

The Year of Faith *and the Door of Faith Which is Christ*

“My little white dove, do you know what I find most lacking in the world today? It is FAITH. There are so few souls that believe in Me and My love. They profess their belief and their love, but they do not live this belief. Their hearts are cold, for without faith there can be no love. Pray and sacrifice yourself, My child, that faith may once again find entrance into the hearts of men.”

(Sr. Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA, Fostoria, OH, Pg. 5.)

Our dear Lord lamented to Sister Mildred (Mary Ephrem) Neuzil in 1954, over half a century ago, about the crisis of faith in our world. How grateful we are that Pope Benedict XVI has addressed this crisis of faith in his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei, The Door of Faith*, published October 11, 2011 on the feast of the maternity of Mary. With it he announced the Year of Faith which began October 11, 2012, the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and which will end November 24, 2013, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King. This Year is an invitation to come through the **“door of faith”** that is Jesus Christ our Lord and King, and through the **“door of the church”** that is the sacrament of His abiding Presence with us on earth, a guiding Light for all on our journey toward God and eternal happiness in union with God. This Year of Faith commands a new evangelization within our families and within the Church, a commitment to a renewed conversion and rediscovery of the great truths and mysteries of our Catholic Faith through a serious study of Sacred Scripture, the true doctrines of the Catholic Church, the Vatican II documents and the Catechism of the Catholic Church. His Holiness states:

The “door of faith” (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime. It is to believe in one God who is Love (cf. 1 Jn 4:8): the Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation; Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world; the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church across the centuries as we await the Lord’s glorious return. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei, The Door of Faith*, #1.)

We see this theme of entering through the door in Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the Davidic Messiah prefigured in Eliakim who is given charge over the palace of the King of Judea: **“I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.” (Isaiah 22:22).** Thus, Eliakim decides who can or cannot have access to the king. John, in the Book of Revelation, describes his vision of the open door into heaven as he perceives heavenly worship in the eternal city and gives us the beautiful description of the banquet of the Lamb Who was slain for our sins, the Messianic King Who is the glorified Christ and Redeemer. He is the Holy One of God Who alone holds the key to the eternal house of David, Who alone can give us access to God and to His everlasting glory, for He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all creation.

... the holy one, the true, who holds the key of David, who opens and no one shall close, who closes and no one shall open. (Rev 3:7) ...Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, (then) I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne. (Rev 3:20)

In chapter 10:9 of the Gospel of John, Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd, as the gate or doorway itself through which we must pass in order to be saved. **“I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture.”** In John 14:6 Jesus again states this same truth: **“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”** In the message of Our Lady of America® given to Sister Mildred Neuzil, Jesus addresses the failure of so many to accept Him as the one true Messiah, the only One sent down from heaven by the Father as the Savior of the world.

“My faithful spouse, the world does not know me. My people do not know me. I am a stranger to them. Many claim to love me yet hate and kill their neighbor and say they do it in My Name. These listen to the false prophets who are manipulated by the powers of evil. Me they do not follow, Me they do not hear. The Bible, the Gospels are to them just so many words that they throw out to those hungering to know about the real Christ who seeks their love, who holds out the true meaning of the Gospels, the only One who can lead them to the Father. With the same tongue with which these benighted souls praise and proclaim their love and dedication to Me they curse and condemn their neighbor whom I redeemed as I did them.”...

“My dearest one, many false doctrines are being taught and for many the true Christ is never made known. The false prophets and self-proclaimed Messiahs are drawing many away from Me, the Way, the Truth and the Life. I am the true Messiah who was sent and the only one proclaimed as such by My Father. Seek Me for I only am truth, I only am the Christ.” (Words spoken by Our Lord, July 13, 1981, Diary, Pg. 40.)

When Blessed John Paul II opened his pontificate on October 22, 1978, he said, **“Do not be afraid. Open, I say open wide the doors for Christ.”** He urged us to seek a deeper relationship with Christ and to make Him our personal Lord and Savior, King not only of the world but of our hearts. We see this spiritual kingship expressed vividly in the gesture of Pope Paul VI who wore the traditional papal tiara at his coronation June 30, 1963. On November 13, 1964, he removed the tiara from his head and placed it on the altar in a gesture of **“renunciation of human glory and power”** and as **“the new spirit of the Church purified.”** John Cardinal Spellman of New York requested and obtained this tiara for the purpose of honoring the generosity of the American people toward the hungry and dispossessed people of the world. Thus, on February 6, 1968, it was presented by Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., the patronal church of the American people, and can be seen in the papal exhibits outside the crypt church. It is the only papal tiara on display outside of Rome. This renunciation of worldly power and influence speaks volumes for us on the

reign of Christ as the true King and spiritual Ruler over all the world. “My kingdom is not of this world. My kingdom is within you.”

The richness of this theme of the “**door of faith**” is seen in the ornate and symbolic carvings in the Holy Doors of the four patriarchal or papal basilicas of Rome, St. Peter’s, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major and St. Paul’s Outside the Walls. Each basilica has its own Holy Door which is normally sealed shut from the inside so it cannot be opened. These holy doors are opened during Jubilee years so pilgrims may pass through them in prayer and gain the plenary indulgence connected to the Jubilee for the remission of temporal punishment due for their sins. St. John Lateran is the cathedral of the diocese of Rome and has the Pope for its bishop. It is called “**The Mother of All Churches**” and is dedicated to our Savior, to St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist. It was in 1423 at this Basilica that Pope Martin V opened the Holy Door for the first time in the history of the Jubilee, often celebrated every 33 years at that time. In 1499 Pope Alexander VI desired the Holy Doors be opened at the other three churches as well. **These Holy Doors are always a symbol for Christ, our access to God.** In Jubilee 2000, for the first time in history, the Pope, Blessed John Paul II *personally* unsealed all four Holy Doors of the Roman Basilicas to open wide the doors for Christ.

The Jubilee itself was established in the Old Covenant which God had made with His people, Israel, calling for a Jubilee every 50 years as a time of rest, celebration, forgiveness of debt and the exercise of mercy. In the New Covenant Christ is our Jubilee, paying the debt for our sins, obtaining God’s merciful forgiveness for us, reconciling us to God and giving us such cause for joy. But, to enjoy the favor of Divine Jubilee, Christ demands that we pass through the door of conversion, repentance, the confession of sin and reform of life. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation our sins are forgiven and the eternal effects of sin are wiped away, but temporal punishment due sin remains and must be atoned for. The Church maintains the practice of the Jubilee and has added other special years of grace, such as the Year of the Rosary and this Year of Faith, granting plenary indulgences as well to satisfy all the temporal punishment due our sins. These plenary indulgences can be gained for oneself or, charitably, for a soul in purgatory who did not satisfy the temporal punishment due their sins while on earth. Outside these special times of grace the Church has always taught that temporal punishment due sin can be atoned for with prayer, fasting and almsgiving to the poor.

This Year of Faith is a year focused on renewing and deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ and with His Church through the study of its true doctrines and their correct interpretations, and through meditation on the Word of God contained in Sacred Scripture and in the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It celebrates God’s gift of faith to us in Baptism and our exercise of that faith in the community of believers that is Christ’s Church, gathered together as His Mystical Body in the Eucharist. Faith is believing the Word that has been revealed to us and has been entrusted to Christ’s Church and is protected from error by the power of the Holy Spirit in His Church. Faith is believing in the Word Who is the Son of God made flesh in the awesome mystery of the Incarnation for our Redemption. In the Incarnation God stoops to our level to speak to us and lifts us to His level so we can speak to Him. Hence, Christianity has its starting-

point in the Incarnation of the Word. Here, it is not a matter of man seeking God, but of God coming in Person to speak to man about Himself and to show man the path by which He may be reached. ... ***The Incarnate Word is thus the fulfillment of the yearning present in all the religions of mankind: this fulfillment is brought about by God himself and transcends all human expectations. It is the mystery of grace.***
(Blessed John Paul II, Tertio Millenio Adveniente, #6.)

Years of grace, like those of Jubilee, offer a plenary indulgence for the remission of all the temporal punishment due our sins. Such indulgence can be obtained by all the faithful who, truly penitent, take Sacramental Confession and the Eucharist and pray in accordance with the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff and fulfill any of the following prescriptions:

- 1) Attend at least three sermons during the Holy Missions, or at least three lessons on the Acts of the Council or the articles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in church or any other suitable location
- 2) Visit, in the course of a pilgrimage, a papal basilica, a Christian catacomb, a cathedral church or holy site designated by the local ordinary for the Year of Faith ((for example, minor basilicas and shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Apostles or patron saints), and there participate in a sacred celebration, or at least remain for a congruous period of time in prayer and pious meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary and, depending on the circumstances, to the Holy Apostles and patron saints.
- 3) Each time that, on the days designated by the local ordinary for the Year of Faith, in any sacred place, they participate in a solemn celebration of the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours, adding thereto the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form.
- 4) On any day they chose, during the Year of Faith, if they make a pious visit to the baptistery, or other place in which they received the Sacrament of Baptism, and there renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form."
- 5) The statement added that diocesan or eparchial bishops, and those who enjoy the same status in law, on the most appropriate day during that period or on the occasion of the main celebrations, "may impart the papal blessing with the Plenary Indulgence".
- 6) The document concludes by recalling that those unable to leave their place of abode because of illness or other legitimate reason may still obtain Plenary Indulgence "if, united in spirit and thought with other faithful, and especially at the times when the words of the Supreme Pontiff and diocesan bishops are transmitted by television or radio, they recite ... the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, and other prayers that concord with the objectives of the Year of Faith, offering up the suffering and discomfort of their lives".

<http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/vatican-announces-plenary-indulgence-for-year-of-faith#ixzz2DAMCZmbo>

Having studied the symbolism of “**the door of faith**” in this year of grace, let us turn now to the significance of ending the Year of Faith on the solemnity of the feast of Christ the King. This feast is celebrated on the last Sunday of the Church’s liturgical year. It is followed in the Church’s New Year with the season of Advent that recalls the ancient prophecies concerning our Messiah-King who would be born of the house of King David. We remember and invite our Savior-King to be our personal savior and

Lord and to fill our hearts with His mercy and love, so we may be ready to greet Him at His Second Coming when He comes sitting upon the clouds in all His glory to judge the living and the dead and to rule over heaven and earth. **Pope Pius XI established the feast of Christ the King in 1925 as an antidote to secularism, a way of life which leaves God out of man's thinking and living, acting as if God did not exist.** Since Jesus is the Word of God through whom all things were made, He is the supreme power over all people and all things. Since He is the Messiah Who purchased us with the price of His blood, we are His property and possession. Since He is the **divine Founder and Head of His Church**, built upon the rock of Peter and the twelve apostles, His Church has primacy over every other church. Since Christ has done naught but the Will of the Father, the Father has seen fit to give Him dominion over all the nations of the world. His rule is supreme, universal, eternal and spiritual. He will rule forever, our Universal King!

At the Synod of bishops prior to the start of the Year of Faith, Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl of Washington, D.C. addressed our current secular culture and its desperate need for a return to Faith that goes back to the creed and to the apostles. He stated that Vatican II was faithful to the Church's traditional doctrines, but its implementation was met with a **"tsunami of secularism"** that washed across Western Europe and took with it those foundational concepts of family, marriage, right and wrong, the common good and objective order. Standards of Catholic religious education were loosened as we attempted to catechize without content and to communicate some idea that God loves us that wasn't rooted in the creed. This poor catechesis cost us two generations of Catholics; hence, the utter importance of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. While religious education on the elementary and secondary levels has improved, many of our higher institutions have need of restoring their Catholic identity and alignment with true Catholic doctrine. The Cardinal quoted the Holy Father's words: **"If you are not proclaiming the Christ that the church knows and lives, then you could be proclaiming a Christ that you've created."**

As Blessed John Paul II did so often, His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI entrusted this year of grace to the Mother of God who was proclaimed "blessed" because she believed the word that was spoken to her. Who better than His Mother can lead us to Christ? In the message of Our Lady of America®, Jesus' Mother bids us come to her as the **privileged door** into the Heart of her Son, for it is her special work to help us put on Christ and imbibe His Spirit. She has been given the key to her Son's Heart.

"But to make your hearts grow more and more like to the Heart of the Son, you must go to the Mother, whose heart is most like His. From this Pure and Immaculate Heart you will learn all that will make you more pleasing to the Divine Heart of the Son of God. The Holy Trinity looks down with infinite delight upon such souls and makes them Its heaven upon earth." (Diary, Pg. 16.)

"There is only one true way to the Father, my child, only one way to eternal union. It is the way of the divine humanity. It is through my Son, the Only-begotten of the Father, that souls attain perfect union with the Divinity, as perfect as human nature is capable of, aided by divine grace. But my children will not heed; they will not listen. Every other way they will take, but not this one." (Diary, Pg. 23.)

“I am the Mother of the sacred humanity, and it is my special work as co-redemptrix of the human race to help souls reach the sanctity of the Father in eternal union by showing them how to put on Christ, to imbibe His Spirit, and thus become one with Him.” (Diary, Pg. 24.)

His Holiness also asked that this year be a worldwide moment of prayer and encouraged the praying and promotion of the **World Mission Rosary** conceived in 1951 by Servant of God, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen. In the Mission Rosary each decade is made of a different color to represent a different part of the world. White symbolizes Europe, the seat of the Holy Father, shepherd of the world. Yellow symbolizes the morning light of the east and is prayed for Asia. Blue is for the ocean surrounding the Islands of the Pacific. Green is for the forests and grasslands of Africa, and red calls to mind the fire of faith that brought missionaries to the Americas. What a wonderful way to carry out this worldwide moment of prayer and the call to evangelization!

In Our Lady of America®’s message, she calls on her children in America to be the nation dedicated to her purity through whom she wishes to draw all peoples and all nations **back to faith and purity**. In this year of grace, it is our special mission here in America to heed Our Lady’s call for that deep conversion and reform of life she asked for as testimony of our love for her and for her Divine Son. Armed with a deeper faith and love, let us take up her mandate to renew the face of the earth through the saving grace of Christ, the one and only Savior of the world. Let us urge all, especially those who have left the house of the Lord, to come through the holy door that is Christ and into the door of His holy Church for their salvation. Together with Mary, Mother of Christ, Model of Faith and Mother of the Church, let us join with the universal church in praising God with our profession of Faith in the Apostles’ Creed.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Christ, the Redeemer of the world, is the one Mediator between God and men, and there is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved (cf. Acts 4:12).

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