

Faith



Eleventh Festival Letter of
✠ Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA

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In the early centuries of Catholic Christianity, when calendars were uncommon and often imprecise, a bishop would send out an annual “Festival Letter” to announce the proper dates for observing the fasts and feasts of the Liturgical Year. It was not uncommon to also use such a letter as a means of instruction for the faithful. I have established this custom in our Diocese both to foster a greater love for the liturgy and to afford myself an additional opportunity for teaching.

Dear brothers and sisters, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of His return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons, let us celebrate the mysteries of our salvation.

Let us recall the year’s culmination, the Sacred Easter Triduum of the Lord: His Last Supper, His Crucifixion, His Burial, and His Rising, celebrated between the evening of Thursday, the 28th of March, and the evening of Sunday, the 31st of March.

Each Easter, as on each Sunday, Holy Mother Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has conquered sin and death.

From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy:

Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, in the Year of Our Lord 2013,
will occur on the 13th day of February.

Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fast and abstinence. In commemoration of the Lord’s death on the cross, all Fridays of Lent are days of obligatory abstinence. Abstinence from meat is also recommended on all the Fridays of the year.

According the ancient custom of the Church, we pray in a special way during the Holy Season of Lent for our brothers and sisters preparing to join the Family of God’s Holy Church through the Easter Sacraments. The Church accompanies their journey with the Rites of Christian Initiation. The Rites of Election will be celebrated in the Cathedral on the First and Second Sundays of Lent, February 17 and 24th respectively.

The annual Chrism Mass, during which the priests renew their ministerial commitment, will be celebrated in the Cathedral on Tuesday of Holy Week, the 26th Day of March.

No other activities or pastoral responsibilities, except the need to tend to the dying, should keep a priest from attending the Chrism Mass. I also invite the faithful of our diocese to join us for this celebration as they keep their priests in prayer.

The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on Sunday, the 12th of May, according to the decision of the bishops of the Illinois Province.

Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the Great Fifty Days of Easter, will be celebrated with a Solemn Vigil Mass at the Cathedral on Saturday, 18th of May during which I invite all of the New Catholics who entered the Church during the Easter Season to join their brothers and sisters in giving thanks. Then on Pentecost Sunday, the 19th day of May, I will joyfully ordain 4 men to the transitional diaconate.

Any Catholic in a state of serious sin is obligated to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once between Ash Wednesday and Pentecost Sunday. All Catholics are especially urged to confess their sins during the penitential season of Lent, during Advent, before the great festivals, and regularly throughout the year.

In a special way our Divine Savior gave the Church the gift of the Sacrament of Holy Orders to make present the Paschal Mystery for all people of every time and place. This year, the Diocese of Peoria will celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Orders on two occasions.

Besides the Ordination of Transitional Deacons on Pentecost Sunday, on Saturday, May 25, I rejoice to ordain 4 men to the Sacred Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

I invite and encourage the clergy, consecrated men and women, and lay-faithful to join with me at these great celebrations. All priests serving in the Diocese of Peoria are expected to participate in the Ordination of Priests. Except the need to tend to the dying, no other pastoral duty or personal obligation is of greater importance than welcoming our new brothers to our presbyterate.

Likewise, the Pilgrim Church proclaims the Passover of the Lord in the feasts of the Holy Mother of God, the Apostles, and the Saints, and in the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed.

In the Year of Our Lord 2013, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, the spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, will be celebrated on Tuesday, March 19th.

The Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord will be celebrated on Monday, the 8th of April.

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary is celebrated on Thursday, the 15th of August, and is a holy day of obligation this year.

The Feast of Saint Therese of Lisieux, Doctor of the Church and Patroness of our diocesan vocations program, is celebrated on Tuesday, the 1st day of October, and has been raised to the rank of a liturgical feast in our Local Church.

The Solemnity of All Saints is celebrated on Friday, the 1st day of November, and is a Holy Day of Obligation.

The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed is observed on Saturday, the 2nd of November.

The Church will celebrate the beginning of the new liturgical year of grace and prayer on the First Sunday of Advent, the 1st of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2013.

In the Year of Our Lord 2013, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary is transferred to Monday, the 9th of December, and is not a holy day of obligation this year. However, as Mary the Immaculate Conception is the patroness of our nation as well as the Patronal Feast of the Diocese of Peoria I encourage pastors to celebrate this great feast with due solemnity, especially in the Catholic schools of our diocese..

The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of the Americas, is celebrated on Thursday, the 12th of December.

Christmas will be on Wednesday, the 25th day of December.

The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God, is celebrated on Wednesday, the 1st day of January in the Year of Our Lord 2014, and is a Holy Day of Obligation.

Further, in accord with the *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum* and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, “the diocesan bishop in his own diocese may bestow the papal

blessing with the plenary indulgence, using the proper formulary, three times a year on solemn feasts, which he will designate....”

As Bishop of Peoria, I am happy to bestow such blessing with the plenary indulgence during the Year of Our Lord 2013 at the end of Holy Mass for the great Solemnities of Easter Vigil, Pentecost Day, and Christmas Eve.

By the favour of the Apostolic See, there are several other opportunities for indulgences during this Year of Faith according to my decree of October 15, 2012. A copy of that decree can be found as an appendix to this Festival Letter.

To Jesus Christ, who is, was, and who is to come, the Lord of all time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has invited the Universal Church to observe the year 2012-2013 as a *Year of Faith*. I therefore thought it might be well for me in this my *Tenth Festival Letter* to share with this Local Church, the Catholic Diocese of Peoria, what the word *Faith* means to me both as a fellow believer and as your bishop.

Basic to my understanding of faith is the notion that we must always *let God be God*. Now God will be God whether we believe it or not, want it or not, or like it or not. God is that singular reality from which all other reality has its origin. His infinite nature suffers no restraints, and no human language can ever exhaustively describe God. It is simply accurate to acknowledge that God is absolutely awesome and utterly unlike anyone or everything else. Recognized or ignored, the innate restlessness of our human hearts is deeply rooted in our wonder before an infinite mystery. Since we were originally created *in the image and likeness of God*, we were intentionally designed by God with a hunger that only God can satisfy. God is that beauty beyond all beauty and that truth beyond all truth. As an Irish monk once explained: “No one can tell his ardor or his energy, his blazing and his brilliance, his splendor and his bliss, his constancy and his steadfastness.”

It is *Good News*, therefore, that God’s own deepest desire for us is the gift of Himself. From no necessity but rather from the overflowing abundance of his great love, God wishes to be known and loved by us. As the Gospel teaches: *For God so loved the world, that He gave us his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16) So for our sake and our salvation, the Uncreated became a creature. Jesus shared in our humanity so that we could share in his Divinity. He assumed our flesh by being *born*, and we can assume a share in his life by being *born again*. We gave Him the power to die, while He gave us the power to live forever. By this wondrous exchange, the Lord transformed our poverty into inexhaustible riches. For Christians, faith means turning to Christ, surrendering our lives to Christ, and believing in Christ’s Holy Gospel. As the great Saint Ambrose of Milan once advised in the face of all our human needs:

“If you wish to heal your wounds, He is the doctor.
If you are burning with fever, He is the spring.
If you are oppressed by sin, He is mercy.
If you need help, He is strength.
If you are afraid of death, He is life.
If you desire heaven, He is the way.
If you flee darkness, He is the light.
If you search for food, He is nourishment.
*Taste and see that the Lord is good,
happy the man who shelters in Him.*”

Mother Teresa of Calcutta in her guided meditation, "*I thirst*," points out a condition that a person must embrace in accepting faith. One of her favorite scripture verses is also relevant, "*Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.*" (Revelation 3:20)

And God's self-giving love does not end with the gift of his Son but continues with the gift of his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is that endless love that for all eternity unites the Father to the Son, and in this time of grace unites humanity to the life of the Holy Trinity. It was the Spirit who once soared over the waters of chaos and created everything out of nothing. It was the Spirit that guided the patriarchs, strengthened the judges and kings, gave eloquence to the psalmist, called the prophets, and taught wisdom to the sages. It was the Spirit who overshadowed the Blessed Virgin Mary when the *Word became flesh*. It was the Spirit who hovered above Jesus, in the form of a dove, when he rose up from the waters of his baptism. It was the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead on Easter morning. It was the Spirit manifested as *tongues of fire* over the Blessed Mother and the Holy Apostles on Pentecost Sunday when the Church was born as the very Body of Christ on earth. It is the Holy Spirit who inspires the Scriptures, teaches us our Profession of Faith, illuminates minds, empowers the Sacraments, pleads on our behalf, and with marvelous gifts guides the Church and each one of us in the service of God and neighbor.

This wonderful *Good News* about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is the very core of the Christian Faith. Our shared experience of the Triune God forgives sins, gives new life, inspires worship, and sustains good works. The message of the Gospel is so consoling and compelling that believers should not be able to contain their enthusiasm for sharing it with others. The simple fact is that the overwhelming majority of the Church is made up not of priests, deacons, and consecrated religious but of lay believers. As Pope Benedict and several of his holy predecessors have reminded us, the whole Church fundamentally exists to evangelize. Evangelization means the joyous announcement of the greatest possible *Good News*. God loves us, and in Jesus Christ we can know God and so know wholeness and salvation. "*The mission of the Church can be summarized, "Go into the world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."* (Mark 16:15)

The Lord identified his own proclamation of the Kingdom of God with the words of the Prophet Isaiah: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to announce the time of favor.* (Luke 4:18-19) And the Lord has also given his entire Church this great commission: *Go into the whole and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.* (Matthew 8:19) Ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart and He will give you the inspiration to spread the Gospel.

Saint Francis of Assisi once said: “Preach always, and sometimes use words.” In this spirit, husbands and wives can support the faith of one another. Parents have the primary responsibility of sharing their faith with their children. Children can call their brothers and sisters to faith and even help to renew the faith of their parents. I believe that grandparents often have a very privileged place to witness their faith especially to their *children’s children*. There are always teachable moments when friends and neighbors and even strangers could hear about Jesus Christ and the life of the Church. A *New Evangelization* means seeking out those who have fallen away and sharing the Gospel with those who have never known the Lord. On our diocesan website, under Evangelization, we have booklets to assist you in sharing the New Evangelization. Do not worry about what you should say or how you should say it, because the Holy Spirit will give you the words that you need. God gives everyone opportunities to share the *Good News*, but not everyone accepts this most basic responsibility of Christianity.

Our witness to the power of Faith reminds us over and over again that *only God is God*. No position, no possession, no other experience or relationship is as necessary or as good as God. Faith in God liberates us from the sad mistake of imposing divine expectations upon one another or upon material things. Faith in God then allows us to give real value to everyone and everything that enters our lives. Faith in God repudiates despair. Faith in God frees us from sins and addictions. Faith in God shows us the significance of all our decisions and undertakings. Faith in God reveals the wonder of life and the splendor of creation. Faith renews our understanding of the scriptures and creeds that the Church has always proclaimed. For Christian believers, living and dying are really only acts of faith. Making room for God, trusting in God, *letting go and letting God be God* are all profound expressions of faith. Jesus said: *Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me.* (John 14:1)

This *Year of Faith* is therefore a providential opportunity to deepen our personal experience of God and to radically expand our willingness to give witness to Christ. “*All Christians are called to witness and in this way they can be real evangelizers.*” (Evangeli Nuntiandi 21) A very basic way to continue our Christian *Metanoia* (changing our whole way of seeing and thinking) would be to more regularly approach the Sacrament of Penance. Reconciliation, like all the Sacraments, is fundamentally an act of faith-filled worship. We come in prayer with our faults and sins, and Jesus comes in mercy with his healing and forgiveness. In this Sacrament, all the transforming graces of Baptism and Confirmation are powerfully renewed. Reconciliation is about continuing conversion, following Christ more closely, knowing his love more fully, and then living his Gospel more boldly. We cannot give what we do not have, and we cannot bring others to Christ unless we ourselves are engaged in a life long journey with the Lord through our growing adherence to his teaching.

Any journey of faith must always be sustained by prayer which simply means to live in relationship with God and to regularly raise our minds and hearts to the experience of his loving presence. The Mass is our greatest prayer and the “source and summit” of the entire life of the Church. At Mass the Lord’s life giving death on the cross is renewed, and in the Eucharist we know his Real Presence as our Risen Lord and Savior. The Bible is God’s Word that in *many and various ways* prayerfully teaches us the truth. The Rosary is a reliable means to stay centered in the stories of our salvation, and then in the company of Our Lady to pray for all kinds of needs. Short prayers, long prayers, traditional prayers, prayers in our own words all strengthen our faith. Prayer by definition *lets God be God*, and it is consoling to remember that whenever or however we pray, we are really only responding to God’s personal invitation to grow closer to Him.

That incomparable preacher Saint John Chrysostom once described the relationship between the life of prayer and the life of faith: “Prayer stands before God as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit and peace to the heart. I speak of prayer not words. It is the longing for God, a love too deep for words, a gift not governed by man but by God’s grace. When the Lord gives this kind of prayer to a man, he gives him riches that cannot be taken away, heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. One who tastes this food is set on fire with an eternal longing for the Lord. His spirit burns with a fire of utmost intensity.”

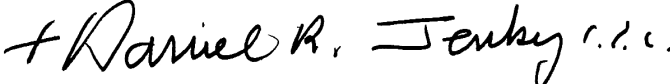
This kind of passionate believing must be embodied in our personal way of living. If we are searching our way, discerning our vocation, going through the emotional dislocation of change, do we seek the guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit? When we encounter the “limit situations” of human existence, when we face problems and persecutions, when we know illness, financial challenge, conflicts and misunderstandings, worries about children or parents, temptations, spiritual dryness, doubts and all the other stratagems of the evil one, in faith do we use these opportunities to surrender our lives more fully to our Good Lord? There is profound wisdom in the simple ideas: *I can’t. God can. Let God.* Long ago, guided by that same insight, the Psalmist once rejoiced: *I was helpless, so He saved me.* (Psalm 116:6) So in good times and in bad times, at celebrations and in grief, when worshiping, praising, and giving thanks, at moments of quiet and moments of fear, we can still faithfully know the abiding presence of God in our lives.

Saint Thomas Aquinas clearly and succinctly taught in his great *Summa*: “Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church further explains: “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason.” (CCC 154)(ST II-II,2,9) And as Thomas Merton once observed about faithful prayer:

“God makes us ask questions when He intends to resolve them. He gives us needs that He alone can satisfy and awakens capacities that He means to fulfill.”

So my dear fellow believers, may this *Year of Faith* proclaimed by our Holy Father the Pope of Rome be for all of us a year of enormous grace. In the coming months may we deepen the intensity of our faith and so inspire greater fervor in our worship of God and greater energy in our service of neighbor. May each and every believer accept that challenging mandate from Christ to go out into the whole world and announce the *Good News*. *God is God. The Lord alone is God. The One true God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is Lord.* Jesus and the Spirit truly bring the Father into our lives. We were created for this incomparable beatitude. We were redeemed so that we might know the boundless bliss of seeing our God face to face, forever and ever. This is the greatest possible *Good News* to share with everyone.

Given at my Chancery,
January 6, 2013
Feast of the Epiphany

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C." The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

✠Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA



**A Decree of
His Excellency, The Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, CSC
By the Grace of God and the Favor of the Apostolic See
BISHOP OF PEORIA**

Concerning the Gift of Sacred Indulgences for the Year of Faith

In a decree of September 14, 2012, His Eminence Manuel Cardinal Monteiro de Castro, Major Penitentiary of the Catholic Church outlined several indulgences available to the Faithful: “During the whole span of the Year of Faith, proclaimed from October 11, 2012 to the whole of November 24, 2013, all individual faithful truly repentant, duly confessed, communing sacramentally, and who pray according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, will be able to acquire a plenary indulgence from the temporal punishment for their sins imparted by God’s mercy, applicable in suffrage to the souls of the deceased faithful.”

His Eminence then lists a number of special exercises of piety to be undertaken in order to fulfill the obligations of the indulgences. He further empowers diocesan bishops to decree certain additional exercises for the faithful of their Local Churches. Therefore, I am happy to decree that the Faithful of the Diocese of Peoria, fulfilling the usual requirements above, may obtain a Plenary Indulgence:

Every time they visit by way of pilgrimage the Cathedral Church of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception; the diocesan shrines of the Rosary in LaSalle, of Our Lady of the Fields in Hooppole, of Blessed Fra Angelico in Peoria or the Chapel of the Holy Family at Nazareth Retreat House and take part there in some sacred function or at least pause for an apt time of recollection with pious meditations, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary and, according to the case, to Holy Apostles or Patrons;

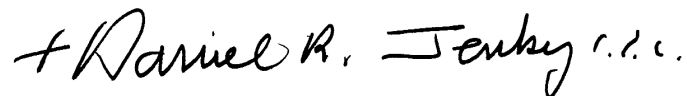
On the Solemnities of Christ the King in 2012 and 2013, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker, the Solemnity of Pentecost, and the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, in any sacred place that they participate in a solemn Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours, adding the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form;

Further, “in order that access to the Sacrament of Penance and the obtaining of divine forgiveness through the power of the Keys is pastorally facilitated,” for any priest hearing confessions of the faithful in the Cathedral and the Shrines and Chapels listed above during the year of faith, I happily extend the faculties limited to the internal forum, according to canon 508, paragraph 1; namely, the lifting of all undeclared *latae sententiae* censures which are not reserved to the Apostolic See.

As Chief Shepherd of this Local Church in Peoria, I highly encourage the pastors of the Diocese and those who help them in the work of handing on the Faith to instruct their people in the rich theology of Indulgences and to encourage their people to always desire the Mercy of God generously provided through the Sacraments and the rich treasury of the Church’s Indulgences, some of which are expressed in this decree for this special Year of Faith.

The present decree is valid only for the Year of Faith, any contrary disposition notwithstanding.

Given at my Chancery on this 15th Day of October, the Feast of St. Teresa of Jesus, Doctor.



✠Most Reverend Daniel R. Jenky, C.S.C.
BISHOP OF PEORIA

Attesting:



Monsignor James E. Kruse, VG, JCL
Vicar General, Vicar Judicialis