

Pope Benedict XVI's Missionary Intention for November:
That the pilgrim Church on earth may shine as a light to the nations.

Happy Thanksgiving from Una Fides

America's celebration of Thanksgiving as a national holiday gives eloquent witness to the fact that our nation was founded upon a profound belief and trust in God.

The first Thanksgiving holiday proclamation was given to us in 1789 by President George Washington.

Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor; and Whereas both Houses of Congress have, by their joint committee, requested me to "recommend to the people of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer, to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity

peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness."

In 1863 President Abraham Lincoln officially established Thanksgiving as a national holiday, to be celebrated each November.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that God should be solemnly, reverently and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people.

This is both our history and our heritage. We pray this Thanksgiving that all will come to once again recognize that every gift and blessing comes to us from Almighty God.

Indulge Me

No, we're not talking about an extra helping of pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving, we are talking about indulgences. Preparing us for the many indulgences being offered in the Year of Faith, Dr. Edward Mulholland of Benedictine College deepens our understanding of these treasures of the Church in the following article which appeared in the Gregorian Institute.

I landed in Rome the night before my doctoral defense. It was scheduled for the afternoon. The smart thing to do was to sleep in and clear my mind. But it was the Jubilee Year 2000, so I did the next most logical thing: visit three patriarchal basilicas before lunch. The reason? A plenary indulgence was offered for such visits and I figured I could use all the heavenly help I could get. A clear soul beats a clear mind.

A friend raised an eyebrow when I told him that story. "Do you really believe that God is going to wipe your slate clean just because you walked through a doorway?" I found it interesting coming from a guy who showed up at the Wal-Mart at 4 a.m. the day after Thanksgiving to get a flat screen TV at 75% off.

Why show up on Black Friday? Because you believe that Wal-Mart's advertising is not a lie. You really do believe that if you beat the rush to the electronics section before 6 am they'll actually give you the TV for that price.

The Apostolic Penitentiary (no, not the Vatican jail, but the office in Rome that deals with penance) published a list of special indulgences for the Year of Faith. During the Year of Faith, you can read from the documents of Vatican II a few times and hit your soul's reset button.

I will not explain the Church's doctrine on indulgences here. There are great explanations of it available. The basic teaching is that even when we are forgiven, there is still temporal punishment due for our sins, and that by doing penance here on earth, we won't have to suffer it in Purgatory.

Suffice it to say that God can forgive our sins, but there is still work to do before we can be purified and heaven-ready. Our Father loves us, and I guess we clean up good, but, like when I give my 5 year old a bath, I try to teach him to do some of the scrubbing himself. Some days I'm in a hurry and I just grab the shower head and hose him down.

We will have lots of chances for that during the Year of Faith. We can merit and offer (for our own soul or for someone who has passed away) a plenary indulgence in many ways. The normal conditions for earning an indulgence are to receive communion the same day, to have been to confession recently and to pray for the intentions of the Holy Father (traditionally, an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be).^{*} There is also the condition of having no attachment to sin.

Don't let scruples beat you down, though. There is a difference between your attachment to sin and sin's attachment to you. You may fight a habit that you haven't kicked yet, like waving your hand wildly to try to shake loose a piece of paper that got stuck to it. In that case, the paper's stuck to you, but you're not stuck to it, because you're trying to get rid of it. That's what God is looking for: the pure intention of being His and His alone.

Now why do I care about indulgences? I want to go to heaven, and I know I have a tendency to stain my soul with sin in the valley of tears, so if God is offering to scrub me up with little extra effort of my part, I'm in.

People who balk at that don't seem to believe in the Church. Jesus clearly gave his apostles authority to forgive sins. (John 20:23) The bishops are successors of the apostles and the Holy Father is Christ's Vicar on Earth.

So, if you believe the CEO of Wal-Mart can set the prices on their products, if you believe the president has power to pardon criminals and commute their sentences, then you should understand the concept of indulgences. Yes, our sentence in Purgatory is commuted. Getting to heaven is being made, in a sense, less costly to us. You have to believe that the Church has that power.

In the Year of Faith, we renew our faith in God and our faith in His Church. Ridding ourselves of sin helps purify our faith. The Church is as holy as her members (and since Christ is the head, we have a huge head start), so we owe it to each other to strive for holiness.

Indulgences, whatever abuses may have existed in the past, are things that help us get to heaven. The economy of salvation never has a recession, but it still can throw a sale. Since what we are asked to do to gain an indulgence (a prayer, pilgrimage, spiritual reading) is something that points us towards heaven anyway, I think they make more sense than fighting the crowds on Black Friday. These will be available all year long. (Gregorian Institute Update, 2012)

^{*}In the Jubilee Year 2000, the Apostolic Penitentiary relaxed the norm in

going to confession, receiving Holy Communion and praying for the Pope "to several days (about 20) before and after the indulgenced act." Gifts of the Indulgence, General remarks, 5 EWTN reports that this norm remains in effect.

Plenary Indulgences for the Year of Faith

Each time the faithful attend at least three sermons during the Holy Missions, or at least three lessons on the Acts of the Council or the articles of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in church or any other suitable location.

Each time they visit, in the course of a pilgrimage, a papal basilica, a Christian catacomb, a cathedral church or a holy site designated by the local ordinary for the Year of Faith (for example, minor basilicas and shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Apostles or patron saints), and there participate in a sacred celebration, or at least remain for a congruous period of time in prayer and pious meditation, concluding with the recitation of the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary and, depending on the circumstances, to the Holy Apostles and patron saints.

Each time that, on the days designated by the local ordinary for the Year of Faith, in any sacred place, they participate in a solemn celebration of the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours, adding thereto the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form.

On any day they choose, during the Year of Faith, if they make a pious visit to the baptistery, or other place in which they received the Sacrament of Baptism, and there renew their baptismal promises in any legitimate form.

Matthew Kelly is coming to Orlando!!

Mark Your Calendar!

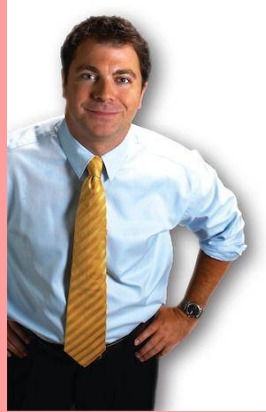
February 23, 2013 - 9AM - 1:30PM

Holy Family Catholic Church

He will lead a morning of reflection:

Living Every Day with Passion & Purpose

For more information please visit:
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