



COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE NOTE OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH WITH PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE YEAR OF FAITH

January, 5 2012



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With his **Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*** of 11 October 2011, Benedict XVI declared a *Year of Faith*. It will begin on 11 October 2012, 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican Council II, and will conclude on 24 November 2013, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Universal King. The Holy Father's aim in promulgating this *Year* is to focus the attention of the Church on the theme which, since the beginning of his Pontificate, has been closest to his heart: the encounter with Jesus Christ and the beauty of having faith in Him. The Church is well aware of the problems facing the faith and feels impelled by the question Jesus Himself raised: «When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?» (*Lk 18: 8*). Therefore, «if faith does not take on new life, deep conviction and real strength from the encounter with Jesus Christ, then all other reforms will remain ineffective» (*Christmas address to the Roman Curia*, 22 December 2011).

By order of Benedict XVI, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has prepared a **Note with pastoral recommendations for the Year of Faith**. The *Note* was written in consultation with other Dicasteries of the Holy See and with the help of the **Committee for the Preparation of the Year of Faith**. That *Committee*, by pontifical mandate, is under the auspices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and includes among its

members: Cardinals William Levada, Francis Arinze, Angelo Bagnasco, Ivan Dias, Francis E. George, Zenon Grocholewski, Marc Ouellet, Mauro Piacenza, Jean-Pierre Ricard, Stanisław Ryko and Christoph Schönborn; Archbishops Salvatore Fisichella and Luis F. Ladaria; and Bishops Mario del Valle Moronta Rodríguez, Gerhard Ludwig Müller and Raffaello Martinelli.

The *Note* is dated 6 January 2012, Solemnity of the Lord's Epiphany, and will be published the following day 7 January. It contains an introduction followed by a number of pastoral recommendations. The **Introduction** explains that «the *Year of Faith* is intended to contribute to a renewed conversion to the Lord Jesus and to the rediscovery of faith, so that the members of the Church will be credible and joy-filled witnesses to the Risen Lord, capable of leading those many people who are seeking it to the *door of faith*».

«The **beginning of the Year of Faith** coincides with the anniversaries of two great events which have marked the life of the Church in our days: the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, called by Blessed Pope John XXIII (11 October 1962), and the twentieth of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, given to the Church by Blessed Pope John Paul II (11 October 1992)».

Vatican Council II, «beginning with the light of Christ, ... wanted to elaborate on the intimate nature of the Church and its relationship with the contemporary world». «After the Council the Church – under the sure guidance of the Magisterium and in continuity with the whole Tradition – set about ensuring the reception and application of the teaching of the Council in all its richness».

«To assist in the correct reception of the Council, the Popes have frequently convoked the Synod of Bishops, ... providing the Church with clear guidance through the various post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations. The next General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, to be held in October 2012, will have as its theme: *The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*».

«From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has worked decisively for a correct understanding of the Council, rejecting as erroneous the so-called "hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture" and promoting what he himself has termed "the 'hermeneutic of reform', of renewal in continuity"».

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, being an «authentic fruit of Vatican Council II» (Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, no. 4), is an integral part of that "renewal in continuity". It includes «what is new and what is old» (*Mt* 13: 52). On the one hand, it embraces the *old* and traditional order of the catechesis, being divided into four parts: the *Creed*, the *liturgy*, *Christian life* and *prayer*; but at the same time it expresses this in a *new* way, in order to respond to the questions of our own times.

The *Year of Faith* will be a propitious occasion to make Vatican Council II and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* more widely and deeply known.

The **pastoral recommendations** contained in the *Note* aim «to aid both the encounter with Christ through authentic witnesses to faith, and the ever-greater understanding of its contents». Through these pastoral recommendations - which do not intend to preclude «other initiatives which the Holy Spirit will inspire among Pastors and faithful in various parts of the world» - the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is seeking to offer its help, because its specific functions include not only safeguarding sound doctrine and correcting errors but also, and foremost, promoting the truth of the faith (cf. Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, nos. 48-51).

The *Note* groups its **suggestions onto four levels**: 1) *Universal Church*, 2) *Episcopal Conferences*, 3) *Dioceses* and 4) *Parishes, Communities, Associations, Movements*. Some of the **specific suggestions** it makes are given below.

For example, along with the solemn opening celebration for the *Year of Faith* and other events in which the Holy Father will participate (Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, WYD 2013), various ecumenical initiatives are being planned «aimed at "the restoration of unity among all Christians"». Moreover «there will be a solemn ecumenical celebration in which all of the baptised will reaffirm their faith in Christ».

On the level of Episcopal Conferences, attention will be given to the quality of catechesis, and efforts will be made to examine «local catechisms and various catechetical supplements in use in the particular Churches ... to ensure their complete conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*». It is also hoped that use will be made of the language of the mass media and art, with «television and radio transmissions, films and publications focusing on the faith, its principles and content, as well as on the ecclesial significance of Vatican Council II».

At the diocesan level, the *Year of Faith* is considered, among other things, as an occasion for «renewed creative dialogue between faith and reason in the academic and artistic communities, through symposia, meetings and days of study, especially at Catholic universities», and as a favourable time for «penitential celebrations ... in which all can ask for God's forgiveness, especially for sins against faith».

At the parish level the focus remains on the celebration of the faith in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, because «in the Eucharist, mystery of faith and source of the new evangelisation, the faith of the Church is proclaimed, celebrated and strengthened». It is on this foundation that other initiatives will come into being, develop and spread, particularly those undertaken by Institutes, new Communities and Ecclesial Movements.

«A **Secretariat** to coordinate all of the different initiatives promoted by various Dicasteries of the Holy See, or other events relevant to the Universal Church, will be established within the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation». The *Secretariat* «can also suggest appropriate initiatives» for the *Year of Faith*, and «will open a dedicated website with the goal of making available useful information» on the subject.

The recommendations contained in the *Note* invite all members of the Church to work to ensure that, during the *Year of Faith*, we may rediscover and «share **that which is most dear to us: Christ Jesus**, the Redeemer of mankind, Universal King, "leader and perfecter of faith" (*Hb* 12: 2)».