



ROMAN CATHOLIC
**DIOCESE
OF CHARLESTON**
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

This month's *Via Fidelis* activity is to "Look on an apologetics website, such as *Catholic Answers*, to be able to respond to questions you are commonly asked about our faith." I want to explain what "apologetics" is and how it can be an important tool to understand and share the faith with others.

In English, the word "apology" has taken on a very different meaning since the 1500s. Today, when we apologize, we are admitting wrongdoing and asking for forgiveness from someone we have hurt or mistreated. The original meaning, stemming from the Greek word *apologia*, is to formally defend a position or belief. As Catholic Christians, we are called to apologize in both senses of the word. It is an extension of the Great Commission to baptize and share the Good News with those around us.

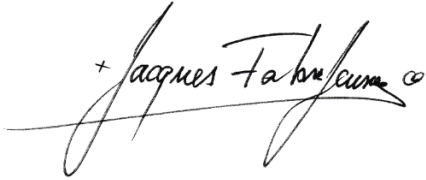
First, learning how to defend our faith deepens our understanding of what we believe. This involves doing in-depth research of *why* the Church teaches what it has for the past 2,000 years. As Catholics, we have the great gift of the writings of the saints and Fathers of the Church who have defended Christ throughout history. Instead of "reinventing the wheel" and attempting to justify the *why* on our own, let us remember that the wisdom of the Church has been passed down through an unbroken series of St. Peter's successors. This takes the pressure off us to make any final argument, and we are never alone.

Second, as a tool to share with others, apologetics relies on the reality of Jesus' ministry. He was prefigured throughout the Old Testament and continues to dwell among us in society and in tabernacles around the world. Christ himself stressed the urgency of sharing the Gospel message in parables, such as in the Sermon on the Mount, where he said, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Mt 5:14-16).

Finally, I want to emphasize that sometimes the most effective way to defend our faith is to live it out in our own families and in society. When we bear the love of Christ Jesus to the world, he will call those who are searching for the truth to ask us questions about the Catholic Church. So, as you share this faith with those who do not believe or who are longing to "come home" to the Church, begin with a prayer in your hearts to the Holy Spirit to guide you in charity and humility. All good work, especially evangelization and witness to truth, should be credited to God alone who speaks through us.

“Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear” (1 Pt 3:15-16).

In Christ’s love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jacques Fabre-Jeune" with a small cross at the beginning and a flourish at the end.

Most Rev. Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS
Bishop of Charleston