

Porta Fidei... A year of challenge, a year of discovery, a Year of Faith

We were all struck by the wonderful painting of Jesus 'Light of the World' which was given to all parishes as a legacy of Pope Benedict's visit in 2010. Indeed it is a beautiful painting and best seen in its full size hung in St Paul's Cathedral. But its real secret lies in what could be seen as a mistake. Jesus stands at the door and knocks but there is no handle for Him to open. The door of our heart has to be open from within. He cannot come in unless we invite Him in.

This year from October the 11th has been named the Year of Faith and the Document telling us about why it is so vital 'Porta Fidei', door of faith. We have been invited to become evangelists and to take the gospel to others. Who asked us to do it? It was of course Jesus himself. During His life He sent the apostles and disciples to go out in pairs to tell others about it and to live it out themselves. Then, before He finally ascended to His Father, He gave them this command "Go then to all people everywhere and make them my disciples: baptise them In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you to the ends of the age." (Matt.28 19-20.)

It is easy to dismiss this request as being only for the Apostles or for priests and religious but this call applies to all of us. We are indeed called to



Light of the World (Holman-Hunt)

witness to our faith all through our lives. At the end of every Mass this is repeated to us we are told to take the Good News to others. We are called to do so through Baptism. We are not told to keep it to ourselves as a kind of private devotion, our own little bit of heaven, but to share, what should be our joy at such a gift, with everyone. (Porta Fidei 10)

We are brought to faith in the first instance by our families or later by friends and the circumstances of our lives. We are drawn to faith by the Father and the door opens to Jesus who shows us the path of life. Jesus reveals how we must live and teaches us by example and by Teachings which are both timeless and perfect and that can lead us to live fully and lovingly as people of the Gospel. Such a gift has to be shared with others. He called us to love God and to love each other perfectly as well

as we love ourselves. If faith is good for us then surely if we truly believe this then it is also good for our neighbour. Faith is a gift and indeed we can only speak the truth in love but we must do so. The door has to be opened by the person receiving the offer but like Jesus we must knock at that door.

When something wonderful has happened to us we are often bursting to tell others. Indeed it is difficult to keep it to ourselves. Yet we are people of Faith and a promise of Eternity and great blessing yet we wish to contain this in our own

beings. Faith multiplies when it is shared. Not only do we share it but we gain from doing so for it remind us too of the path that we should walk and our own human frailty.

So how do we do this? The first way has of course to be by our example. We cannot tell others to do what we are not prepared to do ourselves. Living the gospel means to behave with great love and charity to all. It means to behave as Jesus would have us do in the everyday circumstances of our live. Christian families can set a good example by the way that they treat each other; husband and wives relate to each other and look after their children and older relatives. It means to treat people with dignity in our work situations, in our schools, hospitals and looking outward to those in greater need than ourselves. This 'living out' our faith is the prime means of evangelisation. It also means not to be frightened to get involved in projects that serve the needs of others.

But we cannot take to others what we have not truly understood ourselves. In this year we are called to explore our faith more deeply. How often do we reflect on the Gospels, or the Old Testament?



Do we truly listen to the homily? Are we willing to go to talks about our faith? Are we willing to learn more? Do we ever go to the documents of

the church or even look at the catechism to see if we have understood correctly rather than rely on our own opinions only?

If we see doubt do we encourage each other with words of faith? Yes and are we really willing to share the gospel with others by deed and by word?

Finally, are we able and desiring of spreading the words of Jesus and letting them take root in someone else's heart? The words of Scripture are alive and active. They have real power to transform people's lives. Our world is hungry for the truth. We must never underestimate the words of Jesus and the action of the Holy Spirit. There are many ways of spreading the gospel, and today with the ease of communication, films, access to information many more. We must use them all wisely.



Feast of the Archangel 29th September

Even simply to tell people that we will pray for them can bring about a change, or a thankful reference to God. People in hospital often have a wonderful opportunity to evangelise as do visitors. Having a sign of our faith such a Crucifix in our homes or going to Church or an act of witness or speaking out if necessary.

Above all we must pray that those who have abandoned faith, or are lost or simply have never heard the Good News do so for Jesus knocks at the door of their heart through us.

'To convert someone go take them by the hand and guide them.' *St Thomas Aquinas*

'He rightly reads scripture who turns words into deed.' *St Bernard of Clairvaux*

Feast days In September

Our Lady's Birthday 8th, The Triumph of the Cross 14th, Our Lady of Sorrows 15th, The Archangels 29th. Try to get to Mass or reflect on these feast days.

Prayer...

"Help each other to live and to grow in the Christian faith so as to be valiant witnesses of the Lord. Be united, but not closed. Be humble, but not fearful. Be simple, but not naive. Be thoughtful, but not complicated. Enter into dialogue with others, but be yourselves."

Pope Benedict XVI 2008

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