

# LIVING OUR FAITH IN A NEW WAY & CELEBRATING IT

As we enter the fourth week of the Lenten season, we are called to stand very close with the Church with our prayers for the election of the Supreme Pontiff. Lent 2013 is very special and historic because of the witnessing challenge that is shown by the Holy Father Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. It began with the deeply moving declaration of the Pope's resignation, continues with the *Sede Vacante* in the absence of a Pope and will hopefully be concluded with a new Pope. Looking at the life of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI and his all-embracing witness in stepping down from the Petrine Office, we see all the elements of the spirit of Lent. It also gives us a leading link to the second recommendation of the Church to respond to the 'Year of Faith' - *Living our faith in a new way and celebrating it*.

In his message for Lent, the Holy Father expressed the deepest wish of his heart to all: 'Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Lent ... I express my wish that all of you may spend this precious time rekindling your faith in Jesus Christ, so as to enter with him into the dynamic of love for the Father and for every brother and sister that we encounter in our lives.' This rekindling of faith calls forth the authentic life of faith, which finds its end and means in charity. At the same time this call to rekindle faith presupposes the basic reality that **"We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us" (1 Jn 4:16)**.

The central theme of the Holy Father's Lenten message - "Believing in charity calls forth charity" is the key to *living our faith in a new way and celebrating it*. There is no other new way to live out our faith than the way of charity. Since charity always assumes new expressions and new fervor, a life of faith in charity also always calls for new ways of witnessing. This living witness has only one means – charity; and the life in charity has only one end – witness. Let us recall the Holy Father's reminder that "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses". Therefore, giving a solid footing to the 'priority of faith and the primacy of charity' and their indissoluble interrelation is the new way that calls our attention to live our faith, very specially in the season of Lent.

The traditional Lenten proposals by the Church are prayer, fasting and almsgiving. They do not have any meaning unless each one of them is observed with a heart of charity, which covers up

a multitude of sins. Prayer is charity because primarily it is a loving response to the love of God revealed on the cross. The Pope writes "faith is a gift and response, it helps us know the truth of Christ as the incarnate and crucified Love, full and perfect obedience to the Father's will and God's infinite mercy towards others", charity helps us enter into "the love of God manifest in Christ, and joins us in a personal and existential way to the total and unconditional self-giving of Jesus to the Father and to his brothers and sisters". Thus, enkindling faith is possible through the prayer and meditation on the pierced heart of Jesus. *This attitude arises primarily from the consciousness of being loved, forgiven, and even served by the Lord, who bends down to wash the feet of the Apostles and offers himself on the Cross to draw humanity into God's love.*

In our apostolate of prayer, we are reminded of praying for all priests and especially for those priests who accompany us in our journey as a movement in particular. Praying for the growth of priestly vocations and their spiritual empowerment should become a loving concern of every Jesus Youth. Our prayers shall not come to an end unless the prophecy of Jeremiah is fulfilled: 'I will give you shepherds after my own heart' (Jer 3:15). In this Year of Faith, the greatest gift that we can offer to the Church is also praying for priests.

This calls for giving a 'faith gift'. Just as new evangelization calls for new expressions and new fervor and new methods, so also our life of faith calls for new responses urged by charity. The greatest work of charity is evangelization, because essentially, everything proceeds from Love and tends towards Love. The Pope writes: "There is no action more beneficial - and therefore more charitable - towards one's neighbour than to break the bread of the word of God, to share with him the Good News of the Gospel, to introduce him to a relationship with God: evangelization is the highest and the most integral promotion of the human person.' Our project of giving a faith gift should be seen in the context of this integral promotion of the human person. And let us always remember that this is possible only through the transmission of a genuine life witness.

May the season of Lent as a time of purification rejuvenate us for a leap of faith. Thus, our faith will never be considered as something melancholic, but a reason to celebrate.

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