



PARISH LINK



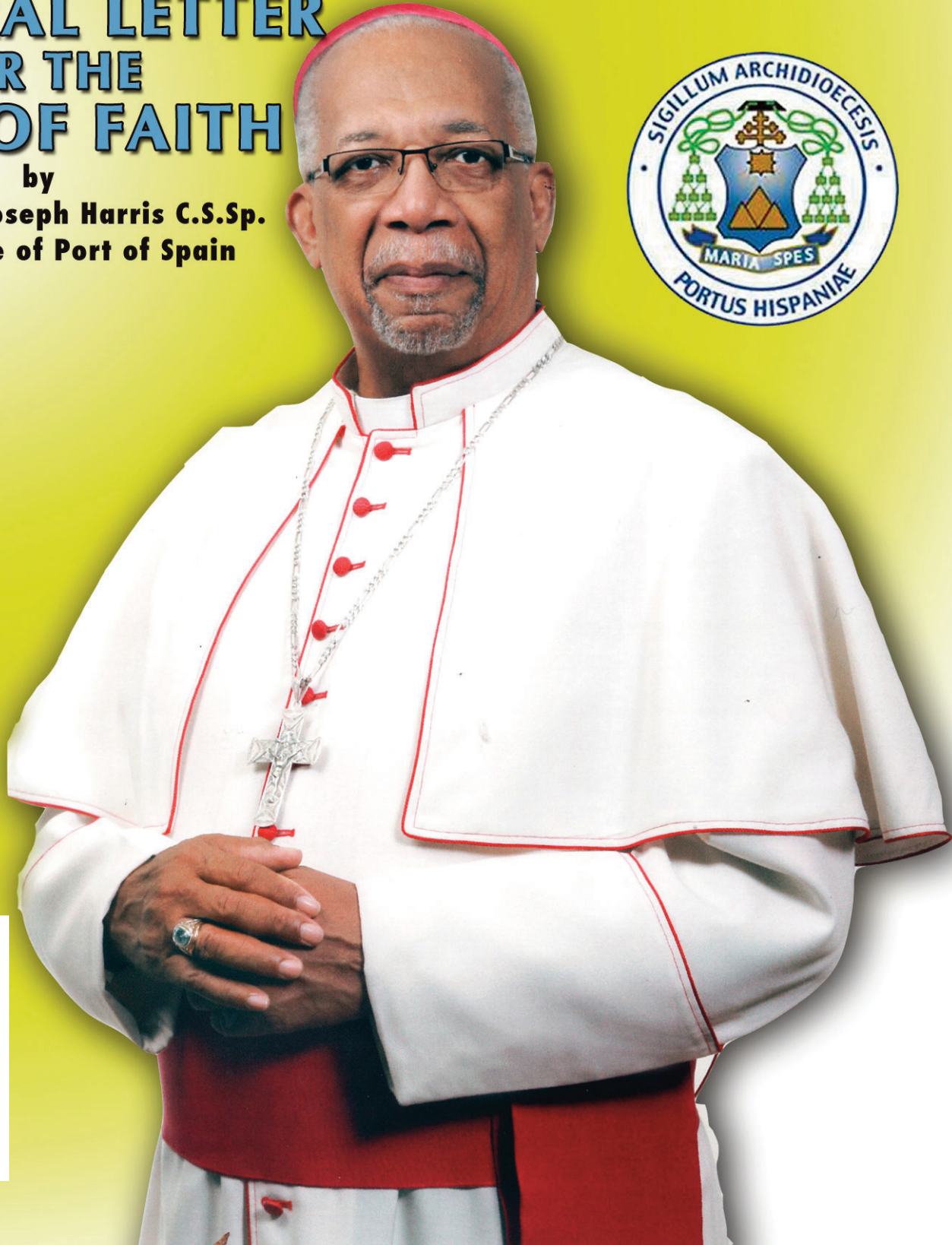
The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission For Social Justice

Issue 5 November 2012

PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE YEAR OF FAITH

by

**Archbishop Joseph Harris C.S.Sp.
Archdiocese of Port of Spain**



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

INTRODUCTION

Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, during the Year of Faith, let us intensify our reflections on the gift of our Faith and strengthen our commitment to proclaim our Faith with joy and enthusiasm. What does it mean to be a Catholic? Can we discern from the way in which we live our lives whether or not we are living our Faith? Are we true witnesses to Christ whom we say we follow? Are we a source of evangelisation in our homes, workplaces and communities? Love of God and love of neighbour impel us to walk with the 2 feet of social action: works of mercy and works of

social justice. Charity and justice must go together. Let us open our hearts to the Lord and enter fully through the door of Faith.



CCSJ is aware that there are major challenges to our discipleship in today's world. However, if we deepen our personal encounter/relationship with Christ, he will help us to transform the world to reflect Gospel values. We can do nothing without God, so let us pray incessantly to Him during this Year of Faith for the grace to live up to our vocation to be holy and to build his Kingdom of justice, peace, truth, love and freedom.

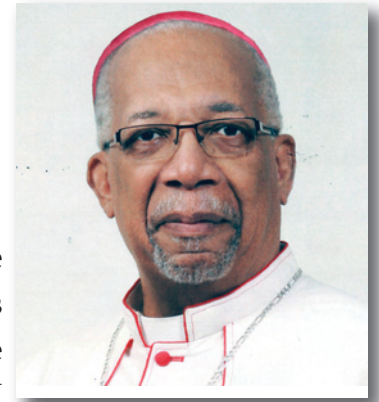
We share with you in this issue of *Parish Link*, Archbishop Joseph Harris' Pastoral Letter which was issued on Sunday 14 October. Please study it with your family, friends, parishioners and with all people of Goodwill. Let's pray that during this time of grace, the Holy Spirit will lead us to a greater understanding/appreciation of our faith and renew our Church.

Let us open our hearts to the Lord and enter fully through the door of Faith.



“ *To The Faithful of the Archdiocese and to All People of Faith and Goodwill in Trinidad and Tobago* ”

PASTORAL LETTER OF ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH HARRIS C.S.Sp.



Lord. I believe; help my unbelief. (Mark 9:24) These words find an echo in my heart as I seek to respond as your bishop, to the invitation of the Holy Father to journey with him on a Year of Faith and to invite you to join me here in this Archdiocese on that journey. We in Trinidad and Tobago are adherents of many faiths. God is in our constitution. Prayer is very much a part of our life as individuals and as a nation. Yet we know how much and how often we fall short. Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! This Year of Faith extends from October 11th this year to the Feast of Christ the King, November next year. Its beginning marks the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church; both landmark moments in the history of the modern Church. October 11th also marks the beginning of the Synod on the New Evangelisation which seeks to confront the challenges we face in proclaiming the Gospel to today's world. In this year, we will give thanks to God for the faith which the missionaries brought to our shores and which our parents, grandparents and generations of catechists have passed on to us. Our Catholic institutions across the land bear witness to the meaning, affirmation and joy - abundant life - which we have found in the faith for over more than two centuries. This year our Pro-Cathedral community celebrates 225 years of such witness and the parish of St. Michael's, Maracas Valley, 150 years. From the years 2003 to 2009 the archdiocese engaged in the Synod process, an expression of our on-going desire to deepen our faith and its expres-

sion. Even as we give thanks for this witness throughout the years, we continue to pray, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! The strong foundations of our faith face the crisis of a decaying edifice symbolised by our Cathedral in disrepair. How do we build on these strong foundations an edifice able to withstand the current storms which assail us and become a beacon, a light on the hills of Aripo and Naparima for God's people in Trinidad and Tobago?



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KNOWLEDGE OF THE FAITH

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

If this faith which has been passed on to us by missionary priests and religious, by parents and grandparents, and in our Catholic schools is to overcome the storms which assail us so that we can be, as Pope Benedict tells us in *Porta Fidei* 'Salt of the Earth and Light of the World' (cf. Mt 5:13-16), then we here in Trinidad and Tobago must be that beacon, that light on the hills of Aripo and Naparima for God's people in Trinidad and Tobago; we must know our faith but know it in such a way that it can help us to respond creatively to the problems which we face as a nation today.

Over 30 years ago, our Seminary began a lecture series at Holy Name Convent entitled KNOW YOUR FAITH. This annual series helped many to a deeper understanding of their faith and its consequences

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sponsibility. Lord Help my unbelief which does not allow me to be that truly credible witness which I must be if the Church which I love is to be credible.



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LIVE YOUR FAITH

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

To be credible witnesses, or to be Salt of the earth and Light of the World, we must respond to the call to be holy.

We must not be afraid of that term. Holiness is not contrary to manliness nor is it contrary to joyfulness. Holiness requires strength and clarity of purpose. Holiness requires an ability to think critically and make judgments, not based on emotion but on clearly thought out and adopted principles, principles which flow from the values of the Kingdom. This is clearly seen in the age of the martyrs when men and women accepted death rather than betray their convictions and the object of their faith, Jesus Christ. In the Trinidad and Tobago, On December 1st, 1699, three missionaries were slain by Amerindians at the mission of San Francisco de los Arenales. The bodies of these slain missionaries were later brought to the church in St. Joseph's and interred under the floor. While we do not know very much about the death of these Franciscan priests, and they have not been declared as martyrs officially by the church, their presence in Trinidad is witness to their desire to spread the faith, which desire they paid for with their lives. In present day Trinidad and Tobago, this ability to think critically and make judgments based on the values of the Kingdom, will allow us to be counter cultural, will allow us to move away from the emptiness of seeking money and comfort above all else and will allow us to speak truth to power, even when the power has the wherewithal to harm us.

Even though today it is unlikely that we will be killed for professing our faith in Jesus Christ, we will suffer for it in other ways but the suffering of martyrs is the still the seed of Christians.

Another definition of holiness is putting on the mind which was in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5) The mind of Christ is revealed to us very clearly in the Gospel of Luke when we are told that on the Sabbath day Jesus entered the Synagogue and took the scroll and began to read; *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* (Luke 4, 18 – 19) In a very true sense, putting on the mind of Christ is recognizing that through baptism and confirmation we have been set aside to do precisely what Jesus did and what he proclaimed as his min-



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for life. Many parishes held their own KNOW YOUR FAITH series. It was an exciting time for our church.

Today I invite you to ignite again the fire of curiosity about the truths of faith. Do not just say the Creed. Thirst to understand it. Question it and, above all, let the Creed question you - about what you really believe, about your lifestyle and morals, about your destiny. We cannot be contented with what we were taught for First Communion and Confirmation. Just as a medical doctor or lawyer or engineer or the member of any profession cannot be contented with what he/she first learnt at University, neither can we be contented with what was learnt at the beginnings of our faith journey. We will see the intellectual deepening of our faith however as a necessity, only if we are deeply conscious of our vocation as baptized and confirmed members of a church, which of its very nature is missionary. This recognition will convict us of our call to be agents and witnesses of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of the Creed which finds its roots in the Gospel.

I urge parishes therefore if possible to have once again, "Know your faith" exercises. May the members of parish ministries come together, or devote part of their meetings to study of the doctrines of our faith. I call on all families and catholic institutions of learning to set aside time in the day to read and meditate on the sacred scriptures. I am extremely confident that if this exercise of scripture reading and meditation is done regularly we will as Pope Benedict desires "rediscover the taste of feeding ourselves on the word of God faithfully handed down by the Church..."

For us Catholics the renewal of our faith will take us on a journey of appreciation from Abraham, our father in the faith, through the lives of the patriarch, the liberation from the slavery of Egypt to the Holy Mountain of Sinai and the formation of the Chosen People, their infidelities and the forgiveness of God into the Christ event. For us Catholics, the renewal of our Faith will bring us to the deeper understanding of the Christ event and the reality that the Truth of our Faith is a Person, Jesus Christ, the ultimate Word of the Father, who as we are told by St. Paul,



“gave up his divinity”, became a human being, was born of the Virgin Mary, pitched his tent amongst us, as the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel tells us, spent his time amongst us doing good, suffered, was crucified, buried and rose again after three days and is seated at the right hand of the Father. The renewal of our faith moves us from, believing in Jesus and the historical facts about him to believing Him, to believing what Jesus says, to believing the message, and ultimately to living the Life of self-giving love which Jesus modelled for us by his life and death on the cross.

Many persons no longer see the need for God and so the Church and the sacraments have now become simply social activities

We are called therefore to take a deeper look at the lives of those who are models of faith in both the old and new testaments. In the Old Testament, we have the stories of Abraham, Moses and the prophets whose lives portray an adherence to God and to God’s word in the midst of trials and tribulations. In the New Testament we have the example of Mary, whose, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to your word” paved the way for the coming in human flesh of the Divine word, Jesus Christ. We have the story of the apostles, all martyred, with the exception of St. John whom tradition tells us was boiled in oil but miraculously survived, because of their belief in Christ Jesus. In the history after Christ and the apostles, we have the age of the martyrs and the saints, all witnessing to the truth of the Gospel in their very lives. And what about the models of faith here in Trinidad and Tobago? Persons like Archbishop Pantin of happy memory and the

many others, parents and grandparents who were faithful witnesses of the Faith in their daily lives. We thank God for them and pray that their lives may inspire us.

This faith, to which so many dedicated their lives and for which so many gave their lives has been passed on to us, to you and to me and we, you and I have the responsibility of passing it on to our children and grandchildren. This is our responsibility and this must be our commitment.

Because of human frailty, the Church has lost, it would seem, the confidence of many persons. More and more we hear the statement, I believe in God but not in the Church; or all the churches are the same; or there is only One God, so I will worship anywhere I want to. Today also because of secularization, we live in a world in which God is not important. Many persons no longer see the need for God and so the Church and the sacraments have now become simply social activities which have no real religious meaning for people’s lives. Many persons and whole sections of society, no longer believe in the Church. A correct translation of the Latin does not call us to believe in the church but to believe the church. We are called to believe what the church proclaims. The church must once again be a credible witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If the Church has lost credibility we are all to be blamed, to different degrees it is true but blame we must accept. It is important therefore that all of us who are the church, bishop priests, religious, deacons and laity do all that we can so that church be truly the Body of Christ in the world and so that the world may see once more the face of Christ in us and amongst us. We have to so live that the Church is once again a credible witness to the testimony about Jesus; we cannot shirk this re-

istry. He preached the Gospel to the poor and validated his preaching by his lifestyle. This lifestyle if our faith is true must of necessity include the dimension of Justice. This must be preached and lived.

Pope Paul VI in the postal synodal document, 'Justice in the World' of the 1971 synod of bishops declares, "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation" Among these oppressive situations the Synod of Bishops calls to mind the violation of the right, especially that of children and the young to education and to morally correct conditions of life. And the rejection of the growing number of persons who are often abandoned by their families and by the community: the old, orphans, the sick and all people who are rejected.

Faced with such situations here in T&T, in the worsening education system, the unacceptable number of vagrants, the abandonment of parents and relatives in homes for the aged, the gang culture which is dividing and terrorizing neighbourhoods etc. the Scriptures remind us of God as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor, demanding from people faith in him and justice towards one's neighbour. In the New Testament Christ, by his action and teaching, united in an indivisible way the relationship of people to God and the relationship of people to each other. Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of people. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all people and the intervention of God's justice on behalf



of the needy and the oppressed (Lk 6: 21-23). In this way he identified himself with his "least ones," as he stated: "As you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). (Justice in the World # 31).

Justice therefore cannot be separated from Christian living. We have to come to the understanding that loving Christ means loving him as he appears in the least of the brothers and sisters, the sick, the imprisoned, the naked the homeless, and the stranger. For us here in T&T, the stranger is often the one who is ethnically different from ourselves. Indeed our present Pope Benedict XVI, in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* #6, reminds us that "*Charity goes beyond justice, because to love is to give, to offer what is "mine" to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is "his", what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting. I cannot "give" what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice. If we love others with charity, then first of all we are just towards them. Not only is justice not extraneous to charity, not only is it not an alternative or parallel path to charity: justice is inseparable from charity, and intrinsic to it.*" Justice therefore demands that I acknowledge the fatherhood of God for all people

and therefore the universal brotherhood and sisterhood of all human beings irrespective of their class, social status or ethnicity.

The commandment of love then which is at the heart of any expression of faith cannot be lived without justice exercised in a concrete and realistic manner and holiness cannot be achieved without justice. Help my unbelief Lord so that I may treat all those around me as you want me to treat them because we are all sons and daughters of the same father.



SHARE/PROCLAIM YOUR FAITH

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!

As we know and live our faith, it will become easier for us to share our faith. It is much easier

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2013 to live our faith in community than to try to live it alone. The struggles which we face as we confront the attacks of relativism and secularism are more frequent and more sustained. We will be able to overcome the attacks and temptations coming from these ways of thinking and acting only if we live the unity for which Christ died on the cross. One of the ways in which this unity is built is by Faith Sharing in our communities and parishes. This activity is a support for us as we struggle to come to a deeper understanding of the scriptures and their role in our lives.

Sr. Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND, in her book *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment*, explains that:

“Faith sharing is the practice in which two or more people

share experiences about their relationship with God: their awareness of God’s Presence in the events of their lives; their struggles to believe in God’s Presence; the ways in which they have responded to or resisted God’s Presence in their lives; places of suffering, confusion, or joy that have been the entry point for their prayer. It is grounded in humble acceptance of the truth that each of us is a person honored and loved by God and that God is present and active in all of our lives. It assumes the belief that God often chooses to minister to us through the sharing and support of others. Faith Sharing to be successful, depends on reverent and prayerful *Listening and Confidentiality*. People are asked to share their experiences simply and to receive the sharing of others without judgment or attempts to change the experience.

There are numerous possibilities for the content of what is shared, e.g., a response to such things as Scripture, a film, or some form of prayer experienced with a group. As long as respectful listening and confidentiality are maintained Faith sharing becomes a privileged moment in which we begin to see and understand the working of God in our own lives and in the lives of others. It leads to the deepening of faith and brings us to greater unity. I call on all families to begin to build the practice and habit of faith sharing in their homes. What an opportunity for parents to teach and guide their children in the practice of the faith! I urge Catholics in the work place to meet and to share their struggles and successes in living their faith in the world of work. I thank the organization “Catholics in the Workplace” for the lead that they have already taken in this regard. I ask catholic business men and women to facilitate these exercises as an expression of their own faith. I call on all parish priests to encourage their pastoral groups to begin this on-going exercise of sharing the faith which they believe and live.



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Another form of Faith Sharing, already practiced by many parish groups, is *Lectio Divina*. Archbishop Gilbert, my predecessor, urged that it be introduced into schools.

Lectio Divina or Sacred reading is a method of scripture reading which allows us to recognize the events of scripture in our daily lives. Ultimately *Lectio Divina* allows us to recognize our personal stories in the Gospel story and leads us to the understanding that our lives are sacred. This is extremely important if we are to deepen and live our faith.

It is important that we are convinced that we proclaim our faith both by word and action and I would like at this point to repeat the words of the late Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife in Brazil. In a retreat given to priests, he said this which I have never forgotten. "Be careful of the way in which you live your life for your life is the only Gospel that many people will ever read." If we know and live our faith, sharing and proclaiming will become easier.

"Be careful of the way in which you live your life for your life is the only Gospel that many people will ever read."

I call therefore on businesses and the faithful in general to support all those who use the new technologies and the social media and other means of networking for the sharing and proclamation of the Gospel. I include in this appeal all artistes and those engaged in cultural activities. Your work is an ideal pastoral space for the proclamation of the Gospel and the truth of our faith. Help our unbelief Lord

and forgive us for not sharing our faith and proclaiming it with our lives.

CONCLUSION

I began this pastoral letter with the Gospel prayer taken from Mark 9.24, "Lord, Help my unbelief!" The Lord is waiting anxiously to help our unbelief but we must make ourselves available to God so that God can continue to work His wonders within us.

Let us together through the activities which I have suggested rediscover the joy of believing and enthusiasm for communicating the faith. To this end I urge all parents, the first educators in the faith, to be true to your responsibility as primary educators. Gather your family around you and pray and study together the truths of our faith. To this end, the presbyterate has asked a team of priests to prepare lesson outlines for the following year.

These outlines should be in the hands of your parish priests very soon. Use them well - these outlines will help guide you in your study throughout the year. Youth and young adults remember that you are the future of the Church in Trinidad and Tobago. As you study the scriptures and the truths of the Faith remember that the truth of our Faith is a person, Jesus Christ. Build a strong relationship with Him.

Teachers, remember the goals of catholic education and teach the faith by example. Let the truths of faith, in a special way, also form part of the Religious Knowledge curriculum.



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Politicians and especially Catholic politicians, remember that as leaders you are called to set a tone for our country. May your behaviour reflect the faith which you profess!

Catechists be imaginative in your approach to transmitting the faith to your charges in Pre-first communion, First communion, Confirmation and RCIA classes. Imagination in this sense must be understood as attentive listening to God's Spirit who guides us to do what is most efficacious. Remember that it is only when what we learn reaches the heart that we have received the faith. Pray assiduously that those in your care receive this grace.

Religious and ecclesial communities, let your communities be models of what Christian life is because of your mutual charity and common prayer.

To the aged and sick, we thank you for the witness of patient and prayerful acceptance of suffering and I ask you to unite these to the cross of the Lord for our Archdiocese during this year of faith.

Clergy, priests and deacons, let our celebrations be prayerful and inviting, our preaching, encouraging and consoling, our teaching intelligible but pro-

found.

It is my sincere wish that this year of faith will see all of us once again proud to be Catholic and Christian, not in any triumphalist way but happy to know more fully our faith, happy to be more authentic disciples, imitating the Lord Jesus in his love and devotion to the Father and to the people of his time, happy to bring the message of God's love to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, happy to be bearers of the promise that one day we will be united with the Virgin Mary and the Apostles and Saints, glorifying God our Father in heaven.

I hope that at the end of this year of Faith, all parishes will have Faith Sharing groups. I ask Catechists to begin this practice with Confirmation and RCIA candidates so that at the end of these programmes there will be groups already formed who have developed the habit of Faith Sharing. Family Life groups in parishes and catholic schools are asked to begin this practice also.

Young adults, as St. Paul urged Timothy, I also urge you. Let no one think less of you because of your youth! Take this year seriously and be evangelists among your peers! I end this letter, which I hope will find its way into all your homes and be used as frequently as possible, with a quotation from the Letter, Porta Fidei. "Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment. A Christian may never think of belief as a private act. Faith is choosing to stand with the Lord so as to live with him. This "standing with him" points towards an understanding of the reasons for believing. Faith, precisely because it is a free act, also demands social responsibility for what one believes.

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The Church on the day of Pentecost demonstrates with utter clarity this public dimension of believing and proclaiming one's faith fearlessly to every person. It is the gift of the Holy Spirit that makes us fit for mission and strengthens our witness, making it frank and courageous. Profession of faith is an act both personal and communitarian. It is the Church that is the primary subject of faith. In the faith of the Christian community, each individual receives baptism, an effective sign of entry into the people of believers in order to obtain salvation. As we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "I believe' is the faith of the Church professed personally by each believer, principally during baptism. 'We believe' is the faith of the Church confessed by the

bishops assembled in council or more generally by the liturgical assembly of believers. 'I believe' is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both 'I believe' and 'we believe' If as a church we achieve this we will have restored our Catholic culture and identity.

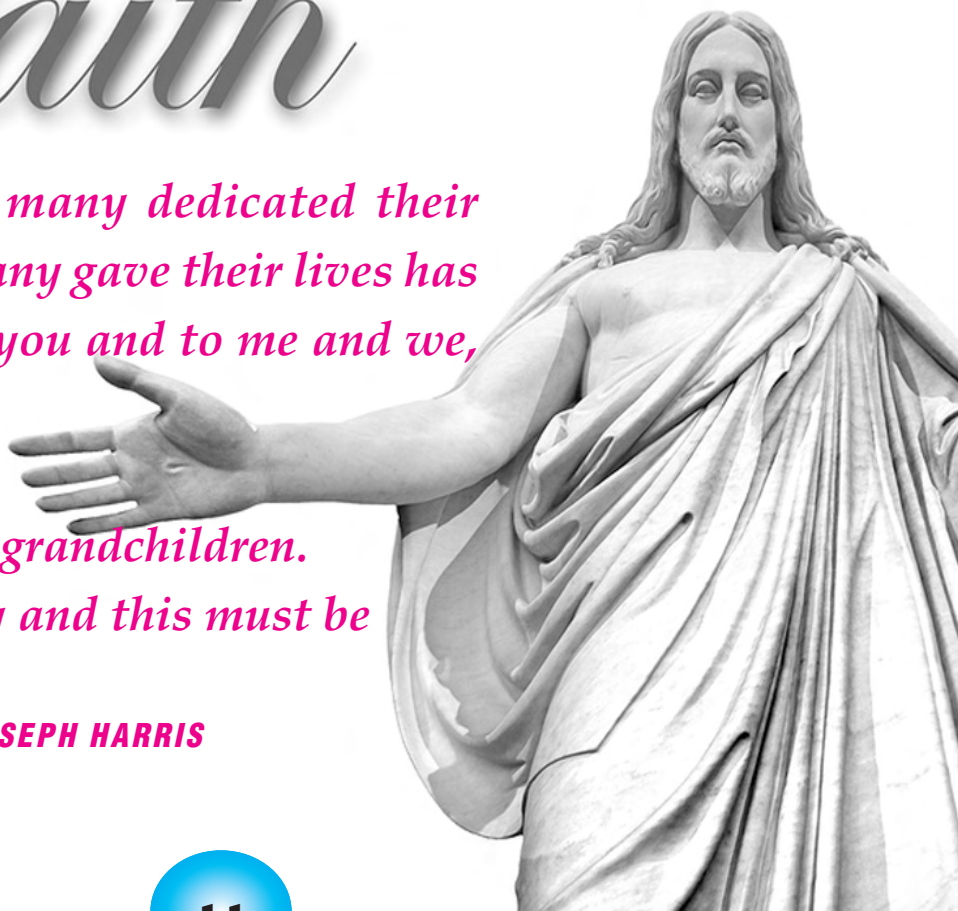


**+ Most Rev. Joseph Harris
Archbishop of Port of Spain**

Faith

This faith, to which so many dedicated their lives and for which so many gave their lives has been passed on to us, to you and to me and we, you and I have the responsibility of passing it on to our children and grandchildren. This is our responsibility and this must be our commitment.

ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH HARRIS



CREDO, DOMINE:

I BELIEVE, LORD INCREASE OUR FAITH (Official Hymn for the Year of Faith)

1. Pilgrims we, full of expectation,
searching in the darkness.
Lord, you come, revealing the Father,
You for us are Son of the Most High.

Credo Domine, credo!

With the saints who are walking with us,
O Lord, we ask:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

2. Pilgrims we, lost and despairing,
what bread for our journey?
Lord, your Birth feeds us with your light,
You for us are the Morning Star.

Credo Domine, credo!

With Mary, the first of all believers,
O Lord, we pray:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

3. Pilgrims we, broken and exhausted,
our wounds open still.
Lord, you heal those who seek you in the desert
You for us are the hand that heals.

Credo Domine, credo!

With the poor who are yearning for help,
O Lord, we implore:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

4. Pilgrims we, your cross on our shoulders,
we follow in your footsteps.
You arise in the morning of Easter,
You for us are life everlasting.

Credo Domine, credo!

With the humble who wish to be born anew,
O Lord, we plead:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

5. Pilgrims we, gathered by your call
for each new Pentecost.
You recreate the breath of the Spirit,
You for us are the Word of the future.

Credo Domine, credo!

With the Church which proclaims your Gospel,
O Lord, we invoke:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

6. Pilgrims we, thankful and united
each day that you give.
Lord, you guide us on the pathway of life
You for us are the hope of salvation.

Credo Domine, credo!

With the world where your kingdom is among us,
O Lord, we cry:

Adauge, adauge nobis fidem!

Credo Domine, adauge nobis fidem!

For 'score' (sheet music) see:

www.annusfidei.va/content/novaevangelizatio/en/annus-fidei/inno-musicale.html

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