

## Living the Spirit An End and a Beginning

On November 24<sup>th</sup> the Church celebrates the conclusion of the Year of Faith. On the feast of Christ the King we bring to an end all the special events in which the Church has tried to show the boundaries of its belief. There have been Papal Masses and conferences, celebrations of Catholic Youth and families, of Religious communities and Diocesan events.

During this time the Church experienced the rarest of events, the resignation of its leader, Pope Benedict XVI. Pope Francis was elected and has been continuing the work of his predecessor. He has completed the encyclical begun by Pope Benedict, a letter written about Faith. He has also brought new energy to the many activities usual in the papal calendar.

It is not for me to give a summary here of the encyclical on faith. Nor do I wish to summarize all the many fine aspects of observing this Year of Faith. I do think it has been a limited success. Perhaps people are tired of years being set aside for a particular focus. This brings with it a sense of apathy and a lack of enthusiasm in scheduling various events in the local churches.

What remains for me to write is my personal assessment concerning faith – my faith. I am reasonably sure that your assessment would not differ in its focus from mine. I admit this sharing is a subtle way of suggesting that you spend some time thinking about your personal faith. Just what do you believe? Whom do you believe? This second question is important for faith means that we believe because God has revealed truth.

When I think of my faith, I find that I cannot identify myself independent of my Catholicity. There are many things that make up the human person. One is born as male or female, as a citizen of one nation or another, as a person living in a diverse culture of race and life. One is also a child of one's own generation.

Those who know me need not be given the details of who I am. I do think I was blessed all along the way of my early life. This was despite the fact that only months after that event the Great Depression took place. Like all those of my generation I was to know the fact that material goods were not always of value. They manage to disappear from one's power or use.

Catholic faith was treasured by those having it as a spiritual treasure; it was the source of real hope. All the moral and charitable imperatives that were a part of life were readily seen as a reflection of our faith. People identified themselves by the parish where they worshipped. The Church was busy with its internal mission or life --- proclaiming the good news. Hardly anyone was without some knowledge of the basics, so easily found in the famous Baltimore Catechism.

One cannot forget that one's earlier life was a time of great change. The terrible War was somewhat unreal to me at its beginning, since I was in grade school. But it was a factor in one's life. Both my father and brother were serving the nation. My job was seen as praying for them. That is why I was so often at church, as were my confreres.

Being a student in a Catholic High school, being taught by diocesan priests, what do you think happened? From early on, I wanted to be a priest. I knew that you had to pray that God would call you to that vocation. I also knew that Mary, our Blessed Mother was a good ally in the effort. So it all happened. From this point on my life was very different from the average Catholic. The faith of those called to be priests was a faith that had to become intense and inclusive.

Once ordained I knew that my mission, as with all priests, is to share the faith with others. I was blessed to be able to teach the faith for eight years at Allentown Central. I still on occasion hear from a few students. What an encouragement that is! Then I was called to learn even more about the working of faith in the Church. Sent to Rome as a student, I was in the center of Catholic life at the time. Once home, I was back to work. I was called to work in our Tribunal in a canonical ministry. Then came the call to be a pastor – and so in time I found myself just where I am now. Life throughout the years could never be separated from faith.

Dear friends, while the details of your life will differ, simply because of the difference of time or life vocation, I hope that faith is a part of it. Faith is a blessing and a wonderful gift for our happiness in life. We find the Lord in the Eucharist because of faith. We have the forgiveness of our sins through faith. We have our vocation blessed by sacramental grace. We have the community of life with others who bring the faith to what they do for and with us.

Yes, the Year of Faith is in its final days, but only as a “year”, a celebration or observance. Our faith continues and grows and bears much fruit if only we let it do so. I believe that faith's gift to us is peace. About this some saints have said the same thing.

In his book *Theology and Sanity* Frank Sheed writes as its conclusion about the nature of peace and holiness.

“The Saint, we may say, is the successful man. He is this even by natural standards. For he has found peace, and peace is what all men are seeking at all times. They would say they are seeking for happiness, but peace *is* happiness, and nothing else. Peace is not, of course, the absence of activity, but the absence of discordancy. It is not the beginning of our life in the Church. Anyone who joins the Church, as the common misunderstanding has it, to find tranquility will soon begin to wonder what he has found; not tranquility certainly, but struggle. Peace is not given along with faith. [We pray God to lavish peace on those whom He has given faith.] We shall find peace at the end, if we persevere to the end. The danger is that in seeking peace we may be led away from the road to peace: the struggle to harmonize our will with God's....” We want happiness so urgently. Christ cries, “If you could understand the ways that can bring you peace.”

Know that faith can bring us to that happy end. Through its practice we can succeed just as the Saints have done. Through faith we can live the Spirit. Faith is the way and the road ahead is straight towards holiness.

*May God love you always and give you His peace!*

*Monsignor Morrison*

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