

Living the Faith

Celebrating BXVI's Year of Faith



Mar 2013

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This Month...

- Su 3 **Lent 3**
Holy Ground
- Th 7 Sts Perpeual &
Felicity
- Su 10 **Lent 4**
New Life
- Su 17 **Lent 5**
Forgiven
St Patrick
- Tu 19 St Joseph,
Husband of Mary
- Su 24 **Palm Sunday**
Hosanna
- Tu 26 The Annunciation
- Th 28 **Holy Thursday**
- Fr 29 **Good Friday**
- Sa 30 **Easter Saturday**
- Su 31 **Easter Sunday**
Alleluia!

The world today repeatedly writes off the Catholic Church as being irrelevant, so the fascination and buzz that has been generated by Pope Benedict retiring has been the source of substantial bemusement here at CathFamily!

None-the-less, big things are afoot in the Church and in the world.

In all the hype and hysteria, we present a few thoughts on an on-going project begun by Benedict: The Year of Faith. It is a year dedicated to going back to the basics of our faith journey. It is a year centered on Jesus, the reason for faith. It providentially ties in beautifully with the Australian Bishops Year of Grace.



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A Year of Faith

Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated the Year of Faith on the 12th of October 2012. This was a significant date for the church, being the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and 20th Anniversary of the re-publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

In his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* (Door of Faith), Benedict points out that as Catholics, we can no longer go out into the wider world and assume that 'Faith' is a well-understood foundation of our culture. Our secularised western culture actively denies faith and attempts to discredit believers. Benedict challenges us to grow in our understanding of our faith so that we can be the credible, enlightened and confident witnesses that our culture desperately needs.

By going back to the basics of the Catholic faith, (the Nicene Creed and the Catechism), Benedict invites us on a journey of rediscovery, joy and deeper unity in our belief, prayer and living as Catholics.

Vatican II: 50 Years on

The Second Vatican Council was opened by Pope John XXIII in 1962 and concluded by Paul VI three years later. Unlike other Church councils, Vatican II did not institute any creeds, condemn any heresies or define any doctrines. Although it produced 16 documents on subjects ranging from liturgy to inter-faith relations, the meaning and 'spirit' of the Vatican II has been bitterly and intensely disputed.

Some have hailed it as "theological year zero", a new age of openness to philosophical currents of the world and popular culture. Others have declared it the source of all the ills of the modern church.



A Third Way...

Benedict XVI, being a theological advisor to the Council in his youth, takes an entirely different understanding of the spirit of Vatican II. Benedict's third way is what George Wiegel calls 'Evangelical Catholicism' and can be summarised in Benedict's papal motto: "Co-operators with Truth". We have gifts of both faith and reason and by bringing them together, we achieve not only an individual fullness of being, but we are a beacon of light and hope to a culture characterised by fracture and disillusionment.

"Evangelical Catholicism takes John Paul II's injunction in the 2001 apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* to heart: it sets sail from the stagnant shallows of institutional maintenance into the deep waters of post-modernity, preaching the Paschal Mystery as the central truth of the human condition, while building communities of integrity, decency, solidarity and compassion - Eucharistic communities of supernatural charity capable of nurturing genuine human flourishing."

- George Wiegel

The New Evangelisation

The Catholic Church exists to proclaim the Gospel. That's it. End of story. Any time we forget this, we stray from the path that Jesus laid down for his Church.

Naturally, there are many different ways to proclaim the Gospel; serving the poor and the sick, feeding the hungry, educating the next generation, and a great many physical, practical and absolutely necessary engagements that the Church has in the world.

BUT... the Year of Faith is not about these good works. The Year of Faith is about why we are who we are and the reality is, without THE personal encounter with Christ in the Incarnation, the Catholic Church is little more than a global charity.





Benedict's Year of Faith is about the simplest, most basic proclamation of the Gospel: ourselves.

Each individual Catholic's faith is absolutely crucial to proclaiming the Gospel. It is not our words necessarily or even our good deeds that are the essential to Christian witness. It is our lived witness of our relationship with Jesus.



As
Mother
herself
said:

“We are not nurses, we are not doctors, we are not teachers, we are not social workers. We are religious.”

An Example:

Bl. Mother Teresa

What is it that made her one of the holiest people in the 20th Century? Her work with the dying and destitute could have been done by social workers.

It was the faith of Bl. Mother Teresa, a faith that she nurtured with constant prayer, reflection and learning that made her a saint. Everything she did was an outpouring of love from that rock-solid foundation of faith.

Putting it into Practice

Benedict asks us: Do we understand our faith? Do we know why the Church teaches the things it teaches? Do we understand the points of belief in the Creed and do we mean them when we say them or just mumble along with our mind elsewhere? Who are we living for?

With his Trilogy *Jesus of Nazareth* now published, Benedict makes it clear that Christianity is primarily about a relationship with the actual person of Jesus.

This is what the Year of Faith is about. Going back to the core of what we believe so we can better live it. The teachings of the Church as expressed in the Catechism and the Creed help us to identify what may be blocking our spiritual growth. But it is not just about how well we know our Catechism, it is as much about the person of Jesus and our relationship with him that is the core of our faith.

Author: Kiara Pirola

[Annus Fidei.va 'The New Evangelisation](#)

[Pope Benedict XVI, Porta Fidei, annusfidei.va](#)

Angelo Devananda, *Daily Prayers with Mother Teresa* (Fount, 1987), p. 91



Participating in the Year of Faith

Things to Read

The Catechism of the Catholic Church | The full version and the Compendium is available on the Vatican website.

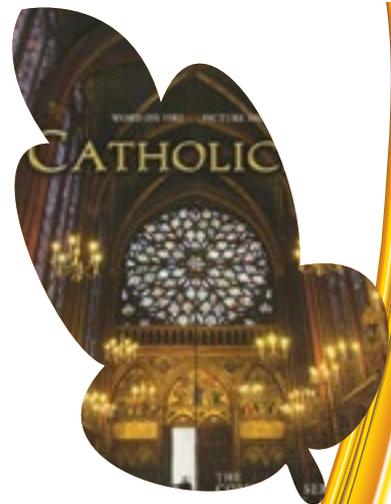
The Nicene Creed | The text of the creed (and the shorter Apostle's Creed) is available here.

Things to Listen to

Cradio.org.au | Check out the *Living Faith* show with Fr Richard Umbers from the online catholic radio station Cradio. Covering everything from prayer to Trinitarian dogma, Fr Richard gives you everything you need to know.



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Things to watch

WordonFire.org | The web hub of Fr Robert Barron's ministry. He puts up regular Youtube commentaries on everything from Batman to New Atheism. To get you started, check out his reflection on the legacy of BXVI.



The Catholicism Series | This stunning production is a wonderful tour through the Catholic Faith making full use of the incredible visual and liturgical library of the universal Church. This is a wonderful way to fall in love with Catholicism all over again!

Frequently Asked Questions

How well do you know your faith? Could you answer some of the most common questions about our faith? Have a go!

1. Why do Catholics worship Mary?

A short answer: We don't. We honour Mary as the Mother of God, the first disciple and our most powerful intercessor, but we worship God alone. For more, check out:

- [CCC nos. 487-507](#)
- [Dr Scott Hahn, Hail Holy Queen, Double Day Publishers, New York 2001.](#)



2. What is the Trinity?

Christians believe that there is only one God who exists in three persons, The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. So how does that work exactly? It's a mystery, but here is one analogy: If 'God is Love' that means God is a being that is eternally 'doing' love. As love is not a solitary action, logically, there must be one who loves, one who is loved and the fruit of that love. If God is Love, then he cannot be alone. So we say the Father is the lover, the Son is the beloved and the fruit of that love is the Holy Spirit. These are three distinct persons but they are of the same essence or substance (hence the "consubstantial" in the Creed.) For more, check out:

- [CCC nos. 232-260](#)
- [Gilles Emery O.P. & Matthew Levering, *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2011](#)

3. How can Jesus have two natures?

This has been such a contentious issue that the Council of Niceae was convened in 325 AD to settle it. Both the human and the divine nature of Jesus co-exist together in complete fullness. Jesus is not like a demigod, half man and half god, nor is his divinity or humanity at war with each other. They exist together in one union. For more info:

- [CCC no. 456-478](#)
- [The Skit Guys, Fully Human, Fully God. Video.](#)

4. Isn't the bread and wine just a symbol?

The Eucharist is not just a nice ritual we do because Jesus asked us. It is literally his body and blood offered up for our redemption. It may taste, feel, smell and appear like bread and wine, but when the priest prays the consecration, the *substance* of the bread and wine transform (miraculously) into Jesus' body and blood whilst remaining in the *form* of bread and wine. More info:

- [CCC no. 1333-1344](#)
- [Fr Robert Barron comments on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist](#)



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5. Why do we confess to a priest?

Why can't we just confess to God directly? Well yes we can, and we should, every day. Sacramental confession however is about more than just our relationship with God. It's about our participation in the Body of Christ. The Church has always held that the grace of mercy and forgiveness can be mediated through a priest who acts in the person of Christ (*in persona Christi*) who authoritatively forgives our sins (see Matthew 16:19).

The practice of going to a priest to confess our sins and be reconciled to the Church is incredibly powerful and healing and one of the great gifts of faith. Check out:

- [CCC no. 1445-1449](#)
- [Dr Robert Tilley, Reconciliation: Becoming Truly Human, iWitness 2012 talk via Cradio.org.au](#)

Faithful

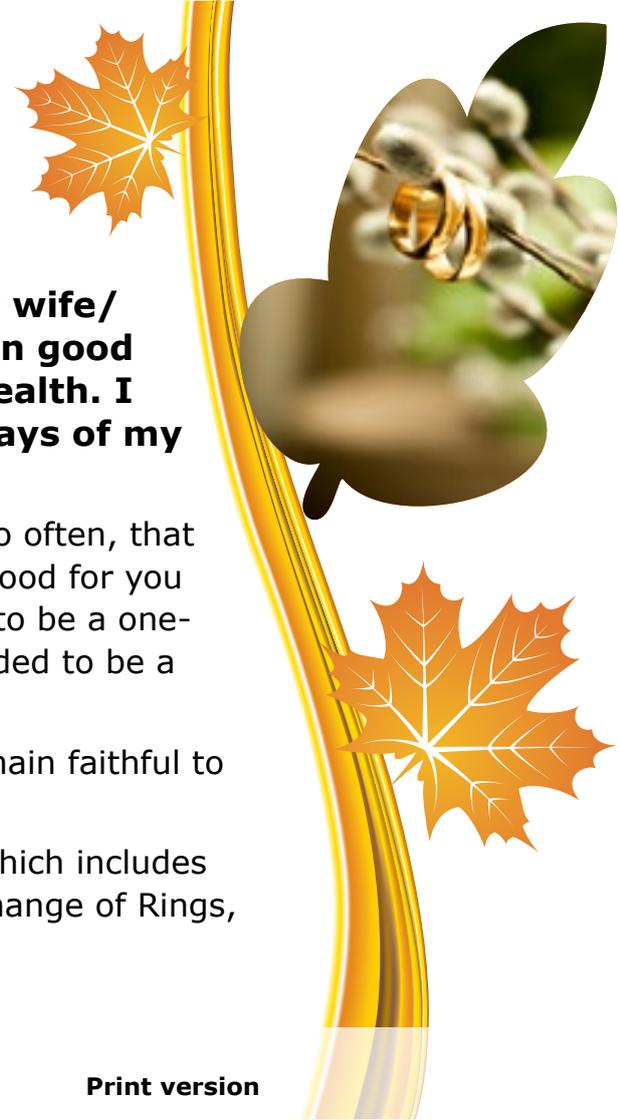
Francine & Byron Pirola

“I (name) take you, (name), to be my wife/ husband. I promise to be true to you in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health. I will love you and honour you all the days of my life.”

We hear these vows in movies and at weddings so often, that many of us can recite them without prompting. Good for you if you can! Our wedding vows were never meant to be a one-time thought on our wedding day. They are intended to be a daily mantra.

But what do they really mean and how do we remain faithful to our vows?

Taken in the context of the full wedding liturgy, which includes the Statement of Consent, the Vows and the Exchange of Rings, four essential characteristics are evident.





1. Freely given. Inherent to the marriage promise is the idea that the marriage is freely entered into. Sometimes this freedom may be undermined such as when there is undue pressure from family, friends or the fiancé or there are unfortunate circumstances such as a pregnancy. One's free consent might also be limited by the presence of mental illness or addictions.

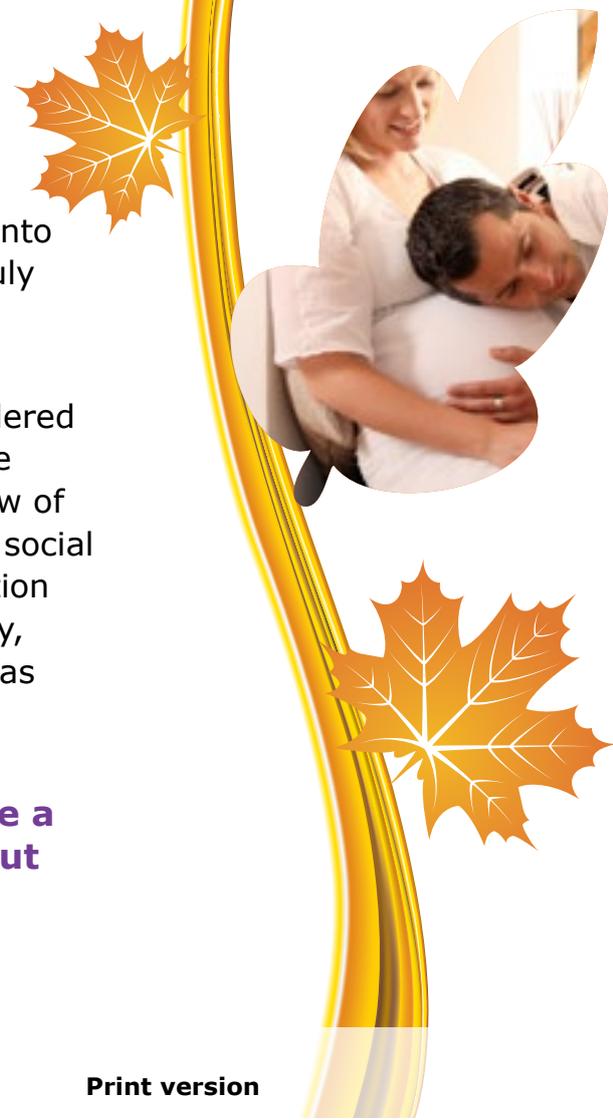
2. Total and unconditional. Marriage is unique among contracts in that it demands a willingness to share everything unconditionally, without an exit clause. When couples mutually respect this call, a beautiful synchrony results where each spouse is able to confidently rely on the generosity of the other.

3. Faithful and exclusive until death. Life-long, sexual exclusivity is a central principal of Christian marriage. Fidelity ensures that all children conceived by the spouses will be raised by their biological mother and father. It also encourages the couple to direct their sexual passion and relationship energy towards strengthening the marriage bond.

4. Open to life. Children are both a wonderful blessing and a great responsibility to a marriage. The capacity of the couple to cooperate with God to bring new life into the world who will be loved by him for eternity is a truly profound ability.

Regrettably, with the exception of the first characteristic (freely given), all these features of married love are considered negotiable in the wider society. Beginning in the 1960s, the uptake of contraception and sterilisation challenged the vow of being open to life. This was followed in the 1970s with the social acceptance of divorce and remarriage which is a contradiction of the second characteristic: total and unconditional. Finally, the explosion in internet pornography in the past decade has normalised sexual infidelity.

More than ever, our culture needs the radical witness of long-time, faithful couples to provide a counterpoint to the cynical disillusionment about marriage.



Couple Exercise: Take each phrase of the wedding vows and write down what you understand it to mean. For example: “*I take you* – means that I freely, and willingly, join myself to you. It means that I accept you, all of you, as you are and knowing that you will change and grow. *I take you* today and every day.”

I take you...

To be my wife/husband...

I promise to be true to you...

In good times...

And in bad...

In sickness...

And in health...

I will love you...

And honour you..

All the days of my life...



SMART Loving
Because Every Marriage Matters
Seminars | Resources | Articles



Find out more about Catholic marriage and how you can enjoy deeper intimacy and spiritual connection.

Catechism Roulette

Ever wondered why Catholics do the things we do? Get your Catechism out, dust it off and have a go at playing Catechism Roulette!

Open your Catechism at random, place your finger on the page and read the paragraph it lands on. Discuss together how you could more faithfully live out that particular teaching point.

CathFamily Lent & Easter Activities

Spiritual Spring Cleaning

Rituals for Lent

Fasting Before Feasting

Waste Not Stale Bread!

**Feasting and Fasting
in Marriage**

**The Last Supper and
the Jewish Passover**

The Last Supper Meal

Easter Rituals

Lord of Joy!

The Life of Benedict XVI

1927 | Born in Bavaria, the youngest of three children.

1951 | Ordained a priest.

1953 | Receives his doctorate.

1959 | He begins his teaching career.

1962 | Attends the Second Vatican Council as a theological advisor.

1977 | Appointed a Bishop and then Cardinal.

1992 | Presents completed *Catechism* to John Paul II which is published.

2005 | Is elected Pope.

2012 | Publishes the final volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*

2013 | Retires from the Papacy.



[ETWN, 'Life of Pope Benedict XVI'](#)

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