

What is an indulgence?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (n. 1471) explains:

“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. An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin. Indulgences may be applied to the living or the dead.”

General conditions necessary to obtain a plenary indulgence are:

- Sacramental confession. A single sacramental confession suffices for gaining several plenary indulgences; but Communion must be received and prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff must be recited for the gaining of each plenary indulgence.
- Eucharistic Communion.
- Prayer for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff. The condition of praying for the intention of the Sovereign Pontiff 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.
- 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.