



Remission of Sins

Understanding indulgences

The Catholic Church teaches that an indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven (CCC 1471). This doctrine is rooted in the belief that sin has both eternal and temporal consequences. While the sacrament of Confession absolves a person from eternal punishment, temporal punishment remains due to the effects of sin. Indulgences, granted by the Church through the authority of Christ, help to remove or reduce this punishment.

The Church has clarified that indulgences are not a means of buying forgiveness or salvation. They presuppose true repentance

and the desire for holiness. The abuses of indulgences in the Middle Ages, which led to misunderstandings, were corrected in the 25th session of the Council of Trent, which reaffirmed their legitimate role in the Church's spiritual life.

Indulgences are a rich spiritual practice in the Catholic Church, offering the faithful a means to seek purification and assist souls in purgatory. It encourages deeper conversion and acts of charity, ultimately leading the faithful closer to God.

Sources: *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Indulgentiarum Doctrinae, The Gift of the Indulgence, Council of Trent Session 25, Manual of Indulgences*

Pilgrims gather to walk through The Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica. Photo by Angelica Corona

PLENARY INDULGENCE

A plenary indulgence removes all temporal punishment due to sin. To gain a plenary indulgence, one must fulfill the required conditions fully and can be obtained once per day.

To obtain a plenary indulgence, the faithful must fulfill the following conditions:

- Be free from mortal sin at that time
- Have complete detachment from sin
- Go to confession (about 20 days before or after)
- Receive Holy Communion
- Pray for the Pope's Intentions
- Perform the Indulged Work:
 - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for at least 30 minutes.
 - Reading the Bible for at least 30 minutes with devotion.
 - Praying the Rosary in a church, family, or religious community
 - Making the Way of the Cross in a properly designated place.
 - Receiving the Papal blessing

PARTIAL INDULGENCE

A partial indulgence removes part of the temporal punishment due to sin. The extent of the remission depends on the act performed and the disposition of the person receiving it, and can be obtained multiple times a day.

Ways to Gain a Partial Indulgence

A partial indulgence is granted for various pious actions, including but not limited to:

- Making a devout Sign of the Cross while praying.
- Reciting certain approved prayers, such as the "Anima Christi" or "Come, Holy Spirit."
- Offering up daily sufferings with patience.
- Performing an act of charity for someone in need.
- Teaching or spreading the faith with devotion.