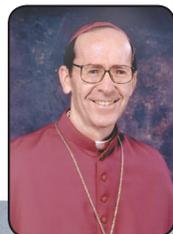


# Blest Are They Who Believe

A pastoral letter on the occasion of the Year of Faith.  
Promulgated on Sept. 14, 2012.



Bishop  
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YEAR OF

FAITH



*Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation,” Jesus said, “The man who believes in it and accepts baptism will be saved; the man who refuses to believe in it will be condemned” (Mk 16:15). What a difference it makes to believe in God. When faith is absent, the Lord’s work is hampered: “Jesus did not work many mighty

deeds there because of their lack of faith” (Mt 13:58). When faith is active, it can move mountains, for nothing is impossible with God. Faith, which opens the door of our heart to Christ, is a great gift from Him, a free decision on our part, and a major force for shaping our individual lives and indeed the history of the world.

## Introduction

Throughout the 2,000-year history of our Church, **the unique and central proclamation of our faith has been based on a personal encounter with the living God** – the God who created us in love and unfolded His plan for us throughout the narrative of salvation history. In His Son, He took on our flesh, suffered death for our sins, and rose from the dead so that we might rise with Him to everlasting life.<sup>1</sup> Our Catholic faith is a celebration of this unique encounter, demonstrated throughout the world by the victorious saints in heaven, and us pilgrims here on earth who seek to know, love, and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. In every age, the Church brings together the faithful, calling them to conversion, strengthening them through the

1. cf 1 Cor 15:20

Sacraments, and sending them to serve in His vineyard. But for every faithful pilgrim, it is always necessary to deepen and sometimes even to revitalize our relationship with God and His Church. It belongs to each generation to “rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ.”<sup>2</sup> For this reason the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI declared that the Universal Church will celebrate this “Year of Faith,” a year dedicated to renewed and concentrated efforts on proclaiming, teaching, and defending the truth, beauty, and goodness of our faith in Christ. As we also commemorate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, we will highlight the many conciliar and post-conciliar documents

2. Porta Fidei para 2

that “have lost nothing of their value or brilliance.”<sup>3</sup> We invite all the Catholic faithful, as well as our separated brothers and sisters in Christ, to participate in the Year of Faith by an “authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

This Pastoral letter contains two distinct yet connected parts. Part I is addressed to all the faithful and outlines the six principle ways in which all Catholics can enter into this special year. Part II highlights the specific ways that we invite the faithful through their various vocations to celebrate the Year of Faith. It is our hope that you will prayerfully read Part I and also the section in Part II that pertains to your state of life.

3. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 57: AAS 93 (2001)

4. Porta Fidei para 6

## Part One: To All The Faithful

Throughout the Diocese of Phoenix, there will be increased opportunities for all believers to celebrate our faith during this important year. In union with the Holy Father, and in solidarity with Catholics throughout the world, we are calling each of the faithful to participate in the Year of Faith in the following ways:

1. Sincere, personal profession of faith.
2. Renewed participation in the Liturgy.
3. Increased study of Scripture and the Catechism.
4. Reflection on the history of faith.
5. Intensified witness of charity.
6. Fostering and promoting vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life.

A special Diocesan website has been created to assist the faithful in their celebration of this grace-filled year ([www.CatholicFamilyPrayer.org](http://www.CatholicFamilyPrayer.org)). You can also visit the unique sites created by the Vatican ([www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en.html](http://www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en.html)) and the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops ([www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith](http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith)) to help them fully engage in the Year of Faith.

### 1. The Profession of Faith

In their encounter with Christ, Christians seek to conform themselves to Him and grow in faith (cf Rom 12:2). The heart of evangelization, and the dynamism of the New Evangelization, is this personal encounter that makes Christians authentic witnesses to the love that Christ has for each one of us. This personal relationship with Christ compels us to share Him with others: “It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize.”<sup>5</sup> In this Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI calls each of the faithful “**to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope,**” rediscovering the content of faith that we celebrate, live, and believe.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the Diocese, the faithful and all those who serve our parishes and apostolates will be given opportunities to publicly profess their faith in the Risen Lord. This profession will mean we are re-committing ourselves to a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church, as well as to the task of proclaiming the Good News in our “homes... among our families... so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and... transmit to future generations the faith of all times.”<sup>7</sup>

5. Porta Fidei para 7 (cf. 2 Cor 5:14)

6. Porta Fidei para 9

7. Porta Fidei para 8

### 2. Renewed Participation in the Sacraments

In a special way, all the faithful are called to a renewed sense of awe of and increased participation in the holy mysteries.

► Our entrance into the faith through the saving waters of Baptism should be ardently celebrated and remembered throughout our pilgrim journey of faith. Every Catholic should know and celebrate the day of their Baptism as their “birth into new life.”<sup>8</sup> Parishes should renew their efforts to educate persons of all ages about this foundational sacrament as well as to prepare parents and uninitiated adults for entrance into the saving waters of Baptism.

► The Sacrament of Confirmation builds on our Baptism, perfecting Baptismal grace, rooting us more deeply in the Holy Spirit, and increasing our relationship with God as His sons and daughters.<sup>9</sup> The outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the sacrament seals us with His gifts of Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding, Counsel, Piety, Fortitude, and Fear of the Lord. During this special Year, we must be more aware of and open to these gifts, asking God to reawaken within us an appreciation for the profound role of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

8. CCC1277

9. cf CCC1316



► The Sacrament of the Eucharist has always been and remains the “source and summit” of our faith. **Through our participation in the Eucharist, we witness the profound love of Christ**, who suffered and conquered death for our sins to bring us to everlasting life. His real and substantial Presence in the Eucharist renews and strengthens us so that we may faithfully serve as His sons and daughters. For this reason, the Year of Faith calls each one of us in a particular way to witness to Christ’s presence in the Eucharist and to receive Holy Communion more frequently and worthily.

► The Sacraments of Service – the vocations of Marriage and Holy Orders – are particularly important in our society, yet perhaps the most often misunderstood. Married couples, priests, deacons, and consecrated men and women are all called to witness the love of God in their particular vocation. During the Year of Faith, those who have received or are preparing to receive these sacraments should reflect upon and understand with greater clarity how they reveal the love of God to the world.

► The Sacraments of Healing – Reconciliation and the Anointing of the Sick – remind us of the ever present need we have for God in our lives. In all believers, the Year of Faith should bring forth a deeper recognition of our need for God’s healing grace and increased desire to seek God’s mercy in the Sacrament of Confession. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that, **“the New Evangelization begins in the confessional.”**<sup>10</sup> In a society that often confuses freedom with licentiousness, recognizing the reality of our brokenness helps us not only to better understand the objective nature of sin that wounds our relationship with God and one another, but also to increase our confidence in God’s mercy and redemption. The authority given by Christ to all priests to forgive sins in His name (Jn 20: 22-23) is a great treasure of the Church. During the Year of Faith, this treasure of frequent reception of the Sacrament of Confession should be rediscovered with great joy and thankfulness. This year should also be an opportunity to grow in our understanding and appreciation of the Anointing of the Sick. In this sacrament, Christ the healer makes His ever present grace particularly palpable in the believer – a grace to strengthen, support, and encourage those who have a serious illness, who have grown weak because of aging, or who are undergoing a serious medical procedure. Scripture reveals the unique role of our belief in Christ’s willingness and ability to heal us. In this Year, all believers, and especially those who have received or will receive the Sacrament, should contemplate the meaning of this grace given during times of exceptional suffering.

### 3. Study of Scripture and Participation in Catechesis

“Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with Him. This ‘standing with Him’ points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing.”<sup>11</sup> Understanding the faith requires reading, listening, and praying with God’s word in Holy Scripture, as well as studying how God has revealed Himself through the teachings of the Church. For this reason, the study of Scripture and the participation in catechesis are upheld as a necessary aspect of both “standing with Him” and “living with Him.” We call all Catholics to more deeply fall in love with Christ by listening to His voice proclaimed through Scripture and Tradition. A renewed and more ardent study of the faith “direct-



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ed towards the love that never ends”<sup>12</sup> is necessary for a more enthusiastic and joy-filled faith in Christ and His Church. The faithful should read the Sacred Scriptures, the Catechism, and the documents of the Church’s Magisterium, both individually and as a family, and they should seek out and participate in the many opportunities for Scripture study and catechesis through local parishes and the Diocese.

### 4. The History of our Faith

Scripture speaks of salvation as an ongoing, ever present reality. St. Paul’s says, “for our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed” (Rom 13:11). In this way, **we can say that we have been saved, that we are being saved, and that we will be saved through Christ our Lord.** In other words, the history of Salvation as anticipated and perfected in Sacred Scripture continues through God’s saving plan for each of us today. By “retracing the history of our faith,” we can “highlight the great contribution of men and women have made... through the witness of their lives,” and recognize the personal “continuing work of conversion” that is still necessary.<sup>13</sup> During this Year of Faith, we must recall the salvific activity of Christ through:

1. His Church, in His apostles, “who fearlessly proclaimed to all the joy of the resurrection,”<sup>14</sup> and in His disciples, “who formed the first community around the teaching of the Apostle,”<sup>15</sup>
2. in His Martyrs, who gave their lives in service of the Gospel,<sup>16</sup>
3. in His men and women consecrated, who leave all things behind to be concrete signs of waiting for the Lord,<sup>17</sup>
4. in people of faith throughout the centuries, “who have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness,”<sup>18</sup>
5. and to us who live now for Christ and as His witnesses in the world.<sup>19</sup>

Improving our knowledge of the history of the Catholic faith comes through prayer and study, read-

12. CCC para 25

13. Porta Fidei para 13

14. Porta Fidei para 13 E

15. Porta Fidei para 13 F

16. Porta Fidei para 13 G

17. Porta Fidei para 13 H

18. Porta Fidei para 13 I

19. Porta Fidei para 13 J

ing and learning from the Magisterium, as well as from solid teachers and texts about Scripture, Church history, the lives of the saints, and major figures in Catholic life (past and present).

### 5. The Witness of Charity

“Above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14). Since faith and charity support each other, the Year of Faith should be directed towards intensifying the witness of charity.<sup>20</sup> **The evidence of our faith is found in the way that we love as Christ loved**, that we serve as Christ served. Our faith must be witnessed and supported by our actions.<sup>21</sup> The Church’s concrete witness to charity in truth has been and continues to be a vibrant light for a secular world that doubts we can “serve without counting the cost.”<sup>22</sup> During this Year of Faith, individuals, parishes, apostolates and movements are called to clearly witness charity in truth through service in Christ’s name.

### 6. Fostering Vocations

It is the call of each Christian to ardently “ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest” (Mt 9:38). In addition to our prayers, we – as parents, extended family, friends, teachers, coaches, group leaders, etc. – are called to foster vocations to the clergy and consecrated life by helping young people discern their calling to a state in life. Both through the love witnessed in the family and in our Church communities, youth and young adults gain the courage to listen for and accept God’s plan for their lives. Our Holy Father Benedict XVI reminds us that “families are not only the privileged place for human and Christian formation; they can also be “the primary and most excellent seed-bed of vocations to a life of consecration to the Kingdom of God.”<sup>23</sup> It is our hope that the home and parish be places “where vocations are carefully discerned and their authenticity tested, places where young men and women are offered wise and strong spiritual direction.”<sup>24</sup> During this Year of Faith, let us renew our efforts to pray and foster vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life in our homes and parish communities.

20. Porta Fidei para 14

21. Cf. Jas 2:14-18

22. Prayer of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

23. World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 2012

24. World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 2012

10. Papal Address on Sacrament of Confession March 12, 2012

11. Porta Fidei para 10

## Part Two: To Specific Groups

Recognizing the unique and varied roles of the faithful throughout the Diocese, we wish to identify some practical ways that each can participate in the Year of Faith, given their particular state of life.

### Marriage and Family Life

#### 1. To Married Couples

We would like to address our mothers and fathers, the leaders of the Domestic Church in our diocese,<sup>25</sup> the “first and abiding catechists” in teaching the faith to children. A trustworthy tradition in the Church, derived from the teaching of the great saint and Doctor of the Church, St. Augustine calls you the “regents” of your “little church” as husband and wife, father and mother. You are not called to a mediocre, passive existence in the Church. Rather, you have an indispensable mission in the New Evangelization. The often quiet and thankless mission of prayerfully building a home full of love and life, and bringing up your children to “know, love and serve God in this life and to be happy with Him forever in the next”<sup>26</sup> is not forgotten. It causes rejoicing in heaven, and in our own heart as your Bishops. **We wish this segment of the Year of Faith Pastoral Letter to encourage and challenge you personally.**

**There is no greater concern to the Church than the health and flourishing of her marriages and families.** Much confusion in our time is spread daily about the nature of marriage and the family, which is the first society created directly by God. In the first chapter of Genesis, we see the beautiful image of God shown in the creation of man as “male and female” (Gen 1:27). And we hear the blessing of God Himself who calls them to “be fruitful and multiply” (Gen 1:28) instituting the permanent, faithful, loving relationship of husband and wife. But this beautiful design instituted by God and His plan for marriage is so attacked, so ridiculed, so undermined, and so manipulated by forces within our society. Why? We must see here nothing less than a masterful spiritual attack from the “father of lies” (John 8:44), who deals in distortion, manipulation, and discouragement. Make no mistake; the Church defends marriage and the family, including its public definition in law, not because she is somehow determined to force her “private opinion” on all members of society. She has neither power nor desire to do this. Rather, the Church makes this lively and hope-filled defense in the humble confidence that she is defending God’s plan for His creation, and that no society can long survive the neglect of the family or the erosion of marriage.

#### The Ultrasound our world needs today

We are convinced that while we face difficult times in our Church, we are also on the cusp of a “new spring-time” for marriage and the family. How so? Here we wish to offer an analogy and a challenge. Much like the ultrasound which gives a couple the privilege of seeing their child “knit in the mother’s womb” (Ps 139:13), the domestic church offers a revelatory moment to society about the truth and beauty of God’s plan for marriage and the family. These truths about the dignity of human life and the sanctity of marriage are written on the heart, and lies can never hold in the face of the truth. Every human heart longs to know the truth, and many respond in respect and awe when the truth is revealed

in all its integrity and fullness. The ultrasound has given the pre-born human person his revelatory moment, much like the Domestic Church is called to witness in society to God’s faithfulness to His people, His abundant and fruitful love, and the goodness of His plan for marriage and the family.

In this Year of Faith, we need you, as the leaders of our domestic churches in the Diocese of Phoenix, to be an ultrasound for the truth of marriage and the family! As the “real presence” of the child on display in ultrasound images preaches the Gospel of Life clearly and convincingly – yet without words – we urge you to pray, to ask for God’s healing and miraculous intervention of peace and truth so that you and your family will inspire faith and will become more and more an “icon” of love and life in the world. You will in this way, little by little, be formed by our God, who is Love, into a beautiful, convincing work of art in the potter’s hands, radiating life and love. Lies and distortions, with which the evil one begins his work of destruction, will simply fall apart in the face of more marriages alive in Christ Jesus, radically open to the will of the Father, fueled by the Holy Spirit, and sacramentally saturated with grace in His Church.

In this Year of Faith, we urge you to reflect upon and pray more for your mission in the Domestic Church, especially how living this mission inspires faith in both your immediate and extended communities. Living this mission, you will be “caught up into Divine Love”<sup>27</sup> and be inheritors of the prophetic promise called for in the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, that “authentic conjugal love will be more highly prized, and wholesome public opinion created about it if Christian couples give outstanding witness to faithfulness and harmony in their love, and to their concern for educating their children.” In this way, **the Domestic Church will be for the “renewal on behalf of marriage and the family.”**<sup>28</sup>

Even in times of great difficulty and pain, in times of separation and strife, Christ is present to strengthen, heal, and enrich the vocation of marriage. Even tremendous difficulties of hurt, disillusionment, and economic hardships in marriage can, and indeed must be, embraced as Christ embraced the cross, out of covenantal love. This is the whole Christian difference. It is of vital and paradoxical significance that the altar at Mass has a crucifix present, the image which the world finds hopeless and a sign of failure. Yet in faith, we know our Lord’s crucifixion and death to be the moment of deepest victory. Your marriage, handling times of trial and suffering with grace and perseverance, will be for many the truest evidence of beauty, the real proof that Christian marriage is indeed “caught up into Divine Love” because it is built on rock, not sand (cf. Mat 7:24-29). Particularly in this Year of Faith, your very existence as married couples and families, especially in times of suffering, is a powerful sign of faithful love to the world.

Witnesses of the holiness and goodness of marriage may seem lacking in today’s society, but in every generation, heroic witnesses of marital and paternal fidelity shine brightly. Consider, for example, the love between Luis and Zélie Martin (the parents of St. Thérèse of Lisieux) whose witness of love modeled that of Christ for His Church, nurturing a simple and beautiful piety in their daughters who are now celebrated and imitated throughout the world. Consider, too, the love of Pier Luigi and Gianna Molla and the grace of the sacrament of marriage which sustained them throughout their trials, preparing them to make the ultimate sacrifice in order to bring their daughter into the world.

Every marriage will undergo difficulties. Therefore,



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we urge you to surround yourselves with other married couples, who can affirm the sacredness of this vocation. During this Year of Faith, reach out to new couples in your neighborhood, parish, and/or school(s) of your children. Seek help when difficulties arise - assistance from your pastor, from solid counselors who understand and defend the sacramental nature of marriage, and from programs provided at the diocesan and parish levels for the renewal and healing of marriage.

If you are not sacramentally married, we urge you to move toward a remedy for this during this Year of Faith by contacting your parish, and perhaps beginning the marriage preparation process. This process, recently strengthened in our Diocese, will help you to understand the richness and beauty of the call to Christian marriage, as well as your mission to bear witness in the world through a joy-filled marriage. In some life situations, such as divorce and remarriage without annulment of the previous union, it may be very difficult to hear and act on what is needed to remedy the matter. Please know that we are here for you, and encourage you to take the steps necessary to avail yourself of the riches God has prepared for you in the sacrament of Marriage.

#### Three Fundamental Helps to Parents

In this section, we wish to emphasize three areas which the “Giver of good gifts” (cf. Jas 1:17) offers to the leaders of the domestic church in order to strengthen them in their weekly walk of faith. Like all gifts, they must be unwrapped and used, and as the lead catechists of your home, your mission is to assure the unwrapping and the full and proper use of the gifts for your children. The parish is there to assist you, to be in solidarity with your work of evangelization and catechesis of your children, but it is your own sacred honor to assure your children’s education in the faith. None of these three gifts is novel, and none will surprise, but as air, food, and water are essential to the body, there are essentials to the spiritual life of the Catholic home. These three gifts are:

1. Keeping the Sabbath,
2. Establishing and protecting the Family Meal, and
3. Family Prayer.

#### Keeping the Lord’s Day

In many families today, there is a great need to **rediscover the sanctity of Sunday** and the keeping of the Sabbath. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “The Sunday Eucharist is the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice.”<sup>29</sup> Without regular Sunday worship, our life in Christ can barely survive, and our faith will suffer on many levels. From the beginning, God set aside one day of the week to be different from the others. He called it the Sabbath, and he intended it to be a day for rest and family worship.

29. CCC #2181

25. Lumen Gentium, para 11

26. Baltimore Catechism Question #6.

27. Gaudium et Spes, para 48

28. Gaudium et Spes, para 49



In his Apostolic Letter “The Day of the Lord,” Blessed John Paul II invited us to think more deeply about time itself in order to appreciate God’s gift of the Lord’s Day. He wrote,

*Do not be afraid to give your time to Christ! ...He is the One who knows the secret of time and the secret of eternity, and He gives us ‘His day’ as an ever new gift of His love. The rediscovery of this day is a grace which we must implore, not only so that we may live the demands of faith to the full, but also so that we may respond concretely to the deepest human yearnings. Time given to Christ is never time lost, but is rather time gained, so that our relationships and indeed our whole life may become more profoundly human.*<sup>30</sup>

Only the Maker of time can teach us time’s true meaning and fill every day with hope. He does this when we have the wisdom to place all our days, but especially our Sundays, in His hands with boundless trust. The family is the ideal place to learn the value and meaning of the Lord’s Day. What a difference Sunday makes when we make it a day of rest, a day free of unnecessary “busyness”, a day to accept Jesus’ invitation: “**Come away... and rest a while**” (Mk 6:31).

When Sunday is forgotten, and we are left only with a weekend, events become strictly entertaining or just an extension of work. As one author has observed, we can end up “amusing ourselves to death.” We no longer rest in the Lord’s presence, we no longer make the Eucharist the center of our lives; we just avoid boredom by incessant entertaining and a rat race of other activities. But it need not be so, and the family is the key to turning around the tragic loss of Sunday in society today.

When preserved as days of rest, Sundays bring a healthy rhythm to our lives, remind us of the value of both work and leisure, and renew our eagerness for spending eternity with the Lord who made us. Even more than being a day of rest, Sunday is a day of worship and joy. Our human need for rest is far surpassed by our need for genuine joy that only God can give. There is something profoundly exhilarating about celebrating the saving death and Resurrection of Jesus together with the parish family on the day Christ rose from the dead. During this Year of Faith, we pray that families throughout the Diocese will rediscover how to rejoice in the Lord on each Sabbath, as well as to discover rich new ways to keep the Lord’s Day sacred and spent together as a family.

## Family Meal Time

It is often said that marriage and family life are hard work. This notion, while not untrue, can make family life seem like nothing but a burden. Keep in mind that time together is more fundamental than “hard work.” Like all relationships, our relationship with God and our relationship with others, family relationships only thrive when time is spent together. It should not surprise us that social science points to the family dinner table as a key to family unity and to children’s success.<sup>31</sup>

Every family meal can help to strengthen the family bond. It is an opportunity for prayer and catechesis, renewing the closeness of bonds, hearing stories of the day, discussing important topics, sharing life wisdom, learning old traditions and making new ones, and simply enjoying each others’ presence. A Doctor of the Church from the 4th century, St. John Chrysostom, who preached to parents in another challenging culture, saw the family table as an ideal setting for leading children in the faith and inviting the Holy Spirit in a deeper way:

*When you go home from here, lay out with your meal a spiritual meal as well... In short, that the household*

*might become a church, so that the devil is driven off and that evil spirit, the enemy of our salvation, takes to flight; the grace of the Holy Spirit would rest there instead, and all peace and harmony would surround the inhabitants.*<sup>32</sup>

The cumulative effect of the daily meal over time brings with it several long-term benefits. As you participate in the Year of Faith, we strongly urge you to rediscover the joy and beauty of the family meal, to make every sacrifice necessary in order to share more meals together as a family, and to work towards making this a daily habit in your home.

## Praying Together



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Few statements are more true than the axiom, “**The family that prays together stays together.**” The family that prays together learns how to weep together, to rejoice together, to face difficulties together, to forgive each other, and to love one another. Since prayer directs our attention to God, it enables us to turn to God in all the various moments of daily life, both as individuals and as a family.

During this Year of Faith, you are again invited to make family prayer a priority in your lives. The rewards of this are peace, unity, and joy that reach beyond this world. We encourage all families to use three simple ways to grow in prayer:

1. Attend Sunday Mass together as a family, making this connection to the Church and her communion an immovable element of your family’s week, and where possible, Mass on other days during the week.
2. Pray the Rosary with deeper devotion so that with Mary, our Lord’s first disciple and our spiritual mother, we will gaze with love upon her dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Adopt or continue mealtime prayer, before and after meals.

For more inspiration and ideas on prayer and life as a domestic church, we encourage you to visit the Year of Faith website: [www.catholicfamilyprayer.org](http://www.catholicfamilyprayer.org)

During this Year of Faith, we want to express our gratitude to you as parents, and we want you to know how grateful we are for your continued witness of faith in the Diocese of Phoenix. We applaud your efforts to build a domestic church in your home, your openness to the gift of life in your marriages, your generosity of service to others in need when children do not naturally come, as in the painful case of infertility. Our prayerful support and collaboration are with you every day. In this Year of Faith, renew your trust in the Lord, lead your families in the faith, and know “that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil 1:6).

## 2. To the Elderly

In this Year of Faith, we remind our elder brothers

and sisters in Christ of the tremendous opportunities to enrich their lives, deepen their love for Christ, and sharpen their awareness of God’s presence always available to us. While life in its later stages presents new and often difficult challenges, **the graces provided to us never diminish**, nor does our call to participate with God’s grace in the mystery of the Cross – a participation for our salvation and the salvation of others (cf. Luke 9:23). In a particular way, these final years draw us closer to God, call us to be ever more grateful for all we have received, and challenge us to share the gifts God has given us with great love and conviction.

We remind each of you, that while the challenges of old age may diminish our mental or physical ability, our dignity as a beloved son or daughter of God will never diminish. And as we enter the twilight of our life, new and richer opportunities will come to further realize our dignity as persons. During this special Year, continue to be strong witnesses of faith, hope, and love, by accepting the challenges that may come and finding new opportunities to serve God more selflessly through prayer for others. When we retire and grow older, we can commit even more time to praying for our families, friends, neighbors, and the Church, as well as offering up our suffering for others. As we approach the end of our earthly life, we need not be afraid. We can find courage and strength in knowing “that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Throughout the Year of Faith, we ask you in humility to remember to offer special prayers for the Bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated religious, seminarians, engaged and married couples, families, as well as for vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life, and to married life.

## 3. To the Youth

In this Year of Faith, we call on the Youth in a particular way to take ownership of their faith, to seek the truth and to be heroic witnesses of the truth, and to bring the Good News of God’s incredible love to your peers and family. Youth brings with it a beautiful dignity, an expression of wonder and trust that should not be lost as you enter into adulthood. The Sacred Scriptures remind us of the dignity and important role youth play in God’s plan of salvation. God speaks to each of us these marvelous words: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you” (Jer 1:5). Trust in God’s unfailing love for you, and His plan for your happiness, fulfillment, and salvation that can only come from following His will for your life. Get to know or call to mind again the many great saints, who modeled the love of Christ in their service to others in both large and small ways. **The world today is in desperate need of youthful witnesses of the evangelical virtues, faith, hope, and charity**, witnesses such as Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati, Blessed Chiara Luce Badano, and St. Kateri Tekakwitha.

Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati is an excellent witness of faith because his love and defense of the faith only strengthened his intellect and character. He found in faith not a rejection of reason, but a sincere embrace of it and of both the physical and spiritual realities that encompass the human person. Listen again to his words of wisdom: “To live without faith, without a patrimony to defend, without a steady struggle for truth, that is not living, but existing.”<sup>33</sup> Dear young people, we call on each of you in this Year of Faith not just to exist, but truly to live and to be authentic witnesses of faith.

Bl. Chiara Luce Badano is an exceptional model of enduring hope because despite falling ill in the prime of her youth, she maintained a joy and peace that continued through her suffering until the very moment of her death at the young age of 18. Her simple yet authentic

30. Para #7

31. Gibbs, Nancy; “The Magic of the Family Meal”; Time Magazine, June 2006. Several studies cited.

32. St. John Chrysostom Homily 2 on Genesis 13

33. Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, Letter to a friend February 27, 1925

witness to the love of Christ led to the conversion many of her doctors and caregivers who found in her joy a profound proclamation of Christ's victory over death. St. Paul tells us that "since we have such hope, we act very boldly," (2 Cor 3:12) and in the face of difficulty and suffering, we can be steadfast in our trust of God's love and plan for each of us, serving as a beacon of hope to all those who are yet to know Christ. Together, we can stand with joy in Christ like Blessed Chiara, against the culture of death while proclaiming a culture of life in all we say and do, among our friends, at our workplace, in our homes, and at school.

St. Kateri Tekakwitha is an unparalleled American example of courage and love for Christ which compelled her to care for those in the most desperate of conditions. Her witness of charity, to the sick and dying in Sault Saint-Louis, Canada, was always in service to the truth; the truth of our human dignity, the truth of our redemption in Christ, and the truth that we are God's hands and feet in this world. She understood that "to defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity."<sup>34</sup>

We urge you, dear young friends in Christ, to ardently study our Catholic faith in this special Year, and to ask the essential questions of life so that you may "always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope" (1 Peter 3:15). Do not hesitate to hope boldly in God's plan for your life, and to seek His will for you daily in prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments of Holy Communion and Confession. Don't be afraid to love as Christ loved, to seek authentic live-giving relationships with your peers and colleagues, and to find ways to serve in Christ's name.

## The Clergy and Consecrated Life

### 4. To Priests

In this Year of Faith, the Church encourages her priests to foster a more passionate love for the Lord through personal spiritual renewal and faithful service of God and His people, especially in the celebration of the Sacraments. Following the example of Christ Himself, we have been called to give our very lives for the salvation of souls. This becomes possible only after having a personal encounter with the living Christ and when continuing to cherish that treasure.

The Year of Faith offers each of us an opportunity to deepen our longing for holiness of life. This will take place through: increased prayer, Eucharistic adoration, faithfully praying the Liturgy of the Hours, celebrating the sacraments with greater attentiveness and care (most especially the sacrifice of the Mass), and through generously and more frequently making ourselves available for hearing confessions. Let us enter into this Year of Faith with an increased desire to grow closer to Christ through our life and ministry. **Our mission to evangelize** and to heal the culture, to be ministers of charity and hope, **depends upon an intimate closeness to the Lord**, and our own faithfulness to this relationship will serve as powerful and inspiring examples during this Year of Faith.

Brother priests, who share with us the duty and honor of serving Christ as priests in the 21st century, there are two priorities that the Holy Father has encouraged us to address in the New Evangelization. Both are useful for us to contemplate as we prepare ourselves and our diocese for the Year of Faith: First, promotion of the sacrament of Confession, and second, prayer as a school of hope.

On the Sacrament of Confession, Pope Benedict, while meeting with priests and bishops in Rome, spoke about "the close connection between holiness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation,"<sup>35</sup> recalling how our great saints in the Church bear witness to this sure path to sanctity. This Sacrament of mercy begins with a sincere look at one's actual condition in life, followed by a recognition of our need for the love and forgiveness of Jesus, and then a lifting of our eyes to the face of Christ and confession of our sins. If we are open to His grace, the Holy Spirit stirs up within each of us "a profound desire: the desire for change, the desire for mercy and, ultimately, the desire for an encounter with Christ."



Because of the deeply personal nature of the Sacrament of Penance, it has the power to bring each of us into a profound communion with the Lord Jesus in all His tenderness and compassion. This is why, Pope Benedict says, "The New Evangelization begins in the Confessional." Where else is despair so soundly defeated as in the sincere confession of our sins? Where else are our deepest fears overcome, our deepest doubts dispelled, and our deepest thirsts quenched? The New Evangelization begins in the Confessional, because it begins when, as St. Augustine said, "mercy meets misery." The confessional is where Christ meets us sinners.

Secondly, in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, Pope Benedict writes: "A first essential setting for learning hope is prayer." **Prayer truly is a school of hope.** When we priests pray with our people, when we continue to pray in tragedy and in hardship, we help them and also ourselves to be wiser than despair. The Holy Father also tells us, "One who has hope lives differently." What a difference it makes to believe in the love of God. What a difference it makes to receive and to minister God's mercy in the Confessional. What a difference it makes to be united in prayer in the Eucharist.

My brother priests, please join me in recommitting ourselves during this Year of Faith, resolved once again to making the Eucharistic Sacrifice the center of every day, and to spending a generous portion of each week in the Confessional. With Christ alive in our hearts, we can bring glad tidings to the poor, be wiser than despair, and be faithful witnesses to the Lord Jesus for the people we have the privilege to serve. The fruits of this commitment will inspire, (re)awaken, and increase the faith of our people who have been entrusted to our care and guidance.

### 5. To Deacons

In the Acts of the Apostles (6:1-7), we see that with a growing community, the Apostles needed helpers to assist them by taking care of the widows and the orphans. Here in the Diocese of Phoenix, we are very blessed with men of great faith who have responded so generously to God's call to holiness and the Church's call to serve as deacons. During this Year of Faith, we are newly grateful to God for our deacons engaged in

a variety of pastoral settings: administering parishes, visiting the sick and the elderly, visiting the prisoners, working among the outcasts and forgotten, bringing the charity of Christ to our Native Peoples, witnessing the Sacrament of Marriage, administering the Sacrament of Baptism, preaching the Word of God at Liturgical celebrations and Holy Mass, catechizing the faithful, and many other roles of charitable service. Your tireless efforts and consistent dedication offer a unique witness in this Year of Faith.

During this special Year, we ask all Deacons throughout the Diocese to commit to renewed efforts of evangelization of our culture and to outreach to the materially poor and the poorly catechized. In your vocation as deacons, strive to engage all persons and all your work **with the same passion, love, and zeal as the deacons of the early Church**, bearing witness to Christ in both word and deed.

We encourage you also to meditate on the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary, and especially on how Jesus, by seeking not to be served but to serve, brought the light of faith, hope, and charity into the world. Throughout this Year of Faith, contemplate further how you are called to be channels of the luminous presence of Christ in today's world. When you pray the Luminous Mysteries of the rosary, reflect on the life of Christ and on your own life as a Deacon in service to the faithful:

► *The First Luminous Mystery, "The Baptism in the Jordan": As you prepare families for baptism and as you celebrate baptisms you are in a privileged position to help parents and children to discover anew the life and light that come from Christ and His Gospel. Never underestimate the many graces that God pours forth at every Baptism through your sacred ministry.*

► *The Second Luminous Mystery, "The Wedding of Cana": When you assist couples in their preparation for Holy Matrimony and when you officially witness marriages in the name of the Church, remember that Jesus worked His first miracle at the Wedding Feast of Cana. Let this inspire you to help these couples look beyond the wedding ceremony and enter into a life-long sacrament in which the love of Christ for His Bride the Church shines forth in mutual love.*

► *The Third Luminous Mystery, "Jesus Proclaims the Kingdom of God": You are Heralds of the Gospel. You share in the Church's mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. As Jesus brought new light into the world through His preaching, so too do you bear witness to Christ in your teaching, preaching and catechesis. Be ever mindful of the power of God's word to transform our lives and the lives of those we serve.*

► *The Fourth Luminous Mystery, "The Transfiguration": When the first disciples were tempted to despair, the Lord Jesus took some of them up a mountain and was transfigured before them so that their faith might be strengthened. Your faith too is strengthened by your encounter with Christ through ordination. Stay always close to Him and you will find the grace to be beacons of hope for all, especially for the least of the Kingdom. Remember always, when serving those affected by loss and tragedy, to point them to Christ, the source of our hope.*

► *The Fifth Luminous Mystery, "The Institution of the Eucharist": As a deacon you are privileged to assist the priest at the altar of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this most public role you are witnesses of Christ's humble gift of Himself. May this mystery inspire you to live an intensely Eucharistic life of generous service.*

We are deeply grateful for you, our brothers in the faith, who serve alongside the Bishops and priests in your unique ministry of Word, Altar, and Charity. During this Year of Faith, may all of us come to a greater understanding of your roles as servants of the mysteries of Christ and of your brothers and sisters. May your humble service always reflect the light of Christ to all.

34. Caritas in Veritate, para 1.

35. Ad Limina Visit March 9th 2012



## 6. To Consecrated Women and Men

In this Year of Faith, we call on consecrated brothers and sisters to listen again to the powerful words from Benedict XVI during his visit to the United States:

*You, dear men and women religious, both contemplative and apostolic, have devoted your lives to following the divine Master in generous love and complete devotion to his Gospel... By your personal witness and your fidelity to the ministry or apostolate entrusted to you, you prepare a path for the Spirit. For the Spirit never ceases to pour out his abundant gifts to awaken new vocations and missions, and to guide the Church, as Our Lord promised... into the fullness of truth.”(cf. Jn 16:13)*

The Holy Father goes on to ask those in Consecrated Life to “be the first to demonstrate the humility and purity of heart which are required to approach the splendor of God’s truth.” The tradition of this way of life is to be the “first friend of the poor, the homeless, the stranger, the sick, and all who suffer;”...to be... “beacons of hope casting the light of Christ upon the world and encouraging young people to discover the beauty of a life given completely to the Lord and his Church.” You are, in your daily life and witness, beacons of hope for our Diocese. Echoing the words of the Holy Father in a special message given to new members in Consecrated Life, we too exhort you: “Never forget that you are called to carry on, with all the enthusiasm and joy that the Spirit has given you, a work that others have begun, a legacy that one day you too will have to pass on to a new generation. Work generously and joyfully, for he whom you serve is the Lord!”<sup>36</sup>

Thank you for your years of faithful service to the Diocese of Phoenix and beyond. During this Year of Faith, may you come to a greater understanding and renewed enthusiasm for your indispensable witness to Christ. Through the many charisms and ministries of education, pastoral care, prison, parish, and healthcare, **you live out the words of Jesus found in Matthew 25:31-46**, and in you, we continue to see the face of the living Christ.

## The Church Engaging the World

### 7. To the Catholic Faithful working in secular fields

As the Church marks with gratitude the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, we remember the important call of the Council fathers for the laity to be engaged in the temporal order for the sake of the Kingdom of God.<sup>37</sup> As professionals in health care, law, engineering, education, and other professions, as laborers and skilled tradespeople, you make the Church present and operative through your service to others, working “for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven.”<sup>38</sup> As Catholics, your vocation directly advances the ministry of the Church in the world: to heal the sick, to defend the most vulnerable, to educate and catechize the culture on the dignity of the human person. By living lives of personal and professional integrity, you are called to bear witness to the Gospel always; “In this way you may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life

resplendent in faith, hope and charity.”<sup>39</sup> The zeal to bear witness to Christ is born from love, nurtured by prayer and frequent reception of the sacraments, and propelled by cooperation with the Holy Spirit. You are called to courageous virtue, and must prepare yourselves to be credible witnesses to Christ’s joy and peace that comes from knowing and living for Him. During this Year of Faith, may you have a new awareness of your important role in renewing the temporal order and joyfully participate in witnessing Christ to the world. May you be ever more “**conscious of the dignity of human work** which can never be in end to itself” but always points to a participation in our redemption.<sup>40</sup> May you look to St. Joseph and our Blessed Mother and all the saints as models of strength and joy, and pray always for the grace and strength to persevere.

### 8. To Educators and Catechists

Bl. John XXIII called Vatican II in order to strengthen and defend the deposit of faith and the truth of the human person.<sup>41</sup> Educators have a privileged place to form young minds in the discovery of the natural world and the study of God’s creation. Education in the Catholic tradition is never just solely intellectual, nor solely spiritual. Seeking to form the whole person, mind and soul, educators and catechists play an essential role in the authentic development of the human person. **During this Year of Faith, we invite educators to rediscover the joy of teaching, and to find with those you teach the blest excitement of discovering the truths of this world.** We invite catechists to teach more confidently the truths of our faith, especially those most often misunderstood and rejected, as well as to seek for yourselves a deeper, more fervent knowledge, appreciation, and love for the deposit of faith which you join us in proclaiming and defending. May you find fresh energy for witnessing to Christ through fidelity to daily prayer, devotion to the Mother of God, and renewed appreciation of the truth that Christ has entrusted to us in the Church.

### 9. To Non-Believers

It is with an open and a humble heart that the Church extends a special invitation in this Year of Faith to non-believers, and to all those who are seeking answers to the questions inherent in the human experience, especially those that touch on faith and the meaning of life.

The fundamental questions about identity (“Who am I?”), about origin (“Where did I come from?”), about destiny (“Where am I going?”), about purpose (“Why am I here?”), and about morality (“How am I to live?”) demand answers. It is precisely on these questions that the Catholic Church offers to the world a uniquely holistic understanding of man made in the image and likeness of God, both rational and free. By seeking the profoundly **important truths of our origin and destiny**, we can begin to understand our trajectory in life and how we are to live. We also acknowledge, however, that “although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known.”<sup>42</sup> This obligation to seek the truth and adhere to it is the starting point of all authentic dialogue. Through her 2,000-year heritage, the Catholic faithful have asked these questions and sought to answer them through a dialogue between faith and reason. Faith and reason are not mutually exclusive, nor should they be separated. They are the “two wings on which the human

spirit rises to the contemplation of truth.”<sup>43</sup> Through reason, we can observe the ordered world around us and posit the existence of a Creator. Through reason, we can observe the intricate design of life, and the intended plan for its promotion and continuation. Through reason, we can observe the “how” and the “what” of the physical universe. However, we also seek deeper answers that are demanded by reason. The “whys” of the physical and meta-physical universe are answered not by ignoring them, but answering them through the lens of faith. It is through this marriage of faith and reason that a complete holistic answer of the human person and our purpose on earth can be truly discovered. The Church bears this constantly in mind, and it carries a timeless truth which speaks to the heart of the human person and his place in God’s creation. From its inception, the Catholic Church has been charged with the mission of bringing the good news of Jesus Christ into dialogue with all people, in all times and places (cf. Mt 28:19-20). This mission is an essential component not only of what the Church does, but of who she is,<sup>44</sup> and for this reason it is our wish to embrace, always and everywhere, the opportunity to enter into authentic dialogue with those of our fellow men and women who, though non-believers, are seeking after the truth.

We pray that in this Year of Faith, there will be an increased awareness of the important role faith has played – and continues to play – in mankind’s search for beauty, truth, and goodness. Throughout this special year, may all men and women of good will seek answers to these fundamental questions and along with the Church profess the Good News of God’s unfailing love for His creation.

## Conclusion

What brought the greatest sorrow to the heart of our Savior, especially when He returned to His hometown of Nazareth, was the people’s lack of faith. He came into our world to reveal the love of the Father and to restore hope to a world weighed down by the despair and burdened by sin. He came that we might have life and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). But He will not force us to accept His love and His gift of hope. **He will only invite us to open the door when He knocks**, to accept through faith all the many the gifts of the Kingdom that lasts forever. You and I have received this great gift, a treasure beyond all imaginings, and we must not hide it under a bushel basket. As our Holy Father says, “Today, too, there is a need for stronger ecclesial commitment to new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith... Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy.”<sup>45</sup> May this Year of Faith make us more like the Blessed Virgin Mary, of whom Elizabeth said (Lk 1:45): “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

**Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

*Thomas J. Olmsted*

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Bishop of Phoenix

*Eduardo A. Nevares*

+ Eduardo A. Nevares  
Auxiliary Bishop of Phoenix

36. All quotes taken from the homily of Benedict XVI at St. Patrick’s April 19, 2008.

37. Lumen Gentium, para 31, Apostolicam Actuositatem 5.

38. Lumen Gentium, para 31

39. Ibid

40. Paul VI, Feast of the Holy Family Homily, Jan 5th 1964

41. Address of Pope John XXIII at the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council, October 11, 1962. Council Daybook p. 25.

42. Veritatis Splendor, para 34

43. Fides et Ratio Introduction

44. cf. CCC, para. 849 and Redemptoris Missio, para. 3

45. Porta Fidei, para 7