

PLENARY INDULGENCE FOR THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF LOURDES

VATICAN CITY, DEC 5, 2007 (VIS) - According to a decree made public today and signed by Cardinal James Francis Stafford and Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, O.F.M. Conv., respectively penitentiary major and regent of the Apostolic Penitentiary, Benedict XVI will grant the faithful Plenary Indulgence for the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Lourdes.

"The forthcoming 150th anniversary of the day in which Mary Most Holy, revealing herself as the Immaculate Conception to Bernadette Soubirous, wished a shrine to be erected and venerated in the place known as 'Massabielle' in the town of Lourdes," the decree reads, "calls to mind the innumerable series of prodigies through which the supernatural life of souls and the health of bodies has drawn great advantage from the omnipotent goodness of God."

"Indeed, by venerating the Blessed Virgin Mary in the place 'upon which her feet trod,' the faithful draw nourishment from the Holy Sacraments, expressing the firm intention to lead in the future Christian lives of increasing faithfulness" and they "achieve a vivid vivid perception of the significance of the Church. ... Indeed the succession, over time, of marvelous events ... enables us to glimpse the joint operation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Church: in the year 1854 the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was defined," and "in the year 1858 Mary Most Holy showed herself to ... Bernadette Soubirous using the words of the dogmatic definition: 'I am the Immaculate Conception.'

"In order to draw increased fruits of renewed sanctity from this holy anniversary," the decree adds, "the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI has decided to concede the gift of Plenary Indulgence" to the faithful under the usual conditions (sacramental Confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer in keeping with the intentions of the Holy Father), in the following way:

A) "If between December 8, 2007 and December 8, 2008 they visit, preferably in the order suggested: (1) the parish baptistery used for the Baptism of Bernadette, (2) the Soubirous family home, known as the 'cachot,' (3) the Grotto of Massabielle, (4) the chapel of the hospice where Bernadette received First Communion, and on each occasion they pause for an appropriate length of time in prayer and with pious meditations, concluding with the recital of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith, ... and the jubilee prayer or other Marian invocation."

B) "If between February 2, 2008 ... and February 11, 2008, Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes and 150th anniversary of the apparition, they visit, in any church, grotto or decorous place, the blessed image of that same Virgin of Lourdes, solemnly exposed for public veneration, and before the image participate in a pious exercise of Marian devotion, or at least pause for an appropriate space of time in prayer and with pious meditations, concluding with the recital of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith, ... and the invocation of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

The decree concludes by recalling that faithful who "through sickness, old age or other legitimate 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, on the days February 2 to 11, 2008, in their hearts they spiritually visit the above-mentioned places and recite those prayers, trustingly offering to God, through Mary, the sickness and discomforts of their lives."