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Pope authorizes granting of indulgences for Year of Faith events

by Francis X. Rocca by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — Catholics who participate in events connected with the 2012-2013 Year of Faith can receive a special indulgence, the Vatican said.

Pope Benedict XVI authorized the granting of a plenary, or full, indulgence in order to highlight the Year of Faith and encourage the "reading, or rather, the pious meditation on" the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, a Sept. 14 Vatican decree said.

The decree, which the Vatican released Oct. 5, was signed by Cardinal Manuel Monteiro de Castro, head of the Vatican tribunal that deals with indulgences and with matters related to the sacrament of penance.

An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for sins that have been forgiven.

Pope Benedict established the Year of Faith, "dedicated to the profession of the true faith and its correct interpretation," to run from Oct. 11, 2012 to Nov. 24, 2013. It begins on the 50th anniversary of the opening of Vatican II, which is also the 20th anniversary of the publication of the catechism.

The plenary indulgence is being offered to pilgrims who visit sacred shrines, to Catholics who participate in local events connected to the Year of Faith, and to those who may be too ill or otherwise prevented from physical participation.

It can be granted on behalf of the individual petitioner or on behalf of departed souls.

The decree said conditions for the special Year of Faith indulgence include the normal requirements set by the church for all plenary indulgences: that the person goes to confession, receives the Eucharist and

prays for the intentions of the pope.

The decree explained in detail some specific requirements for the plenary indulgence:

-- Those visiting basilicas, cathedrals, catacombs or other sacred sites in the form of a pilgrimage must participate in a liturgy, "or at least pause for an appropriate time in prayer and with pious meditations, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the profession of faith in any legitimate form, invocations of the Blessed Virgin Mary and, where appropriate, of the Holy Apostles or patron saints."

-- The Catholic faithful in any local church can obtain the indulgence by attending three sermons at parish missions or three lectures on Vatican II or the catechism; attending Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours on days designated by the local bishop for the Year of Faith; or visiting the place where they were baptized to renew their baptismal vows.

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-- Catholics who attend Mass celebrated by a bishop on the Year of Faith's last day, the feast of Christ the King, will also receive the indulgence, as will those impeded by sickness or other serious cause from attending the Mass, as long as they are truly repentant and pray while listening to the bishop bestow the indulgence via television or radio.

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