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PRESS RELEASE OF THE VATICAN OBSERVATORY: CELEBRATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF ASTRONOMY IN VATICAN CITY

The Governorate of the Vatican City State and the Vatican Observatory are organizing a celebration of the International Year of Astronomy in Vatican City on 30 and 31 October.

The two-day celebration includes an address at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences by Prof. John Huchra of Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics and President of the American Astronomical Society with the title "From Galileo to Hubble: Astronomy in the 21st Century".

The program will also include a tour of the Tower of the Winds at the Vatican, built in 1582 at the time of the Gregorian Reform of the Calendar and first location of the Vatican Observatory; a visit to the Vatican Secret Archives, the Sistine Chapel, and the exhibition ASTRUM 2009 at the Vatican Museums. On display in this exhibition there are 130 items, including Galileo Galilei's original handwritten notes detailing his observations of the Moon, and his publication "Starry Messenger" from 1610.

The highlight of the day is a private audience with Pope Benedict XVI who will address an international group of renowned astronomers. A group of friends and benefactors of the Vatican Observatory Foundation will also participate in the papal audience. The Foundation generously supports the work of the Observatory in the United States.

On 31 October, a tour of the new headquarters of the Vatican Observatory in the Vatican Gardens at Castel Gandolfo is planned. Pope Benedict XVI officially inaugurated the Vatican Observatory's new headquarters on 16 September.

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