



Family Light

The Family That Prays Together Stays Together™

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION

ENTERING THROUGH THE DOOR OF FAITH...

It's a beautiful opportunity as we begin the Year of Faith on 11 October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and it will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on 24 November 2013 (*Porta Fidei*, No. 3). We may ask ourselves what it is all about. The journey of faith starts on the day of our Baptism when our parents and godparents made their commitment to transmit faith to us. Last year when I baptized a child surrounded by the child's parents, godparents, family members and friends of the family, it was a moving experience of faith for the family. The child would begin to trust its parents, siblings, grandparents and family members and slowly begin to trust in God. There comes the grace filled time when one begins to profess his/her faith by saying: "I Believe".

Faith is a personal commitment which is between an individual and the divine. It's one's journey. The parents play a big role in transmitting faith to their children. Parents may find it hard when they need to journey with their adolescent children. How we live our faith has a more profound effect on our children than what we say to them about our beliefs. I remember reading the following story recently: *Troubled by the fact that his neighbor was a non-believer, John decided to send him a Bible hoping that he would read the Bible and believe. To his horror, the neighbor threw the Bible in the dustbin. Angry as he was, John confronted his neighbor regarding his behavior. To his surprise, the neighbor's response made John think: "You are the Bible, I am learning to read from you for the last ten years."*

The foundation of our faith is based on a belief in, and commitment to, the person of Jesus Christ. The encounter with Christ when we pass through the door of faith will strengthen our faith in Him, in the Father

and in the Spirit. *Family Light* in the coming four issues will deal with the year of faith and help you to meet Christ and share that experience of the "leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12: 2). Faith is both a personal and a communal act: it is a gift from God that is lived in the communion of the Church and must be communicated to the world.

The Year of Faith is a "call to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord" (*Porta Fidei*, 6). In other words, the Year of Faith is an opportunity for families to experience a conversion to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The "door of faith" is opened at one's baptism, but during this year we are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew our relationship with Christ and his Church.

An appropriate observance of the Year of Faith can enable families to root themselves in Scripture. Jesus sent the Apostles saying: "Go out to the whole world." Hence, in every moment and in every place the Church has the obligation to proclaim, with perseverance, the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The family is the domestic church which has the obligation to proclaim. This was also the conviction of the Fathers of Vatican II and, precisely because of this, an evangelizing thrust began from the Council. Today, 50 years later, much has changed and it is good to give a new dimension to this thrust.

"...They called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith" (Acts 14: 27). May the Lord whom we encounter during this year open the door of faith to us.

Fr. Arul Raj Gali, CSC Director

"But we are those who have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2: 16)

TOWARDS RECEIVING THE FREE GIFT OF 'THE MIND OF CHRIST'

We discovered early in our married years that both of us have been blessed with a love for the Word of God. Since then God provided us plenty of opportunities to learn and share the Word of God among ourselves, in small-groups and in several seminars and retreats. Jesus says in Mathew's Gospel (12: 34b) that from 'out of the abundance of heart the mouth speaks'. Yes, as we continued our journey together as husband and wife, as parents in our home situations, family gatherings, and in our work situations, we found ourselves expressing "we have the mind of Christ".

On our part, we continue to read-pray daily the readings of the Church from the Bible or from the annual publication by St. Paul's or the Claretians. We also enjoy reading daily, according to the year, the Vision, Mission, and Action booklets written by Fr. Mark Link. S.J, also a St. Paul's Publication. Very often we share among ourselves and with our near ones how we experience the guidance of the Word in our day-to-day situations, and also the encouragement and confirmation we get in such situations. We are blessed that we are able to attend the Holy Mass every day. Thanks be to God that the Word of God, for us, is becoming an integral part of our being and living.

The Mind of Christ and Family Prayer

When our children were with us, our family prayer time had always been a very joyful experience. The children prepared daily a roller board with a Bible reading, hymn numbers, and during the prayer time the children felt free to share and we both did a lot of listening and affirming before we shared. One of the boys played on the guitar. In addition, often we found that certain experiences of any one of us, when shared and listened to,

ended with a prayer asking God for His grace to obey His guidance that emerged. Eventually each of our children developed a love for the Word of God and experienced tremendous personal strength and guidance.

Mind of Christ and Couple power

- For over twenty-five years, we enjoyed animating a 'Cell Group' which also functioned as a 'Support group'.
- We were also involved in several training programs for youth, couples, and teachers.
- Now, for the past 7 years, we both are doing honorary service in Bangalore Community College and we take about fifty poor, tenth failed students. Each one of us does the work which the Lord gives him to do... The one who plants and the one who waters really do not matter. It is God who matters, because he makes the plant grow (Ref. 1 Corinthians 3: 5, 7). This passage assures us that God can do great things with the seeds we sow in the minds and hearts of the young people He gives us each year.

We see, therefore, that our ministry is to love and guide the students, love training them, and love the subjects we teach. This is not easy, because we don't get to see the fruit of our efforts. But our faith in the Word inspires us to keep focusing on our efforts and constantly innovate our teaching-learning-testing strategies. And we just enjoy the journey with the students and make the learning environment as conducive to learning as possible. We believe the seeds we sow is our gift back to God in gratitude for God's gift to us.

Albert & Rosalind, Bangalore.

INVITATION

This bulletin is sent to you four times a year, free of charge. Those of you who wish to offer some contribution to help us meet the cost of publication and mailing are welcomed to send their offerings to the following address by cheque or money order.
The Fathers of Holy Cross, 294, 3rd Cross, 6th Main Road, Vivekanagar, Bangalore - 560 047.

'FAITH' FULLY YOURS...

Recently on a train travel I met a couple who had been married seven years. During the brief conversation they referred to something in their married life which had almost ruined their relationship. Though they did not, understandably, reveal everything, one could reasonably surmise that it had to do with some issue of infidelity. And that the vulnerable one, in their case, was the woman. What struck me was the way they kept referring to that experience.

They spoke of it as a spiritual experience where they discovered the true meaning of Faith. They said they discovered what it means to trust in each other and what it means to trust in a higher power to keep their commitment. The vulnerability opened the eyes of the woman to a hitherto unfelt need of a spiritual support to keep her commitment. And when the man discovered the vulnerability of his wife the whole issue of trusting his wife took on an altogether new dimension. The miracle is how they came out stronger through that experience. Stories such as these remind us faith has a very deep experiential dimension in our daily life. Faith is what keeps us going, what gives meaning to our lives. Take that out of our life and it can render life purposeless.

Expressions of faith can take many forms in our daily lives. An expression of faith is an expression of trust and of commitment. Attending Mass on a regular basis becomes an expression of faith when it is an expression of one's trust in the Lord, more so when the entire family goes together to the church. Similarly, observing a moment of prayer before the meals, gratefully remembering God, is an expression of faith and trust in a God who, we believe, enables us to put some food on our table.

Letting the others in the family know about one's programs/activities of the day, being sensitive to the needs of others in the family, sharing one's joys and sorrows with the family members at an emotional level, ensuring that one is present with his/her family members for the family meal, gathering together on a regular basis for a few minutes of prayer, forgiving another for a fault, ... all these are expressions of faith in a God whose love we share with each other. Very often it is through our

children, siblings, parents and spouse that we learn how compassionate and loving our God is. It is by showing in our life how loving our God has been to us that we truly express our faith. So, faith is not entirely a personal affair, but faith makes one like a lighthouse a lamp on a hill. The stronger is one's faith, the more he/she becomes an inspiring source of light to others. It won't be long before he/she discovers that others, including one's children, want a slice of that light for themselves.

Let this year of faith enable each of us to become bearers of faith and express it in the realities of daily life. For those of us who may look for ways to grow in faith together as a family, the following suggested activities may help.

1. Read the life of one saint and reflect on it together.
2. Read a parable from a Gospel and reflect on its meaning.
3. Make sure the children know the Apostles Creed and the Our Father by heart.
4. Get next Sunday's Mass Readings and have them read and reflected on in advance as a family.
5. Ask everyone to choose a favorite saint, and share with others why he/she is his/her favorite saint.
6. As a family, visit an orphanage or a shelter run by the Missionaries of Charity and spend time with the inmates/children. After you are back home, sit together and reflect on the experience.
7. Gather as a family and, beginning with the eldest, share your experiences of the day. Conclude the sharing with praying the Rosary as a family. Offer each decade of the rosary for the intentions of each member of the family.
8. Pray the rosary as a family. At the beginning of each decade of the rosary, one member makes a prayer for another member of the family. No one prays for his/her own needs, and ensure that everyone's needs are covered in the entire five decades.

Shiju Edassery, CSC

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE YEAR OF FAITH

Here are some recommendations for the Year of Faith adapted from a Note of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The Year of Faith will begin on 11 October 2012 and will conclude on 24 November 2013, the Solemnity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King. These recommendations are addressed specially to Catholic families in the Church.

- Read a short passage from the Gospel every day with your family.
- Recognize the special role of Mary in the mystery of salvation, to love her and follow her as a model of faith and virtue.
- Take part in symposia, conferences and large gatherings to encourage encounters with authentic witness to the faith and to promote understanding of the contents of Catholic doctrine, especially the teachings of Vatican II.
- Deepen your knowledge of the primary documents of Vatican Council II and of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This is especially true for those in a period of discernment for joining an Ecclesial Association or Movement.
- More attentive reception of the homilies, catechesis, addresses and other speeches and documents of the Holy Father.
- Take part in ecumenical initiatives aimed at the restoration of unity among all Christians.
- Dedicate a day of study to the topic of faith, its personal witness and its transmission to new generations.
- Read the lives of local saints and blessed, the authentic witnesses of the faith.
- Take part in the celebration of the opening and the solemn conclusion of the Year of Faith in your parish or diocese.
- Participate in catechetical events, especially for young people and those seeking the meaning of life, to discover the beauty of ecclesial faith.
- Attend penitential celebrations in which all can ask for God's forgiveness, especially for sins against faith.
- Pay greater attention to Catholic schools, which are a perfect place to offer students a living witness to the Lord and to nurture their faith, using such instruments as the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and "Youcat".
- Read closely and meditate upon Pope Benedict XVI's Apostolic Letter, "Porta fidei".
- Intensify the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, in which the faith of the Church is proclaimed celebrated and strengthened. Participate in the Eucharist actively, fruitfully and with awareness.
- Help to distribute the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and other resources appropriate for families - the primary setting for the transmission of the faith - for example, during the blessing of homes, the Baptism of adults, Confirmation and Marriage.
- Take part in missions and other popular programs in parishes and in the workplace, to help the faithful rediscover the gift of baptismal faith and the task of giving witness.
- Try to communicate your own experience of faith and charity to your brothers and sisters of other religions, believers and non-believers. In this way, it is hoped that the entire Christian people will begin a kind of mission towards those with whom they live and work.

"The recommendations provided here have the goal of inviting all of the members of the Church to work so that this Year may be a special time in which we, as Christians, may share that which is most dear to us: Christ Jesus, the Redeemer of mankind"