

## **Pope Francis says faith has the power to transform lives**

CAFOD welcomes Pope Francis' first Encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, reminding us all that our faith is an amazing gift from God and a powerful force for good that can transform people's lives.

This encyclical on faith is the third in a series on faith, hope and love, following on from 'Deus Caritas Est' in 2005, and 'Spe Salvi' in 2007.

The Pope's words invite us to respond to the gift of faith which transforms us so that we see and hear the world in a different way, and we see and hear our brothers and sisters in a different light.

Pope Francis reflects that faith is not something which takes us away from the world, and is not 'irrelevant to the concrete concerns of the men and women of our time'. In fact, it 'leads us, as Christians, to live our lives in this world with ever greater commitment and intensity.'

Chris Bain, director of CAFOD, said:

"Lumen Fidei is a deeply challenging reflection on our modern world, and on what it means to be a person of faith today. Building on the writings of Pope Benedict XVI on charity and on hope, it challenges us to think and act in new ways.

"Pope Francis is clear that faith is not a 'private matter, a completely individualistic notion or a personal opinion.' We are not alone; we are bound together as human beings in community, and each person matters, 'Faith teaches us,' he says, 'to see that every man and woman represents a blessing for me, that the light of God's face shines on me through the faces of my brothers and sisters.'

"Our work will continue to be enriched by this teaching in the years to come. In *Lumen Fidei*, Pope Francis poses some big questions that development agencies like CAFOD need to consider carefully. He challenges us to think differently about the meaning of progress and human flourishing. He tells us that faith helps us to respect nature and calls us to devise models of development which are not based on 'utility or profit', but on gratitude for the gift of creation. And he reminds us that faith calls us to develop just forms of government, because all authority comes from God and is meant for the service of the common good.

"Pope Francis sees faith as a service to the common good and a foundation for the building of a good society, as he tell us: 'Faith is truly a good for everyone; it is a common good. Its light does not simply brighten the interior of the Church, nor does it serve solely to build an eternal city in the hereafter; it helps us build our societies in such a way that they can journey towards a future of hope.'

"Pope Francis acknowledges that the journey is not always easy, saying 'Faith is not a light which scatters all our darkness, but a lamp which guides our steps in the night and suffices for the journey.' Faith brings hope, it is 'an accompanying presence, a history of goodness which touches every story of suffering and opens up a ray of light.'

"I am inspired by the challenge of this document, because through faith, hope and love we are united in solidarity with all our brothers and sisters, and especially those living in the poorest communities. Most of all, I am inspired by the message of hope that it brings. Indeed, as Pope Francis says, we must 'refuse to be robbed of hope'".