

# **A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF LANCASTER TO INAUGURATE THE YEAR OF FAITH**



**APPOINTED TO BE READ AT ALL PUBLIC MASSES IN ALL CHURCHES & CHAPELS OF THE  
DIOCESE OF LANCASTER ON THE WEEKEND OF THE 6-7 OCTOBER, 2012.**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As some of you may already know, Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XV1 has invited the whole Church to join him in what he calls a *Year of Faith*, beginning on 11 October and concluding next year on 24 November, the Feast of Christ the King. The Pope calls us, in his own words, 'to rediscover the journey of faith', and to recapture something of the beauty and richness of what almighty God has done for us in Jesus Christ his Son. We are to enter once more, as it were, through the door of faith first opened for us on the day of our baptism, only this time with full consciousness of the new life we are continually receiving in Christ as sons and daughters of the living God.

In his letter summoning us to a *Year of Faith* Pope Benedict is expressing a concern which is widespread, that in recent decades there has been a general weakening in the practice of the faith and that so many seem ignorant of Catholic teaching. Areas and regions, especially in our Western world, once strongly Christian and Catholic are now sadly much less so. The Pope notes that this year, 2012, is the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council which through its decrees pointed the way for the Church in the modern world. This year also marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, that great compendium of our Catholic Faith now available to us. Pope Benedict wishes each one of us to reflect and take stock of our own personal faith and call to union with the Lord. We are also asked to find new ways of handing the treasure of the faith to those who come after us. This is an urgent appeal to the 'New Evangelisation' by the successor of St. Peter and one which we may not ignore.

To be a faithful and practising Catholic in today's world is not easy, and we face many challenges. Alternative and superficially alluring paths stretch out before us where we appear to have no need for God, Church or Sacraments. Such paths lead us to the illusion that as human beings we are self-sufficient and can answer the great questions of life with the wisdom of this world. We know that this is false, and the wonder and comfort of our Catholic Faith is that in Jesus Christ we do possess true wisdom and the truth that only God can provide. During this *Year of Faith* each one of us Catholics is called by the Pope to make ever more our own that wisdom and truth given by God to us in Christ in the Church. There will be many faith initiatives taking place in the Diocese of Lancaster throughout this *Year of Faith* in our parishes, schools and all other organisations. You will find much relevant information on these initiatives in the October edition of *The Catholic Voice of Lancaster* and on the diocesan website: [www.lancasterdiocese.org.uk](http://www.lancasterdiocese.org.uk) These are grace-filled opportunities and I urge you to make full use of them.

Time and change do not allow us as a Church to stand still, and we constantly have to ask ourselves, particularly in this *Year of Faith*, whether our present material structures and numerous buildings inherited from the past help us in our God-given task of being effective witnesses to Christ, or might they be a hindrance to the evangelising work of the Church in this third millennium? In every age the Church is called to a continual process of dying and rising with her crucified and now glorified Lord, Jesus Christ. I pray that as individuals and as a diocese we in Lancaster may have the courage to respond to Pope Benedict's call for renewal in faith, and that we may have the courage both personally and as a diocese to discard what clings to us and impedes the mission of grace and mercy for which Christ came on earth.

With assurance of my very good wishes, prayers, and a blessing,

Yours sincerely,

+ *Michael Campbell OSA*

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Bishop of Lancaster