

October 11, 2012
Year of Faith Homily
Noon Little Flower
Msgr. Peter J. Vaghi

At long last the “Year of Faith,” called by Pope Benedict XVI, has begun! Unlike the individual in today’s Gospel who, upon being asked to open his door and give his friend three loaves of bread telling him “the door has already been locked,” the door of faith is open. It is always open and especially during this year.

In his Apostolic Letter (“Porta Fidei”) given a year ago announcing this Year of Faith, Pope Benedict, referring to the English translation of the latin title of the Apostolic Letter—“Door of Faith”—stated that “to enter through that door is

to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime,” a journey that began on the day of our baptisms. He repeatedly speaks of the need this specific year to recover the joy of our faith. He writes as well that “we must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples.” That means regular participation at Holy Mass, especially on Sundays, and with our families and grandchildren. And it is deepened by periods of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed and Benediction as we have organized on every First Friday afternoon during this Year of Faith.

Yes, this is the designated year to accept the challenge to see and embrace our

faith as a lifetime journey, one that should give us deep joy. Each of us has entered the door of faith, and now in this special year, we have a chance with the Church throughout the whole world and with each other as members of our parish to rediscover its power and beauty and the life-giving nature of our faith. The door is not locked to us.

And our special challenge as we rediscover the beauty of our faith and as we grow in faith—to share it with others. This is the opportunity that the New Evangelization, a term we have often heard, presents to us—to discover the faith anew, to become more and more converted to Christ Jesus and in experiencing His never ending love for us, to share that love with those we meet, those we live with, those with whom we

work and recreate. At Rome a few days ago Cardinal Dolan, speaking of the New Evangelization in this Year of Faith, said that sacramental confession is the “primary sacrament of the new evangelization.”

Pope Benedict repeatedly underscores that “the Year of Faith...is a summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the one Savior of the Lord.” And the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Penance, this primary sacrament of the New Evangelization, makes that possible. And that leads moreover to a deeper growth in 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.” And the Sacrament of Reconciliation makes that possible.

On this specific day, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the feast day of Blessed John XXIII, who called the Vatican Council.

How do we deepen our faith during this year? What is the basis of our efforts at evangelization? Benedict suggests two specific ways. First, the Pope underscores the importance of taking a fresh look at the teachings of the Second Vatican Council as appropriately and authentically interpreted during the last three papacies—looking at the letter of the 16 texts and drawing from them its authentic spirit. On First Thursday at

Little Flower, I will help walk us through some of the more essential and hopefully spiritually enriching contributions of Vatican Council II. Second, Pope Benedict speaks of the Catechism of the Catholic Church as “an authentic fruit of the Second Vatican Council.” I have written four books in the last years that reflect on each of the four pillars of the Catechism—the creed, the commandments, the moral life and prayer. They are available in the rectory as a tool hopefully to deepen your understanding of the Catechism and our precious Catholic Faith.

Thus as Pope Benedict said at Rome this morning at the opening homily at the Year of Faith: “This, then, is how we can picture the Year of Faith: a pilgrimage in the deserts of today’s world, taking with

us only what is necessary: neither staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, nor two tunics – as the Lord said to those he was sending out on mission (cf. Lk 9:3), but the Gospel and the faith of the Church, of which the Council documents are a luminous expression, as is the Catechism of the Catholic Church, published twenty years ago.”

To conclude: I hope to make this year a special year to deepen my own faith as a priest and I hope you will also. The Gospel today speaks of the need for persistence in our efforts. As your pastor, I am committed to helping you deepen your faith this year and I ask you to help each other. I ask you to commit with me today that each of us

pray daily that this “Year of Faith” might be a great grace for our families and parish and the universal church. It is an inspiration of our Holy Father, an inspiration for sure guided by the Holy Spirit to enrich our Church and our individual journeys of faith. It will not and thus cannot fail with such divine inspiration and motivation. For “I tell you, ask and you will receive, seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” I speak of the door of faith. God bless you all.

AMEN

