

Guidelines for celebrating Year of Faith revealed



The Vatican issued guidelines Jan. 5 for how the Church at all levels should celebrate the Year of Faith, which starts in October 2012.

A summary of the guideline document, which was produced by the Congregation for the Doctrine, was released on Jan. 5, but the full text will be published Saturday, Jan. 7.

The introduction to the guidelines explains that the Year of Faith is “intended to contribute to a renewed conversion to the Lord Jesus and to the rediscovery of faith, so that the members of the Church will be credible and joy-filled witnesses to the Risen Lord, capable of leading those many people who are seeking it to the door of faith.”

The Year of Faith was announced by Pope Benedict XVI last year in his apostolic letter “Porta Fidei.” It will begin on October 11, 2012, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. It also coincides with the 20th anniversary of the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The year will end on November 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ Universal King.

The document from the Vatican’s doctrinal congregation offers a sketch of what should take place at every level of the Church during the Year of Faith.

At the universal level, the Pope will engage in various events, including the solemn opening of the Year of Faith, the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, and World Youth Day 2013 in Brazil. There will also be “various ecumenical initiatives” aimed at “the restoration of unity among all Christians,” including “a solemn ecumenical celebration in which all of the baptized will reaffirm their faith in Christ.”

Bishops’ conferences will focus on increasing the “quality of catechesis.” Some of the efforts in this area will involve examining “local catechisms and various catechetical supplements in use in the particular Churches,” in order “to ensure their complete conformity with the Catechism of the Catholic Church.”

The Vatican body also hopes that the bishops' conferences will use the media to evangelize, such as "television and radio transmissions, films and publications focusing on the faith, its principles and content."

At the level of dioceses, the Year of Faith is expected to provide an occasion for "renewed creative dialogue between faith and reason," among both the academic and artistic communities. It should also be a year for "penitential celebrations" in which Catholics can "ask for God's forgiveness, especially for sins against faith."

In local parishes, the Vatican would like to see a focus on the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, since in it the "mystery of faith and source of the new evangelization, the faith of the Church is proclaimed, celebrated and strengthened."

Religious institutes, new communities and ecclesial movements are also expected to take their lead in celebrating the Year from the pastoral guidelines.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith hopes that the Year of Faith will make the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism "more widely and deeply known" throughout the Church.

"From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Benedict XVI has worked decisively for a correct understanding of the Council," says the document, "rejecting as erroneous the so-called 'hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture' and promoting what he himself has termed 'the 'hermeneutic of reform,' of renewal in continuity.'"

The Vatican's doctrinal congregation says that their pastoral recommendations are aimed at helping people encounter Christ and grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith. At the same time, it adds, the guidelines are not meant to rule out "other initiatives which the Holy Spirit will inspire among Pastors and faithful in various parts of the world."

The document concludes by announcing the creation of a secretariat to help coordinate the Year of Faith. It will be established within the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization.

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