



The Christian Soldier in the Service of Just Peace

„To live authentically according to the Word of God and to spread the Gospel“

Commemoration and Christian Faith

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Porta fidei

“The “**door of faith**” (*Acts 14:27*) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his Church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.” (1)



Porta fidei

“To profess faith in the **Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit** – is to believe in one God who is Love (cf. *1 Jn* 4:8): the Father, who in the fullness of time sent his Son for our salvation; Jesus Christ, who in the mystery of his death and resurrection redeemed the world; the Holy Spirit, who leads the Church across the centuries as we await the Lord’s glorious return.”
(1)



Porta fidei

“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. Whereas in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a **profound crisis of faith** that has affected many people.” (2)



Porta fidei

“In the light of all this, I have decided to announce a **Year of Faith**. It will begin on 11 October 2012, the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the **Second Vatican Council**, and it will end on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, on 24 November 2013. The starting date of 11 October 2012 also marks the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***, a text promulgated by my Predecessor, Blessed John Paul II, with a view to illustrating for all the faithful the power and beauty of the faith. ... It is **not the first time** that the Church has been called to celebrate a Year of Faith. My venerable Predecessor the Servant of God **Paul VI** announced one in **1967**, to commemorate the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul on the 19th centenary of their supreme act of witness.” (4)



Porta fidei

“The renewal of the Church is also achieved through the **witness** offered **by the lives** of believers: by their very existence in the world, Christians are called to radiate the word of truth that the Lord Jesus has left us. ...The **Church, ‘like a stranger in a foreign land**, presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God’, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes (cf. *1 Cor 11:26*). But by the power of the risen Lord it is given strength to overcome, in patience and in love, its sorrow and its difficulties, both those that are from within and those that are from without, so that it may reveal in the world, faithfully, although with shadows, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it shall be manifested in full light.” (6)



Porta fidei

- “*Caritas Christi urget nos*” (2 Cor 5:14): it is the **love of Christ** that **fills our hearts** and **impels us to evangelize**. ... 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: indeed, it opens the hearts and minds of those who listen to respond to the Lord’s invitation to adhere to his word and become his disciples.” (7)



Porta fidei

“We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to **profess the faith** in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope. ... To **rediscover the content of the faith** that is professed, celebrated, lived and prayed, and to **reflect on the act of faith**, is a task that every believer must make his own, especially in the course of this Year.” (9)

“Evidently, knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one’s own **assent**, that is to say for **adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes**. ... The giving of assent implies that, when we believe, we freely accept the whole mystery of faith, because the guarantor of its truth is God who reveals himself and allows us to know his mystery of love.” (10)



Porta fidei

“... we must not forget that in our cultural context, very **many people**, while not claiming to have the gift of faith, are nevertheless **sincerely searching** for the ultimate meaning and **definitive truth of their lives and of the world**. This search is an authentic “**preamble**” to the faith, because it guides people onto the path that leads to the mystery of God.”
(10)



Porta fidei

“To a greater extent than in the past, faith is now being subjected to a series of questions arising from a changed mentality which, especially today, limits the field of rational certainties to that of scientific and technological discoveries. Nevertheless, the Church has never been afraid of demonstrating that there **cannot be any conflict between faith and genuine science**, because both, albeit via different routes, tend towards the truth.” (12)



Porta fidei

- “The Year of Faith will also be a good opportunity to intensify the **witness of charity**. ... 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. ...” (14)
- Intent on gathering the signs of the times in the present of history, faith commits every one of us to become **a living sign of the presence of the Risen Lord in the world**. What the world is in particular need of today is the **credible witness** of people enlightened in mind and heart by the word of the Lord, and capable of opening the hearts and minds of many to the desire for God and for true life, life without end.” (15)



Silence

- “Silence can carve out an inner space in our very depths to enable God to dwell there, so that his word will remain within us and love for him take root in our minds and hearts and inspire our life. Hence the first direction: relearning silence, openness to listening, which opens us to the other, to the word of God.”

(General Audience, Saint Peter's Square, Wednesday, 7 March 2012)



Commemoration and Christian Faith



1 Thess 4, 13-14.18

- “We do not want you to be unaware, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that **you may not grieve like the rest, who have no hope.** For if **we believe that Jesus died and rose,** so too will God, through Jesus, bring with him those who have fallen asleep.Therefore, console one another with these words.”



Röm 8, 18-22

- “I consider that the **sufferings of this present time** are as nothing compared with the **glory to be revealed for us**. For creation awaits with eager expectation the revelation of the children of God; for creation was made subject to futility, not of its own accord but because of the one who subjected it, in hope that creation itself would be set free from slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that **all creation is groaning in labor pains** even until now.”



Röm 8, 23-25

- “and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we **wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.**

For in hope we were saved.

Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees?

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance.”



Offb 21, 1-5a

- “Then I saw a **new heaven** and a **new earth**. The former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, God’s dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]. **He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain,** [for] the old order has passed away.” The one who sat on the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.””



Towards a Christian Culture of Commemoration for Today

Christian Existence ↔ biblical and liturgical memoria

Commemoration of recently killed soldiers in the light of centuries-old religious traditions?

Tension between

- Present and future
- Grief and consolation
- Sorrow and joy
- Guilt and forgiveness
- Hostility and reconciliation
- Doubt and certainty
- Darkness and light



Towards a Christian Culture of Commemoration for Today

Challenges for Christian Soldiers in secular societies

- Memoria and Commemoration
Remembering salvation and resurrection in the situation of grief and sorrow, suffering and injustice?
- Christian universality/ internationality
Commemorating enemy soldiers? All that are killed in armed conflict? Victims and aggressors?
- Heroes of a glorious past and today's missions
How to commemorate those killed in missions of disputable legality/ morality? Those who are killed in an accident in peace keeping missions? Suicides?
- Functionalization of religion in commemoration ceremonies?
and vice versa? Do the dead need commemoration? Or those who survived? Or the military, the state as a whole? Does religion need the dead?
- New modes of commemoration?
in secular societies, in 21st century conflicts?
- Failing remembrance (shoah?) – Silence?



Hearsay and Silence

- “In the Bible Job’s experience is particularly significant in this regard. In a short time this man lost everything: relatives, possessions, friends and health. It truly seems that God’s attitude to him was one of **abandonment**, of **total silence**. Yet in his relationship with God, Job speaks to God, cries out to God; in his prayers, in spite of all, he keeps his faith intact, and in the end, discovers the value of his experience and of God’s silence. And thus he can finally conclude, addressing the Creator: “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you” (Job 42:5): almost all of us **know God only through hearsay and the more open we are to his silence and to our own silence, the more we truly begin to know him.**” (General Audience, Saint Peter's Square, Wednesday, 7 March 2012)