

Indulgences attached to the Year of St Joseph...

What is an indulgence?

Even after being reconciled with God, we still must endure the “temporal punishment” of sin (suffering and negative effects of our sins). We must therefore strive to purify ourselves and make amends by growing in charity and performing works of penance: fasting, prayer, and almsgiving. Those who die in friendship with Christ, yet have not been purified on earth, endure their purification in purgatory. As St. Paul says: “If any man’s work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3.15).

However, the Church - from a sort of “treasury” of merits (those of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and all the saints) - can grant indulgences to certain members of the faithful. When a member of the Church receives an indulgence, it releases them from the temporal punishment of sin. Some indulgences are *plenary*, meaning that they take away *all* the temporal punishment. If you receive a plenary indulgence: you will not have to endure purgatory for your past sins.

How can the Pope do this?

First, because Pope Francis is the successor of St. Peter, who was given “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” and the power to bind and release from sin (Matt. 16.19).

Second, because we belong to the communion of saints. We are mystically united with Christ and the saints in one Body, and therefore can benefit from them.

How do I receive a plenary indulgence?

- † One must have proper dispositions: ie, faith, love of God, contrition, trust in Christ, at least a general intention to receive an indulgence, and no attachment to sin.
- † Perform a specified work (see below).
- † Receive the sacrament of Penance (confession): may be done a few days before or even after the work.
- † Receive Holy Communion: strongly recommended to be done on the day of the work.
- † Pray for the intention of the Holy Father: strongly recommended to be done on the day of the work. One Our Father and one Hail Mary is enough.

You can apply the indulgence to yourself, or to a soul in purgatory.

You may receive up to one plenary indulgence a day. One sacramental confession can suffice for multiple indulgences.

What must I do to receive a plenary indulgence during the Year of St. Joseph?

Pope Francis has given us many different works we can perform to receive plenary indulgences this year. Each bullet point indicates a different way to gain a plenary indulgence.

- † Meditate for 30 minutes on the Our Father.
- † Participate in a spiritual retreat that includes a meditation on St. Joseph.
- † Follow the example of St. Joseph by performing one of the spiritual or corporal works of mercy.
- † Recite the Holy Rosary with your family or with your fiancée (if you are engaged). This will help your family be more like the Holy Family.
- † Entrust your day’s activities to St. Joseph, and ask him to pray for those seeking work and that the work of everyone will be more dignified.
- † Pray the Litany of St. Joseph for persecuted Christians.
- † Recite an approved prayer in honour of St. Joseph on certain days: the Solemnity of St. Joseph (March 19th), St. Joseph the Worker (May 1st), any Wednesday, and the 19th day of each month.