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Vatican's Year of Faith celebrations to resume in September

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

Vatican City — Vatican activities for the Year of Faith begin again in late September with an international meeting of catechists, followed in October by a Marian pilgrimage in the presence of the original statue of Our Lady of Fatima and a celebration of faith and family life.

The International Conference on Catechesis will bring together leaders of national and diocesan offices Sept. 26-28 for religious education to discuss theory and practice before they begin a two-day Year of Faith pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Peter and celebrate Mass Sept. 29 with Pope Francis.

October, traditionally the month of the rosary, will bring thousands of members of groups promoting Marian piety to the Vatican.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Portugal announced in early August that Pope Francis requested that the original statue of Our Lady of Fatima be brought to the Vatican for the celebration. It will be only the 11th time since the statue was made in 1920 that it has been removed from the Portuguese Marian shrine.

The seventh time it left Portugal was in 1984 when it was taken to the Vatican. After consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary during a liturgy in St. Peter's Square, Blessed John Paul II gave one of the bullets he had been shot with a year earlier to the bishop of Leiria-Fatima, who had the bullet placed into the statue's gold crown.

Pope Francis and the pilgrims will welcome the statue to St. Peter's Square during an evening prayer service Oct. 12; afterward, the statue will be taken to the Rome Shrine of Divine Love, where the Diocese of Rome plans an all-night vigil.

The statue and the pilgrims will return to St. Peter's Square on Oct. 13 for the recitation of the rosary and Mass with Pope Francis. In a press statement, the directors of the Fatima shrine said Pope Francis will consecrate the world to Mary during the event.

The sixth and final apparition of Mary to the three children in Fatima occurred Oct. 13, 1917.

In another Year of Faith event, Catholic families from around the world will gather in Rome's Piazza del Popolo and walk to St. Peter's Square for an Oct. 26 celebration of family life with Pope Francis.

The pope will celebrate Mass with the families Oct. 27 in St. Peter's Square.

The Year of Faith, convoked by retired Pope Benedict XVI to mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, will conclude Nov. 24.

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