

Vatican to issue recommendations for celebrating Year of Faith

VATICAN CITY - In an effort to help Catholics have a better and correct understanding of their faith and become authentic witnesses to Christ, the Vatican is issuing a list of pastoral recommendations for celebrating the Year of Faith.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will release a “note” Jan. 7 outlining the aims of the special year and ways bishops, dioceses, parishes and communities can promote “the truth of the faith,” the congregation said in a written statement Jan. 5.

It also announced that within the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization, a secretariat would be set up to suggest and coordinate different initiatives. The new department will be responsible for launching a special website for sharing useful information on the Year of Faith.

Pope Benedict XVI wanted the Year of Faith, which runs from Oct. 11, 2012, to Nov. 24, 2013, to help the church focus its attention on “Jesus Christ and the beauty of having faith in him,” it said.

“The church is well aware of the problems facing the faith” and recognizes that without a revitalization of faith rooted in a personal encounter with Jesus, “then all other reforms will remain ineffective,” it said citing the pope’s Dec. 22 address to the Roman Curia.

The year is meant 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 statement said.

Critical to renewing one’s faith and being a credible witness is having a firm and correct understanding of church teaching, it said.

Because the year’s start, Oct. 11, coincides with the anniversaries of the opening of

the Second Vatican Council in 1962 and the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992, it would be an auspicious occasion to make the work of the council and the catechism “more widely and deeply known,” it said.

The congregation said the pope “has worked decisively for a correct understanding of the council, rejecting as erroneous the so-called ‘hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture’ and promoting what he himself has termed the ‘hermeneutic of reform,’ of renewal in continuity” with the church and tradition.

The catechism “is an integral part of that ‘renewal in continuity’” by embracing the old and traditional while expressing it “in a new way, in order to respond to the questions of our times,” it said.

The note will offer pastoral recommendations aimed at aiding “both the encounter with Christ through authentic witnesses to faith, and the ever-greater understanding of its contents,” it said.

Among the initiatives will be various ecumenical events at the Vatican aimed at restoring unity among all Christians, including “a solemn ecumenical celebration in which all of the baptized will reaffirm their faith in Christ,” it said.

Some recommendations for bishops, dioceses and parishes include ensuring there be better quality catechetical materials that conform to church teaching; promoting Catholic principles and the significance of Vatican II in the mass media and art; hosting events that bring artists, academics and others together to renew dialogue between faith and reason; offering penitential celebrations; and putting a focus on liturgy, especially the Eucharist, it said.

The congregation said it wanted to promote the recommendations because the office’s “specific functions include not only safeguarding sound doctrine and correcting errors but also, and foremost, promoting the truth of the faith.”

The congregation’s note, drafted on the orders of Pope Benedict, was written in consultation with other Vatican offices and with the help of the Year of Faith preparatory committee. The committee, which operates under the auspices of the doctrinal congregation, includes U.S. Cardinals William J. Levada, congregation

prefect; Francis E. George of Chicago; and Canadian Cardinal Marc Ouellet, prefect of the Congregation for Bishops.

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