



APOSTOLIC PENITENTIARY

THE GIFT OF THE INDULGENCE

The celebration of the Jubilee Year is not only an extraordinary occasion for benefiting from the great gift of indulgences which the Lord gives us through the Church, but it is also a fitting opportunity to recall the catechesis on indulgences to the attention of the faithful. The Apostolic Penitentiary is therefore publishing this sacred notice for the benefit of all who will be making Jubilee visits.

General Remarks On Indulgences

1. This is how an indulgence is defined in the *Code of Canon Law* (can. 992) and in the [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*](#) (n. 1471): "An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints".
2. In general, the gaining of indulgences requires certain prescribed *conditions* (below, nn. 3, 4), and the performance of certain prescribed *works* (nn. 8, 9, 10 indicate those specific to the Holy Year).
3. To gain indulgences, whether plenary or partial, it is necessary that the faithful be in the *state of grace* at least at the time the indulgenced work is completed.
4. A *plenary indulgence* can be gained only *once a day*. In order to obtain it, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace:
 - have the interior disposition of *complete detachment from sin, even venial sin*;
 - *have sacramentally confessed* their sins;
 - *receive the Holy Eucharist* (it is certainly better to receive it while participating in Holy Mass, but for the indulgence only Holy Communion is required);
 - *pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff*.
5. It is appropriate, but not necessary, that the sacramental Confession and especially Holy Communion and the prayer for the Pope's intentions take place on the same day that the indulgenced work is performed; but it is sufficient that these sacred rites and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20) before or after the indulgenced act. Prayer for the Pope's intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary" are suggested. One sacramental Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father's intentions are required for each plenary indulgence.

6. For the sake of those legitimately impeded, *confessors* can commute both the work prescribed and the conditions required (except, obviously, detachment from even venial sin).
7. Indulgences *can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased*, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

Specific Aspects Of The Jubilee Year

Having fulfilled the necessary *conditions* in nn. 3-4, the faithful may gain the Jubilee indulgence by performing one of the following *works*, listed here below in three categories:

8. *Works of piety or religion*

— Either make a *pious pilgrimage* to a Jubilee shrine or place (for Rome: one of the four Patriarchal Basilicas — St Peter, St John Lateran, St Mary Major, St Paul —, or to the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, the Basilica of St Laurence in Campo Verano, the Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love or one of the Christian Catacombs, and participate there in Holy Mass or another liturgical celebration (Lauds or Vespers) or some pious exercise (the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, the recitation of the *Akathistos* Hymn, etc.);

— or make a *pious visit*, as a group or individually, to one of these same Jubilee places, and there spend some time in Eucharistic adoration and pious meditations, ending with the "Our Father", the profession of faith in any approved form and prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

9. *Works of mercy or charity*

— Either *visit* for a suitable time *their brothers or sisters in need or in difficulty* (the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly living alone, the handicapped, etc.), as if making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them;

— or *support* by a significant contribution *works of a religious or social nature* (for the benefit of abandoned children, young people in trouble, the elderly in need, foreigners in various countries seeking better living conditions);

— or *devote* a suitable part of *personal free time to activities benefiting the community* or other similar forms of personal sacrifice.

10. *Acts of penance*

For at least one whole day

— Either *abstain from unnecessary consumption* (smoking, alcohol, etc.);

— or *fast*,

— or *abstain from meat* (or other food according to the specific norms of the Bishops' Conferences), and *donate a proportionate sum of money to the poor*.

Given in Rome at the offices of the Apostolic Penitentiary, 29 January 2000.

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Major Penitentiary

Bishop Luigi De Magistris
Titular Bishop of Nova
Regent