

Pope grants indulgence for novena prayer for Church in China

Tuesday, 13 May 2008

Hong Kong, May 14, 2008 / 05:20 pm (CNA).- Pope Benedict XVI has decreed an indulgence for Catholics in Hong Kong who join a novena to Our Lady, Help of Christians asking for special prayers for the Church in China.

The novena is a response to the Pope's call for May 24 to become a World Day for Prayer for the Church in China. He announced the day of prayer in his June 2007 letter to mainland Catholics and asked that it be dedicated to "the liturgical memorial of Our Lady, Help of Christians, who is venerated with great devotion at the Marian Shrine of Sheshan in Shanghai."

According to UCA News, the Pope offered the indulgence at the request of Cardinal Joseph Zen Ze-kiun, the Archbishop of Hong Kong. The indulgence is available to those who join in the diocese's May 15-23 novena. Those joining in activities marking the feast of Our Lady, Help of Christians on May 24 and the feast of Corpus Christi on May 25 are also eligible for the indulgence.

Cardinal Zen, writing in a message on the novena, said local Catholics are able to actively respond to the call for prayer "as part of the motherland," asking God to bless their motherland and asking the Blessed Virgin to protect the Church.

Seventeen Hong Kong churches dedicated to Mary are designated venues for the novena prayers and the celebrations of Our Lady, Help of Christians.

According to UCA News, the novena will begin with solemn prayer at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Diocesan Vicar General Father Dominic Chan, who is also a priest at the cathedral, said he would thank God the diocese is blessed with religious freedom.

Over the nine days of the novena, the designated churches will take turns hosting the daily prayers. Prayer sessions will include Eucharistic adoration and recitation of the rosary, while the May 24 and 25 celebrations will feature processions.

Writing in a May 9 notice, diocesan Chancellor Father Lawrence Lee Len said a Catholic must attend at least one of the special prayer functions to qualify for the indulgence. Citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, he said they must also make a sacramental confession, receive Communion and pray for the pope's intentions with a pure heart

The Catechism defines an indulgence as "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven."

Father Lee said Pope Benedict desires that the faithful strive for and practice the supernatural virtues of faith hope and charity, and strengthen their unity with the Pope.

Hong Kong's two bishops will also deliver talks about the Pope's letter to mainland Catholics.