

**LETTER ON THE YEAR OF FAITH 2012  
TO THE PRIESTS, CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS AND LAY FAITHFUL  
OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BUENOS AIRES  
by Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.**

Dear brothers and sisters:

One of the most powerful impressions in recent decades has been the experience of finding closed doors. Growing insecurity has been leading people, little by little, to lock the doors, to install safety devices and security cameras, to distrust the stranger who calls at the door. Nevertheless, in some neighbourhoods there still are doors that are open. The closed door is a perfect symbol of today's world. It is something more than a simple sociological fact; it is an existential reality that characterizes a life style, a way to stop confronting reality, dealing with others, and facing the future. The closed door of my house, which is the intimate place of my dreams, my hopes and sufferings and also of my joys, is closed to others. And this is not just about my material house; this is true also of the enclosed area of my life, my heart. Fewer and fewer people can cross this threshold. The security of some shuttered doors guards the insecurity of a life that is becoming more fragile and less susceptible to the risks of life and to the love of others.

The image of an open door has always been the symbol of light, friendship, joy, freedom, confidence. How we need to recover these things! The closed door harms us, paralyzes us, separates us.

We are beginning the Year of Faith, and paradoxically the image that the Pope suggests is that of the door, a door that we have to go through so as to be able to encounter the One whom we need so much. The Church, through the voice and heart of her Shepherd, Benedict XVI, is inviting us to cross the threshold, to take a step that is a free, interior decision: to encourage us to enter into a new life.

The door of faith reminds us of the Acts of the Apostles: "And when they arrived, they gathered the Church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). God always takes the initiative and does not want anyone to be excluded. God calls at the door of our hearts: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me" (Rev 3:20). Faith is a grace, a gift from God. "Only through believing, then, does faith grow and become stronger... in a continuous crescendo of self-abandonment into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God" (Apostolic Letter *Porta fidei*, 7).

Passing through this door involves setting out on a journey that lasts a lifetime, while we walk onward past so many doors that nowadays are opened to us, many of them wrong doors that very attractively but deceptively invite us to take another path; doors that promise an empty, narcissistic happiness with an expiration date; doors that lead us to cross-roads where, whatever option we follow, it will in the short or long term cause anxiety and bewilderment; self-referential doors that tire themselves out with no guarantee of a future. While the doors of the houses are closed, the doors of the shopping malls are always open. Someone goes through the door of faith, this threshold is crossed, when the Word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be moulded by the grace that transforms it. A grace that bears a specific name, and this name is Jesus. Jesus is the door (Jn 10:9). He, and He alone, is and always will be the door. No one goes to the Father except through Him (see Jn 14:6). If there is no Christ, there is no way to God. As a door He opens up for us the way to God, and as the Good Shepherd He is the only One who cares for us at the cost of his own life.

Jesus is the door and calls at our door so that we will let him cross the threshold of our life. "Be not afraid ... open the doors to Christ," Blessed John Paul II told us at the beginning of his pontificate. Open the doors of the heart as the disciples did in Emmaus, asking the Lord to remain *with us so that we can go through the doors of faith*: the same Lord leads us to understand the reasons why we believe, *so as then to go out and proclaim him*. Faith involves deciding to be with the Lord so as to live with him and to share him with our brethren.

We give thanks to God for this opportunity to appreciate our life as children of God, through this journey of faith that started in our life with the waters of baptism, the inexhaustible and fruitful shower that makes us children of God and brothers and sisters as members of the Church. The goal, the destination or the purpose is the encounter with God with whom we have already entered into communion and who desires to restore us, purify us, lift us up, sanctify us, and give us the happiness that our heart yearns for.

We wish to thank God because He sowed in the heart of our Archdiocesan Church the desire to spread and to give with open hands this gift of Baptism. It is the result of a long journey that began with the question, "How can we be the Church in Buenos Aires?" and proceeded by way of the [Archdiocesan] Synod Report [*Estado de Asamblea*] so as to take root in the [Archdiocesan] Mission Statement [*Estado de Misión*] as a permanent pastoral option.

Beginning this Year of Faith is a new call to deepen in our lives this faith that we have received. Professing the faith with our mouths implies living it in our hearts and showing it in our works: a witness and a public commitment. The disciple of Christ, son or daughter of the Church, can never think that believing is a private act. This is

an important and intense challenge for every day, since we are convinced that “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6). Considering our reality, as missionary disciples, we ask: “What does crossing the threshold of faith challenge us to do?”

*Crossing the threshold of faith* challenges us to discover that although it seems today that death reigns in its various forms and that history is ruled by the law of the most powerful or the most cunning, and although hatred and ambition operate as driving forces of so many human struggles, nevertheless we are absolutely and decisively convinced that this sad reality can change and must change, because “if God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31, 37).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* means not being ashamed to have the heart of a child who, because he still believes in impossible things, can live in hope—the one thing that is capable of giving meaning and transforming history. To ask for it without ceasing, to pray without fainting and to adore so as to be transfigured by what we contemplate.

*Crossing the threshold of faith* leads us to beg for each one of us the “mind... which was in Jesus Christ” (Phil 2:5), so that we may experience a new way of thinking, of communicating, of being in the family, of planning the future, of living out the virtue of charity and our vocation.

*Crossing the threshold of faith* is acting, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit present in the Church and who also manifests himself in the signs of the times; it is accompanying the constant movement of life and of history without falling into the paralyzing defeatism that regards any time in the past as being better; it is a sense of urgency to think of something new, to contribute something new, to create something new, kneading into life “the new leaven of justice and holiness” (cf. 1 Cor 5:8).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* implies keeping our sense of wonder and a heart that has not lazily settled into a routine, but is capable of recognizing that every time a woman brings a child into this world she is logically betting on life and on the future, that when we protect the innocence of children we guarantee the truth of a tomorrow, and when we act as caregivers for an elderly person we perform an act of justice and cherish our roots.

*Crossing the threshold of faith* is work performed with dignity and a vocation of service, with the self-denial of someone who in either case goes back to daily life to begin again without slackening, as though all that had already been done were just one step in the journey toward the kingdom, the fullness of life. It is the silent hope after the daily sowing, contemplating the fruit gathered and thanking the Lord because He is good and asking him not to abandon the work of his hands (Ps 138).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* demands striving for freedom and peaceful coexistence even though everyone around us is faltering, in the certainty that the Lord is asking us to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* entails the ongoing conversion of our attitudes, the manners and the standards by which we live; voicing our thoughts in new, unvarnished terms, without papering over differences; offering the new form that Jesus Christ imprints on anyone whom He has touched with his hand and his Gospel of Life, encouraging one another to do something unprecedented for society and for the Church; because “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17-21).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* leads us to forgive and to be able to put on a smile; it is drawing near to everyone who lives a marginalized existence and calling him by name, it is caring for the frailties of the weakest and supporting their tottering steps, certain that whatever we do for the least of our brethren we do for Jesus himself (Mt 25:40).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* means celebrating life, allowing ourselves to be transformed so that we become one with Jesus at the table of the Eucharist celebrated in community, and being there with our hand and our heart busy working on the great project of the Kingdom: all the rest will be given us as well (Mt 6:33).

*Crossing the threshold of faith* is living in the spirit of the [Second Vatican] Council and of Aparecida [Brazil, site of the Fifth General Conference of Latin American Bishops in 2007], in the Church of the open doors, not only so as to receive the Gospel but fundamentally so as to go out and fill with the Gospel message the streets and the lives of the people of our times.

*Crossing the threshold of faith* for our Archdiocesan Church means to feel that we are confirmed in the Mission to be a Church that lives, prays and works in a missionary key.

*Crossing the threshold of faith* is, finally, accepting the newness of the life of the Risen Lord in our poor flesh so as to make it a sign of his new life.

Meditating on all these things, we look to Mary, that She, the Virgin Mother, might accompany us in this crossing of the threshold of faith and draw down upon our Church in Buenos Aires the Holy Spirit, as in Nazareth, so that just like her we might adore the Lord and go out to proclaim the marvels that He has done among us.

*Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, S.J.*

*October 1, 2012,*

*Feast of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus*