

## APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY

### URBIS ET ORBIS

## DECREE

### **During the *Year of Faith* special acts of penance will be rewarded with the gift of Sacred Indulgences.**

On the day of the 50th anniversary of the solemn opening of the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, to which Blessed John XXIII “entrusted the principal task to guard and present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all people of good will” (John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum*, 11 October 1992: AAS 86 [1994] 113), the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI established the inauguration of a Year dedicated in particular to the profession of true faith and its correct interpretation, with the reading of, or rather, with devout meditation on the *Acts of the Council* and on the Articles of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published by Blessed John Paul II, 30 years after the opening of the Council, “in order that all the Christian faithful might better adhere to it, and to promote knowledge and application of it” (*ibid.* n. 114).

In the year of the Lord 1967, to commemorate the 19th centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul, a similar *Year of Faith* was proclaimed by the Servant of God Paul VI, “intended to show, by an authentic and sincere profession of the same faith, how much the essential content that for centuries has formed the heritage of all believers needs to be confirmed, understood and explored ever anew, so as to bear consistent witness in historical circumstances very different from those of the past” (Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, n. 4).

In our time of profound change to which humanity is subjected, the Holy Father Benedict XVI, by proclaiming this second *Year of Faith*, wishes to invite the People of God, whose universal Pastor he is, as well as his brother Bishops from all over the world “to join the Successor of Peter, during this time of spiritual grace that the Lord offers us, in recalling the precious gift of faith” (*ibid.*, n. 8).

All the faithful will be given “the opportunity to profess our faith in the Risen Lord... in our cathedrals and in the churches of the whole world; in our homes and among our families, so that everyone may feel a strong need to know better and to transmit to future generations the faith of all times. Religious communities as well as parish communities, and all ecclesial bodies old and new, are to find a way, during this *Year*, to make a public profession of the *Credo*” (*ibid.*).

In addition, all the faithful, individually and as a community, will be called to witness to their faith openly before others in the specific circumstances of their daily life: “the social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community” (cf. Declaration on Religious Freedom *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965: AAS 58 [1966], 932).

Since it is primarily a matter of developing a supreme degree of holiness of life — to the extent that it is possible on this earth — and hence of obtaining the highest possible degree of purity of soul, the important gift of Indulgences, which the Church, by virtue of the power conferred upon her by Christ, offers to all who, with the proper disposition, fulfil the special prescriptions for gaining them, will be of great usefulness. “With the Indulgence”, Paul VI taught, “the Church availing herself of her powers as minister of the Redemption brought about by Christ the Lord,

communicates to the faithful participation in this fullness of Christ in the Communion of Saints, providing them with abundant means to achieve salvation” (cf. *Apostolorum Limina*, 23 May 1974: AAS 66 [1974] 289). In this way is revealed the “treasure of the Church”, to which “the merits of the Blessed Mother of God and of all the elect, from the first righteous person to the last, add further” (Clement vi, Bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, 27 January 1343).

The Apostolic Penitentiary is charged with everything concerning the granting and use of Indulgences. To encourage the faithful to have a correct conception of Indulgences and to develop a devout desire to obtain them, at the request of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization and with attentive consideration of the Note with Pastoral Recommendations for the Year of Faith, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for gaining the gift of Indulgences during the Year of Faith, the Apostolic Penitentiary has established the following measures, issued in conformity with the wishes of the august Pontiff, so that the faithful may be further encouraged to know and love the Doctrine of the Catholic Church and obtain from it a greater abundance of spiritual fruit.

Throughout the Year of Faith — established from 11 October 2012 to 24 November 2013 — all individual members of the faithful who are truly repentant, have duly received the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion and who pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff may receive the *Plenary Indulgence* in remission of the temporal punishment for their sins, imparted through God’s mercy and applicable in suffrage to the souls of the deceased:

- a. every time they take part in at least three homilies preached or attend at least three lectures on the *Proceedings of the Second Vatican Council* and on the Articles of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, in any church or suitable place;
- b. every time they go as pilgrims to a Papal Basilica, a Christian catacomb, a cathedral church, a sacred place designated by the local Ordinary for the Year of Faith (for example, the Minor Basilicas and Shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to the Holy Apostles or to the Holy Patrons), and take part there in some sacred function or at least pause in recollection for a suitable length of time with devout meditation, concluding with the recitation of the *Our Father*, the *Profession of Faith* in any legitimate form, invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary or, depending on the case, to the Holy Apostles or Patrons;
- c. every time when, on the days determined by the local Ordinary for the Year of Faith (such as, for example, the Solemnities of the Lord and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Feasts of the Holy Apostles and Patrons and of the Chair of St Peter), in any sacred place, they take part in a solemn Eucharistic celebration or in the Liturgy of the Hours, adding the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form;
- d. a day freely chosen during the Year of Faith on which to make a devout visit to the baptistery or other place in which they received the sacrament of Baptism, if they renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form.

Diocesan or Eparchial Bishops and those who are legally equivalent to them, on the most appropriate day in this period, on the occasion of the principal celebration (for example, 24 November 2013, on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Universal King, with which the Year of Faith will end) will be able to impart the Papal Blessing with the Plenary Indulgence from which all the faithful who receive this Blessing devoutly may benefit.

Faithful who are truly repentant and are unable to take part in the solemn celebrations for serious reasons (such as, for example all the nuns who live in perpetually cloistered monasteries, anchorites and the hermits, prisoners, the elderly, the sick, and likewise those who, in hospital or in other places for treatment serve the sick permanently...), will gain the *Plenary Indulgence* on the same conditions, if, united in mind and spirit with the faithful present, especially at a moment when the words of the Supreme Pontiff or of the Diocesan Bishops are broadcast via the television or radio, they recite at home, or wherever their impediment obliges them to be (for example, in the monastery chapel, in hospital, in a clinic, in prison...), the *Our Father*, the Profession of faith in any legitimate form and other prayers in conformity with the objectives of the *Year of Faith*, offering up their suffering or the hardship in their lives.

In order that access to the sacrament of Reconciliation and the gaining of divine forgiveness through the power of the Keys may be pastorally facilitated, local Ordinaries are asked to grant faculties, limited to the internal forum, to canons and priests who will hear confession. The hearing of confession of the faithful will take place in cathedrals and churches designated for the *Year of Faith*, as specified for Eastern Rite faithful in can. 728 § 2 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches and, in the case of a possible reservation, those in can. 727, excluding, as is obvious, the cases considered in can. 728 § 1; for the faithful of the Latin Church, the faculties specified in can. 508 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law.

After warning the faithful of the gravity of sins to which a reservation or censure has been attached, Confessors will determine appropriate sacramental penances that will lead the faithful, as far as possible, to permanent repentance and, according to the nature of the case, will make them make reparation for any possible scandal and damage.

Lastly, the Penitentiary cordially asks Bishops, since they are in possession of the triple *munus* [office], to teach, to guide and to sanctify, to take pains to explain clearly the principles and measures proposed here for the sanctification of the faithful, taking into account in particular the circumstances of the place, culture and traditions. An appropriate catechesis for the temperament of each people will draw them, in a clearer and more lively way, and more firmly and deeply root in hearts, the desire for this unique gift, obtained by virtue of the Church's mediation.

This Decree is valid solely for the *Year of Faith*. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

*Given in Rome at the Seat of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 14 September 2012, on the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.*

**Manuel Card. Monteiro de Castro**  
*Major Penitentiary*

**Mons. Krzysztof Nykiel**  
*Regent*