

## The Holy Souls and Indulgences

The month of November is dedicated to the Holy Souls. On all days from November 1 through November 8 inclusive, a plenary indulgence, applicable only to the Poor Souls, is granted to those who visit a cemetery and pray, even if only mentally, for the departed. Partial indulgences are granted to those who recite Lauds or Vespers of the Office of the Dead, and to those who recite the prayer “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domini, et lux perpetua luceat eis. Requiescant in pace” (“Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace”).

To appreciate the benefit of an indulgence, one must recognize that every sin, because it is an injustice against God, merits punishment. Moreover, one must understand that the forgiveness of sin is one thing but the removal of punishment is something else. Mortal sin and the eternal punishment due to it are removed by a sacramental confession, however, one must still undergo temporal punishment (a punishment that lasts for a time). The sorrow of the penitent does not remove all temporal punishment. This punishment must be endured either in this life or in purgatory.

An indulgence, however, is one way that the temporal punishment due to forgiven sin is removed. Three things are necessary for an indulgence: (1) the one granting it must have legitimate authority; (2) there must be a just cause for granting it; (3) the one acquiring the indulgence must be in the state of grace and subject to the one granting the indulgence. Indulgences may be gained by the living for themselves or applied to the souls in purgatory but they cannot be applied to other living persons. Indulgences are called plenary if they remove all temporal punishment and partial if they remove only some part of it. A plenary indulgence can be acquired only once in the course of the day but a partial indulgence may be acquired more than once in a day. To gain an indulgence for oneself one must be baptized, in the state of grace at least at the completion of the prescribed work and subject to the one granting the indulgence. He must also have at least a general intention of gaining them and must perform the works enjoined at the time and in the manner prescribed.

To acquire a plenary indulgence it is necessary to perform the work to which the indulgence is attached and to fulfill the following three conditions: sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff. It is further required that all attachment to sin, even venial sin, be absent. If the latter disposition is in any way less than perfect or if the prescribed three conditions are not fulfilled, the indulgence will be partial only.

The three conditions may be fulfilled several days before or after the performance of the prescribed work; it is, however, fitting that Communion be received and the prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff be said on the same day the work is performed. The condition of sacramental confession may be fulfilled within a period of about twenty days before or after the work is performed.

A single sacramental confession suffices for gaining several plenary indulgences; but Communion must be received and prayer for the intention of the Pope must be recited for the gaining of each plenary indulgence. The condition for praying for the Pope is fully satisfied by reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary; nevertheless, each one is free to recite any other prayer according to his piety and devotion.

Some works to which are attached plenary indulgences are: a visit to the Blessed Sacrament which lasts for half an hour, the Stations of the Cross, recitation of five decades of the Rosary, and reading Scripture for one half hour.

In Christ,  
Fr. Jeff Fasching