

Vatican

Plenary indulgence announced for anniversary of the Apostle to the Gentiles

Vatican City, May 12, 2008 / 11:11 am (CNA).- On Saturday a decree from the Vatican stated that Benedict XVI will grant the faithful plenary indulgence for the occasion of the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of St. Paul. The gift of indulgences, states the document, assist in the attainment of purification and honor the great saint.

The Plenary Indulgence will be valid throughout the Pauline Year which will run from June 28, 2008 to June 29, 2009. Plenary indulgences, if all the conditions are fulfilled, remove all temporal punishments that afflict people as a result of their sins. The scriptural roots of indulgences are found in Matthew 16.

The decree states that the Holy Father is granting the indulgences to provide the faithful with “spiritual treasures for their own sanctification” in honor of St. Paul.

"In fact, the gift of indulgences which the Roman Pontiff offers the Universal Church, facilitates the way to interior purification which, while rendering honor to the Blessed Apostle Paul, exalts supernatural life in the hearts of the faithful and spurs them on ... to produce fruits of good works."

The means to obtain the plenary indulgence are as follows:

The indulgences are available to "All Christian faithful - truly repentant, duly purified by the Sacrament of Penance and restored with Holy Communion." The faithful must “undertake a pious visit in the form of a pilgrimage to the papal basilica of St. Paul on Rome's Via Ostiense and pray in accordance with the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff” to be “granted and imparted Plenary Indulgence for the temporal punishment of their sins.

Each person may obtain an indulgence for themselves or for anyone who is deceased “as many times as the aforementioned acts are undertaken; it remains the case, however, that Plenary Indulgence may be obtained only once a day.”

"In order that the prayers pronounced on these holy visits may lead and draw the souls of the faithful to a more intense veneration of the memory of St. Paul, the following conditions are laid down: the faithful, apart from pronouncing their own prayers before the altar of the Blessed Sacrament, ... must go to the altar of the Confession and pray the 'Our Father' and the 'Creed', adding pious invocations in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Paul; and such acts of devotion must remain closely linked to the memory of the Prince of the Apostles St. Peter."

The document mentions those who may have difficulty traveling to the basilica can receive the indulgence by participating in a celebration for St. Paul. "Christian faithful from the various local Churches, under the usual conditions (sacramental Confession, Eucharistic communion, prayer in keeping with the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff) and completely unattached to any form of sin, may still obtain the Plenary Indulgence if they participate devotedly in a religious

function or in a pious exercise held publicly in honor of the Apostle of the Gentiles: on the days of the solemn opening and closing of the Pauline Year in any place of worship; on other days determined by the local ordinary, in holy places named for St. Paul and, for the good of the faithful, in other places designated by the ordinary."

The decree concludes by addressing Catholics who are suffering from sickness or are unable to fulfill the necessary requirements for a legitimate reason. These people "may still receive a plenary indulgence even if they are unable to leave their homes. In these situations, the faithful must fulfill three conditions: While striving to refrain from sin, the person must "spiritually unite themselves to a Jubilee celebration in honor of St. Paul, offering their prayers and suffering to God for the unity of Christians."