

Additional Resources

Books

Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus. Sherry A. Weddell, (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

Lectio Divina Bible Study: The Creed in Scripture. Stephen J. Binz, (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

Opening the Door of Faith: A Study Guide for Catechists and the New Evangelization. Jem Sullivan, Ph.D., (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, (USCCB Publishing, 2006).

The Year of Faith: A Bible Study for Catholics. Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J., (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012).

Website

Year of Faith: Oct. 11, 2012-Nov. 24, 2013. *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-faith/

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THE YEAR OF FAITH



“Joy-Filled
Witnesses to Christ”

What Is the Year of Faith?

In this special year, believers around the world are called to renew their commitment to the faith that is “always the same, yet the source of ever new light.” Pope Benedict XVI has proclaimed a Year of Faith beginning October 11, 2012, and concluding on November 24, 2013, the feast of Christ the King.

The start of this Year of Faith coincides with the anniversaries of two great events that have marked the life of the Church: the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.



Why the Focus on Faith?

What could be more important than our faith? It is the foundation of who we are as Catholic Christians and a gracious gift from God. Yet, in our contemporary world, we are increasingly vulnerable to secular movements that pull us away from our relationship with God.

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has worked to gather God's people into a fuller communion with one another and with the risen Lord. This Year of Faith is a time for us to renew our personal relationship with Jesus and recommit ourselves to the Church. We are called to give ourselves more fully to God by professing our faith in Jesus Christ, his only Son, and this faith is expressed when we profess the Creed.

In the early church, *credo* was the verb form of the noun “faith.” The Latin roots of the word mean “I give my heart to.” In the giving of our heart, *credo* means “I commit my loyalty to.” When we pray “credo” at the beginning of the Creed, we are saying, “I give my heart to God.”



The Last Supper, Carducci Bartolomeo / The Bridgeman Art Library

The Year of Faith is a time to:

- ✦ Reflect on the gift of faith
- ✦ Deepen our knowledge and understanding of the teachings of the Church
- ✦ Read, reflect, and pray with the Scriptures
- ✦ Nourish and strengthen our faith through the holy Eucharist
- ✦ Open “the door of faith” for others



Faith in Scripture

Jesus Opens the Eyes of a Man Born Blind, Duccio di Buoninsegna / The Bridgeman Art Library



In the Gospels, Jesus encourages a strong and unwavering faith. He rebukes his apostles for having “little faith” and demonstrates the glorious power of God for those who believe. When a storm arises as they are out to sea, the apostles panic in fear. Jesus says to them:

“Why are you afraid, O you of little faith? Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm” (Matthew 8:26).

Jesus also links faith to his healing miracles. In Mark’s Gospel we meet Bartimaeus, a blind man who has heard about Jesus’ miracles and hopes that Jesus might help him recover his eyesight.



“And Jesus said to him, ‘Go your way; your faith has made you well.’ And immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way” (Mark 10:52).

The Letter to the Hebrews defines faith as “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). And with the apostles in Luke’s Gospel, today we call out to Jesus, “**Increase our faith!**” that we might come to know and believe the one, true God.

How Christians Can Celebrate the Year of Faith

- 1 Memorize the Nicene Creed.** We recite the Nicene Creed at Mass every Sunday. Memorizing its 224 words should come easily to us.
- 2 Take time for daily prayer.** The Year of Faith presents us with an opportunity to renew our commitment to daily prayer. Opening our heart to God in prayer paves the way for deeper faith and conversion and a more compassionate heart.



- 3 Worship wholeheartedly at Mass.** Approach Mass with increased faith by participating fully in the prayers and hymns.
- 4 Study the teachings of the Church.** Our faith magnifies as we respond to the Word of God. During this year we are called to immerse ourselves in the Gospels, as well as the Vatican II documents and the *Catechism*.

- 5 Serve the poor and marginalized.** We put our faith in action by caring for our neighbors in need. In addition to giving money, we should also look for ways to make serving others more of a part of our daily lives.

Major Themes

The major themes of this special year are the very foundation of our faith:

- ❖ Belief in the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – and in the Paschal Mystery, the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus
- ❖ A deepened encounter with the risen Lord, who is the light of faith
- ❖ A renewed commitment to Mass and the Eucharist

It is most important that the Year of Faith should be approached with great joy and celebration!

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 in the world of today – capable of leading those many people who are seeking it to the 'door of faith.' (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith")



The Holy Trinity, Rublev, Andrei / The Bridgeman Art Library



“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.”

Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei* Apostolic Letter, 2011, 7.

The Fruits of a Year of Faith

The fruits of this Year of Faith will be seen in a strengthened commitment to God and one another. When we reach out in compassion to help a neighbor in need, we are bearing witness to the light of Christ. When we share our faith as bold disciples of Jesus, the fruits of this yearlong renewal will be reflected in our efforts. When we receive the holy Eucharist daily or weekly, we will be transformed by the real presence of the risen Lord and will go forth to live more fully as his disciples.

We are invited to rediscover our faith and become “credible and joy-filled witnesses to the risen Lord in the world today.”