

Special Plenary Indulgence Issued by the Vatican

What is a Plenary Indulgence?

Explaining a plenary indulgence requires clarifying what sin is and what it does. Two things occur when we sin:

- #1. We incur guilt.
- #2. Our soul undergoes deformity.

Sacramental Confession removes the guilt (#1). However, the deformity (#2) remains. A person's heart is changed when it sins: sin deforms it. A deformed heart must be reformed in God's image and likeness before entering Heaven. Heaven is, by definition, the realm of the saints. No non-saints exist in Heaven; every soul in Heaven is a saint.

Herein is the difficulty. Of those people you have known who have already died, how many were you certain left the world as saints? Most know very few, if any. Yet we are told in the Letter to the Hebrews that no one can see the Lord without possessing holiness (Hebrews 12:14). That is why Purgatory exists: it is a state of purgation whereby a soul is purified through suffering so that it may enter God's presence in Heaven. That the saved may need purification—and are aided by the prayers of the living—is confirmed in 2 Maccabees 12:45: "He made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin."

A plenary indulgence is an act by the Pope whereby he uses his authority as the successor of Saint Peter to declare the removal of one's accrued purgation to be spent in Purgatory (an instance of the papal "power of the keys" described in Matthew 16:18-19). A Catholic who gains a plenary indulgence receives a blank slate in terms of Purgatory up to the moment of attaining it.

The Conditions to Receive the Plenary Indulgence

1. *Venerate the relics of St. Jude.*

There is no set way this needs to occur. Inside the Church where the relics are displayed, or at least someone on the grounds where they are present, say a prayer of your choosing (a formal prayer—such as an Our Father—or one made up by you) or make an act of veneration (e.g., touching the glass of the display case or making the Sign of the Cross). Please see the next section for those who cannot physically be present.

2. *Pray for the Pope.*

Reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary satisfies this condition.

3. *Receive the Sacrament of Confession within twenty days of visiting the relics.*

4. *Receive Holy Communion within the same twenty days while free from grave sin.*

5. *Resolve to end all relationships with sin, even venial (i.e., non-mortal) sin.*

This condition is by far the most difficult and requires explaining. It entails making the decision that you will never sin again. This does not mean you lose the indulgence if you sin again. Once gained, an indulgence cannot be lost. However, it requires the decision in the heart to remove any ongoing relationship or dependency with sin. Examining the following examples of sins that often escape our attention will help illustrate this point.

- Lying (including “white” lies).
- Theft (including copyright theft).
- The use of blasphemy (using the Lord’s name or referring to what is holy irreverently) or accepting it.
- The use of contraception.
- Holding a “pro-choice” view towards pre-born babies (e.g., tolerating abortion within one’s heart) and refusing to give it the moral importance it deserves (e.g., at the polling booth).

For Those for Whom Visiting the Relic is Not Possible Due to Serious Inconvenience

6. Persons of old age, the sick, and all who are unable to leave their home for a serious reason (e.g., travel distance) may likewise gain the plenary indulgence after fulfilling condition #5 above and conditions #2-4 “as soon as possible” and fulfilling the additional condition of “joining themselves spiritually to Saint Jude’s holy pilgrimage and offering their prayers, sufferings, and inconveniences to our merciful God.”

May One Obtain a Plenary Indulgence on Behalf of Someone Else?

A plenary indulgence may be obtained for oneself, offered for the soul of someone already deceased (or for the dead in general), but it cannot be applied to another still living.

How Often May One Obtain a Plenary Indulgence?

Once a day.