

Fr. Roger J. Landry
Day of Recollection for the Sisters for Life and Other CMSWR Communities
Villa Guadalupe, Stamford, CT
October 3, 2013

Women Religious and the Year of Faith

- Introduction
 - In this day of recollection today, we're going to ponder two mutually related themes: the Year of Faith in which we're presently engaged, and the New Evangelization, for which the Year of Faith is a preparation. And the readings of Mass will help us to ponder the role of Sacred Scripture in both. These are all very rich themes, on which whole retreats can be preached, and particularly so for priests and religious. I would also like to frame what we'll be discussing to a large degree within the thought of our new Holy Father Pope Francis, who has given us much to ponder with regard to the way we and all those in the Church live our faith and share it.
 - We begin with the theme of Women Religious and the Year of Faith and I'd like to do so fundamentally through the prism of the gift we received on July 5, the 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 learn, during this Year of Faith and beyond, how to live by faith more and better.
 - Neither Pope Benedict nor Pope Francis chose an official theme for this Year of Faith, but if each of us and the entire Church were looking for a motto, I think the best one would be "*Audage 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.
 - Among the greatest talents that God has given us is the talent of faith. A talent of faith the size of a tiny mustard seed is already something far more powerful than big backhoes. But no matter the size of our faith today — whether it's a mustard seed, or a full mustard tree, or a mountain, it's one that we must invest to make grow.
 - Prophecy of Ezekiel 47.
 - It's important for us to be humble enough to admit that each of us here is a little like the father who met Jesus after he had come down the mountain of the Transfiguration. He son was possessed with a spirit that made him mute. He went to the disciples and asked them to expunge it, but they couldn't. He turned to Jesus and said, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus' response is lapidary: "If you can!" Then he said, "Everything is possible to one who has faith." That's when the father exclaimed, "I do believe, help my unbelief!"
 - We do have faith. It's what has led us to discover our vocations and to say yes to the Lord. But often, rather than feeling powerful in faith, we sense our weakness. While many in the world think that because of our vocations and our vesture, we're automatically superheroes in faith, we know each time we examine our consciences of the ways we don't live by faith. Likewise among those we serve in the midst of a world and even many parts of the Church that are becoming increasingly secular, where people are living as if God doesn't exist, as practical atheists, it's becoming more challenging, more heroic, to live by faith. That's why we cry out, "Lord, I do believe. But help my unbelief!"
 - 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). If the Son of Man were to come right now, in the midst of this Year of Faith, two months after his earthly vicar shared with us the talent of a beautiful encyclical to nourish our faith, would he compliment us for our “great faith” or reprove us for our “little faith”? All of us this year in the Church — no matter how many talents of faith we presently have need to imitate the apostles and beg, “Lord, increase our faith!” We need to echo the words of St. Thomas Aquinas, “Fac me tibi semper magis credere,” “Make me always believe in you more and more.”
- In order to grow in faith, we not only need God’s grace, but we need hunger, desire, zeal, love, fire. We can remember Mary’s words in the Magnificat, “The Lord has filled the hungry with good things, but the rich he has sent away empty.” In order to be nourished, we must have an appetite. And Catholics are called to have a ferocious appetite.
- One of the main crises facing the Church today, the laity, the priesthood, and religious and consecrated life, is of a lack of hunger flowing from tepidity. People are going through the motions of faith. They show up but they’re not all there.
- Pope Benedict focused on it last October 7 in a talk in preparation for the Year of Faith. He said, “There’s a passion of ours that must grow from faith, which must be transformed into the fire of charity. Jesus said: I came to cast fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled. Origen has conveyed us a word of the Lord: “Whoever is near me is near the fire.” The Christian must not be lukewarm. The Book of Revelation tells us that this is the greatest danger for a Christian: not that he may say no, but that he may say a very lukewarm yes. This being lukewarm is what discredits Christianity. Faith must become in us flame of love, flame that really fires up my being, becomes the great passion of my being, and so it fires also my neighbor.”
- Pope Benedict says a lot here:
 - First, to be near Christ, Pope Benedict stresses, is to be near the fire. If we’re truly drawing close to Christ in prayer, in the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Confession, in charity toward others, in the communion that is the Church, then we can’t help but get fired up. The problem is that often we draw near to God with asbestos around our hearts. We don’t draw near with the faith, hope and love we should. We can say our prayers, but rush through them without love. We show up to Mass, but leave our enthusiasm at the door. The fact that so many Catholics approach without fire is a sign of tepidity.
 - Second, Pope Benedict, not one for hyperbole, says that lukewarmness is the “greatest danger for a Christian,” that we give only a half-hearted yes with a shrug of our shoulders to God and the gift of his love. Pope Benedict makes this conclusion based on what Jesus himself said in the Book of Revelation, speaking to the Church in Laodicea, which many commentators have said seems to bear much in common with the United States today. Jesus says, “To the angel of the church in La-odicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation. ‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.’” Then he says why, “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.” We lose the sense that we really need God in our lives, or need him very much. “You say,” Jesus tells them, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing” and we begin to prioritize our relationship with mammon rather than God. We fail to see, Jesus points out, that we are

poor in need of Jesus' gold refined by fire, that we're naked in need of his white garments, that we're blind in need of his salve on our eyes. We don't recognize we're drowning and need a Savior who loves us so much that he will leap into the water all the way from heaven to give his life in order to save our own. Materialism, what Pope Francis calls "spiritual worldliness," makes us lukewarm. Jesus tells us, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be," and if our treasure is in this worldly stuff, our heart will necessarily be tepid toward the things of God.

- Third, Pope Benedict says that lukewarmness is what discredits Christianity more than any thing else. It's like a contagious cold of the faith that we pass on to others. People expect that Catholic clergy, religious, consecrated and faithful will take the faith seriously and really seek to love God with all their hearts, minds, souls and strength and love their neighbor. They expect that Catholics who profess that Sacred Scripture is God's holy word will actually out of love for God to know that word inside out, rather than barely know it or ignore it together. They anticipate that Catholics who profess that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is really present in the Holy Eucharist, would never place something else on Sunday above God. They anticipate that Catholics who believe in the importance of all seven sacraments will take confession seriously and go regularly, confirmation seriously and not delay it, marriage seriously and not live as others do, the anointing of the sick seriously and call the priest whenever they or others get in danger of death. They expect that Catholics will go way beyond the call of duty to cross the road and care for others as good Samaritans. They are counting on Catholics to obey Church teaching as expressed by the Pope and the Bishops on matters like care for immigrants and the poor, on marriage, on abortion, and other topics. When non-Catholics encounter lukewarm Catholics, however, or *a fortiori* tepid clergy and religious, they easily lose respect for Church teaching and for Catholics in general.
- The reason for a Year of Faith is because many of us don't have this fire. We don't have anywhere near the real relationship with God that he desires for us. We don't live in the mad, passionate love he has for us. We don't really love him back, in the sense that we make sacrifices for him. The Year of Faith is to help us, and the whole Church, grow in these realities. The encyclical *Lumen Fidei* is a gift to us to spur us to that type of growth.
- I'd like to break our discussion of the encyclical down into three parts:
 - First, I'd like to tackle the encyclical's description of faith. It describes more than defines and it's a very rich description of eight different ways we're called to grow in faith during this Year of Faith.
 - Next, I'd like to cover many of the challenges to faith that are in the background to the encyclical and the response the encyclical gives. These are the weeds that can choke the growth of faith in hearts that were initially good soil. I hope that this will help us personally and apostolically to confront the various challenges to faith that come to us and to those the Lord is calling us to serve.
 - Lastly, I'd like to look at how the encyclical applies those principles to various contexts raised in the encyclical — prayer, the Creed, the sacraments and the ten commandments, as well as the common good, the family, the environment and suffering — to give us all a chance to see how in these areas God would like to have our faith increase in action.
- What faith is — Eight Descriptions
 - Faith is a personal entrustment to God
 - 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." When we talk about faith, we mean both the things we believe — like what we profess in the Creed, like our belief in Jesus' real presence in the Eucharist, like our faith in the possibility of heaven, etc. — and the trust we have in God. We believe in something on the basis of a belief in someone. Many have looked at the Year of Faith as just as "Year of Catechesis" — some in the Vatican have succumbed to this as well, looking at it as an opportunity to read or re-read the documents of the Second Vatican Council on their 50th anniversary or

the Catechism on its 20th — but the encyclical justly emphasizes not the growth in the *fides quae* (our knowledge of the content of the faith) but the *fides qua*, our total adhesion to God in faith.

- The encyclical illustrates this by referring to the faith of Abraham. By faith, it asserts, 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. The Letter to the Hebrews describes this 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.
- We could likewise look at other figures, who likewise show that their belief in what God is asking flows from their trust in the One asking:
 - Peter
 - Putting out into the deep to lower his nets. He trusts in Jesus enough to do what he says. We know what happens.
 - His words about Jesus’ teaching with regard the Eucharist. “To whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life.”
 - Mary.
 - She believes immediately in the miracle of the Virginal Conception and acts on the other information, that her elderly post-menopausal cousin Elizabeth has conceived a son, going immediately to help her.
 - Martha of Bethany
 - When Jesus asks her if she believes that everyone who lives and believes in him will never die. She replies, “Yes, Lord! I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world!”
- Faith, the encyclical stresses, 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.
- 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
 - 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 whether 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.
 - One can have faith without agreeing with everything the Church proposes to be held by faith
 - This is very common today. Many people are what are called cafeteria Catholics, accepting those truths pleasing to them and rejecting others that are calling them to change in a way that they don't want to.
 - The encyclical responds by quoting St. Leo the Great: If faith is not one, then it is not faith. Faith must be professed in purity and integrity. To deny one article of

faith disturbs the whole, because they're all interconnected, the encyclical asserts. We need vigilance to ensure the deposit of faith is passed on in its entirety.

- Lumen Fidei calls us to see that all the truths of faith are meant to be held in communion. To subtract something from the faith is to subtract something from the truth of veracity of communion. Harming the faith means harming communion with the Lord.
- In this Year of Faith, that's something that all of us can work on. It's very easy for us to see that others are cafeteria Catholics, but we fail to see that we, too, readily opt for a theological buffet. For others, it might be the Church's teachings on abortion or marriage. For us, it might be the Church's teachings about forgiveness, about turning the other cheek, about visiting prisoners, about caring for the sick or mentally ill. In this Year of Faith, we can ask ourselves are there any aspects of the teaching of my faith on faith and morals that I dismiss, that I make excuses for not upholding, that wound my communion?
- Application of the Principles to the Life of Faith
 - Faith and the Sacraments.
 - Sacraments are the place to live and transmit the faith
 - Faith is more than doctrine, which could be transmitted in a book, but an encounter with the true God that engages our minds, wills and emotions, opening us up to communion, which is what the sacraments do.
 - Faith possesses a sacramental structure, awakening a sacramental sense in our lives in which visible realities point beyond themselves to God.
 - Baptism is more than a pedagogical tool for those needing images and signs, but the means by which we become a new creation and God's adopted children, dying to receive new life. Baptism gives us a teaching to be professed and a way of life demanding our total engagement.
 - Baptism begins with name of the Trinity, who bestows upon us a new filial identity.
 - Water symbolizes both our death (a Passover of conversion) and a symbol of life, a womb in which we are reborn. Christ penetrates our being and transforms us radically, making us adopted children and sharers in divine nature, something that modifies all our relationships, our place in the universe, opens us to God's communion, and gives us a firm and reliable foundation. Baptism gives us a new name and a new life.
 - Sacramental character of faith finds highest expression in the Eucharist, whereby we encounter Christ truly present in the supreme act of his life. Two dimensions of faith intersect: history and mystery, the act of remembrance that makes present the mystery, and the passage from the visible to the invisible world, with Christ's drawing us and all creation toward fulfillment in God.
 - I preached a retreat to religious women in July in New Jersey applying the eight descriptions of faith in the encyclical to our celebration of the Mass. I'd like to give a brief summary:
 - The Eucharist is a personal entrustment to God in response to his total entrustment to us:
 - Jesus gives himself to us fully.
 - We're called to give our own *Logike latreia* in response (Rom 12). This is where we renew our consecration, our belonging to him so that we might be sent out together with him.
 - The Eucharist is a light
 - John Paul II said that the Mass is a "mystery of light," a *mysterium fidei*, in which we look at the "latens Deitas" the "Iesum velatum" with faith, and see what human eyes can't see with the faith-version of night goggles.
 - The Eucharist is a new way of hearing

- St. Thomas Aquinas in his *Adoro Te Devote* wrote, “*Visus, tactus, gustus in te fallitur, Sed auditu solo tuto creditur.*” “Having seen, touched and tasted one is deceived about you. But only through hearing can it be believed in full,” he says. Then he goes on to say why: “*Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius, Nil hoc verbo veritatis verius.*” I believe whatever the son of God has said. Nothing is truer than the word of truth.
 - We listen with the ears of our heart so that we can recognize Jesus, as happened in Emmaus.
- The Eucharist is a deep mutual touch of the heart
 - We pray that we may “feel” the fruit of his redemption (prayer for benediction).
 - Jesus touches us on the inside and we touch him back with faith.
- The Eucharist is a memory of the future
 - Do this in memory of me. It makes Jesus’ hour present. It makes the eschaton present.
- The Eucharist is a journey
 - Liturgical year
 - Salvation history through the readings
 - Triduum
 - Jesus’ call to “come” and “go”
 - The journey of the “Sursum Corda”
- The Eucharist is a form of building
 - The Eucharist builds the Church, builds our communion with God and with each other. It makes us a temple.
 - It strengthens us precisely to help build the kingdom
- The Eucharist is a Mother
 - We are breast fed with the faith of the Church. Pie pellicane.
 - We learn the faith of the Church pronouncing our faith with the words of our Mother. *Lex orandi, lex credendi.*
- During this Year of Faith, there’s so much room for growth, both in terms of our *fides qua* and *fides quae* with respect to our baptism, to our having been sealed with the Holy Spirit in confirmation, to our uniting our suffering to Christ, to our being ordered to the Lord’s own ordering of holiness, to our spiritual sponsality and commitment.
- Faith and the Profession of 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.
 - In a retreat to religious over the summer, I focused on how we can grow in our faith by enhancing our prayer in this Year of Faith. I'd like to give a brief summary here, applying the eight prisms of faith from the encyclical to our prayer:
 - Prayer is a personal entrustment to God in response to his total entrustment to us.
 - God gives himself to us.
 - We give ourselves back and enter into the inner dynamism of the Trinity, recognizing the Giver is more important than the gift. We entrust ourselves to the Father within Jesus' entrustment.
 - Prayer is a light
 - Discernment
 - Helps us to see things God's way, opening our minds to his interpretation of reality.
 - Prayer is a new way of hearing
 - God speaks normally in gentle breeze and whisper.
 - Word of God to be done. Audire and ob-audire, listening and obedience.
 - Jesus blesses those who hear and do, who are not idle listeners but doers of the Word.
 - Need to cultivate silence, outward and inward, so that as the words decrease, the Word may increase.
 - Prayer is a deep mutual touch of the heart
 - Cor ad cor loquitur of St. Francis de Sales and Cardinal Newman
 - St. Cyprian: "God is the hearer, not of the voice, but of the heart."
 - Conversion of heart needed. To see God we must be pure of heart. Prayer helps us to treasure God, to love with God's own heart.
 - Prayer is a memory of the future
 - Mary taught the Church how to pray with memory. She gives the living memory of Jesus in prayer and the Church exists to preserve Jesus' memory.
 - At a very practical level, in prayer we remember our past:

- Remembering our blessings and thanking God for them.
 - Remembering our sins, and sorrowfully begging God for mercy.
 - Remembering others, and interceding for them
 - Our prayer is also a remembrance of the future:
 - Our call to eternal communion that fills us with hope
 - Our dependence on God’s providence, which gives us trust
- Prayer is a journey
 - Pope Benedict say that “praying is a journey in personal communion with Christ, setting before him our daily our life, successes and failures, our struggles and our joys – in a word, it is to stand in front of him.”
 - St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*.
 - St. John Climacus’ ladder
- Prayer is a form of building
 - Prayer builds us up. St. Teresa’s Seven Mansions
 - Prayer builds us the Church. We become an anima ecclesiastica, a personal embodiment of the Church.
- Prayer is a Mother
 - We learn to speak with our mother and her words become our words, Cardinal Ratzinger said.
 - Teaching prayer is more mystagogy than pedagogy.
 - Church is supposed to be a school of prayer, a school of faith.
- 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, that 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.
 - In this Year of Faith, we’re called to examine how the moral life is the life of faith, because it is a life of love and hope. In the midst of a world that wants to separate faith from life, the truths of faith from morality, we are called to show that integration. We can’t love God if we’re forming idols, or blaspheming his name, or treating other people or activities as more important than Him and spending time with Him especially on the day we call his. We can’t truly love neighbors as we authentically love ourselves if we’re dishonoring those who together with God gave us life, if we’re hating, or hurting, or killing others, if we’re using them for own gratification even in our hearts, if we’re ripping them off, lying to them, getting upset for the good things they have and the people who love them and more. A life of faith helps us to trust in the Lord who reveals to us that the Decalogue is not asbestos counter to our vocation to love but precisely the pruning we need to love for real.
 - (Summary) So there are four elements comprising the storehouse of memory transmitted by the Church: profession of faith, celebration of the sacraments, path of the ten commandments and prayer. This is the structure of the Church’s catechesis. In this Year of Faith, we’re called not just to come to know their reality better but to live it.
- Faith and the Common Good
 - The Christian faith serves the common good by helping us to understand the truth rightly, the encyclical declares.

- Because faith works through love, the light of faith is placed at service of justice, law and peace. The life of faith develops into a praxis leading to the fullness of life.
- Light of faith enhances human relationships, their endurance and trustworthiness. Faith illumines architecture of human relationships because it sees the ultimate foundation and destiny in God, and sheds light on the art of building. Faith is a light illuminating all relationships in society, as a path to brotherhood based on God's mercy. Can't build a universal brotherhood based on equality without common Father as ultimate foundation. Need to return to true basis of brotherhood.
- Faith teaches us to see everyone as a blessing on me, as a mirror of the light of God. Thanks to faith, we have understood the dignity of every person, based on God's love, his concrete concern for every person, his plan of salvation embracing all of humanity in Christ. Without these insights, there is no criterion for discerning what makes human life precious and unique. Man loses his place in the cosmos, either renouncing personal moral responsibility or becoming a judge manipulating the world around him.
- Faith helps us to seek development based not simply on utility and profit but respect the gift of creation. Faith teaches us to create just forms of government recognizing God's authority and call to service of the common good.
- Faith makes forgiveness possible, because we open to a prior goodness stronger than evil.
- When faith is weakened, foundations of humanity are weakened; trust is weakened, only fear motivates. Faith illumines life and society because it relates it to the origin and destiny of all things in God.
- We've already spoken above how in the Year of Faith we're called to ponder the great good that comes from faith, that it brings us together with others, and creates a good that we can hold in communion, a trustworthiness that provides the genuine foundation for growth together.
- Faith and the Family
 - The first setting in which faith enlightens the human city, the Encyclical says, is in family, the stable union of man and woman in marriage. Their union is a sign and presence of God's own love (sacrament) and the acknowledgement and acceptance of the goodness of sexual differentiation whereby the spouses can become one flesh and enabled to give birth to a new life, who manifests the Creator's goodness, wisdom and loving plan. In this love, a man and woman can promise mutual love engaging their entire lives and mirroring many features of faith. We can promise love forever when we perceive a plan bigger than 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 disposable, 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.

- We can also apply the eight descriptions of faith to our charity, because we're called to grow in faith in these ways as well:
 - Charity as a mutual entrustment and commitment
 - Christ made a total commitment to us in charity and we are called to make a similar commitment.
 - Jesus never told us, "love me as I loved you," but "love one another just as I loved you." When Peter, in response to Jesus' three queries, said that he loved the Lord, Jesus told him to "feed my sheep, tend my lambs, feed my lambs." His love for the Lord would be shown in his love for others.
 - Real charity is a commitment. It's not just an ad-hoc thing. While the Lord always sends people into our path that we weren't expecting, charity, nevertheless, needs to be "planned," insofar as we need to take it as seriously as we do study of the Bible, as we do prayer.
 - Those who involve themselves in charitable service know the commitment involved in visiting the sick in nursing homes and hospitals, caring for infirm family members, making St. Vincent de Paul home visits, running food pantries. Faith leads us to make such a commitment.
 - Charity as a light flowing from faith
 - Charity begins with how we look at others in faith.
 - Blessed Mother Teresa always trained her Missionaries of Charity to look at the poorest of the poor as Jesus in a distressing disguise.
 - Faith-filled charity changes our vision.
 - Pope Benedict wrote about this in his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*.
 - DCE 18: Love of neighbor is thus shown to be possible in the way proclaimed by the Bible, by Jesus. It consists in the very fact that, in God and with God, I love even the person whom I do not like or even know. This can only take place on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. **Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ.** His friend is my friend. Going beyond exterior appearances, I perceive in others an interior desire for a sign of love, of concern. ... Seeing with the eyes of Christ, I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave. Here we see the necessary interplay between love of God and love of neighbor that the *First Letter of John* speaks of with such insistence. If I have no contact whatsoever with God in my life, then I cannot see in the other anything more than the other, and I am incapable of seeing in him the image of God.
 - Charity in a new way of hearing
 - One of the biggest ways faith changes our hearing is by helping us to hear others with understanding instead of judgment. We begin to hear their pain, their sufferings, the background to some of their behaviors.
 - Faith leads to a charitable listening that is, as St. Paul would describe, patient, kind, not jealous, pompous, rude, self-interested, quick-tempered, easily injured, or focused on the wrong.
 - Charity as a new way of touching

- Faith-filled charity leads us not just to give “things” to others, but to give ourselves.
- Famous story of the future-Deacon Francis of Assisi and the leper, giving alms.
- Jesus was always touching those in the Gospel, to give this truly human interaction.
- Charity as a new way of memory
 - We remember all that the Lord has done for us and it changes us in our approach to others.
 - Fr. Cantalamessa’s Good Friday homily on the link between what God did for and said to the Israelites and what the Italians were being called to do for the refugees.
 - We should never forget that everything God has given us is a divine depository placed in our hands, as St. John Vianney would say. We’re stewards of it. To the extent God has given us more material resources, we are called to enter more deeply into his generosity.
- Charity as a journey
 - Charity is the great exodus out of ourselves toward God and others. It’s a continual Passover.
 - At a practical level, we need to go out to those in need, rather than let them come to us.
 - Just as there are no plateaus in the spiritual life, so there are no vacations from the life of charity.
- Charity as a form of building
 - Charity builds great bonds and it builds up those who are charitable more and more into Christ and the Church.
 - We see in the early Church how the faith flowed to charity and the diaconate itself was one of the structures built in the Church in order to care for the poor, something that expanded into the early *diakonia* and then into so many other structures that remain to this day.
- Charity as a mother
 - Mother’s care for their children with their own heart and even with their lives.
 - St. John Vianney used to say that good mothers always give special preference to their wounded and sick children, to those in greater need. Fathers, we might say, are tempted to give greater care to their “successful” children, those who indulge their pride much more readily than try their patience, but mothers normally care for the wounded children with special predilection. The whole Church is called to this type of maternal care.
- 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, which is something important for us to do on this Saturday.
 - 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!"