



# Encountering the Light of Faith

## *Lumen Fidei* Online Retreat: Day 1

### Retreat Guide



# Retreat Introduction

During his Angelus message on Sunday, July 7, 2013, Pope Francis declared:

"As you know ... the Encyclical Letter on the theme of faith, entitled *Lumen Fidei*, 'the light of faith', was promulgated. For the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI began this Encyclical, to follow up those on love and hope. I took up this great work and I brought it to conclusion. I offer it with joy to all the People of God: in fact, especially today, we all need to go to the essence of the Christian Faith, to deepen it and to confront it with our current problems. But I think that this Encyclical, at least in several places, can also be helpful to those in search of God and of the meaning of life. I place it in the hands of Mary, the perfect icon of faith, that she may bring forth the fruit desired by the Lord."

In light of the Pope's above-stated intention, the Archdiocese of Washington's Secretariat for Pastoral Ministry and Social Concerns and the Secretariat for Communications, have prepared this devotional, so as to encourage your growth in the joy of faith and your desire to share this joy, this faith, with others.

We offer this devotional, not to serve as a substitution for *Lumen Fidei*, but rather, so as to whet your appetite to discover its riches. Perhaps, if you haven't already, the following excerpts and spiritual exercises will inspire you to read the encyclical and share its light with others.

Peace to you!

*Share your experience on  
Facebook and Twitter  
#LumenFidei*

# *Lumen Fidei* Summary

*Lumen Fidei* is the conclusion of a triptych of papal encyclicals on the theological virtues, beginning with Love in *Deus Caritas Est* ("God Is Love"), followed by Hope in *Spe Salvi* ("Saved by Hope"), and now "The Light of Faith". What is striking about *Lumen Fidei* is its emphasis on the act of faith, that is, trust in God's merciful love, an act whereby the Christian hears and believes the Word of God, sees and understands with the eyes and mind of Christ, and shares in Jesus' disposition as Son of the Father, because he or she shares in Jesus' love, which is the Spirit. The purpose of faith, then, is to illumine the totality of the believer's vision of the world, to transform the believer by God's free gift, which calls for humility and gratitude, and to make the believer a courageous beacon of Trinitarian Love that points the way to God for others.

Written to coincide with the Year of Faith, *Lumen Fidei* is a unique collaboration between Benedict XVI, who began the first draft as pope, and Pope Francis, who completed the encyclical and promulgated it on the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29, 2013.

*Lumen Fidei* is divided into four chapters, plus an introduction and conclusion, as follows:

- A. Introduction (paragraphs 1-7)
- B. Chapter 1: We Have Believed in Love (1 Jn 4:16)  
(paragraphs 8-22)
- C. Chapter 2: Unless You Believe, You Will Not Understand  
(Is 7:9) (paragraphs 23-36)
- D. Chapter 3: I Delivered to You What I Also Received  
(1 Cor 15:3) (paragraphs 37-49)
- E. Chapter 4: God Prepares a City for Them (Heb 11:16)  
(paragraphs 50-57)
- F. Conclusion: Blessed is She Who Believed (Lk 1:45)  
(paragraphs 58-60)

Composed in a warm and engaging, pastoral style, *Lumen Fidei* is meant not only to be read, but to be meditated upon - even *prayed* - so as to draw the reader into his or her own *personal encounter* with God.

# Day 1 Theme:

## *My Encounter with the Light of Faith*

Pope Francis begins his teaching on Faith by telling us about the light of faith. “The light of Faith: this is how the Church’s tradition speaks of the great gift brought by Jesus. In John’s Gospel, Christ says of himself: ‘I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness’ (John 12:46)... Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it comes from Christ, the morning star which never sets.”

*(Lumen Fidei, 1)*

The light of faith is the gift of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Pope Francis continues, “Faith is born of an encounter with the living God who calls us and reveals his love, a love which precedes us and upon which we can lean for security and for building our lives...” (LF, 4) Because faith is the gift of our encounter with the living God it also becomes our responsibility to engage in a vital relationship and build our life on this strong foundation.

Building a life on faith requires great trust in the reliable love of Jesus, a love which comes to us from the past and gives us a future by reuniting us to God and each other. “Believing means entrusting oneself to a merciful love which always accepts and pardons, which sustains and directs our lives, and which shows its power by its ability to make straight the crooked lines of our history.” (LF, 13)

Our encounter with the love of God in the light of faith is always an encounter with others as well. “Faith is God’s free gift, which calls for humility and the courage to trust and to entrust; it enables us to see the luminous path leading to the encounter of God and humanity: the history of salvation.” (LF, 14) We have faith because we believe the words and witness of someone else who introduced us to Jesus and because that personal encounter with him fills our deepest longing and illuminates the depths of our hearts.

# Day 1:

## *Space for Reflection*

1. Describe a time when you experienced a dark moment in your life. This would have been a time when you recognized that you were far from home, or enjoyed too much the show of the world; a time when you were away from faith and prayer was dry; when you had reached the limit of your abilities and could not see beyond today and you did not know the truth of peace.
2. Moments of darkness are gifts too. “We come to see that faith does not dwell in shadow and gloom; it is a light for our darkness.” (LF, 4) When we experience rejection or loss in our lives faith helps us to discover the depth of our need for God’s love and assures us that he is trustworthy and reliable. In those times and seasons of darkness we also share in the rejection of Jesus in his darkest hour. Have you considered the difficulties of life as a gift of faith? If so, how? If not, why?
3. The Gospel according to John 1:5 says that “the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it.” Jesus is the light of faith and faith is a personal encounter with him. Jesus shares his mission to forgive sins, heal the sick, raise the dead, and cast out demons with his disciples. In your time of great need, how have you experienced the encounter with the light of faith?
4. One of the great mysteries of faith is that the Holy Spirit works through us, imperfect people, to share an encounter with Jesus and awaken faith in others. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to share the light of his love with someone else today. Do you need to forgive someone for sinning against you or do you need to seek forgiveness for your own sin? Is there someone for whom you have promised to pray? Maybe you can answer a question for someone struggling with the faith. You can be a friend to someone going through a hard time. You can serve the hungry and visit the lonely. For whom can you let your light shine?