



# PARISH LINK



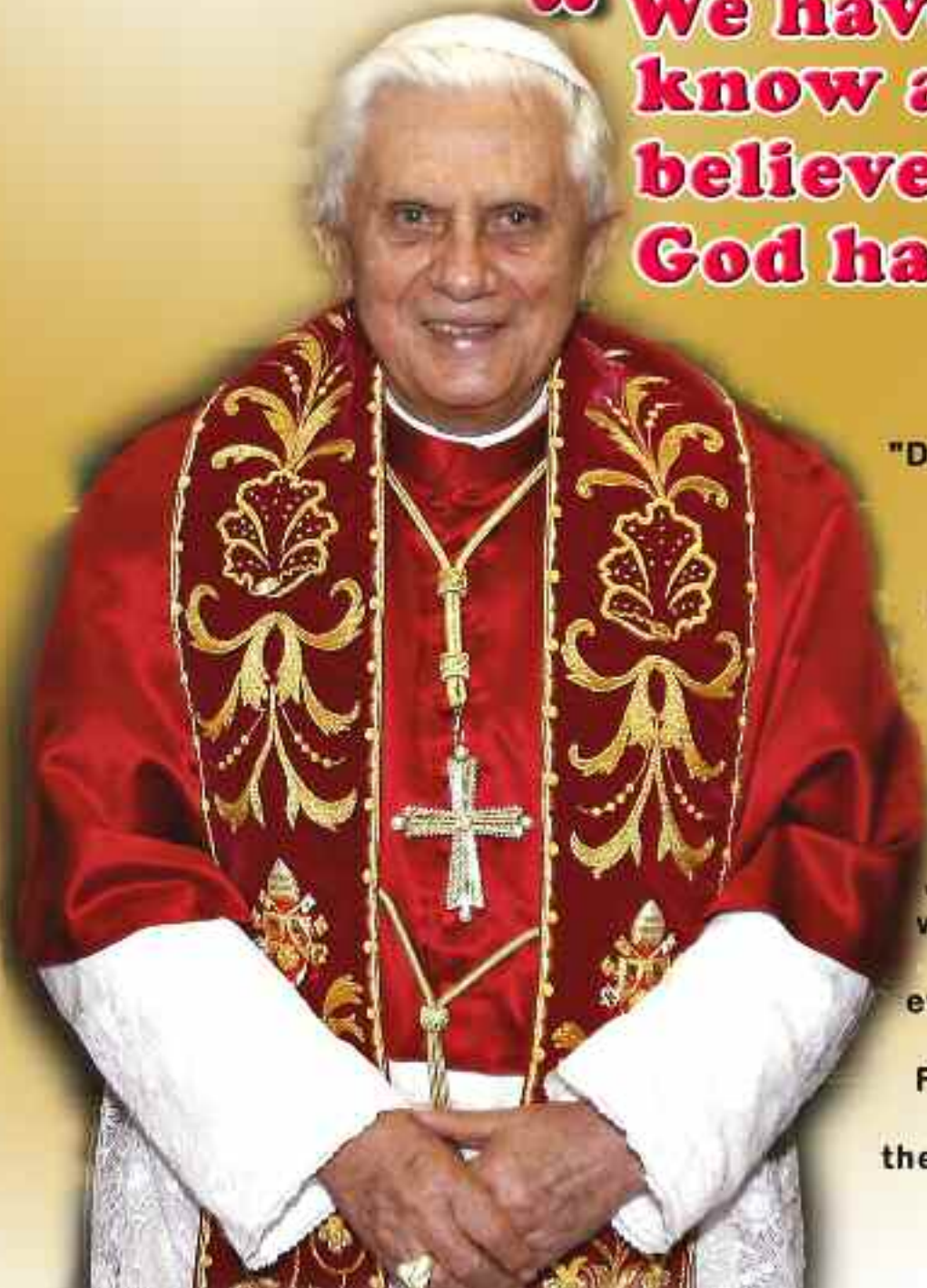
The Newsletter of the Catholic Commission For Social Justice

Issue 7 ● February 2013

**“ Believing in charity calls forth charity. ”**

**“ We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us. ”**

**(1 Jn 4:16)**



**"Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Lent, as we prepare to celebrate the event of the Cross and Resurrection – in which the love of God redeemed the world and shone its light upon history – I express my wish that all of you may spend this precious time rekindling your faith in Jesus Christ, so as to enter with him into the dynamic of love for the Father and for every brother and sister that we encounter in our lives. For this intention, I raise my prayer to God, and I invoke the Lord's blessing upon each individual and upon every community!"**

# INTRODUCTION

Leela Ramdeen, Chair, CCSJ

**D**ear brothers and sisters in Christ, in this issue of CCSJ's Newsletter, we share with you Pope Benedict XVI's Lenten Message for 2013 entitled: "Believing in charity calls forth charity."

While we are sad at the news of the Holy Father's resignation from the office of Bishop of Rome we must thank God for his 8 years of leadership and selfless service to our Church. As his Declaratio, dated 10 February 2013, stated:

*"After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry....in today's world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary, strength which in the last few months, has deteriorated in me to the extent that I have had to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me. For this reason, and well aware of the seriousness of this act, with full freedom I declare that I renounce the ministry of Bishop of Rome, Successor of Saint Peter, entrusted to me by the Cardinals on 19 April 1995, in such a way, that as from 28 February 2013, at 20:00 hours, the See of Rome, the See of Saint Peter, will be vacant and a Conclave to elect the new Supreme Pontiff will have to be convoked by those whose competence it is...I wish to also devotedly serve the Holy Church of God in the future through a life dedicated to prayer."*

The TT Guardian Editorial on Tues 12 February is worth noting: "...no doubt after many hours of prayer—Pope Benedict has decided it is in the best interest of the church...for him to step down. This ac-

knowledgement of personal frailty and willingness to consider the greater good are a rare example of humility and selflessness. Pope Benedict's resignation is a useful lesson to many in positions of power in all spheres of life."



This sentiment was also expressed by Archbishop Pinder, President of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, in his statement following the Holy Father's resignation. He said: "The decision of Benedict XVI is one of great courage. It is also a profound lesson to us all. It reminds us most forcefully that office in the Church, even the highest office, is not essentially about power and the exercise of authority. Rather it is essentially about ministry and service. We give praise and thanks to God for the Petrine ministry of Benedict XVI...Let us pray that the Holy Spirit continue to guide and inspire the Church as we prepare for the election of the next Successor of St. Peter. Like Benedict XVI may he shepherd us with wisdom, courage, and humility."

I had the pleasure of meeting the Holy Father on 2 occasions – in 2009 and 2011 during private audiences arranged for those of us who attended 2 Conferences organised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace at the Vatican. He will be remembered, inter alia, for being a great scholar, theologian and spiritual leader; a man with an incisive mind who spoke out for the poor, for distributive justice/a fairer world economy, for environmental justice; and who urged us to dismantle the "dictatorship of relativism." Archbishop

Pinder says that the AEC Bishops have fond memories of their meetings with him during their last “ad limina” visit in 2008: “His warm and serene personality, his profound erudition coupled with his gift for clarity and simplicity of expression and his gentle character all endeared him to us.”

From the start Pope Benedict XVI saw himself as a “simple and humble worker in the Lord’s vineyard.” He will continue working in the Lord’s vineyard, albeit in a different way - dedicating himself to prayer.

He is a prolific writer. We can learn much from his writings, including his 3 encyclicals: *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love) (2005), *Spe Salvi* (Saved by Hope) (2007), and *Deus Caritas Est* (Charity in Truth) (2009). We hope that you will read the Holy Father’s Lenten Message and share it with others. And as we journey through Lent may our personal encounter with Christ and our love for our neighbour and for all of God’s creation grow deeper.

As the Pope’s message states, Lent, in the context of the Year of Faith, offers us a valuable opportunity to meditate on the relationship between faith and charity and between believing in God and love. When we make room for the love of God, then we become like Him, sharing in His own charity.

It is because God loves us so much that we know that He will not abandon us; He will guide and inspire our Church. Let us continue to pray for Pope Benedict XVI and for the Consistory of Cardinals, that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit when they gather in Conclave to elect a successor to Pope Benedict XVI.

Archbishop Harris reminds us that we are called to “authentic discipleship.” May our Lenten journey deepen our encounter with Christ and lead us to live our lives as His true disciples.

*Leela Ramdeen*





**Pope Benedict XVI's 2013 Lenten Message:**

# **BELIEVING IN CHARITY CALLS FORTH CHARITY.**

**“We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us”**

*(1 Jn 4:16)*

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

*The celebration of Lent, in the context of the Year of Faith, offers us a valuable opportunity to meditate on the relationship between faith and charity: between believing in God – the God of Jesus Christ – and love, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit and which guides us on the path of devotion to God and others.*

**1**

## **FAITH AS A RESPONSE TO THE LOVE OF GOD**

In my first Encyclical, I offered some thoughts on the close relationship between the theological virtues of faith and charity. Setting out from Saint John’s fundamental assertion: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us” (*1 Jn 4:16*), I observed that “being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction ... Since God has first loved us (*cf. 1 Jn 4:10*), love is now no longer a mere ‘command’; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us” (*Deus Caritas Est, 1*). Faith is this personal adherence – which involves all our faculties – to the revelation of God’s gratuitous and “passionate”

love for us, fully revealed in Jesus Christ. The encounter with God who is Love engages not only the heart but also the intellect: “Acknowledgement of the living God is one path towards love, and the ‘yes’ of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love. But this process is always open-ended; love is never ‘finished’ and complete” (*ibid.*, 17). Hence, for all Christians, and especially for “charity workers”, there is a need for faith, for “that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others. As a result, love of neighbour will no longer be for them a commandment imposed, so to speak, from without, but a consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love” (*ibid.*, 31a). Christians are people who have been conquered by Christ’s love and accordingly, under the influence of that love – “*Caritas Christi urget nos*” (*2 Cor 5:14*) – they

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are profoundly open to loving their neighbour in concrete ways (*cf. ibid.*, 33). This attitude arises primarily from the consciousness of being loved, forgiven, and even served by the Lord, who bends down to wash the feet of the Apostles and offers himself on the Cross to draw humanity into God's love.

Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that it is really true: God is love! ... Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working" (*ibid.*, 39). All this helps us to understand that the principal distinguishing mark of Christians is precisely "love grounded in and shaped by faith" (*ibid.*, 7).

us in such a profound way as to bring us to say with Saint Paul: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (*cf. Gal 2:20*).

When we make room for the love of God, then we become like him, sharing in his own charity. If we open ourselves to his love, we allow him to live in us and to bring us to love with him, in him and like him; only then does our faith become truly "active through love" (*Gal 5:6*); only then does he abide in us (*cf. 1 Jn 4:12*).

Faith is knowing the truth and adhering to it (*cf. 1 Tim 2:4*); charity is "walking" in the truth (*cf. Eph 4:15*). Through faith we enter into friendship with the Lord, through charity this friendship is lived and cultivated (*cf. Jn 15:14ff*). Faith causes us to embrace the commandment of our Lord and Master; charity gives us the happiness of putting it into practice (*cf. Jn 13:13-17*). In faith we are begotten as children of God (*cf. Jn 1:12ff*); charity causes us to persevere concretely in our divine sonship, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit (*cf. Gal 5:22*). Faith enables us to recognize the gifts that the good and generous God has entrusted to us; charity makes them fruitful (*cf. Mt 25:14-30*).

## 2

### CHARITY AS LIFE IN FAITH

The entire Christian life is a response to God's love. The first response is precisely faith as the acceptance, filled with wonder and gratitude, of the unprecedented divine initiative that precedes us and summons us. And the "yes" of faith marks the beginning of a radiant story of friendship with the Lord, which fills and gives full meaning to our whole life. But it is not enough for God that we simply accept his gratuitous love. Not only does he love us, but he wants to draw us to himself, to transform

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## 3

## THE INDISSOLUBLE INTERRELATION OF FAITH AND CHARITY

In light of the above, it is clear that we can never separate, let alone oppose, faith and charity. These two theological virtues are intimately linked, and it is misleading to posit a contrast or “dialectic” between them. On the one hand, it would be too one-sided to place a strong emphasis on the priority and decisiveness of faith and to undervalue and almost despise concrete works of charity, reducing them to a vague humanitarianism. On the other hand, though, it is equally unhelpful to overstate the primacy of charity and the activity it generates, as if works could take the place of faith. For a healthy spiritual life, it is necessary to avoid both fideism and moral activism.

The Christian life consists in continuously scaling the mountain to meet God and then coming back down, bearing the love and strength drawn from him, so as to serve our brothers and sisters with God’s own love. In sacred Scripture, we see how the zeal of the Apostles to proclaim the Gospel and awaken people’s faith is closely related to their charitable concern to be of service to the poor (cf. Acts 6:1-4). In the Church, contemplation and action, symbolized in some way by the Gospel figures of Mary and Martha, have to coexist and complement



each other (cf. *Lk 10:38-42*). The relationship with God must always be the priority, and any true sharing of goods, in the spirit of the Gospel, must be rooted in faith (cf. General Audience, 25 April 2012). Sometimes we tend, in fact, to reduce the term “charity” to solidarity or simply humanitarian aid. It is important, however, to remember that the greatest work of charity is evangelization, which is the “ministry of the word”. There is no action more beneficial – and therefore more charitable – towards one’s neighbour than to break the bread of the word of God, to share with him the Good News of the Gospel, to introduce him to a relationship with God: evangelization is the highest and the most integral promotion of the human person. As the Servant of God Pope Paul VI wrote in the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, the proclamation of Christ is the first and principal contributor to development (cf. n. 16). It is the primordial truth of the love of God for us, lived and proclaimed, that opens our lives to receive this love and makes possible the integral development of humanity and of every man (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, 8).

Essentially, everything proceeds from Love and tends towards Love. God’s gratuitous love is made known to us through the proclamation of the Gospel. If we welcome it with faith, we receive the first and indispensable contact with the Divine, capable of making us “fall in love with Love”, and then we dwell within this Love, we grow in it and we joyfully communicate it to others.

Concerning the relationship between faith and works of charity, there is a passage in the Letter to the Ephesians which provides perhaps the best account of the link between the two: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not because of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are his

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workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (2:8-10). It can be seen here that the entire redemptive initiative comes from God, from his grace, from his forgiveness received in faith; but this initiative, far from limiting our freedom and our responsibility, is actually what makes them authentic and directs them towards works of charity. These are not primarily the result of human effort, in which to take pride, but they are born of faith and they flow from the grace that God gives in abundance. Faith without works is like a tree without fruit: the two virtues imply one another. Lent invites us, through the traditional practices of the Christian life, to nourish our faith by careful and extended listening to the word of God and by receiving the sacraments, and at the same time to grow in charity and in love for God and neighbour, not least through the specific practices of fasting, penance and almsgiving.

## 4 PRIORITY OF FAITH, PRIMACY OF CHARITY

Like any gift of God, faith and charity have their origin in the action of one and the same Holy Spirit (*cf. 1 Cor 13*), the Spirit within us that cries out "Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6), and makes us say: "Jesus is Lord!" (*1 Cor 12:3*) and "Maranatha!" (*1 Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20*).

Faith, as gift and response, causes us to know the truth of Christ as Love incarnate and crucified, as full and perfect obedience to the Father's will and infinite divine mercy towards neighbour; faith implants in hearts and minds the firm conviction that only this Love is able to conquer evil and death. Faith invites us to look towards the future with the virtue of hope, in the confident expectation that the victory of Christ's love will come to its fullness. For its part, charity ushers us into the love of God man-

ifested in Christ and joins us in a personal and existential way to the total and unconditional self-giving of Jesus to the Father and to his brothers and sisters. By filling our hearts with his love, the Holy Spirit makes us sharers in Jesus' filial devotion to God and fraternal devotion to every man (*cf. Rom 5:5*).

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The relationship between these two virtues resembles that between the two fundamental sacraments of the Church: Baptism and Eucharist. Baptism (sacramentum fidei) precedes the Eucharist (sacramentum caritatis), but is ordered to it, the Eucharist being the fullness of the Christian journey. In a similar way, faith precedes charity, but faith is genuine only if crowned by charity. Everything begins from the humble acceptance of faith ("knowing that one is loved by God"), but has to arrive at the truth of charity ("knowing how to love God and neighbour"), which remains for ever, as the fulfilment of all the virtues (*cf. 1 Cor 13:13*).

Dear brothers and sisters, in this season of Lent, as we prepare to celebrate the event of the Cross and Resurrection – in which the love of God redeemed the world and shone its light upon history – I express my wish that all of you may spend this precious time rekindling your faith in Jesus Christ, so as to enter with him into the dynamic of love for the Father and for every brother and sister that we encounter in our lives. For this intention, I raise my prayer to God, and I invoke the Lord's blessing upon each individual and upon every community!

*Pope Benedict XVI*

# CCSJ RESOURCES

## SOCIAL JUSTICE RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE

- **DVD Series of 2012 "Ask Why" TV Programme**
- **Take-a-Bite DVD Series**
- **Responses to 101 Questions on Catholic Social Teaching (KR Himes) \$80.00**
- **Compendium of The Social Doctrine of the Church (Pontifical Council for J&P ) \$140.00**
- **Audio CD of staff at Archbishop's House praying the Divine Mercy Rosary, with a link between Sacred Space and Social Justice. Music by Gregory Wong Fu Sue.**

*See link on CCSJ's Website.  
A DVD is being prepared for distribution.*

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