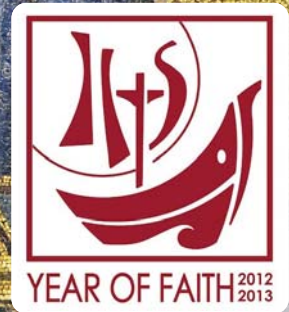
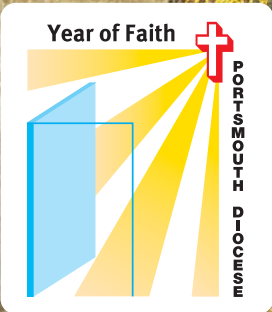
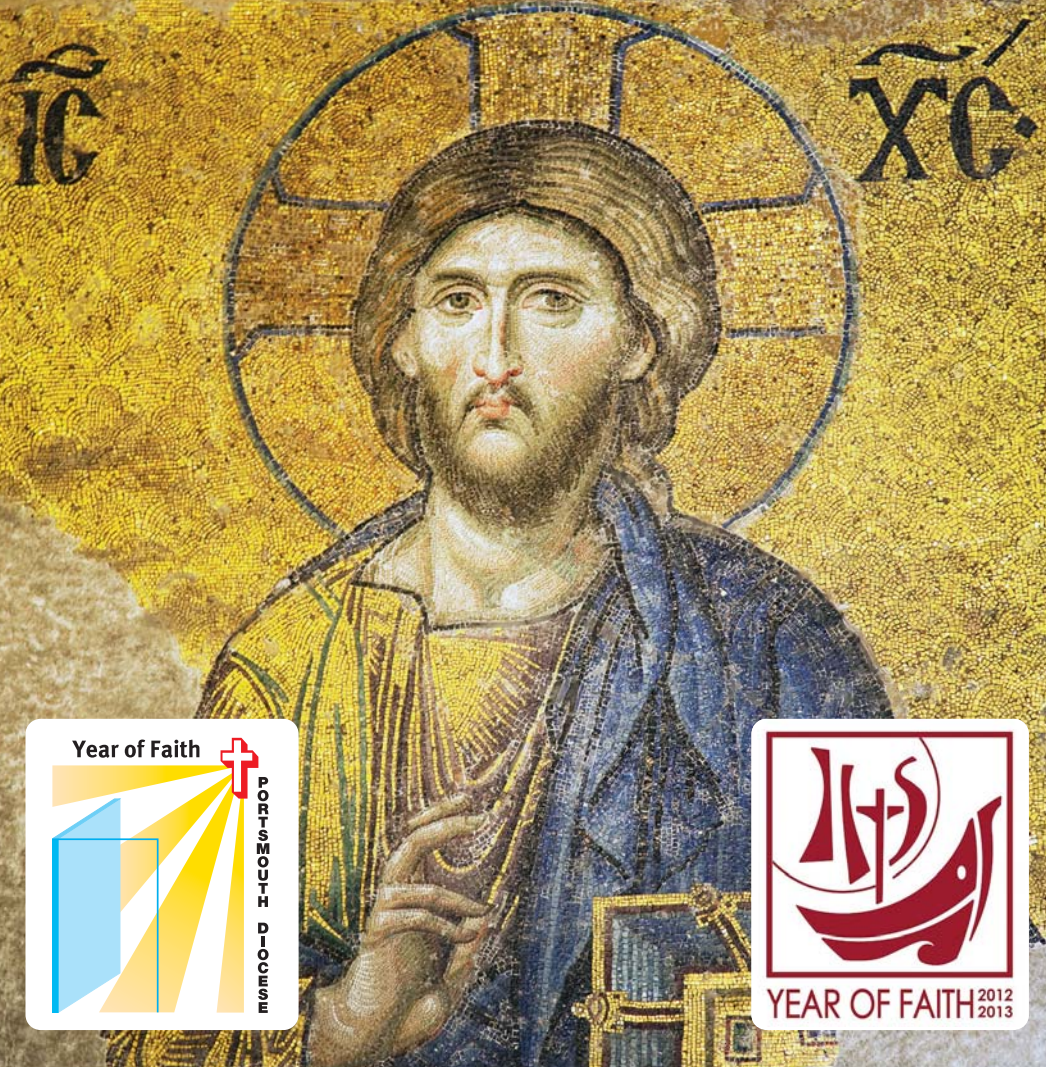


*'The door of faith is
always open for us'*



11th October 2012 – 24th November 2013

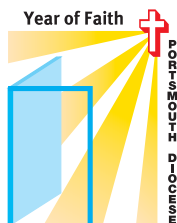
Message from Bishop Philip

'The **Year of Faith** is a great opportunity for our diocese to reflect on the wonderful gift of our Catholic Faith, on what it means to be a disciple of Christ and on the distinctive mission we have in our society of spreading the Gospel to others.

'I hope you will find this booklet and its suggestions a great help. I thank the Working Group for putting it together.

'The main thing this Year is to ask God for the gift of a deeper faith both for ourselves and for others. Try to pray often the **Creed** and the **Act of Faith**. Study the **Catechism** and try to grow in understanding. Also, try to make your faith a bit more public: e.g. wear a crucifix, make the Sign of the Cross when dining out, or say 'Thank God' when someone tells you some good news.

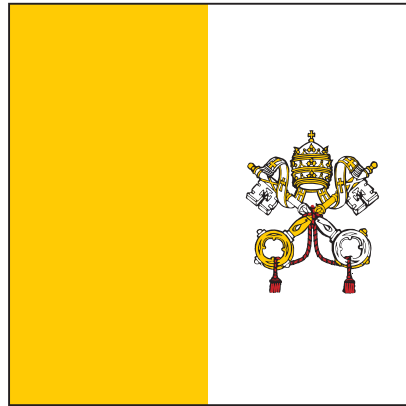
'May God grant us abundant growth in faith. May we, and many others, receive the love, happiness and salvation Christ wishes to offer us from his Heart. "When the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on earth?" (Luke 18:8). It is my prayer this Year that he will, here in the Diocese of Portsmouth.'



+Philip Egan
Bishop of Portsmouth



The Year of Faith



Pope Benedict has declared a **Year of Faith** which begins on 11th October 2012 and ends on 24th November 2013, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King. This event marks both 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*, which was prepared following the Council.



Why a Year of Faith?

The **Year of Faith** is an opportunity for each one of us to reflect on and renew our enthusiasm for our faith so that we can profess it, share it with others, and lead people to Jesus Christ.

Below are some passages from the two Vatican documents about the Year of Faith which might be used for individual reflection or group discussion.¹

What are we invited to do?

Everything we do to mark the **Year of Faith** should aid 'the joyous rediscovery of the faith and its renewed proclamation' (see NPR Conclusion). We can again 'taste and see that the Lord is good' and give that simple message to others. Some of the ways we can do this are:

- Meditating on the Holy Father's apostolic letter ***Porta Fidei***. (see NPR IV.1)
- Reflecting on what our faith actually means for us and how we make it our own; rediscovering the content of faith as something we profess, celebrate, live out and pray. (see PF 9)
- Deepening our knowledge and understanding of the documents of Vatican II and the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church*** (see NPR 1.6) and 'drawing from them resources for ... catechesis, preaching, Sacramental preparation'. (NPR IV.3)
- Witnessing through our lives (see PF 6, 9, 14), especially to those who are searching for meaning and truth. (see NPR III.9)
- Professing the faith 'in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope.' (PF 9)
- Celebrating our faith in the liturgy, especially the Eucharist. (see PF 9, NPR IV.2)
- Undertaking pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Marian shrines and Rome. (see NPR 1.1-3)

¹ The **Year of Faith** is explored in two Vatican documents: Pope Benedict's Apostolic Letter on the Year of Faith, ***Porta Fidei***, is abbreviated to PF. The ***Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith***, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is abbreviated to NPR.

(Other ideas for marking the **Year of Faith** in your parish / Pastoral Area are on pp10-11.)

What is faith?

At the heart of our Christian faith is an encounter with a person – the Risen Christ. This encounter 'gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.' (see NPR Intro)

'The "door of faith" (*Acts 14:27*) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.' (PF 1)

What is the Year of Faith?

The **Year of Faith** is an opportunity for renewed conversion to the Lord Jesus '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" [...] Today, there is a need for stronger commitment of the church community to a 'new evangelization in order to rediscover the joy of believing and the enthusiasm for communicating the faith.' (see NPR Intro)

Growing in faith

'Only through believing [...] does faith grow and become stronger' - only by surrendering ourselves 'into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God.' (PF 7)

'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 [hear] his word and become his disciples. Believers, so Saint Augustine tells us, "strengthen themselves by believing". (PF 7)

'We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. Jn 6:51).' (PF 3)

Living out our faith

'It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelise.' (PF 7)

'The renewal of the Church is [...] achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the truth that the Lord Jesus has left us.' (PF 6)

'All of the faithful, called to renew the gift of faith, should try to communicate their own experience of faith and charity to their brothers and sisters of other religions, with those who do not believe, and with those who are just indifferent. In this way, it is hoped that the entire Christian people will begin a kind of mission toward those with whom they live and work, knowing that they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for (all).' (NPR IV.10)

'The **Year of Faith** will be a good opportunity to intensify the witness of charity [...] Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt [...] Many Christians dedicate their lives with love to those who are lonely, marginalised or excluded [...] because it is in them that the reflection of Christ's own face is seen [...] It is faith that enables us to recognise Christ and it is his love that impels us to assist him whenever he becomes our neighbour along the journey of life. Supported by faith, let us look with hope at our commitment in the world, as we await "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet 3:13; cf. Rev 21:1).' (PF 14)

Professing our faith

'The heart indicates that the first act by which one comes to faith is God's gift and the action of grace which acts and transforms the person deep within [...] Saint Luke (cf Acts 16:14) teaches that [knowledge] is not sufficient unless the heart, the authentic sacred space within the person, is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God.' (PF 10)

Confessing with the lips indicates both commitment and public witness. 'A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. This "standing with him" points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing [...] It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous.' (PF 10)

a) The Creed

'Christians in the early centuries were required to learn the creed from memory. It served them as a daily prayer not to forget the commitment they had undertaken in baptism.' (PF 9)

Profession of faith is an act we make as individuals and as a community of believers. (see PF 10)

There exists a profound bond between the faith we believe and how we live it out. (see NPR Recommendations)

b) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

(In the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***) 'we see the wealth of teaching that the Church has received, safeguarded and proposed in her two thousand years of history [...] In its very structure, the ***Catechism*** follows the development of the faith right up to the great themes of daily life [...] The profession of faith is followed by an account of the sacramental life, in which Christ is present, sustaining and building his Church. Without the liturgy and the sacraments, the profession of faith would lack efficacy,

because it would lack the grace which supports Christian witness. By the same criterion, the teaching of the *Catechism* on the moral life acquires its full meaning if placed in relationship with faith, liturgy and prayer.' (PF 11)

Searching for faith

'In our cultural context, very many people, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless sincerely searching for the ultimate meaning and definitive truth of their lives and of the world.' This search may lead people to faith, 'because it guides (them) onto the path that leads to the mystery of God'. [...] People bear within themselves a yearning 'to find the One whom we would not be seeking had he not already set out to meet us'. (PF 10)

The history of our faith

A vital component of this Year is a 'retracing of the history of our faith, marked as it is by the unfathomable mystery of the interweaving of holiness and sin. While the former highlights the great contribution that men and women have made to the growth and development of the community through the witness of their lives, the latter must provoke in each person a sincere and continuing work of conversion in order to experience the mercy of the Father which is held out to everyone.' (PF 13)

'Marked with the sign of faith'

'We will need to keep our gaze fixed upon Jesus Christ [...] In him, all the anguish and all the longing of the human heart finds fulfilment [...] In him who died and rose again for our salvation, the examples of faith that have marked these two thousand years of our salvation history are brought into the fullness of light': Mary, the Apostles, the disciples, martyrs, men and women who have consecrated their lives to Christ, those who have promoted action for justice so as to put into practice the word of the Lord,

men and women who have confessed the beauty of following the Lord Jesus wherever they were called to bear witness to the fact that they were Christian: in the family, in the workplace, in public life, in the exercise of the charisms and ministries to which they were called. 'By faith, we too live: by the living recognition of the Lord Jesus, present in our lives and in our history.' (PF 13)

Aim at faith

'Having reached the end of his life, Saint Paul asks his disciple Timothy to aim at faith (2 Tim 2:22) with the same constancy as when he was a boy (cf. 2 Tim 3:15). We hear this invitation directed to each of us, that none of us grows lazy in the faith. It is the lifelong companion that makes it possible to perceive, ever anew, the marvels that God works for us. ... Faith commits every one of us to become a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world. What the world is in particular need of today is the credible witness of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.' (PF 15)

Questions for reflection / discussion

- Who / what have been 'doors to faith' in your life?
- Who / what has made your faith come alive?
- Is there one 'door of faith' or many?
- What does it mean to you to belong to the Catholic Church? How does this support your faith? How does it challenge your faith?
- What support do you need to live your faith? Where do you get this from?
- What are the challenges to you in living out your faith?
- What opportunities might you take to deepen your faith through this **Year of Faith**?

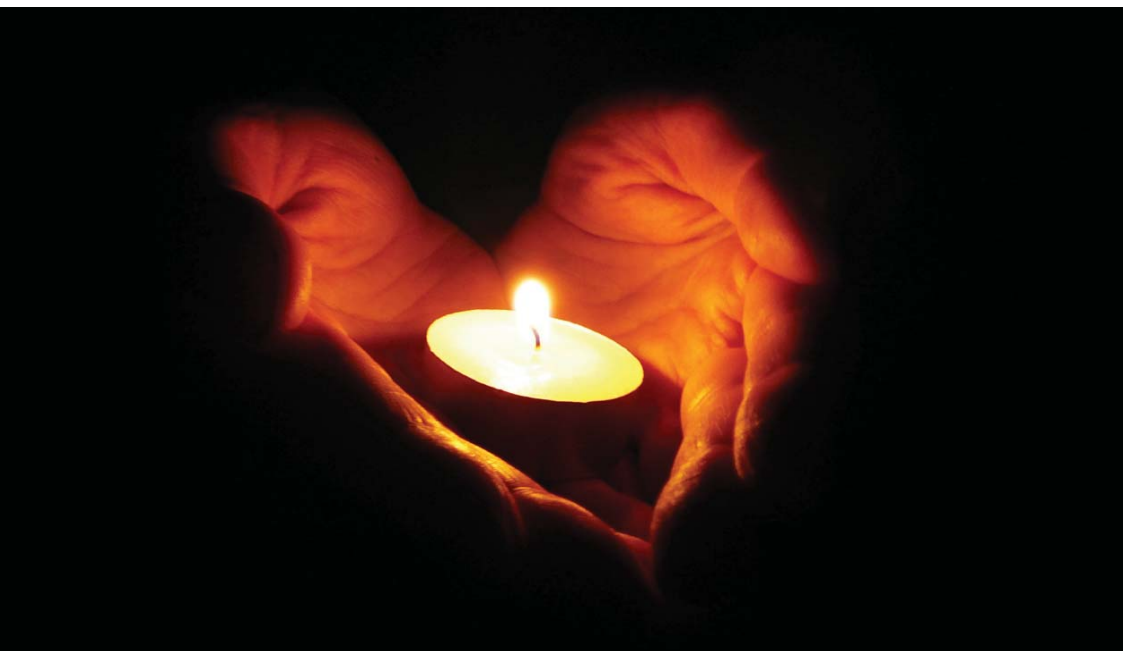
- What compassionate witness can you provide for people who are unable to cross the threshold to this 'door of faith'?
- What message about your faith would you like to convey to our new Bishop?

Some ideas for marking the Year of Faith in your parish / Pastoral Area:

- Keep your church open during the day so that people are able to use it for prayer. During this Year of Faith, consider having Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament on one or more days during the week. Coordinate arrangements so that each church in your Pastoral Area is open on different days each week, with information about opening times clearly displayed in all churches
- Organise a day for all the catechists in your parish / Pastoral Area to reflect on their faith and how they share it with others
- Form a 'human cross' for an hour in a public space at some stage during the year – and make sure you contact the local media to publicise this. The hour might involve singing, readings, time for reflection (You might need to contact the police for permission to gather in a public place.)
- Print out Scripture passages on strips of paper or card for people to pick up in church, and especially at events such as baptisms, weddings, funerals
- Display a large version of the Creed in your Church – one parish is planning to ask people to sew each letter onto a large backdrop
- Have a competition in your area for people to write poems / prayers / songs expressing their faith
- Invite people to take part in a photo competition for images of faith
- Gather together stories of faith from people in your area, and publish these in your newsletter, on your website, as a booklet
- Hold a **Celebrating Faith** day in your Pastoral Area, which draws on the resources of each parish and school in the Area, as well as the different communities within each parish

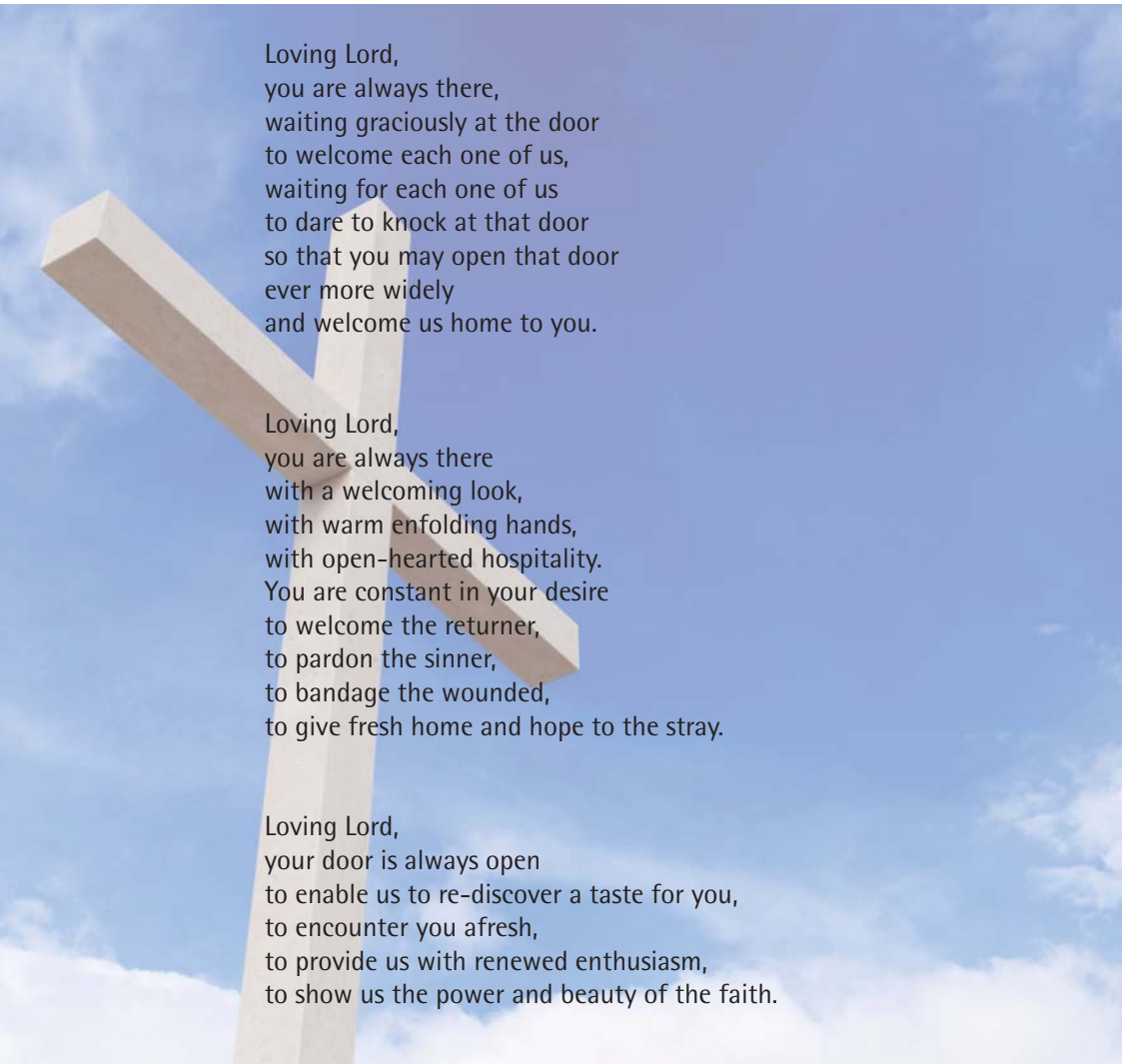
- Organise a series of sessions for people to explore themes from Vatican II, extracts from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and the **Creed**
- Organise a Pastoral Area pilgrimage, perhaps exploring the Catholic history of your area or visiting the churches in your area
- Hold a day of reflection on the theme of reconciliation, and offer the Sacrament of Penance during the day
- Publicise all the outreach / social responsibility projects in which people in your parish / Pastoral Area are involved
- Hold a flower festival on a theme connected with faith
- Every parish in the world is encouraged to have Eucharistic Adoration on the Feast of Corpus Christi, 2 June 2013

Support for some of the above ideas is available from the Department for Pastoral Formation (01329 835583 or email nstevens@portsmouthdiocese.org.uk).



THE DOOR OF FAITH

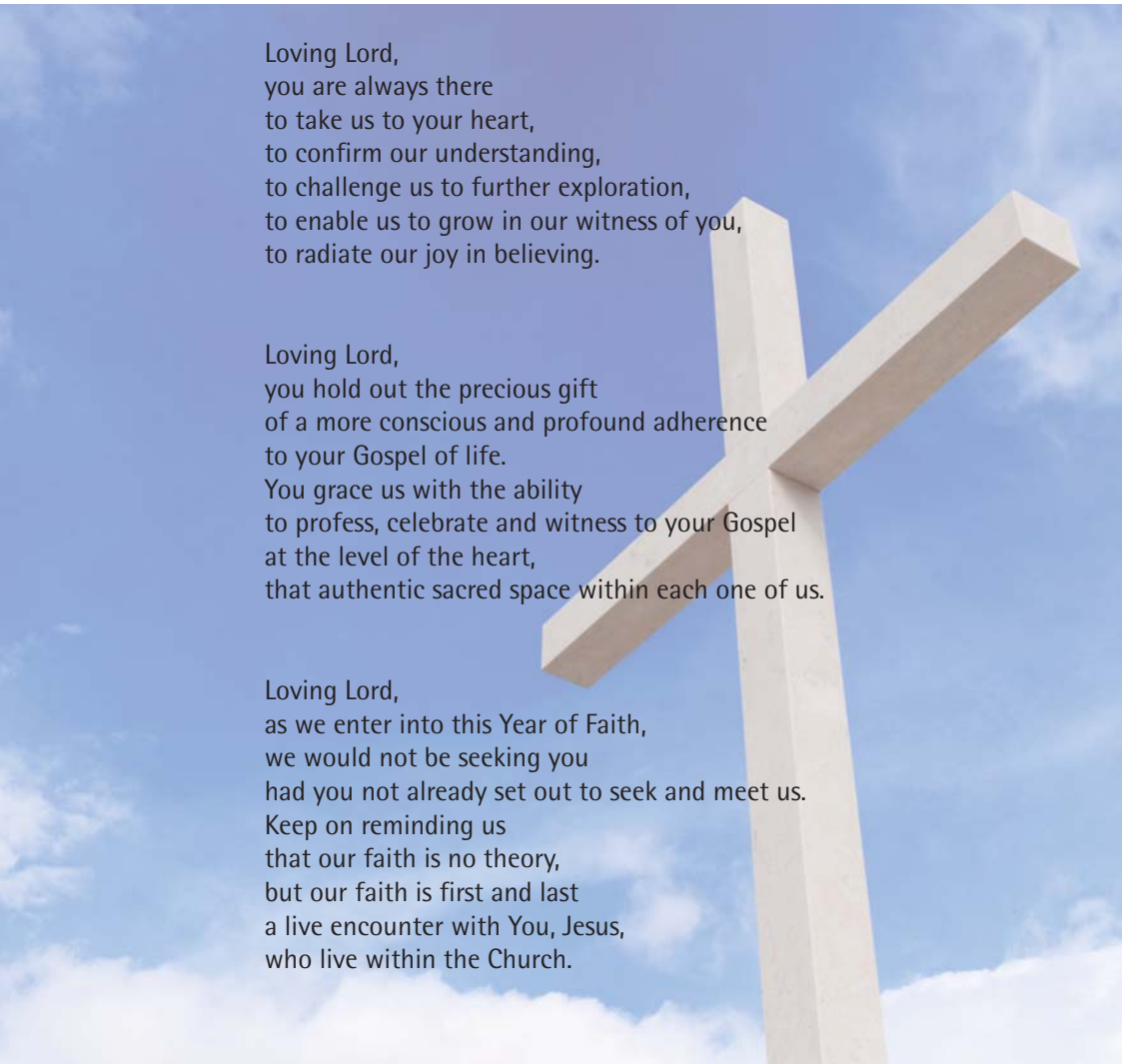
[Written after praying and pondering Pope Benedict XVI's
Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* to open the **Year of Faith**]



Loving Lord,
you are always there,
waiting graciously at the door
to welcome each one of us,
waiting for each one of us
to dare to knock at that door
so that you may open that door
ever more widely
and welcome us home to you.

Loving Lord,
you are always there
with a welcoming look,
with warm enfolding hands,
with open-hearted hospitality.
You are constant in your desire
to welcome the returner,
to pardon the sinner,
to bandage the wounded,
to give fresh home and hope to the stray.

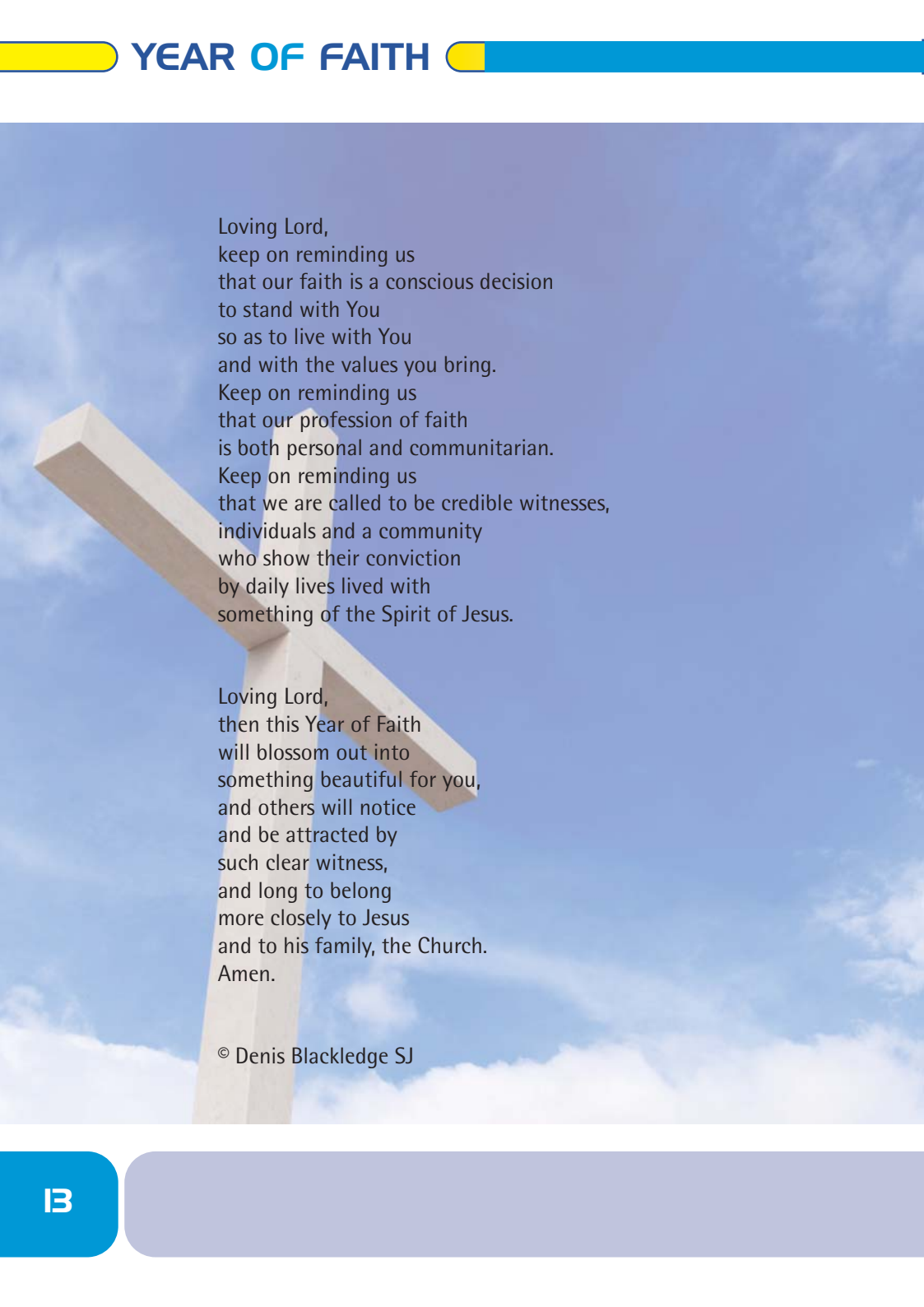
Loving Lord,
your door is always open
to enable us to re-discover a taste for you,
to encounter you afresh,
to provide us with renewed enthusiasm,
to show us the power and beauty of the faith.



Loving Lord,
you are always there
to take us to your heart,
to confirm our understanding,
to challenge us to further exploration,
to enable us to grow in our witness of you,
to radiate our joy in believing.

Loving Lord,
you hold out the precious gift
of a more conscious and profound adherence
to your Gospel of life.
You grace us with the ability
to profess, celebrate and witness to your Gospel
at the level of the heart,
that authentic sacred space within each one of us.

Loving Lord,
as we enter into this Year of Faith,
we would not be seeking you
had you not already set out to seek and meet us.
Keep on reminding us
that our faith is no theory,
but our faith is first and last
a live encounter with You, Jesus,
who live within the Church.



Loving Lord,
keep on reminding us
that our faith is a conscious decision
to stand with You
so as to live with You
and with the values you bring.
Keep on reminding us
that our profession of faith
is both personal and communitarian.
Keep on reminding us
that we are called to be credible witnesses,
individuals and a community
who show their conviction
by daily lives lived with
something of the Spirit of Jesus.

Loving Lord,
then this Year of Faith
will blossom out into
something beautiful for you,
and others will notice
and be attracted by
such clear witness,
and long to belong
more closely to Jesus
and to his family, the Church.
Amen.

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Resources

www.portsmouthdiocese.org.uk/yearoffaith
(Diocesan Year of Faith webpage)

www.yearoffaith.org.uk
(Bishops' Conference website)

www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en.html
(Vatican website)

Porta Fidei:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei_en.html

Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith:
http://www.doctrinafidei.va/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20120106_not-a-anno-fede_en.html

