

PLENARY INDULGENCE FOR BI-MILLENNIUM OF ST. PAUL

Pope Benedict XVI is granting the faithful Plenary Indulgence for the occasion of the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of the Apostle Paul. The Plenary Indulgence will be valid throughout the Pauline Year which is due to run from 28 June 2008 to 29 June 2009.

"With the imminence of the liturgical Solemnity of the Prince of the Apostles", says a Holy See decree, "the Supreme Pontiff ... wishes, in good time, to provide for the faithful with spiritual treasures for their own sanctification, that they may renew and reinforce ... their purpose of supernatural salvation from the moment of the First Vespers of the aforementioned Solemnity, principally in honour of the Apostle of the Gentiles the two-thousandth anniversary of whose earthly birth is now approaching. In fact, the gift of indulgences which the Roman Pontiff offers the Universal Church, facilitates the way to interior purification which, while rendering honour 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:

"All Christian faithful - truly repentant, duly purified by the Sacrament of Penance and restored with Holy Communion - who 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, are granted and imparted Plenary Indulgence for the temporal punishment of their sins, once they have obtained sacramental remission and forgiveness for their shortcomings.

"Plenary Indulgence may be gained by the Christian faithful, either for themselves or for the 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 honour 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".

"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 honour 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 document concludes by recalling how the faithful who, "through sickness or other legitimate or important reason", are unable to leave their homes, may still obtain the Plenary Indulgence if, with the soul completely removed from attachment to any form of sin and with the intention of observing, as soon as they can, the usual three conditions, "spiritually unite themselves to a Jubilee celebration in honour of St. Paul, offering their prayers and suffering to God for the unity of Christians".