



HOW TO GAIN A PLENARY INDULGENCE ON DIVINE MERCY SUNDAY

By

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Divine Mercy Sunday

The Sunday after Easter Sunday is called “Second Sunday of Easter”. Pope John Paul II, “moved by the consideration of the Father of Mercy”, willed that the Second Sunday of Easter be dedicated to recalling with special devotion God’s gifts of grace and gave the Sunday after Easter the name “Divine Mercy Sunday”. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Decree *Misericors et miseritor*, 5th May 2000).

What is an Indulgence?

As defined in the *Code of Canon Law* (can. 992) and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (n. 1471): “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”.

In general, the gaining of indulgences requires certain *prescribed conditions* and the performance of certain prescribed works.

To gain indulgences, whether plenary or partial, one must be a Catholic, not excommunicated or in schism. It is necessary that the faithful be in the *state of grace* at least at the time the indulgenced work is completed.

An indulgence is either partial or plenary. While partial indulgence remits only part of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, plenary indulgence effects full remission of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has been forgiven.

A *plenary indulgence* can be gained only *once a day*. In order to obtain it, the faithful must, in addition to being in the state of grace:

- perform the indulgenced work;
- have the interior disposition of *complete detachment from sin, even venial sin*;
- *have sacramentally confessed* their sins;
- *receive the Holy Eucharist* (it is certainly better to receive it while participating in Holy Mass, but for the indulgence only Holy Communion is required);
- *pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff*.

It is appropriate, but not necessary, that the sacramental Confession and especially Holy Communion and the prayer for the Pope's intentions take place on the same day that the indulgenced work is performed; but it is sufficient that these sacred rites and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20) before or after the indulgenced act. Prayer for the Pope's intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an "Our Father", a "Hail Mary" and a "Glory Be" are suggested. One sacramental Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father's intentions are required for each plenary indulgence.

For the sake of those legitimately impeded, *confessors* can commute both the work prescribed and the conditions required (except, obviously, detachment from even venial sin).

Indulgences *can always be applied either to oneself or to the souls of the deceased*, but they cannot be applied to other persons living on earth.

Even though we can only obtain one plenary indulgence a day, if you perform the required actions for other plenary indulgences on the same day, you can still obtain multiple partial indulgences.

On 29 June 2002, the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See promulgated a decree creating new indulgences that may be gained by the faithful in connection with the celebration of Divine Mercy Sunday. The decree grants a plenary indulgence to those who comply with all the conditions established, and the partial indulgence to those who incompletely fulfill the conditions. This was to ensure that the faithful would observe Divine Mercy Sunday with intense devotion.

Three Conditions for the Divine Mercy Sunday Plenary Indulgence

As stated in The Decree of Indulgence dated 29th June 2002, the Supreme Pontiff (Pope John Paul II), motivated by an ardent desire to foster in Christians devotion to Divine Mercy as much as possible in the hope of offering great spiritual fruit to the faithful, in the Audience granted on 13th June 2002, to those Responsible for the Apostolic Penitentiary, granted the following Indulgences:

a plenary indulgence, granted under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer for the intentions of Supreme Pontiff) to the faithful who, on the Second Sunday of Easter or Divine Mercy Sunday, in any church or chapel, in a spirit that is completely detached from the affection for a sin, even a venial sin, take part in the prayers and devotions held in honour of Divine Mercy, or who, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed or reserved in the tabernacle, recite the Our Father and the Creed, adding a devout prayer to the merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. Merciful Jesus, I trust in you!);

A partial indulgence, granted to the faithful who, at least with a contrite heart, pray to the merciful Lord Jesus a legitimately approved invocation.

For those who cannot go to church or are seriously ill, the Decree states as follows:

In addition, sailors working on the vast expanse of the sea; the countless brothers and sisters, whom the disasters of war, political events, local violence and other such causes have been driven out of their homeland; the sick and those who nurse them, and all who for a just cause cannot leave their homes or who carry out an activity for the community which cannot be postponed, may obtain a plenary indulgence on Divine Mercy Sunday, if totally detesting any sin, as has been said before, and with the intention of fulfilling as soon as possible the three usual conditions, will recite the Our Father and the Creed before a devout image of Our Merciful Lord Jesus and, in addition, pray a devout invocation to the Merciful Lord Jesus (e.g. Merciful Jesus, I trust in you).

If it is impossible that people do even this, on the same day they may obtain the Plenary Indulgence if with a spiritual intention they are united with those carrying out the prescribed practice for obtaining the Indulgence in the usual way and offer to the Merciful Lord a prayer and the sufferings of their illness and the difficulties of their lives, with the resolution to accomplish as soon as possible the three conditions prescribed to obtain the plenary indulgence.

As advised by Archbishop Luigi De Magistris (Major Pro-Penitentiary) and Fr. Gianfranco Girotti, O.F.M. Conv. (Regent), who are both signatories to the Decree on Divine Mercy Sunday Indulgence,

Priests who exercise pastoral ministry, especially parish priests, should inform the faithful in the most suitable way of the Church's salutary provision. They should promptly and generously be willing to hear their confessions. On Divine Mercy Sunday, after celebrating Mass or Vespers, or during devotions in honour of Divine Mercy, with the dignity that is in accord with the rite, they should lead the recitation of the prayers that have been given above. Finally, since "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5:7), when they instruct their people, priests should gently encourage the faithful to practise works of charity or mercy as often as they can, following the example of, and in obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ, as is listed for the second general concession of indulgence in the "Enchiridion Indulgentiarum".

During the Lenten season in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, doing penance for our sins out of pure love of God, forgiving those who have offended us from the bottom of our hearts, fasting, performing spiritual and corporal works of mercy and almsgiving combined with daily prayers, especially the Rosary and Divine Mercy prayers, will dispose us more readily to gaining a Plenary Indulgence on Divine Mercy Sunday.