

The Year of Faith



Letter from Bishop John Buckley
Bishop of Cork and Ross



Finally, I encourage each person to extend an invitation to **one other person** to rediscover the joy of faith during this year. Like Andrew in the Gospel, who brought Peter to Jesus, we too must reach out to people. This follows from our baptismal commitment.

I will end with the words of the psalmist:
'May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you.'

Signed:

+John Buckley,
Bishop of Cork and Ross

Websites for the Year of Faith:

www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en.html

<http://www.catholicyearoffaith.com/index.html>

<http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/>

www.corkandross.org



'Jesus says 'I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' (Rev. 3:20).

Printed by City Print, Cork

not a question of waiting, love does more.

- **Try not to judge others.**

- **Make a special effort to prepare well for occasions like Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage and Funerals. These are privileged moments for evangelisation.**

- **We should pray for the return of people who have distanced themselves from the church.**



Conclusion

We hope that the Year of Faith will lead to a renewal of the Church in Ireland. Renewal can only take place in the context of prayer. There is no other way to renewal; there never has been or never will be. There is no religious renewal in the Church's history, except through men and women who listen to the Word, who pray together, who are nourished by the Bread of Life and who reach out to people, especially the weak and the vulnerable. The Lord renews the Church in every age by raising up men and women outstanding in holiness. All renewal begins with what the Second Vatican Council calls the 'Universal Call to Holiness'. How often do we read in the gospel of Jesus going out to a lonely place to pray?

We place this Year of Faith under the unfailing intercession and protection of Mary. Devotion to Mary is deeply interwoven in our faith. Mary herself was asked to believe that the One whom she conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit was indeed the Son of God. 'Blessed is she who believed' (Luke 1:45). We entrust this Year of Faith to her motherly care.

- **Attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation through individual confession or penitential services, particularly at Christmas and Easter.**

Reaching Out to Other People

In the gospel, Jesus describes himself as the Good Shepherd who will go in search of the lost sheep. He said that he had not come for the healthy but for the spiritually ill, the alienated and the marginalised.

In recent decades, there has been a general weakening of the practice of faith and many European countries, countries often described as the heartlands of Christianity, have drifted away from their Catholic roots. Pope Benedict talks about the desert of darkness: people not aware of their dignity and the goal of human life. Here at home, we are concerned about the growing number of people who are distancing themselves from the Church and no longer practise their faith. Some may be just waiting for an invitation to return. The Church has always been a refuge for the weak and not a home for the perfect.

The missionary imperative is contained in the words 'good news'. One of the most effective ways of growing in the faith is to joyfully share it with others. Our faith is strengthened when it is shared. 'This great joy cannot be kept to ourselves; it must be shared with others' (Pope Benedict at the launch of the Year of Faith). We must gently remind people, who are not close to the Church, that the Lord is waiting for them, longing for them to come to Him and from him they will hear no words of condemnation or rejection, only words of understanding, words of welcome.

We must also gently and sensitively remind people of the words of Jesus: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood will live forever'. The Mass is the mystery of Christ's love for us and we should be generous with our time in going to meet Him. In the humble signs of bread and wine Jesus walks beside each one of us as our food and our strength for our journey through life.

- **Help people to feel part of a caring, Christian community.**
- **Discuss in your parish about how to reach out to those who have grown casual in the practice of their faith. It is**

Reconciliation

There is a great need for the renewal of confession. During this year we will need also to experience this sacrament of forgiveness. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father forgives all, forgets all and prepares a feast to celebrate his son's return. In the confessional the priest is following the example of the Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost, or the Good Samaritan who binds up the wounds. In the gospel, we read that Peter shed tears of repentance after he had denied Jesus and in his first sermon after the Resurrection he emphasised the importance of repentance.

Reconciliation and forgiveness are at the heart of the gospel and of our Christian faith. Many families have differences or a family member who just does not fit in.

- **Let bygones be bygones – we should make every effort to resolve old family quarrels.**

- **Make up with neighbours with whom we have disagreements.**

- **When we make the Sign of the Cross before a meal**

- **When we thank the Lord on hearing of good news or ask the Lord for his help when people tell us of their hopes and aspirations**

- **By having religious symbols in our homes – There is a variety of religious objects available which are artistically good as well as devotional and some of the best are by Irish artists.**

- **When we stop to say the Angelus or take time to say the Rosary**

- **When we invite someone we know to consider the possibility of a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. The need is greater than ever. This need is not diluted in any way by the hugely important work of involving lay people fully in parishes.**

The Year of Faith



On the 11th of October 2012, Pope Benedict launched the Year of Faith in Rome. He said that it was his profound hope that this Year of Faith would strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ, deepen our understanding of the faith and renew our commitment to share this gift with others.

The core of our faith is our relationship with Jesus Christ. Faith is a gift by which we are able to believe in Jesus Christ and his love for each and every one of us. Only in Him will we find the truth and the happiness that we are constantly searching for. The truth of our faith never ages. Ideologies come and go because they lack profound truth.

Each person in every parish can celebrate the Year of Faith:

- **Light a Year of Faith Candle in your home** – Prayer in the home is a very strong Irish tradition. The challenge facing families today is how to weave the thread of family prayer into the changing pattern of modern life.
- **Join a parish pilgrimage** – Pilgrimages e.g. Knock, Lourdes, Fatima, Rome, the Holy Land, have never before drawn greater numbers.



- **Participate in popular devotions that may be organised locally e.g. Eucharistic processions, blessing of graves ceremonies, novenas etc.** – Popular devotions play a very important role in strengthening our faith which finds expression in these religious devotions.
- **Make time for Eucharistic Adoration** – Eucharistic Adoration is regarded as one of the most important developments that is taking place in the Church today. Adoration is a powerful force for renewal. Whoever recognises Jesus in the Eucharist recognises Him in the brother or sister that suffers, or is hungry, thirsty, a stranger, sick or in prison. The Church draws its life from the Eucharist.
- **Display a large version of the Apostles Creed in your Church.**
- **Hold a Celebratory Faith Day in your Pastoral Area which draws on the resources of each parish and school in the area.**

‘And he did not work many miracles there because of their lack of faith’ (Matthew 13:58).

‘Let us make man in our own image’ This is the most fundamental passage in all the bible and is the clearest reflection of God that we have (Cardinal Murphy O’Connor).

We Give Thanks

We thank the Lord for the countless blessings poured out on Ireland in the past. We give thanks for St Patrick, for St Finbarr and St. Fachtna, for Blessed Thaddeus McCarthy (beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1896), for all the Irish saints and martyrs, for the generations who went before us and handed on the faith to us. Our ancestors had few material possessions but it would have been difficult to find a person who disinherited a son or a daughter in the things that really mattered, in the handing on of the faith.

Everyone can learn about the richness of our Christian heritage:

- **Learn about our historical Christian heritage in the country and in your area.** Appreciate the artefacts from our ancient past e.g. Book of Kells, Derrynaflan Chalice etc.
- **Identify Holy Wells, Old Graveyards & Monastic Settlements.**
- **Attend Mass at your local Mass Rock** – The Mass Rock is a silent witness to the love of the people who went before us for the Mass. Even in the harshest times people treasured the Mass and risked life itself to show their love for the Mass.
- **Treasure any relics in your local church or in your homes.** The use of relics goes back to the time of the apostles. We read in the Acts of the Apostles: ‘So remarkable were the miracles that handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched Paul were taken to the sick and they were cured of their illnesses’ (Acts 19:11).
- **Hold a Flower Festival in your parish on a theme connected with faith.**
- **Learn more about the remarkable contribution made by men and women to our spiritual heritage e.g. Edel Quinn, Nano Nagle, Catherine McAuley, Mary Aikenhead, Edmund Rice.**
- **Irish writers, artists, composers and poets have given beautiful religious expression to the faith e.g. Seán Ó Riada, Seán Ó Ríordáin, Patrick Kavanagh, Harry Clarke.**

Deepening our Faith

Ireland has never had a more educated population but it is not reflected in people’s knowledge of their faith. Each of us is constantly invited by the Holy Spirit to rediscover our faith at ever deeper levels. Indeed, the challenge that faces the church today is both very simple and very challenging – to teach the basics of the Christian Faith and to pass on what we ourselves have received. Blessed John Henry Newman used to say that he wanted a laity ‘who know their faith so well that they can give a reason for it’. Our faith, therefore, needs to be cherished and nourished. It is nourished especially at the table of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass.

We strengthen our faith through:

- **Making time for scripture reading/study in the home.**
- **Adult Catechesis which is a major priority in Faith Formation.**
- **Reading the documents of the Second Vatican Council within the tradition of the Church.** This year, we commemorate the 50th anniversary of that historic event.



- **The study of the Catechism of the Catholic Church which was prepared after the Council.** Here we find the wealth of teaching that the Church has received, safeguarded and taught in her two thousand years of history.

- **Distributing YouCat, which is an excellent youth catechism, to young people in your parish.** This book is highly readable and is illustrated with photographs and quotations from scripture, the saints and teachers.
- **Promoting ‘Share the Good News’ – the national directory for catechesis in Ireland.**

Witnessing our Faith

We should be proud of our faith and proud to practise it. Faith is not to be limited to a corner of life. Our faith should inform everything we do. Faith gives substance to our hope and makes us certain of realities that we cannot see. Indeed, recent scientific research has shown that those who believe and practise their faith and join the community live happier and healthier lives. A strong faith can help people cope better with sickness, bereavement etc.

There is still a very strong deposit of faith among our people. We see the support of the community especially in times of tragedy. We all know men and women who have given great witness to their faith. The light and beauty of their faith shine for all to see. There is a saint in every street. They challenge us to become better people.

The witness and example of parents in the home is very important in the transmission of the faith. No school, excellent though our schools are, and no teacher, dedicated and conscientious though our teachers are, will have the same influence on young people as the parents have.

The Christian Faith was carried by Irish emigrants all over the world.

We give witness to our faith:

- **When we reach out with kindness to our neighbour, to the stranger, the poor, the sick, the prisoner**
- **When we bless ourselves when passing a church, grotto or cemetery**