

In this Jubilee Year, the faithful are able to obtain a Plenary Indulgence by carrying out certain acts which are explained in the General Decree issued by Bishop Patrick Neary. This decree was included as an insert to the December 29, 2024 One In Faith Area Catholic Community bulletin and can be found at <https://stcdio.org/jubilee-2025-pilgrims-of-hope/>. Below is an explanation of what an indulgence is. All are highly encouraged to take advantage of receiving these special graces.



## What is an indulgence?

By Jenna Marie Cooper, OSV News

Q: Please explain what an indulgence is and how it can reduce or eliminate the time a soul must spend in purgatory.

A: Indulgences are perhaps one of the more misunderstood parts of Catholic practice. But indulgences are deeply rooted in several key Catholic theological concepts, such as the nature of purgatory, the Church’s authority, the spiritual power of prayer and sacrifice and the communion of saints.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives us a quick working definition of an indulgence when it states: “Through indulgences the faithful can obtain the remission of temporal punishment resulting from sin for themselves and also for the souls in Purgatory.” (CCC, No. 1498)

Canon 992 of the Code of Canon Law further tells us: “A member of Christ’s faithful who is properly disposed and who fulfils certain specific conditions, may gain an indulgence by the help of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints.”

Breaking this down into more practical terms, an indulgence is a spiritual benefit attached to certain pious acts specified by the Holy Father — such as, for example, visiting a designated pilgrimage site during a Jubilee Year which can eliminate (in the case of a “plenary indulgence”) or reduce (with a “partial indulgence”) the amount of time a soul spends in purgatory.

In addition to devoutly completing the pious act in question, the one seeking to earn a plenary indulgence must also: **1. Pray for the pope’s intentions; 2. Make a good confession and receive Holy Communion close to the time of earning the indulgence; and, 3. Be sincerely repentant of their sins, to the point of no longer having any sense of attachment to sin.**

While the process of earning an indulgence is relatively straightforward, the spiritual mechanics of how and why indulgences work can be a bit more subtle.

First of all, it’s important to keep in mind that souls in purgatory are all destined for heaven, and thus that they have already repented of and been forgiven for their sins. We also need to understand that, strictly speaking, purgatory is a state outside of linear time as we experience it on earth. So even though we speak of purgatory as a time of “temporal punishment,” this does not mean that purgatory is akin to a jail sentence with indulgences being like a sort of parole.

Recalling the reminder of the Catechism of the Catholic Church that “every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death” (CCC, No. 1472), we can more accurately understand purgatory as a phase of spiritual purification to prepare souls still affected by the spiritual consequences of their sins to enter eventually into the full presence of God in heaven.

Just as our prayers and sacrifices can help us and others grow closer to God in this life, the Church teaches that we can help the souls in purgatory move farther along on their spiritual journey even after their deaths. While our simple prayers can always help the souls in purgatory, indulgences are an especially powerful means of providing this kind of spiritual assistance.

Indulgences work because we believe that many of the Church’s saints already prayed, sacrificed and patiently suffered enough during their earthly lives to have already have been purified enough to enter heaven; and that all their additional good deeds on top of what was needed for their own salvation created a kind of “surplus” of grace which the catechism refers to as “the Church’s treasury.” (CCC, No. 1476)

Because the Holy Father, as the successor to St. Peter, shares in St. Peter’s power to “bind and loose” (Matthew 16:19), the pope therefore has the power to distribute the extra grace in the Church’s treasury to souls that need it. Indulgences are essentially the means by which the pope distributes these spiritual goods.

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News.

# National Eucharist Revival

## Year 3—Year of Mission

### Pillar 1—Eucharistic Encounter



We have entered the last phase of the National Eucharistic Revival, the Year of Mission. This next phase of the Revival invites us to go out and share the love of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist to transform the world! This phase is organized into 4 pillars. The First Pillar is Eucharistic Encounter, encouraging missionary disciples to encounter Christ frequently through the Eucharist. Below are some ways the faithful are invited to encounter Christ. The other three pillars will be shared in future bulletins.

- ◆ Commit to praying the Eucharistic Gospel Reflection Process each week (see below).
- ◆ Be open to encountering Christ in Mass, in prayer, and in worship.
- ◆ Rediscover “the sense of adoration in silence.”
- ◆ Open your heart and mind daily to Christ in his Word.
- ◆ Be open to encountering Christ in all people, especially in the least, the last, and the lost.
- ◆ Ask Jesus if the apostolic activity you are about to undertake—or have already begun—is truly what he calls you to do, being receptive to his voice, and embracing his call with a humble and joyful spirit.
- ◆ Embrace your relationship with Jesus as the foundation of your identity and mission.

The Year of Mission Playbook which can be found at <https://www.eucharisticrevival.org/year-of-mission>.

## Eucharistic Gospel Reflection Process

**Take:** Prayerfully read the Gospel for the coming Sunday. Notice what word or phrase “cuts to the heart” (Acts 2:37) as you listened to the Gospel. What word carries within it God’s presence for you?

**Bless:** Consider how this word/phrase reveals God’s goodness, invites you to deeper conversion, or informs or illuminates a missionary moment you’ve experienced recently. Share the word/phrase and your connection/reflection.

**Break:** As you reflect on this passage and your experience, how do you sense God inviting you to be “bread, broken for others” as you live this Eucharistic life united to Jesus, the Bread of Life? Share how you feel called to live this truth.

**Give:** Share a resolution based on your reflection and offer a brief prayer asking the Holy Spirit to strengthen you to act on it. Resolve to make a renewed gift of self for the life of the world.

Conclusion: Eucharistic Revival Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you give us your flesh and blood for the life of the world, and you desire that all people come to the Supper of the Sacrifice of the Lamb. Renew in your Church the truth, beauty, and goodness contained in the Most Blessed Eucharist.

Jesus living in the Eucharist, come and live in me.

Jesus healing in the Eucharist, come and heal me.

Jesus sacrificing yourself in the Eucharist, come and suffer in me.

Jesus rising in the Eucharist, come and rise to new life in me.

Jesus loving in the Eucharist, come and love in me.

Lord Jesus Christ, through the paschal mystery of your death and resurrection made present in every Holy Mass, pour out your healing love on your Church and on our world. Grant that as we lift you up during this time of Eucharistic Revival, your Holy Spirit may draw all people to join us at this Banquet of Life. You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of the Eucharist, Pray for us.