

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

23 December 2008

ENHANCED GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION OF PAPAL CELEBRATIONS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

VATICAN CITY – This year, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, in collaboration the Vatican Television Center (CTV), will be offering global distribution of the broadcasts of the Holy Father's Christmas Midnight Mass, Christmas Day Message and Blessing "Urbi et Orbi" and the New Year's Day Mass for the World Day of Peace. In addition, the "Te Deum" end of the year thanksgiving liturgy is being made available to those requesting it (*broadcast times indicated below*). This year marks the first time the telecasts will have been offered around the world free of any downlink charges and for all television broadcasters.

Cardinal John P. Foley, Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, will be providing the English language commentary, marking his 25th year in doing so. Three language commentaries – in English, French and Spanish - are provided by the Vatican and then relayed on the satellite audio channels. On New Year's Day, Vatican Radio will provide these commentaries in addition to ones in Arabic, German, Italian and Portuguese via direct links with television outlets.

Television networks and national broadcasters will also have much easier access to the satellite feeds booked by the Vatican. Eight different satellites will be used, offering much improved coverage of Africa, Asia, Australia and Oceania. These new developments have been made possible due to use for the first time of Eurovision's *World Feed* service, which provides one of the world's largest global distribution platforms via satellite and fibre networks, reaching over one thousand broadcasters on their permanent network alone. The telecasts are available for downlink free of charge for both Eurovision members and non-members alike. Satellite feeds are also provided via two Intelsat satellites booked through Telespazio and via CTV's Europe and Americas coverage. Given that the broadcasts are now distributed widely and free of charge, a precise list of broadcasters retransmitting the celebrations is no longer possible, although much interest in them has been generated through direct contacts with the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

This Christmas marks the 34th year that the seasonal telecasts from the Vatican at Christmas and Easter have been made freely available for retransmission to local, national or international audiences. Satellite uplink fees for the world are covered by a grant from the Knights of Columbus - a Catholic men's fraternal society with members throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico and the Philippines.

The television coverage of the Christmas ceremonies in the Vatican are a coproduction of the Vatican Television Center (CTV) and Italy's public broadcaster, RAI. The international transmissions are coordinated by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications and CTV.

Background information for broadcasters can be found on this Pontifical Council's website **www.pccs.va** and clicking on "*Mondovisione*". For more information, please send a message to: telecast@pccs.va or visit www.pccs.va.

Wednesday, 24 December 2008

Christmas Eve

23:55 – 01:35 Rome time

Midnight Mass presided over by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Basilica

Thursday, 25 December 2008

Christmas Day

11:55 – 12:35 Rome time

Christmas Message and Blessing "Urbi et Orbi" of Pope Benedict XVI from St. Peter's Square

Wednesday, 31 December 2008

18:00 - 19:00 Rome time

First Vespers of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and "Te Deum" liturgy presided over by the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Basilica

Thursday, 1 January 2009

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

10:00 – 11:30 Rome time

Mass presided over by the Holy Father Benedict XVI in St. Peter's Basilica on the occasion of the 42nd World Day of Peace