

## Diocese of Richmond

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Office of the Bishop

My Dear Friends,

As we prepare to enter into a **Year of Faith** in observance of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Second Vatican Council and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, all Catholics are called by our Holy Father to reflect on the richness of our Catholic faith and “to rediscover the gift of Baptismal faith and that task of giving witness.” This **Year of Faith** is intended to awaken Catholics around the world to deepen our relationship with God and live as joyful witnesses to the Gospel. From October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013, we are called to deepen our life of prayer, study, outreach and evangelization.

One way for Catholics to exercise this call is through a more focused approach to our prayer life. Prayer helps us form a more “vital and personal relationship with the living and true God” (CCC 2558). We also have an opportunity to learn more about those whose witness has been forever lifted up as an example to others. By rediscovering the faith of our saints, including those from North American, Catholics in the United States will gain insights into their personal witness to the dignity of every human person, to religious liberty and to our Catholic faith.

These are times of enormous challenge and opportunity for the Catholic Church. Trends in the United States suggest that only 30% of Americans who were raised Catholic are still participating; a full 10% of all adults in the U.S. are ex-Catholics; and the number of marriages celebrated in the Church decreased by nearly 60 % between 1972 and 2010. If the Church is to reverse these trends, the evangelizers must first be evangelized – in other words, Catholics in the pew must make a conscious choice to know and follow Jesus before they can draw others to him. There are a number of excellent resources available through the internet and the many Catholic publishers of which you are already familiar to help achieve this. The staff at the Diocesan Pastoral Center is ready and able to assist you.

Throughout this Year of Faith, we pray in thanksgiving for the gift of our Catholic faith. Faith is God’s gift to us, God’s invitation to a relationship so that we may live out the call of discipleship to be joyful witnesses to Jesus Christ. God bless each of you during this **Year of Faith**.

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature reads '+ Francis X. Di Lorenzo'.

Most Rev. Francis X. DiLorenzo  
Bishop of Richmond

October 2012