

## A Special Grace for the Church and the World

When we as Catholics begin and end our prayers we sign ourselves with the cross reminding us of our baptism into the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. It is by his cross that we are redeemed from sin and reconciled with God. At the conclusion of our sacramental liturgies the bishop, priest, or deacon imparts a blessing as a sign of God's grace given to those who have celebrated the sacrament.

A particularly solemn blessing given by the pope is the *Urbi et Orbi* blessing. This Friday, March 27, at 6:00 pm (Rome time), Pope Francis will impart this blessing as part of his ongoing prayer for the end of the spread of COVID-19.

Already the Holy Father has granted indulgences to those who are living with this illness, they dying, those who care for them. "The plenary indulgence can also be obtained by the faithful if they at least 'recite 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, with the will to fulfill the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy father's intentions), as soon as possible.' (vaticannews.va, Mar. 20/20)"

Vaticannews.va reported today (Mar. 23/20) "that on the following Friday, 27 March, he will preside over a moment of prayer on the *sagrato* of St Peter's Basilica, the platform at the top of the steps immediately in front of the façade of the Church. 'I invite everyone to participate spiritually through the means of communication,' he said."

"The ceremony will consist in readings from the Scriptures, prayers of supplication, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; and will conclude with Pope Francis giving the *Urbi et orbi* Blessing, with the possibility of gaining a plenary indulgence for all those who listen to it live through the various forms of communication. The blessing "to the City [of Rome] and to the World" is normally only given on Christmas and Easter."