

Vatican announces indulgences for World Youth Day

VATICAN CITY – To help encourage prayers for a spiritually fruitful World Youth Day in Madrid, the Vatican announced Aug. 11 that Pope Benedict XVI had authorized a special indulgence for anyone who, “with a contrite spirit,” raises a “prayer to God, the Holy Spirit, so that young people are drawn to charity and given the strength to proclaim the Gospel with their life,” a Vatican decree said.

The decree included the offer of a plenary, or full, indulgence to all the young people who will gather with the pope in Madrid. World Youth Day runs Aug. 16-21 in the Spanish capital; the pope arrives Aug. 18.

An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for sins that have been forgiven. The conditions necessary for receiving a plenary indulgence include having recently gone to confession, receiving the Eucharist and offering prayers for the intentions of the pope.

Pope Benedict decreed that World Youth Day participants can receive a plenary indulgence if they participate with prayerful devotion in any sacred event or “pious exercise” as well as attend the closing Mass, receive the sacraments of reconciliation and the Eucharist and offer prayers for the pope’s intentions.

The decree, signed by Cardinal Fortunato Baldelli, head of the Vatican office that deals with indulgences, said a partial indulgence also is available to all Catholics who are contrite for their sins and offer their prayers with the pope for young Catholics.

The cardinal also asked priests around the world to make themselves available to hear the confessions of those who want the indulgence and to encourage public prayers for the success of World Youth Day.

In central Madrid’s Buen Retiro Park, 200 portable confessionals will be set up for confessions that begin Aug. 14. The pope will hear confessions at the park Aug. 20.