

INTRODUCTION

This week, we continue to focus our prayer on the last part of the **pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on the year of the Laity**. It is imperative that we as Catholics do not only believe in Christ but also follow Him as we express our faith daily. This is the exhortation of the Church.

We need to heed the call of the Church because it is too offensive on our part that majority of those who practice corruption, vote buying, bribery, cheating and the like are graduates from big Catholic schools and universities. Why are these so? Because most of us separated faith from life. It is certainly a shameful proof of our failure to evangelize our country that our churches are filled with people, our religious activities are fervent, our Catholic schools are many, but our country is mired in poverty and corruption. The criteria for decisions taken by many in politics do not derive from faith but from other sources inimical to the Christian life. The poison of the greed to power and wealth has already pervaded the political and business systems.

We are all challenged to let our faith be living. Let's join forces to pray together and read the bible with hard work, dedication and commitment in order to let the word of God become alive in our system that we may become spiritually strong and brave to defend our faith that even the current of evil pressures of our realities cannot conquer it. We have to stand up for Jesus not only in religious activities but also in our public and private lives. We should not be afraid to be identified as Catholic Christians.

Do I remain just a Catholic Laity by name forever? When shall I stand for

my faith? What must I do to become a fully matured Christian? Do I have to keep silent amidst these evil realities and when can I be brave enough to speak for the truth about my faith?

MONDAY

Know the Faith

"So many of our people do not even know the fundamentals of our faith! They thus, become very vulnerable to the seductions of other religious groups who find them easy targets of their recruitment efforts. Many of our Catholics cannot even answer attacks on basic Catholic doctrines... **(CBCP letter)**

My dear lay faithful, the greatest challenge is to know the content of our faith, and to bear witness to your faith by a life of faith. **(CBCP letter)**

¹⁵ Simply proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts, and always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you have. ¹⁶ But give it with courtesy and respect and with a clear conscience, so that those who slander your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their accusations. ¹⁷ And if it is the will of God that you should suffer, it is better to suffer for doing right than for doing wrong. **(1 Peter 3:15-17)**

Knowing our faith can't be measured by the longevity of our age. Knowledge about our religious beliefs and rituals, and our personal achievements are by hard work and dedication to our commitment as baptized Catholics. To know the faith is to live the faith by being brave enough to stand before others to speak for the truth that sin has been a friend and a normal practice for

everybody in the field of business and politics. It is therefore our challenge to join forces in prayer by reading and assimilating the words of God and living out the Sacraments. Do I find time to read and assimilate God's word daily? How often do I go to the sacrament of reconciliation?

TUESDAY

Live the Faith

Thus we urge you to promote a continuing education towards maturity of faith among our people, starting with our Christian families. But even more importantly, we ask you to make your faith bear on your day to day decision and activities. It is only an integral faith, a faith that believes, a faith that worships, and a faith that works in love (Galatians 5:6), that will serve as God's way to "make all things new" in our beloved country... **(CBCP letter)**

We wrote to you a few months ago praising your simple but deep faith. Yet we had to point out to you two main deficiencies of the faith of our people: first, that the faith of many is **uninstructed** and, more importantly that this faith has been **separated from life**. **(CBCP letter)**

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵ Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish... ¹⁷ But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits,

without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸ And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace." **(James 3:13-18)**

We are called by the Church to implement catechesis in our family, giving them proper orientation of our faith, prayers and practices. Let us make our faith be alive as we guide our family towards the truth that we are God's children who are meant to love everyone the way God loves us. How do I live out my faith in my family? Do I seek God's help when I reach my limitation as a Catholic Christian?

WEDNESDAY

We Want to Challenge All the Baptized

We echo the challenge of Pope Francis, "We want to challenge the baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of baptism, we lack meaningful relationship to the church and no longer experience the consolation born of faith. The Church, in her maternal concern, tries to help them experience conversion which will restore the joy of faith to their hearts and inspire a commitment to the gospel.

(Evangelii Gaudium 15)

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. ²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?... ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will

worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. **(Matthew 6:24-34)**

This is our invitation in life not to long so much for the material things because they will all vanish away. We are all baptized Christians who are called to heed the call of the church to evangelize people, to let them be aware that life is worth living for loving and caring for everyone. It is an invitation to all the baptized Catholics to heed the call of the Church to evangelize people giving them awareness of the importance of life.

THURSDAY

Communities of Faith in the Word

“Individual goodness is not sufficient anymore. The good individual will only be swallowed up by the evil system. While individual witness is important it is in unity that good Christian people will get their strength and attain victory.”

(CBCP letter)

To sustain and strengthen you in your efforts, we urge you to read the **BIBLE**, God’s written word. Read it not only to study it but pray with it. When read prayerfully, the Bible will nourish your life. It will be a lamp to guide you in your journey. It will help you resist temptations; it will help you to know and follow Jesus, our Lord. **(CBCP letter)**

²Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from

the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, and discharge all the duties of your ministry... ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” **(2 Timothy 4:2-7)**

Involving a community of prayer is very essential to grow spiritually and morally. Each member of the Verbum Dei family must come into prayer to let the light of the Holy Spirit keep burning in their hearts. Communion with God regularly can increase relationship with Him and is measured by good works, cheerful disposition and bravery to stand for his faith. How often do I commune with my God? How do I keep my faith burning inside? Am I brave enough to stand for my faith before others?

FRIDAY

Communities of Faith in the Sacraments

...we urge you to have recourse to the **SACRAMENTS**. Value your baptism and prepare well for the baptism of your children. Let parents take seriously the responsibility they undertook at baptism to raise up their children as good Christians. Christian marriage should be valued not only as a beautiful and solemn ceremony but as a welcoming of Christ into the life of the couple and their future family... We ask you to have recourse especially to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. The Eucharist, participated in actively in faith, is the source of Christian life and strength. It is the bread of life and of martyrs. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, on the other hand, will help us heal our moral wounds and give us the grace to

fight sin in ourselves and in society. **(CBCP letter)**

It is indeed an urgent call to every Verbum Dei disciple to have a community and to proclaim God’s love to everyone. Let’s not remain silent over the wrong practices and misconceptions of values to our generation. Who will speak for the truth for them if we are afraid? Who can open the eyes of the people to awaken them from sins? It is therefore a need to pray for each other, commune with God regularly, receive the Holy Eucharist daily, and reconcile with God in the sacrament of Reconciliation often times. These are our special weapons to sustain strength in times of trials and difficulties.

SATURDAY

A Church Whose Doors are Open

A Church which “goes forth” is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the hinges of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often, it is better to simply slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son who always kept his door open that when the son returns; he can readily pass through it. **(Evangelii Gaudium 45)**

Learn to live like the heart of the Father who doesn’t condemn but love the unlovable. Set aside your hatred, jealousy and anger with those people who despised God but learn to go beyond your negative emotions and you will discover the great and vast love of the Father whose heart is open and willing to

embrace sinners and restore broken relationships. It is a challenge to each one of us to reach out to our brothers and sisters to bring Jesus to them and let them feel that they are very much loved by God the way He loves us. Who are those people who are difficult to love? How do I show God’s love to them? Where shall I get strength to love them?

SUNDAY READINGS

8th Sunday in Ordinary time.

First Reading –Isaiah 49:14-15

Psalm – 62

Second reading – 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

Gospel – Matthew 6:24-34

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

Choose to be brave! Speak up for Jesus and his Church!

February 24-March 2, 2014



Objective of the week:

That as lay faithful, we can know the faith, live the faith and build communities of faith.

