



Year of Faith  
Teaching Series and  
Forward in Faith  
Appeal

As the Year of Faith moves into 2013, I've begun the teaching sessions on faith that I'll be giving around the diocese in the months ahead. The good people of Burns came out on a snowy morning before Christmas to reflect with me on the heritage of Abraham, "our father in faith." To him God promised descendants and a land of their own. Thousands of years later we Christians - now counted among that promised multitude - join in the ancient Jewish journey to the Promised Land to claim our inheritance as children of Abraham too.

So my first presentation is called "The Geography of Faith." Faith is for those with a journey to make; and the first books of the Bible map out the path. The journey begins in Egypt, winds through the desert, crosses into the Promised Land, veers off to Babylon, and finally comes back home - home to the house of the Father and the end of exile. This journey is about making our way to freedom. At the most basic level we put our faith in a God Who calls us to be free.

Free not only in space but also in time. So my second presentation turns to "The Hour of Faith." Moses' experience at the Burning Bush discloses what happens to us when we take time to pray. God tells us Who He is and who we can become if

we are faithful to His call to be true to ourselves in His sight. Moses left the Burning Bush a changed man. The hour of faith led him to discover the geography of faith, and both converged on the Promised Land of freedom. It turns out that faith is all about freedom. "You shall know the truth," Jesus promises, "and the truth shall set you free."

There will be much more to say when these teaching sessions continue - especially about how the experience of the Burning Bush can help us consciously build into our private prayer what we unconsciously assimilate each Sunday in our public prayer at Mass. I would welcome your presence and your participation when "The Hour of Faith" strikes in your part of the diocese!

I was ordained bishop in the church named for St. Francis of Assisi - a man who rejoiced in his poverty and was not ashamed to beg. As a parish priest I learned that I had to be willing to follow in the footsteps of the beggar of Assisi, and now that I'm bishop it is even more necessary to do so. In this Franciscan spirit, then, permit me to call your attention once again to the Diocesan Appeal: "Forward in Faith" launched before Christmas.

The success of the Forward in Faith Appeal very much affects the ability of the Diocese to take full advantage of the extraordinary financial support we receive from the Catholic Extension Society. Extension has long provided us indispensable assistance for needed construction and repair projects and salary support. But now Extension has developed an imaginative new grant program to encourage mission

dioceses like ours to undertake important projects we could not otherwise afford on our own. In doing so the Society is only being true to its name, which is, after all, Catholic Extension not Catholic Maintenance.

So it is that Catholic Extension has named the Diocese of Baker one of five dioceses to participate in its new Diocesan Appeals Enhancement Initiative. In partnership with the International Catholic Stewardship Council, this Catholic Extension grant provides significant support and covers a large percentage of the costs of the Appeal over a two-year period.

Catholic Extension has included the Diocese of Baker in its Enhancement Initiative because it sees promise in our effort to invigorate this year's Appeal. I hope you will too. Please keep this information in mind as you give thought and prayer to the part you can play to build up the Diocesan Appeal in this Year of Faith.