

The biggest thing I kept hearing about when I arrived back on campus this August, something everyone seems to be talking about, from Cardinal Wuerl at the Mass of the Holy Spirit, to theology teachers, to priests on Sunday mass, is the Year of Faith, which is due to start in a few weeks. When I first heard this term, I really had no idea what to think about it and didn't understand its purpose, what it hoped to accomplish, and how it would affect me. So, in order to find answers to these questions, I hopped onto Google to see what I could find.

The best resource I found for describing the Year of Faith is the Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, delivered by His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI on 11 October, 2011. The letter describes the reasons behind the year of faith and how it will help the Church. The Year of Faith is set to begin on October 11, 2012, which marks the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. This date also marks the 20th anniversary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is one of the most tangible changes from the council. Marking these anniversaries, the Church desires to usher itself into a time of reflection and rediscovery of faith, bringing on renewal.

“The renewal of the Church is achieved through the witness offered by the lives of believers.” The document goes on to describe many aspects of faith: “Faith grows when it is lived as an experience of love received and when it is communicated as an experience of grace and joy. It makes us fruitful, because it expands our hearts in hope and enables us to bear life-giving witness. Believers, Saint Augustine tells us, “strengthen themselves by believing.”” It also says that rediscovering faith in all aspects is a task each of us is called upon to do, especially in the Year of Faith.

The Catechism is offered as a tool to help comprehend the faith of the Church. Therefore the Year of Faith asks that we seek to use the Catechism in order that we may grow in understanding of both our faith and in the reasoning behind it.

A genealogy of the Church is described, originating with Mary, who by her faith accepted God's will for her to bear Jesus. By faith, the Apostles followed Jesus and continued to spread his teachings after his ascension to heaven. By faith, disciples carried out these teachings with the assistance of the Holy Spirit throughout the ages. This goes on to describe how the Church has arrived in our time as it is, guided by the faith of its leaders. We are called to live by this same faith, in recognition of Jesus, present in our lives and in our history.

One of the last main points describing the Year of Faith, probably the most pertinent to our activity in it as Knights of Columbus, is the role of charity and its relationship to faith. “Faith without charity bears no fruit, while charity without faith would be a sentiment constantly at the mercy of doubt. Faith and charity each require the other, in such a way that each allows the other to set out along its respective path.” One of the four principles that we learn about in the Knights of Columbus is Charity. Through this understanding, especially in the Year of Faith, we are called to charity as a way to both show our faith and to grow and renew our faith in God and in the Church.

Another great article I found, which helps describe the Year of Faith in more understandable terms for those of us who are not members of the Church hierarchy, was written recently by our Supreme Chaplain, Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore. In his article, he seeks to answer the question “What good does a Year of Faith do?” He clarifies that it is not a gimmick by the Church or anything that has the intention of rebranding the Church to market it to those who have been swayed away from a life of faith.

However, he draws the analogy of a marriage to the Church and the Second Vatican Council. He says that, in a marriage, it is most often a great tool to the health of the marriage to renew itself after periods of time. As time passes, people change; so in order to keep a strong marriage, a “meeting of minds and hearts” is necessary, as well as prayer and discussion of what is working well and what is not, and finding ways to rectify this. The Church, in this aspect, is like a marriage, as Archbishop Lori suggests, in that it has reached a point where renewal is necessary. It has been 50 years since the Second Vatican Council, and so it is a great time to meet, to pray, and to discuss ways to help the way we actively live what the Church said in the Council’s documents as a means of renewal of the relationship of the Church.

The Year of Faith is something that we, students at the Catholic University of America, will hear plenty about over the next year, until its end in November of 2013; but we as Catholics, and especially as Knights, are called upon to actively live this Year of Faith. Whether through increased prayer and reflection, increased charity, or any number of means, it is our duty to help the Church in this renewal and to have our own personal renewals of faith so that the world may better reflect the plan God has for it.