of loving trust, total surrender and cheerfulness as lived by Jesus and Mary in the Gospel.”
 - We are living this in the Year of Faith. Like any ecclesiastical holy year, it is meant to influence everything we do during that year — including how Missionaries of Charity experience their triduum in preparation for your renewal on August 22.
 - So what I would like to do in this Triduum is to ponder all three themes from within the perspective of the Year of Faith. The goal of the Year of Faith is to increase our faith, to help us truly live by faith, so that we will all be able to say, with St. Paul, “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself up for me.”
 - The goal of this Year of Faith is to enter into Jesus’ loving trust to the Father, into his total submission to the Father’s plans, his radiant joy that he wants to give us so that our joy may be complete. We are called to other Christ’s in this way, to trust the Father with an unshakeable trust based on the intimate knowledge and love of the father.
 - The path to this type of faithful identification with Christ’s loving trust, total surrendered and cheerfulness was shown to us by our Lady, our Mother of Faith, Model of Faith, and Mediator for us to grow in faith, as we hope to highlight.
 - So today we begin with loving trust.
- Two-fold meaning of faith and the growth in faith during this Holy Year
 - In the Romance languages, the words for “trust” and “faith” overlap. *Confidere* means to trust but also to live with faith. When we say, “Jesus, *confio en Ti*,” we can translate it, “Jesus, I believe in you” or “Jesus, I trust in you.”
 - But to be a little bit more precise, trust overlaps with one of the aspects of faith. The Church has always taught that there are two aspects to faith. The CCC tells us, “Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a free assent to the whole truth God has revealed.”
 - The first aspect is a trust in God. The second is a trust in what he has said on the basis of trust in him. So when we talk about loving trust, we’re referring to what the Church has always called the *fides qua*, the faith by which we believe in all that God has revealed, the faith we have precisely because of our trust in God.
- *Adauge nobis fidem!*
 - Neither Pope Benedict nor Pope Francis has chosen an official theme for this Year of Faith, but if were nominated, I am rather certain it would be “*Adauge nobis fidem*,” Lord, increase our faith, that plea of Jesus’ first followers who already had faith but knew they needed more. In response to that petition, Jesus replied that if they had the faith the size of a mustard seed, they could do great things, they could move mountains, because then the Lord would be able to work through them to bring the greatest gifts of all to the world.
 - While “*Lord, increase our faith*,” is not the official theme of the Year of Faith throughout the Church, it constitutes the underlying theme and petition of this retreat.

- The Lord tells us that if we have the faith the size of a tiny mustard seed it's already something far more powerful than big backhoes. But he doesn't want our faith to remain the size of a mustard seed. He wants it to grow.
 - Prophecy of Ezekiel 47.
- So our faith is meant to grow, as we progress in the living relationship with Jesus.
- We know that in the Gospel the greatest compliments Jesus ever gave were about faith. "O Woman, great is your faith," Jesus said to a pagan woman in Tyre after she with beautiful perseverance begged Jesus to heal her daughter. Jesus publicly marveled about the deep faith of a Roman centurion who showed total confidence that Jesus could heal his servant simply by saying a word a great distance away. He likewise praised the faith of his own mother as one who heard, believed into practice the Word of God (Lk 11:28), indicating, as the early saints of the Church beautifully noted, that before she had conceived the Word of God in her womb, she had already conceived him in faith in her heart.
- In contrast to these great icons of faith, there are also figures of little or no faith. Jesus reproved the apostles on four occasions because of their "little faith." Jesus wasn't able to work miracles in various places, including his hometown of Nazareth, because he was amazed at their lack of faith. He candidly called out many of his contemporaries for being a "faithless and perverse generation" (Mt 17:7). And forebodingly, Jesus wondered aloud about his second coming: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8).
- So the question for us at the beginning of this Triduum is whether we're really hungry to grow in faith, whether we're saying "Increase my trust," "Help me to love you more so that I may trust you more."
- What I'd like to do for this conference is ponder what the Holy Fathers have just recently given us to help us grow in faith, the encyclical written by four hands, *Lumen Fidei*. It doesn't really define faith but describes it in eight different ways. These are eight different ways in which we're called to grow in loving trust.
 - Faith is a personal entrustment to God
 - The encyclical begins by focusing on the faith of Abraham, who 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. The Letter to the Hebrews describes his faith very powerfully:
 - Heb 11:8: By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore. ...By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, 18 of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." 19 He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.
 - Faith comes from the same root as Amen, which means to uphold. It's a trust in the fidelity of God.
 - 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.
 - Loving Trust in God implies trust, like Abraham, in:
 - God's omnipotence, his infinite wisdom and his unfailing love.
 - God's tenderest concern for us and his fidelity to his promises, and so total confidence in his providence, that flows from us to a care for others.
 - 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.
- Faith is a light
 - The encyclical says that there is an 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 thing as he himself sees them, it participates in his way of seeing.
 - The Christian sees with Christ's eyes, shares him 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 touché 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 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.
 - God says through Isaiah (49:15), “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.”
 - Loving trust in God as the best of “mothers” implies a loving trust in:
 - The Church and her teaching
 - Superiors who take the place of Christ, not so much in them, but in God’s working through them.
 - Sisters and the poor, who can bring to birth in us an increase in faith.
- Conclusions
 - Our faith, if real, must be lived and 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.
 - It’s a living trust that warms hearts, like Pope Francis said in Brazil about what Jesus did for the disciples on the Road to Emmaus.
 - 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, especially our loving trust in God.
- 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!" Remember, O Most gracious virgin Mary...