

**Homily for the Twenty-eighth Sunday of the Year – Cycle B  
Beginning of the Year of Faith  
and  
Admission to Candidacy  
October 14, 2012**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception  
Springfield**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

Reverend Fathers and Deacons, consecrated men and women, candidates for Holy Orders, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this great and holy Year of Faith – which began this past Thursday – is a great gift to the Church from His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

Throughout the course of this Year of Faith, each of us – you and I – will have the profound opportunity to consider what it is that keeps us from following Christ Jesus completely, without counting the cost and without reserve. For the rich young man in today's Gospel, it was his wealth; what is it for you and me?

For some, perhaps it is the same wealth that prevented that young man from entrusting himself to Christ. For others, perhaps it is an undue attachment to a material item or to another person. For others, perhaps a misunderstanding of what the Church teaches and professes to be true.

So often we think Jesus wants to take away our freedom or to take away something that makes life beautiful and great. In reality, however, he takes nothing away; rather, he gives us everything that makes life truly and lastingly good. He gives us himself; he gives us eternal life!

On the day of our Baptism, our parents were asked, "What do you ask of God's Church for your child?" Among the appropriate answers is, "Faith," to which the priest asked "And what does faith offer?" "Eternal life," came the response. Yes, eternal life comes from faith and faith comes from Jesus Christ.

At the heart, then, of this Year of Faith is the encounter with Jesus Christ. Indeed, in his apostolic letter announcing this year, Pope Benedict XVI spoke of "the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed clearly light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ" (*Porta Fidei*, 2).

Each of us makes our way on this journey of faith at different speeds or paces. Some of us run swiftly along, keeping our eyes firmly fixed on the prize of eternal life. Some of us simply amble on as if this journey of faith were an airport speedway that will simply move us along without

any real effort on our part. Some of us make our backwards and forward and back again.

At whatever pace we travel on this journey of faith, there is always room for a growth in maturity and an ever-greater “self-abandonment, in a continuous crescendo, into the hands of a love that seems to grow constantly because it has its origin in God” (*Porta Fidei*, 7). This is what we call discipleship.

The word “disciple” has its roots in the word *disco* – not a genre of music from the 70s, but Latin for “I learn.” The disciple is one who learns from the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. This learning is not from dusty tomes or ancient manuscripts, but from the very person of Jesus Christ, risen and alive today, through an immediate and personal relationship with him and his Church. This relationship does not – indeed, cannot – leave a person as he or she was before. The true disciple is the one who becomes such a student of the Master that his very life conforms to the life of Christ in all things.

To our sorrow, today there seems to be fewer and fewer people willing to apprentice themselves to Christ, to learn from him the will of the Father and the ways in which we may live in his love. You have heard the

statistic, no doubt, that the second-largest religious group in the United States is non-practicing Catholics. I am sure that many of us know personally the people and stories behind these numbers. They are our sisters and brothers, our nieces and nephews, our sons and daughters, our neighbors and co-workers.

What can we say to reignite in them the fire of faith? What is Christ inspiring us to do to proclaim the faith anew to these lost sheep? These questions lie at the heart of the Year of Faith. Of this task, the Holy Father wrote: "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" (*Porta Fidei*, 9). To this end, I would like to propose to a three-fold plan to make the most of this Year of Faith.

First, we must be grateful for the faith we have received, for our encounter with the Lord. Families should strive to make their homes places where the family prays together, reads the Scriptures together, and is nourished together at Sunday Mass. Families should strive to allow their faith to influence everything they do, rather than reserving their faith only for an hour or so on Sunday.

Second, we must endeavor to understand all the more clearly the faith we profess. If a friend, family member or co-worker asks us a question about Catholicism, can we provide an adequate – and correct – answer? We ought to be able to do so.

Third, we must share our faith, not only with our family and friends, but with our co-workers and everyone we meet. As the Holy Father reminds us, “Confessing with the lips indicates in turn that faith implies public testimony and commitment” (*Porta Fidei*, 10).

This three-fold plan is the way of discipleship and through it we learn to apprentice ourselves to Jesus Christ.

We have among us, these, our brothers, whom we believe the Lord is calling to his service as Deacons. They have expressed their desire to be bound in Holy Orders for the service of God and of mankind and in a few moments I will accept them with joy as candidates for Holy Orders.

And now, my brothers, I turn to you. The Lord has called you to his service and for your generous responses, made in faith, the Lord has made us glad and we will sing for joy (cf. Psalm 90:15, 14). From this day forward you must endeavor, in a particular way, to live this Year of Faith, to truly be his disciples, to look to Jesus Christ as your Master and Teacher.

How fitting it is, then, that at the beginning of this Year of Faith you enter more fully into your formation and preparation for the diaconal ministry.

Know that “the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). If you allow the Lord to search your hearts and to reveal to you whatever it is that keeps you from following him completely, he will mold your heart after his own and through you his love will be known.

May God give us this grace. Amen.