



Celebrating the birth of Christ – Francis of Assisi at Greccio (1223)

Safeguarding the spirit of the Nativity scene becomes a healthy immersion in the presence of God manifested in the small, sometimes trivial and repetitive, everyday things. – Pope Francis (2023)

Catholics Can Receive a Plenary Indulgence by Praying before a Nativity Scene

We share the following article from the *Catholic News Agency* by Francesca Pollio Fenton and Teresa Peterson.

This year, Catholics will be able to receive a plenary indulgence from Dec. 8, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to Feb. 2, 2024, the feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by praying before a Nativity scene in a Franciscan church.

Earlier this year, on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the faithful gathered at the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy, to honor the beloved Italian saint and celebrate the 800th anniversary of the approval of the Rule of St. Francis (1223) and the creation of the Nativity scene in Greccio.

As part of the celebration of this Franciscan Centenary, the Conference of the Franciscan Family asked Pope Francis for the approval of this plenary indulgence.

The conference wrote: “In order to promote the spiritual renewal of the faithful and increase the life of grace, we ask that the faithful receive a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions from 8 December 2023, the solemnity of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to 2 February 2024, feast of the Presentation in the Temple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by visiting the churches run by Franciscan families throughout the world and stopping in prayer in front of the Nativity scenes set up there.”

The Apostolic Penitentiary welcomed the request, allowing the faithful to receive this indulgence under the usual conditions.

Those who are sick or unable to participate physically can obtain the indulgence by offering their sufferings up to the Lord or by “carrying out practices of piety.”

What is a plenary indulgence?

A plenary indulgence is a grace granted by the Catholic Church through the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary, and all the saints to remove the temporal punishment due to sin. The indulgence

cleanses a person of all temporal punishment due to sin. However, it must always be accompanied by a full detachment from sin.

Conditions to receive a plenary indulgence in all cases:

1. Detachment from all sin, even venial.
2. Sacramental confession, holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the pope.

Sacramental confession and receiving the Eucharist can happen up to about 20 days before or after the act performed to receive a plenary indulgence.

It is appropriate that Communion and the prayer take place on the same day that the work is completed. One sacramental confession is sufficient for several plenary indulgences. However, for each plenary indulgence one wishes to receive, a separate reception of the Eucharist and a separate prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father are required.

Source:

Fenton, Francesca Pollio and Peterson, Teresa. (2023, November 27). Catholics Can Receive a Plenary Indulgence by Praying before a Nativity Scene. *Catholic News Agency*

There are two churches in the Diocese of Arlington entrusted to the care of Franciscans:

- **St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church**, 18825 Fuller Heights Road, Triangle. (See parish web site for more information).
- **St. Joseph Catholic Church**, 750 Peachtree Street, Herndon. (See parish web site for more information. The nativity will be set up on the evening of December 24th).