

Thoughts in the Time of COVID-19--#4, March 26, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

I want to share with you today news of the possibility of sharing a Plenary Indulgence by praying for those suffering from COVID-19, the novel corona virus and of a special blessing "*Urbi et Orbi*" (to the City [of Rome] and the World) that Pope Francis will give tomorrow, March 27, 2020.

Plenary Indulgences

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, an indulgence is "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven." An indulgence is an ancient practice of prayer and penance for the remission of the temporal punishment a person is due for sins that have been forgiven. In Catholic teaching, a person can draw on the merits of Jesus and the saints to claim the indulgence for themselves or offer it on behalf of someone who has died.

During this difficult period when the whole world is preoccupied with the battle against the Corona Virus, the Holy See earlier this week invited Catholics the world over to take part in a spiritual aid to those serving on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Apostolic Penitentiary granted special new Plenary Indulgences to the faithful.

The decree states, "So that all those who suffer because of COVID-19, precisely in the mystery of this suffering, may rediscover 'the same redemptive suffering of Christ,' this Apostolic Penitentiary...trusting in the word of Christ the Lord and considering with a spirit of faith the epidemic currently underway, to be lived in a spirit of personal conversion, grants the gift of Indulgences in accordance with the following disposition."

The decree goes on, "The gift of special Indulgences is granted to the faithful suffering from COVID-19 disease, commonly known as Corona Virus, as well as to health care workers, family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them."

It has a specific mention of "Health care workers, family members and all those who, following the example of the Good Samaritan, exposing themselves to the risk of contagion, care for the sick of Corona Virus according to the words of the divine Redeemer: 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends' (John 15.13), will obtain the same gift of the plenary indulgence under the same conditions."

Thus the following may receive this specially granted plenary indulgence:

- The faithful suffering from the coronavirus,
- Health care workers (giving help to those with the virus), and

- Family members and all those who in any capacity, including through prayer, care for them (so this means anyone praying for those suffering from or assisting Corona Virus patients).

How does a person receive the Plenary Indulgence? You must, with a spirit detached from any sin, unite yourself spiritually through the media to **one** of the following:

- the celebration of the Holy Mass;
- recitation of the Rosary;
- a pious practice such as the Way of the Cross (or other forms of devotion);
- recitation of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and "a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity towards their brothers and sisters."

Also, you must perform **all** of the following as soon as possible: (considered the three usual conditions for a plenary indulgence): Sacramental Confession, Eucharistic Communion, Pray for the Pope's intentions.

***Urbi et Orbi* Blessing for the City and the World**

In response to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Pope Francis said he will give an extraordinary blessing "*urbi et orbi*" (to the city and the world) at 6 p.m. Rome time March 27 (1:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time in Eastern Ontario).

The formal blessing — usually given only immediately after a new pope's election and on Christmas and Easter — carries with it a plenary indulgence for all who follow by television, internet or radio, are sorry for their sins, recite a few prescribed prayers and promise to go to confession and to receive the Eucharist as soon as possible.

After reciting the Angelus prayer March 22 from the library of the Apostolic Palace, Pope Francis announced his plans for the special blessing, which, he said, would be given in an "empty" St. Peter's Square. "We will listen to the Word of God, raise our prayer (and) adore the Blessed Sacrament," he said. "At the end, I will give the benediction '*urbi et orbi*,' to which will be connected the possibility of receiving a plenary indulgence."

Pope Francis said, "To the pandemic of the virus we want to respond with the universality of prayer, compassion and tenderness." "Let's stay united. Let us make those who are alone and tested feel our closeness," as well as doctors, nurses, other healthcare workers and volunteers. He also expressed concern for "authorities who have to take strong measures for our good" and the police and soldiers maintaining public order and enforcing the lockdown."

God bless you.

✠ Terrence