

## Publisher's Note

For the first time, the encyclicals, bulls, and apostolic exhortations—all the major writings—of Pope Francis, the 266th and current pope of the Roman Catholic Church, are gathered together in one volume.

*Encyclical* comes from the Latin word *encycli*us, meaning “circular.” In the ancient Church, encyclicals were actual circulating letters. Today, encyclicals are book-length reflections by the Holy Father on significant issues—usually matters of faith or morals—of vital importance to the worldwide Church and beyond. Papal bulls are also formal declarations, usually much shorter, by the pope. In this context, *bull* also comes from a Latin word, *bull*a, the traditional leaden “seal” on the document. Lastly, apostolic exhortations are occasions for a pope to urge certain activity, often after consultation with a synod of bishops.

Each of the five works collected here is a book unto itself. Each was written by Pope Francis for the Catholic faithful but also with the intention of communicating essential contemporary wisdom for all Christians and all people. This volume presents them in the order in which they were promulgated:

*Lumen Fidei* (*The Light of Faith*), an encyclical written four months into Pope Francis's papacy, focuses on the centrality of faith, the relationship between reason and faith, the Church's role in the transmission of faith, and how faith results in redeeming the world.

*Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*) is the apostolic exhortation from later in 2013 and has been called Pope Francis's manifesto. It challenges all Christians to approach evangelization anew and to overcome complacency in order to fulfill Christ's great mission.

*Misericordiae Vultus* (*The Face of Mercy*), the papal bull for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2015, explains why “we need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy.”

*Laudato Si' (Praise Be to You)* is the landmark encyclical from 2015 in which Pope Francis issued a clarion call to the Church and the world on climate change, human responsibility, the role of faith in how we live among God's entire creation, and the future of the planet.

*Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)* is an exhortation published in March 2016 after the Synods on the Family, in which Pope Francis ranges in his quotations on and examples of love in the family from St. Thomas Aquinas to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to the film *Babette's Feast*.

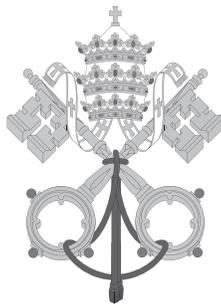
## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations for texts referenced in the documents appear in the endnotes. They are listed below for the convenience of readers who desire to explore the pope's ideas in greater detail.

- AAS *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*: Latin for "Acts of the Apostolic See." An official journal of the Holy See first established by Pope Pius X in 1908.
- PG *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by J. P. Migne. One hundred sixty-one volumes of patrology (the study of early Christian writers) in Greek, published in Paris between 1857 and 1866.
- PL *Patrologia Latina*, edited by J. P. Migne. Two hundred seventeen volumes of patrology in Latin, plus additional indices, published in Paris between 1878 and 1890.
- SC *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. A constitution of the Second Vatican Council, first promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1963.



*Lumen Fidei*  
**The Light of Faith**  
June 29, 2013





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ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
**LUMEN FIDEI**  
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF  
**FRANCIS**  
TO THE BISHOPS, PRIESTS, DEACONS,  
CONSECRATED PERSONS,  
AND THE LAY FAITHFUL  
ON FAITH

1. 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 light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46). Saint Paul uses the same image: "God who said 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts" (2 Cor 4:6). The pagan world, which hungered for light, had seen the growth of the cult of the sun god, *Sol Invictus*, invoked each day at sunrise. Yet though the sun was born anew each morning, it was clearly incapable of casting its light on all of human existence. The sun does not illumine all reality; its rays cannot penetrate to the shadow of death, the place where men's eyes are closed to its light. "No one"—Saint Justin Martyr writes—"has ever been ready to die for his faith in the sun."<sup>1</sup> Conscious of the immense horizon which their faith opened before them, Christians invoked Jesus as the true sun "whose rays bestow life."<sup>2</sup> To Martha, weeping for the death of her brother Lazarus, Jesus said: "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (Jn 11:40). Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it comes from the risen Christ, the morning star which never sets.

**An illusory light?**

2. Yet in speaking of the light of faith, we can almost hear the objections of many of our contemporaries. In modernity, that light might have been considered sufficient for societies of old, but was felt to be of no use for new times, for a humanity come of age, proud of its rationality and

anxious to explore the future in novel ways. Faith thus appeared to some as an illusory light, preventing mankind from boldly setting out in quest of knowledge. The young Nietzsche encouraged his sister Elisabeth to take risks, to tread “new paths . . . with all the uncertainty of one who must find his own way,” adding that “this is where humanity’s paths part: if you want peace of soul and happiness, then believe, but if you want to be a follower of truth, then seek.”<sup>3</sup> Belief would be incompatible with seeking. From this starting point Nietzsche was to develop his critique of Christianity for diminishing the full meaning of human existence and stripping life of novelty and adventure. Faith would thus be the illusion of light, an illusion which blocks the path of a liberated humanity to its future.

3. In the process, faith came to be associated with darkness. There were those who tried to save faith by making room for it alongside the light of reason. Such room would open up wherever the light of reason could not penetrate, wherever certainty was no longer possible. Faith was thus understood either as a leap in the dark, to be taken in the absence of light, driven by blind emotion, or as a subjective light, capable perhaps of warming the heart and bringing personal consolation, but not something which could be proposed to others as an objective and shared light which points the way. Slowly but surely, however, it would become evident that the light of autonomous reason is not enough to illumine the future; ultimately the future remains shadowy and fraught with fear of the unknown. As a result, humanity renounced the search for a great light, Truth itself, in order to be content with smaller lights which illumine the fleeting moment yet prove incapable of showing the way. Yet in the absence of light everything becomes confused; it is impossible to tell good from evil, or the road to our destination from other roads which take us in endless circles, going nowhere.

### **A light to be recovered**

4. There is an urgent need, then, to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating *every aspect* of human

existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God. 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. Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see; we realize that it contains a great promise of fulfillment, and that a vision of the future opens up before us. Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time. On the one hand, it is a light coming from the past, the light of the foundational memory of the life of Jesus which revealed his perfectly trustworthy love, a love capable of triumphing over death. Yet since Christ has risen and draws us beyond death, faith is also a light coming from the future and opening before us vast horizons which guide us beyond our isolated selves toward the breadth of communion. We come to see that faith does not dwell in shadow and gloom; it is a light for our darkness. Dante, in the *Divine Comedy*, after professing his faith to Saint Peter, describes that light as a “spark, which then becomes a burning flame and like a heavenly star within me glimmers.”<sup>4</sup> It is this light of faith that I would now like to consider, so that it can grow and enlighten the present, becoming a star to brighten the horizon of our journey at a time when mankind is particularly in need of light.

5. Christ, on the eve of his passion, assured Peter: “I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail” (Lk 22:32). He then told him to strengthen his brothers and sisters in that same faith. Conscious of the duty entrusted to the Successor of Peter, Benedict XVI proclaimed the present Year of Faith, a time of grace which is helping us to sense the great joy of believing and to renew our wonder at the vast horizons which faith opens up, so as then to profess that faith in its unity and integrity, faithful to the memory of the Lord and sustained by his presence and by the working of the Holy Spirit. The conviction born of a faith which brings grandeur and fulfillment to life, a faith centered on Christ and on the power of his grace, inspired the mission of the first Christians. In the Acts of the Martyrs, we read the following dialogue between the Roman prefect Rusticus and a Christian named Hierax: “‘Where are your parents?’ the

judge asked the martyr. He replied: 'Our true father is Christ, and our mother is faith in him.'"<sup>5</sup> For those early Christians, faith, as an encounter with the living God revealed in Christ, was indeed a "mother," for it had brought them to the light and given birth within them to divine life, a new experience and a luminous vision of existence for which they were prepared to bear public witness to the end.

6. The Year of Faith was inaugurated on the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. This is itself a clear indication that Vatican II was a Council on faith,<sup>6</sup> inasmuch as it asked us to restore the primacy of God in Christ to the center of our lives, both as a Church and as individuals. The Church never takes faith for granted, but knows that this gift of God needs to be nourished and reinforced so that it can continue to guide her pilgrim way. The Second Vatican Council enabled the light of faith to illumine our human experience from within, accompanying the men and women of our time on their journey. It clearly showed how faith enriches life in all its dimensions.

7. These considerations on faith—in continuity with all that the Church's magisterium has pronounced on this theological virtue<sup>7</sup>—are meant to supplement what Benedict XVI had written in his encyclical letters on charity and hope. He himself had almost completed a first draft of an encyclical on faith. For this I am deeply grateful to him, and as his brother in Christ I have taken up his fine work and added a few contributions of my own. The Successor of Peter, yesterday, today, and tomorrow, is always called to strengthen his brothers and sisters in the priceless treasure of that faith which God has given as a light for humanity's path.

In God's gift of faith, a supernatural infused virtue, we realize that a great love has been offered us, a good word has been spoken to us, and that when we welcome that word, Jesus Christ the Word made flesh, the Holy Spirit transforms us, lights up our way to the future, and enables us joyfully to advance along that way on wings of hope. Thus wonderfully interwoven, faith, hope and charity are the driving force of the Christian life as it advances toward full communion with God. But what is it like, this road which faith opens up before us? What is the

origin of this powerful light which brightens the journey of a successful and fruitful life?

## CHAPTER ONE

### **WE HAVE BELIEVED IN LOVE**

(cf. 1 Jn 4:16)

#### **Abraham, our father in faith**

8. Faith opens the way before us and accompanies our steps through time. Hence, if we want to understand what faith is, we need to follow the route it has taken, the path trodden by believers, as witnessed first in the Old Testament. Here a unique place belongs to Abraham, our father in faith. Something disturbing takes place in his life: God speaks to him; he reveals himself as a God who speaks and calls his name. Faith is linked to hearing. Abraham does not see God, but hears his voice. Faith thus takes on a personal aspect. God is not the god of a particular place, or a deity linked to specific sacred time, but the God of a person, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, capable of interacting with man and establishing a covenant with him. Faith is our response to a word which engages us personally, to a “Thou” who calls us by name.

9. The word spoken to Abraham contains both a call and a promise. First, it is a call to leave his own land, a summons to a new life, the beginning of an exodus which points him toward an unforeseen future. The sight which faith would give to Abraham would always be linked to the need to take this step forward: faith “sees” to the extent that it journeys, to the extent that it chooses to enter into the horizons opened up by God’s word. This word also contains a promise: Your descendants will be great in number, you will be the father of a great nation (cf. Gn 13:16; 15:5; 22:17). As a response to a word which preceded it, Abraham’s faith would always be an act of remembrance. Yet this remembrance is not fixed on past events but, as the memory of a promise, it becomes capable of opening up the future, shedding light on the path to be taken. We see how faith, as remembrance of the future, *memoria futuri*, is thus closely bound up with hope.

10. Abraham is asked to entrust himself to this word. Faith understands that something so apparently ephemeral and fleeting as a word, when spoken by the God who is fidelity, becomes absolutely certain and unshakable, guaranteeing the continuity of our journey through history. Faith accepts this word as a solid rock upon which we can build, a straight highway on which we can travel. In the Bible, faith is expressed by the Hebrew word *'emûnāh*, derived from the verb *'amān* whose root means “to uphold.” The term *'emûnāh* can signify both God’s fidelity and man’s faith. The man of faith gains strength by putting himself in the hands of the God who is faithful. Playing on this double meaning of the word—also found in the corresponding terms in Greek (*pistós*) and Latin (*fidelis*)—Saint Cyril of Jerusalem praised the dignity of the Christian who receives God’s own name: both are called “faithful.”<sup>8</sup> As Saint Augustine explains: “Man is faithful when he believes in God and his promises; God is faithful when he grants to man what he has promised.”<sup>9</sup>

11. A final element of the story of Abraham is important for understanding his faith. God’s word, while bringing newness and surprise, is not at all alien to Abraham’s experience. In the voice which speaks to him, the patriarch recognizes a profound call which was always present at the core of his being. God ties his promise to that aspect of human life which has always appeared most “full of promise,” namely, parenthood, the begetting of new life: “Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac” (Gn 17:19). The God who asks Abraham for complete trust reveals himself to be the source of all life. Faith is thus linked to God’s fatherhood, which gives rise to all creation; the God who calls Abraham is the Creator, the one who “calls into existence the things that do not exist” (Rom 4:17), the one who “chose us before the foundation of the world . . . and destined us for adoption as his children” (Eph 1:4–5). For Abraham, faith in God sheds light on the depths of his being, it enables him to acknowledge the wellspring of goodness at the origin of all things and to realize that his life is not the product of non-being or chance, but the fruit of a personal call and a personal love. The mysterious God who called him is no alien deity, but the God who is the origin and mainstay of all that is. The great test of Abraham’s faith, the sacrifice

of his son Isaac, would show the extent to which this primordial love is capable of ensuring life even beyond death. The word which could raise up a son to one who was “as good as dead,” in “the barrenness” of Sarah’s womb (cf. Rom 4:19), can also stand by his promise of a future beyond all threat or danger (cf. Heb 11:19; Rom 4:21).

### **The faith of Israel**

12. The history of the people of Israel in the Book of Exodus follows in the wake of Abraham’s faith. Faith once again is born of a primordial gift: Israel trusts in God, who promises to set his people free from their misery. Faith becomes a summons to a lengthy journey leading to worship of the Lord on Sinai and the inheritance of a promised land. God’s love is seen to be like that of a father who carries his child along the way (cf. Dt 1:31). Israel’s confession of faith takes shape as an account of God’s deeds in setting his people free and acting as their guide (cf. Dt 26:5–11), an account passed down from one generation to the next. God’s light shines for Israel through the remembrance of the Lord’s mighty deeds, recalled and celebrated in worship, and passed down from parents to children. Here we see how the light of faith is linked to concrete life-stories, to the grateful remembrance of God’s mighty deeds and the progressive fulfillment of his promises. Gothic architecture gave clear expression to this: in the great cathedrals light comes down from heaven by passing through windows depicting the history of salvation. God’s light comes to us through the account of his self-revelation, and thus becomes capable of illuminating our passage through time by recalling his gifts and demonstrating how he fulfills his promises.

13. The history of Israel also shows us the temptation of unbelief to which the people yielded more than once. Here the opposite of faith is shown to be idolatry. While Moses is speaking to God on Sinai, the people cannot bear the mystery of God’s hiddenness, they cannot endure the time of waiting to see his face. Faith by its very nature demands renouncing the immediate possession which sight would appear to offer; it is an invitation to turn to the source of the light, while respecting the mystery of a countenance which will unveil itself personally in its own good time.

Martin Buber once cited a definition of idolatry proposed by the rabbi of Kock: idolatry is “when a face addresses a face which is not a face.”<sup>10</sup> In place of faith in God, it seems better to worship an idol, into whose face we can look directly and whose origin we know, because it is the work of our own hands. Before an idol, there is no risk that we will be called to abandon our security, for idols “have mouths, but they cannot speak” (Ps 115:5). Idols exist, we begin to see, as a pretext for setting ourselves at the center of reality and worshiping the work of our own hands. Once man has lost the fundamental orientation which unifies his existence, he breaks down into the multiplicity of his desires; in refusing to await the time of promise, his life-story disintegrates into a myriad of unconnected instants. Idolatry, then, is always polytheism, an aimless passing from one lord to another. Idolatry does not offer a journey but rather a plethora of paths leading nowhere and forming a vast labyrinth. Those who choose not to put their trust in God must hear the din of countless idols crying out: “Put your trust in me!” Faith, tied as it is to conversion, is the opposite of idolatry; it breaks with idols to turn to the living God in a personal encounter. 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. Faith consists in the willingness to let ourselves be constantly transformed and renewed by God’s call. Herein lies the paradox: by constantly turning toward the Lord, we discover a sure path which liberates us from the dissolution imposed upon us by idols.

14. In the faith of Israel we also encounter the figure of Moses, the mediator. The people may not see the face of God; it is Moses who speaks to YHWH on the mountain and then tells the others of the Lord’s will. With this presence of a mediator in its midst, Israel learns to journey together in unity. The individual’s act of faith finds its place within a community, within the common “we” of the people who, in faith, are like a single person—“my first-born son,” as God would describe all of Israel (cf. Ex 4:22). Here mediation is not an obstacle, but an opening: through our encounter with others, our gaze rises to a truth greater than ourselves. Rousseau once lamented that he could not see God for himself: “How

many people stand between God and me!”<sup>11</sup> “Is it really so simple and natural that God would have sought out Moses in order to speak to Jean-Jacques Rousseau?”<sup>12</sup> On the basis of an individualistic and narrow conception of knowledge one cannot appreciate the significance of mediation, this capacity to participate in the vision of another, this shared knowledge which is the knowledge proper to love. 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.

### **The fullness of Christian faith**

15. “Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad” (Jn 8:56). According to these words of Jesus, Abraham’s faith pointed to him; in some sense it foresaw his mystery. So Saint Augustine understood it when he stated that the patriarchs were saved by faith, not faith in Christ who had come but in Christ who was yet to come, a faith pressing toward the future of Jesus.<sup>13</sup> Christian faith is centered on Christ; it is the confession that Jesus is Lord and that God has raised him from the dead (cf. Rom 10:9). All the threads of the Old Testament converge on Christ; he becomes the definitive “Yes” to all the promises, the ultimate basis of our “Amen” to God (cf. 2 Cor 1:20). The history of Jesus is the complete manifestation of God’s reliability. If Israel continued to recall God’s great acts of love, which formed the core of its confession of faith and broadened its gaze in faith, the life of Jesus now appears as the locus of God’s definitive intervention, the supreme manifestation of his love for us. The word which God speaks to us in Jesus is not simply one word among many, but his eternal Word (cf. Heb 1:1–2). God can give no greater guarantee of his love, as Saint Paul reminds us (cf. Rom 8:31–39). Christian faith is thus faith in a perfect love, in its decisive power, in its ability to transform the world and to unfold its history. “We know and believe the love that God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16). In the love of God revealed in Jesus, faith perceives the foundation on which all reality and its final destiny rest.