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Dialogue With Nonbelievers to Kick Off Year of Faith

Courtyard of the Gentiles Event to Be Hosted in Assisi

VATICAN CITY, SEPT. 25, 2012 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- When Benedict XVI first proposed the Courtyard of the Gentiles project in 2009, he explained how Jesus wanted the Temple's court to be available for "people who know God, so to speak, only from afar; who are dissatisfied with their own gods, rites and myths; who desire the Pure and the Great, even if God remains for them the 'unknown God.'"

The Pontifical Council for Culture picked up the Pope's proposal and the first Courtyard event was held in January 2011.

Now, appropriately, the Year of Faith will be kicked off with an event in the line-up of the Courtyard activities: the "Atrium of St. Francis" on the theme of "God, the Unknown," to be held Oct. 5-6 in Assisi.

A press conference presenting the event was held this morning at the Vatican.

The Assisi meeting will have more than 40 speakers and will be opened by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano.

World entire

The program includes nine meetings in nine "atria" at various locations around the city of St. Francis.

Themes to be covered are:

- Work, business and responsibility
- Contemplation and meditation
- Inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue for peace
- Young people, between faith and nihilism

-- The cry of the earth

-- Art and faith

-- The cry of the poor, the world economic crisis and sustainable development

"In a second edition of his letter to the faithful, St. Francis addressed himself to 'all Christians, religious, clergy and laity, to men and women, to all inhabitants of the world entire,'" noted Fr. Giuseppe Piemontese, custodian of the Holy Convent of Assisi. "We are opening the 'Atrium of St. Francis' with great humility, and under the sign of that evangelical openness to others. Our hope is that the Courtyard of the Gentiles, in its call at Assisi, will be able to demonstrate the 'pure heart' and 'pure mind' to which St. Francis called us."

Two parallel events will accompany these two days at Assisi: the Courtyard of Children and the Courtyard of Narration.

Francis' Courtyard can be followed on Vatican Radio, which will cover various portions of the event live.

It will also be available via live streaming at www.H20.org, www.sanfrancesco.org, and www.cortiledeigentili.com.

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