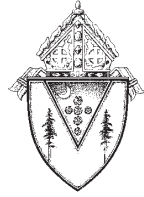




Bulletin from the Diocese of Santa Rosa



Opening The Doors of Faith

October, 2012

My Dear People of God:

Last year Pope Benedict XVI issued an Apostolic Letter entitled, The “door of faith” announcing that the year, commencing on October 11, 2012 through November 24, 2013, would be a Year of Faith. The two dates chosen are both quite significant. The first, October 11 marks the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The second marks the end of the Liturgical Year celebrating as it does the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King.

The title of the document is drawn from the Acts of the Apostles chapter 14, which recounts the return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch after one of their evangelizing missions. In the 27th verse we read: “And when they arrived, they called the church together and reported what God had done with them and how he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). For me, the important language of this passage makes it clear that it is God who acts. Thus they reported, not what they had done, but rather what God had done through them and how He had opened the door of faith. Paul and Barnabas cooperated with God’s grace and call but they were clear that it was God who was at work. It was explicit in their preaching that the good works which they had done were done because of and in the name of God Himself. There was a perfect unity of faith and works with a great clarity that the works were a manifestation of their faith.

The Holy Father points out in his Apostolic Letter that: “It often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied.” It seems to me that this is precisely what is presently happening in the United States with the attempt to separate the whole of one’s Christian faith from the various works through which that faith is made manifest and impacts on our society. In effect, the claim is that medical care, social services and education are not ‘religious’ in and of themselves and therefore are not worthy of ‘religious freedom’ protections. This societal separation of faith from the works which express that faith, unfortunately, has been preceded by a form of this separation in the minds and hearts of our Catholic people. Not only is faith no longer a “self-evident presupposition” in society, it is even possible that it is no longer a “self-evident presupposition” in the hearts of the apostolic workers themselves.

There is a good and noble emphasis on the works of faith, which often take the form of works in the arena of social justice. Since these works seem to stand alone it is easy to lose sight of the faith, that supernatural motivation, which fosters and supports them. The Year of Faith offers an opportunity for each of us to make clear that which can no longer be taken for granted. While continuing all of the great social works done by the members of the Church we can, at the same time, make it explicitly clear that these are manifestations of our faith. These works then become the vehicle for God to open “the door of faith” to the world.

The Year of Faith can be, for all of us, a graced opportunity to reflect upon our faith more deeply and manifest it more ardently.

Asking every good grace and blessing of God upon you, I am, sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Sincerely yours in Christ Jesus,

Most Reverend Robert F. Vasa
Bishop of Santa Rosa