

**Isle of Wight Day of Reflection
THE YEAR OF FAITH: WHAT NEXT?**

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. The topic is 'The Year of Faith: What Next?' So first, the background to the Year of Faith, then, some points about faith, and finally, some thoughts on what next, with some questions for discussion.

1. The Context of the Year of Faith

First, the Year of Faith. In his 2011 Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*¹ ('The Door of Faith'), Pope Benedict announced a 'Year of Faith' for the universal Church, to run from 11th October 2012 until tomorrow, 24th November 2013, the Solemnity of Christ the King. Initially, like many others I am sure, I wondered what good such a Year might produce. In fact, the Year of Faith has produced many wonderful initiatives not only in our own diocese, but across the whole Church.

11th October 2012 was the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and also the 20th anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Let me say a word about Vatican II, the 21st ecumenical council to be held in the history of the Church. It took place in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome and it was attended by most of the world's then 2500 bishops. Councils are usually called to sort out a crisis, but Pope John XXIII wanted Vatican II to be a 'pastoral' council.² It would not make any new definitions of doctrine. Its aim was *aggiornamento*, an updating or modernisation; later, he spoke about opening the windows to let in some fresh air.³ The truths of faith remain the same, but the Church's style and discipline, the presentation of its teaching, life and worship, needed to be modernised, in order to communicate more effectively with the modern world and to spread the Gospel. He also wanted Vatican II to help to bring about unity amongst Christians, with the Orthodox and with Anglican, protestant and reformed Christians.

The Council met in four main sessions from 1962 to 1965. Its 16 documents deal with a vast range of topics, from the role of the laity and the renewal of religious life to modernising the Church's missionary activity and the training of priests. As it got underway, it began to take on a life of its own and the bishops realised that what was happening was of historic significance.⁴ Indeed, some see Vatican II as the single most significant religious event of the twentieth century.⁵ Interestingly, all the documents of Vatican II are marked by a two-fold method or movement of

- *ressourcement*, going back to the sources in the Bible and the Tradition: and
- *aggiornamento*, an application of the results to the needs of the present.

It meant first asking, if you like, 'what does Jesus say' and then: 'what does Jesus want us to do today.' By this methodology, Vatican II was able to assimilate all the new insights of 20C theology, especially the renewal of biblical theology, and to show a genuine openness to the modern world, to modern science and society, to where people were at in the second half of the 20C. The key question the Council asked was: 'What does it mean to be the Church of Christ in the modern world?'

¹ For text, see <http://www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en/annus-fidei/lettera-apostolica--porta-fidei-.html> (November 2103)

² The announcement of the Council came after Pope John XXIII visited the basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls, Rome on 25th January 1959 to a group of his advisors: see R. Gaillardetz *The Church in the Making* (New York, Paulist: 2006) I. For John XXIII's *Opening Speech* given at the Council itself, see www.ourladywarriors.org/teach/v2open.htm (October 2013). A select bibliography would include: G. Alberigo and J. Komonchak, ed. *History of Vatican II*. Five Volumes (Maryknoll, Orbis: 1995, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006), R. Gaillardetz and C. Clifford *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press: 2012), E. Hahnenberg *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (Cincinnati, Franciscan Media: 2007) and M. Faggioli *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York, Paulist: 2012). □

³ Hahnenberg 2

⁴ See Gaillardetz *The Church in the Making* xiiiif. Cf. J. Komonchak 'Vatican II as an Event' *Theology Digest* 46 (1999) 337-352.

⁵ See for instance G. Alberigo *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll, Orbis Books: 2006).

Incidentally, for a more theological guide to what was happening at the Council, may I (humbly) recommend Chapter Two from my own *Philosophy and Catholic Theology*.⁶

The 50 years since Vatican II, the so-called post-conciliar period, has been one of exceptional change, upheaval and development within the life of the Church. The repercussions of the Council and its documents have been felt across every domain of ecclesial life down to parish level with new lay ministries, the new liturgy, a rediscovery of scripture, new programmes of education and a renewed outreach of justice and peace. Moreover, theology itself has entered a period of enormous vitality and creativity with new developments of thought such as liberation theology, feminism, eco-theology, ecumenism, new philosophies and approaches, cultural studies and interreligious dialogue. There have also been many new movements within the Church such as the charismatic movement, world youth days and the new ecclesial groups such as Communion and Liberation, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, and so on.

The post-conciliar period has also coincided with huge changes within our culture, 'the world' in our time through which the Church is passing. Vatican II coincided with the 1960s, a decade of explosive historical, social and technological upheaval that continues today into the 21C. The world and its family and social mores has been changing rapidly, with the end of post-war austerity and a massive growth in affluence in the Western world, in shopping, entertainment, medical care and life-style.

As a consequence, the post-conciliar period has been a period both of real enlightenment, but also for the internal life of the Church of many challenges, indeed a period of crisis. The Council was such a massive event, it gave rise to a sense of a 'before' and an 'after.' Reactionary movements have arisen for and against Vatican II, with a struggle between classicising and modernising tendencies. There has been friction between the Church's Magisterium (i.e. the teaching authority of the pope, the Vatican congregations and the bishops) and certain theologians and commentators in the media. Moreover, after *Humanae Vitae*, Pope Paul VI's 1968 encyclical letter on contraception, a real polarisation has arisen around issues to do with sexual morality. Then, in the 1990s, the clergy abuse crisis broke, with attempts to cover it up; this continues today to shake the trust and confidence of many Catholics in Church authority and to scandalise outsiders. It will be a generation at least before a deeper trust can be restored. Even more problematically, a canon of dissent is now frequently heard, calling on the Church to abandon her traditional teaching against abortion and artificial means of contraception, to allow divorcees to remarry in church, to change doctrine on homosexual unions, to ordain women to the priesthood, to make celibacy optional, to allow Catholics to receive communion at non-catholic Eucharists, to decentralise and restructure the Roman curia, to give more power to the laity, to change the style of the papacy, and so on.

During the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, there was an increasing 'volume' of teaching from Rome in response to the challenges put forward by these new currents, the rapid changes in society, and the huge advances in science and technology, not least in bio-ethics. In 1985, an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops was held which called for a new universal catechism as a "sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine."⁷ This gave rise to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which was published in 1992 and in a revised edition in 1997. Mention should be made also of the papal encyclicals of the 1990s on moral issues and those on the Church's social teaching, such as Benedict XVI's 2009 *Caritas in Veritate*. New safeguarding procedures have been widely adopted in the Church, and this year Pope Francis has instigated a review of the Church's governance structures, as well as announcing the forthcoming synods on marriage and family-life, with the current survey of opinion.

For the Church in Britain, this post-conciliar story has been challenging. We have witnessed a precipitous decline in the numbers of practising Catholics, in Mass attendance, in marriages and in vocations. There are over 5M Catholics in the UK but less than 20% regularly attend Mass. We have an extensive network of Catholic schools, yet few youngsters practice and even many teachers are non-believers. The 19C religious orders of sisters and brothers have been evaporating, and in dioceses parishes and communities are being clustered or closed. On a world scale, Catholicism has never been

⁶ P. Egan *Philosophy and Catholic Theology: A Primer* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press: 2009)

⁷ John Paul II *Fidei Depositum* 3, the *Apostolic Constitution on the Publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* in *Catechism of the Catholic Church. Second Edition* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997) 5.

so big, but in Britain and Europe it is in decline. This is the context of the Year of Faith. Pope Benedict was seeking to revitalise the faith of the Church in the West and to reach out to the huge numbers of Europeans who seemed to have lost their way. Numbers of course are not everything. In the Gospels, Jesus uses various images for the Church such as a city on a hilltop, a lamp on the lampstand, a leaven in the dough. He never promised full churches: if anything, he seemed to envisage a small band, a faithful remnant, a tiny flock.

It is crucial to note that today's questions are different from those asked at Vatican II. Then, it was 'What does it mean to be the Church of Christ in the modern world?' Today, especially among the younger generations, the issue is much more fundamental: 'Does God exist? What is the point of religion? What difference does belief in God make to the way I live my life?'

In *Porta Fidei*, Pope Benedict spoke of the need to rediscover, celebrate and deepen the gift of faith in a cultural context in which many deny the truths of faith and the reality of God (n. 2). He envisaged the Year of Faith to be an opportunity to rekindle the spirit of Vatican II, to study once again the documents (n. 5), to rekindle commitment to Jesus Christ and to proclaim the Christian faith to others (nn. 6-7). This is why he invited everyone to reflect on the Creed, to make a public profession of the Creed (n. 9), and to give witness to the Creed in practical works of charity and justice (n. 14).

2. Faith in Jesus Christ

Since becoming bishop last September, I have been impressed at all the many creative activities the Year of Faith has occasioned in parishes and pastoral areas. I have made my own contribution in a series of public lectures *Being Catholic in a Secular Culture* and have given talks, broadcasts and presentations on the documents of Vatican II, on divine revelation and on the new evangelisation. I have also written five pastoral letters to the people and clergy of the diocese. As a bishop, I would envisage a Pastoral Letter to be a substantial teaching document, an important moment of catechesis from the bishop as the 'Apostle of the Diocese,' which is why I have asked parishes to duplicate copies of the letters for people to take away and study at home, perhaps even to discuss them in a group or with their parish priest.

The pastoral letters, following the directives of *Porta Fidei*, took for their topic the Creed. The history of the two main creeds we use in the Western Church, the *Apostles Creed* and the *Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*, is complex. Basically, they say the same thing, although one is more elaborate than the other. The *Apostles Creed* developed from its use in the Rite of Baptism, where the candidate to be baptised was asked: "Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty...? Do you believe in Jesus Christ his Son our Lord...? Do you believe in the Holy Spirit...?" whereas the Nicene Creed (named after two early councils of the Church, the Council of Nicea I in 325 and the First Council of Constantinople in 381) came from the Church's need to have an agreed list of doctrines that everyone could assent to. Both Creeds have three articles:

- the first concerning God the Father, Creator of the visible, material universe and the invisible, spiritual world of heaven, the angels and saints;
- the second about God the Son, Jesus Christ, who became incarnate, died for us and rose again, with a brief summary of the life of Christ from the Gospels;
- and the third, on God the Holy Spirit. What we believe about the Church is also included in this third article, the article on the Holy Spirit, since the Church, which is the Body of Christ, is a mystery brought into being by the Holy Spirit.

The first Pastoral Letter was about 'faith' itself, what it means to say 'I believe.' The next three Letters dealt in turn with aspects of what we believe about God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The last Letter was dedicated to the Church. If you wish to read them again, you can find them all on the diocesan web-site.

One of the things I like doing in Portsmouth is going out in the evenings for a short walk, usually to say the Rosary. Since being a child, I have always been fascinated with the stars, the constellations, the night sky, but the lights of the city, the traffic, the shops are so bright, the moon is barely visible, let alone the stars. This is exactly what it is like as a spiritual person living in today's secular culture. The secular world is so full of potential, wonderful things, it can make life busy, absorbing, bright. But like the city lights, it can easily block out the spiritual, the sacred canopy of God, heaven, happiness and the most important things in life. People can live their lives totally absorbed with shopping, entertainment, work

and busyness, but with little attention to the God who made them and is calling out to them in their hearts. This is why faith is today's issue: belief in God, the meaning of life, why are we born and what happens when we die, the moral value of human life, the role of religion in a secular culture, the relationship of faith and science, and the difference that being a Catholic makes.

As Catholics, the core of faith is the sense of being called personally by Jesus Christ to be his disciple within his Body, the Church. In her 2012 book *Forming Intentional Disciples*,⁸ Sherry Weddell, from the Catherine of Siena Institute in Los Angeles, notes how 80% of Catholics are 'inactive,' non-church going, 'lapsed' as we used to say. Interestingly many of these inactives convert to Evangelicalism, notably among ethnic communities such as the Portuguese, Poles and Nigerians. The reason they convert is not because of the up-beat style of worship in evangelicalism, nor because of the Church's teachings, the clergy abuse-crisis, or a marriage issue, but perhaps surprisingly, because they say that their spiritual needs are not being met in the Catholic Church. They do not have a personal relationship with God. Weddell's research goes on to show how a staggering 40% of *practising* Catholics, when asked, say they do not have much of a personal relationship with God. Many practicing Catholics do not believe in a loving God with whom they can have a life-changing relationship, despite going to Mass, being involved in the parish, or even exercising a ministry. In any parish, Weddell says, the number of motivated, or 'intentional' disciples is often 5%: the same few who come to everything and do everything.

This is why I believe the time has come to put all the resources of our Diocese of Portsmouth at the service of helping people to pray, to find God, to experience the love of God in their life, to commit to God, to learn the art of praying, to develop a personal-passionate friendship with Jesus Christ, to grasp personally what his death and resurrection means for them, to have a real sense of being personally chosen by Christ to be his disciple. As Catholics we have huge resources for this in two millennia of spiritual theology, in the lives of the saints, the wisdom of the clergy, and in our rich Tradition. We need to ensure that our churches are open for people to visit and pray, that we have periods of Eucharistic Adoration, that we have leaflets and other guides on prayer, and that we offer simple lessons and courses on the basics of how to pray. We need to devise strategies for prayer, to pray that the Spirit will be given abundantly, to focus on creating moments of silence, on developing the religious sense, on helping people to listen and pray, and especially to find Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If we can help people develop a greater 'interiority' then surely they will have a chance to hear what the Lord is calling them to.

Tomorrow, as the Year of Faith ends, I am asking everyone across the diocese to consecrate themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. The consecration is not simply an act of piety. In Britain today, we have much to thank God for and we rejoice that the Holy Spirit is clearly at work far and wide in people's hearts. Yet we also recognise that many people in our society reject God, or they are indifferent towards Him, to their eternal destiny and to the role of religion in human living. More, as the new secular culture takes root and goes into the ascendant, politicians and policy-makers, are taking more and more wrong turns, leading our country further and further away from its Christian patrimony, and from those fundamental beliefs and values which until now have made us what we are. In asking everyone to consecrate themselves to the Heart of Christ, I want to strengthen our Christian identity, to renew our commitment to be disciples of Jesus Christ, to deepen our love for Christ's Church. I want to ask everyone to put Jesus first, to acknowledge Him as their Lord, to profess Him alone to be the Way to human happiness, the Truth that sets us free, the Eternal Life for which we long.

Recently, an eighty year old man was telling me how as a teenager, he used to go on long bike rides with his friends. One summer, they went on a big cycling tour of Wales. Heavy-laden with tents and supplies, they set off for a great time, yet they carefully planned the whole route and its timings so that every day without fail they would be able to get to a church, where they could hear Holy Mass. That is what we mean about putting Jesus first. Faith is never a hobby, an add-on to anything else, something we think about when we can. By baptism Jesus Christ has chosen you and me for a specific task and purpose. He has called us to be His servants, His apostles, His ambassadors. He is our Lord

⁸ S. Weddell *Forming Intentional Disciples. The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington Indiana, Our Sunday Visitor: 2012)

and Master, and we are under Him as His disciples. He wants us in prayer and through studying the Gospels to enjoy a personal-passionate friendship with Him and one day to be with Him forever in the happiness of heaven. So at Mass tomorrow, the Feast of Christ the King, the national Day of Prayer for Young People, I wish to invite everyone to consecrate themselves, through the Heart of Mary, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. That means: put Christ first! Put yourself under His Word! Promise to live your life entirely *In Corde Iesu!*

3. A Year of Faith in Action

So, What next? Tomorrow the Year of Faith ends, and we ask: What can we do as a follow-up? In the *Letter of James*, we read the following:

“What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. ... For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead” (James 2: 14-17, 26).

Tomorrow, at the Mass to close the Year of Faith in the Guildhall in Southampton, I am going to make an important announcement, which will be explored further in a Pastoral Letter for the New Year: that I wish the diocese to follow-up the Year of Faith with a Year of Action, that is, a Year of Faith put into practice in good works, in works of charity, in practical works of justice and love, so that others may see our Catholic Faith and experience our personal-passionate love for Jesus Christ and his Kingdom.

There are two aspects to this. First, next summer, I have invited Sherry Weddell and her team to visit the diocese and to launch the *Called and Gifted Programme*.⁹ The *Called and Gifted Programme* is designed to help ordinary Catholics discern the gifts and talents, the charisms that God has given them. It is a three-step programme, which you can read about on their website. It includes a one-hour, one-on-one interview with each person individually to help them draw up an inventory of the gifts God has given them. I hope eventually 1500 people from across the diocese will take part in this.

In her book *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Weddell also speaks about training Catholics in the art of conversation. As you know, the Church is calling us to the work of new evangelisation, which in the words of John Paul II is an evangelisation “new in its ardour, new in its methods, new in its expression”.¹⁰ Evangelisation is always a two-way movement, like breathing-in and breathing-out. First, it is about ourselves being evangelised, fired-up and formed by Christ and the Gospel (breathing-in) and then it is about reaching out to others with the Good News (breathing-out). As Catholics in Britain, evangelisation can feel uncomfortable. It makes us think of bible-bashing or Pentecostalism. But in today’s 21C, secular culture, we need new images, new methods, new media, new words. Weddell proposes five different levels of evangelistic conversation that any Catholic can be trained to engage in: on the bus, with friends, at work or in school. It can mean anything from dropping into the conversation, “When I was at Mass the other day...” to facilitating a sharing of personal faith-stories.

So first, providing help to put our faith into words. But then secondly, putting our faith into works, into action, into practice.

One way to do this is to become involved in our diocesan Framework for Collaboration. We have now restructured our diocesan curia and begun the process of rolling out the new Framework for Collaboration. The purpose of the curia is to assist the bishop in the pastoral care and direction of the diocese. The new structure, as we have noted elsewhere, is Christ-centred, based on Christ’s three-fold mission as Priest, Prophet and King. But if you read it across the Vicariates, the structure also represents the call of the disciple, the formation of the disciple, and the sending of the disciple on mission. In this way, everything is focused on mission and evangelisation. The Framework is led by the Bishop and the Bishop’s Council, and involves departments and teams of lay men and lay women,

⁹ See Catherine of Siena Institute: Equipping Parishes to Form Lay Apostles: <http://www.siena.org/Called-Gifted/called-a-gifted> (November 2013)

¹⁰ See John Paul II “The Task of the Latin American Bishop” in *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983): 659-62. The occasion was a discourse to an assembly of CELAM in Port-au-Prince on 9th March 1983. Cf. R. Fisichella *The New Evangelisation* (Gracewing, Leominster: 2012) 8f

religious, deacons and priests. Eventually, we hope our parishes and pastoral areas will also have structures and teams that in some way mirror the diocesan Framework, and thus devise and lead policy and projects on the local level in collaboration with the centre. I also hope that the teams will collaborate on common projects. For instance, 2014 is the 100th anniversary of the First World War, and so there could be joint projects led by teams linked together e.g. our schools department, the civic relations unit, the liturgy team, and so on.

At the moment, we are recruiting to some of the teams. The teams are of four types:

- Employees of the diocese, such as in the schools department;
- Then, teams of support-staff that assist a director, such as the diaconal team that helps Fr. Peter Hart, the Director of our Diaconate Programme;
- Thirdly, teams formed of specialists that act like professional bodies or associations, such as the team of hospital chaplains;
- And fourthly, all the other teams: e.g. the Marriage and Family Life Team, Ministry to Marginalised and Inactive Catholics, the Justice, Peace and Social Responsibility team, and so on.

This fourth category are teams of volunteers, mainly of laity and mainly lay-led. They meet about six times a year to pray, to discuss and devise policy, to form themselves and to form others, to sponsor projects, and to encourage and enable the clergy and people at local level to carry out a designated task, e.g. activities relating to justice, peace and social responsibility. The Bishop's Council will appoint the team leader and also a chaplain, and sometimes the Bishop's Council will appoint a specific expert as a team-member. But the rest of the membership of the team, typically comprising twelve members, is open to anyone from across the diocese, anyone who wishes to apply. Members are appointed for 12 months, and then, subject to appraisal, for three years. To belong to a team, you must be a practising Catholic, 18 years old or older. Members should be 'mainstream' Catholics, in communion with the Holy Father, happy to work under the direction of the Bishop's Council. We hope the teams will consist of a balance of women and men, of geographical spread across the diocese, and also of age ranges (18-25, 26-40, 41-60, and 61+). We are interviewing at the moment and application forms can be found on the diocesan web-site.

Please consider volunteering for something you might be interested in, e.g. outreach to lapsed Catholics, ecumenism, or ethnic chaplaincy. On the website, you will find team-descriptors that explain the purpose and scope of each team. God has enriched our diocese with outstanding people with many gifts and talents. Please ask his blessing upon the discernment and recruitment process.

The Framework is one thing, but I would look to every Catholic in the diocese to put their faith into action in a work of practical charity. Think: food banks, credit unions, the needs of the homeless, the support of addicts, visiting the sick, caring for a relative in need, working with the SVP, loving the lonely, helping the elderly, protecting the unborn child, campaigning for justice, befriending an immigrant family, or whatever. The global financial crisis has made a deep impact upon many individuals and families in the UK. Without diminishing our usual concern for the alleviation of poverty in other parts of the world, we need to become more aware of the issues of poverty and homelessness at home, to devise projects to tackle poverty locally, and to involve people in campaign actions that tackle the causes of poverty and need. Catholics have always been noted for their generosity and their practical charity. It speaks volumes. A sign of a parish's vitality is its charitable activities, without of course descending into 'do-good-ery' or constant fundraising. It is because we have a personal-passionate love for Jesus Christ that we care for those in need, seeking to offer in a practical way the comfort of the Gospel. For the Jesus we love in the Eucharist is the Jesus we love in the poor, and the Jesus we love in the poor is the Jesus we love in the Eucharist. In other words, charity is a concrete expression of the new evangelisation.

So to conclude. In this paper, I have spoken about the context of the Year of Faith and then what is meant by faith, especially developing a personal-passionate relationship with Jesus Christ. In this last section, I spoke about putting our faith into words and into practical action and charity. Despite the wishes of the National Secular Society, religion will never go away because every human being is spiritual, a person seeking happiness and fulfilment and as St. Augustine once said, the human heart

is restless until it rests in God.¹¹ Moreover, we believe that through the Holy Spirit, God has an inward relationship with every child, woman and man on earth.¹² The problem, then, is not the product that the Church is offering but the ability of people in a busy, secular culture to hear it. The world we live in thrives on noise and distraction, on work and entertainment; it makes people live 'out there' and not 'in here'; it smothers that inner voice of God and drowns out his call to truth, goodness and holiness. This is why in the Year of Faith and now in a Year of Faith in Action we need to pray ever more earnestly that the Holy Spirit will be given abundantly, that people *will* hear the call to discipleship without and within, that all will yearn to be in union with their loving God and Creator, and come to know, serve and love Jesus Christ in full communion with his Body, the Church. Thank you for listening!

I end with two questions to think about and then to discuss in groups:

1. At the moment, how do I give witness to my Catholic faith in my daily life?
2. Over the next twelve months, in the 'Year of Faith in Action,' how might I help to give a practical witness to my Catholic faith in my daily life?

¹¹ "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" St. Augustine *Confessions* 1,1-2,2.5,5 (CSEL 33, 1-5) in second reading of Office of Readings for the Ninth Sunday of the Year.

¹² Cf. John Paul II *Dominum et Vivificantem* 52: available online at www.vatican.va (November 2013)