

The Door of Faith

Prayer Service for Catholic Educators

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning, and welcome to our prayer service at the start of this Year of Faith. The Year of Faith is an opportunity for the Catholic faith community and all who share in its evangelizing mission to seek and find renewal as believers and disciples of the risen Lord Jesus. Let us together enter this time of prayer by singing our opening song: *You are the Voice* (CBW III No. 576)

OPENING PRAYER

Let us begin our prayer marked by the sign of our faith: In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

And let us pray. Lord God, we begin this Year of Faith with great trust in your providential care, knowing that in your abundant love, you continue to fill our cup to overflowing. We ask you to open our hearts to the renewing action of your Holy Spirit. Strengthen the gift of faith you gave us by our Baptism into the death and resurrection of Jesus, your Son, that we might be his loving witnesses in all that we are and do. We make this prayer to you through this same Jesus, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit; one God forever and ever. Amen.

And now, let us be attentive to God's word.

READING (2Cor 5:16-17)

A reading from the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians:

[T]he love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION

Let us listen – in light of our share in Catholic education's role in the Church's evangelizing mission – to the reflection of Pope Benedict XVI on the above reading in his Apostolic Letter on the Year of Faith, *Porta Fidei (The Door of Faith)*.

[I]t is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelize. Today as in the past, he sends us through the highways of the world to proclaim his Gospel to all the peoples of the earth (cf. Mt 28:19). Through his love, Jesus Christ attracts to himself the people of every generation: in every age he convokes the Church, entrusting her with the proclamation of the Gospel by a mandate that is ever new. 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. In rediscovering his love day by day, the missionary commitment of believers attains force and vigour that can never fade away.

Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord's invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples. Believers, so

Saint Augustine tells us, "strengthen themselves by believing". The saintly Bishop of Hippo had good reason to express himself in this way. As we know, his life was a continual search for the beauty of the faith until such time as his heart would find rest in God. His extensive writings, in which he explains the importance of believing and the truth of the faith, continue even now to form a heritage of incomparable riches, and they still help many people in search of God to find the right path towards the "door of faith".

*Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger; there is no other possibility for possessing certitude with regard to one's life apart from self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God. (Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, No. 7)*

RESPONSE *Here I Am, Lord. (CBW III, No. 520)*

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

1. Let us pray for the Church. That in this Year of Faith, all who share a common Baptism might respond to the Spirit's call to sink their roots deeply in Christ and his Gospel and shine with the light of his love before the world. *We pray ... Lord, hear our prayer.*
2. Let us pray for the world. That peoples of all nations who seek meaning in their lives might be moved to build peace and reconciliation by the loving witness of Christians renewed in their faith during this special year. *We pray ... Lord, hear our prayer.*
3. Let us pray for all those who suffer in our midst in ways that are both visible and hidden from view. That God might bring them the consolation and healing they need to live in Christ's joy and peace. *We pray ... Lord, hear our prayer.*
4. Let us pray for our entire Catholic educational community: Parents, Pastors, Staff, Students, Parishioners and Ratepayers. That all of us might be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit to grow in unity of purpose and embrace of our shared faith. *We pray ... Lord, hear our prayer.*
5. For our own intentions.... *We pray ... Lord, hear our prayer.*

And now, let us with one heart and one mind place all our needs in the hands of our bountiful God, using the words that Jesus taught us: ***Our Father...***

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, as we ponder the weeks and months ahead in this Year of Faith, help us to continually place all our concerns and cares in your hands. Increase our faith, that we might live as your Son's witnesses, trusting that you will give us all that we need to help spread his Gospel message according to your call. We make this prayer to you in Jesus' name. Amen.

And may Almighty God bless us: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

CLOSING SONG:

This Year of Faith has been entrusted by Pope Benedict to Mary, Mother of God: she whom Elizabeth proclaimed "blessed because she believed." With this in mind, let us join with the Holy Father and turn to Mary's motherly help this year. Please join in singing our closing song, *Hail Mary, Gentle Woman.*