



PLENARY INDULGENCE FOR THE YEAR OF SAINT JOSEPH

The decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary made on December 8, 2020, announcing the decision of Pope Francis to celebrate this special Year of Saint Joseph in honor of the Guardian of the Redeemer through December 21, 2021 stated:

“the faithful will have the opportunity to commit themselves “with prayer and good works, to obtain, with the help of St. Joseph, head of the Heavenly Family of Nazareth, comfort and relief from the serious human and social tribulations that besiege the contemporary world today.” (*Church Grants Plenary Indulgence for the Year of St. Joseph*, Adapted from the Vatican News article, December 8, 2020, Vatican City.)

THEOLOGY OF INDULGENCE

A traditional aspect of any Jubilee Year is the granting of the Jubilee indulgence. Although, not a Jubilee Year, the Special Year of Saint Joseph has been decreed as a special year in which the faithful can be granted a Plenary Indulgence. By definition, an indulgence is linked to jubilee themes of release, reconciliation and forgiveness of sins.

The very first Holy Year in 1300 possessed a serious penitential character where the faithful made pilgrimage and made a full confession of sins. The jubilee year indulgence was understood by Christians as the Old Testament Jewish traditions of the themes of release, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They were focused on the great redemption won by Christ and now available to all for the remission of sins. Over the centuries the great indulgence of the jubilee year developed and included pilgrimage, penance, confession of sins, and receiving Communion.

This pardon of sin, first of all, comes through the Church as a gift from God, through the power to forgive sins granted by Jesus Himself (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:22-23). This sacramental power of forgiveness of sins is present in the Church through the power of the Holy Spirit and a gift of God for release, forgiveness, and healing.

Once sin has been forgiven or pardoned, there is still a rupture or a disorderedness in the human person's relationship with God. A deep interior renewal of the person is still needed. This deep journey of conversion is a process that continues throughout the Christian life; recognition of sin, contrition, repentance, forgiveness, and ongoing personal renewal and healing. An indulgence is meant to re-order one's relationship with God and also to repair the defects of the disorder. ("Indulgences and the Jubilee Year 2000" - Aurelie A. Hagstrom, NCCB Subcommittee) 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 and the dead. [*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Number 1471. (Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution, "Indulgentiarum Doctrina.")]

Conditions for the Plenary Indulgence for the Year of Saint Joseph

The usual conditions to receive a plenary indulgence:

- 1.** Celebrate Sacramental Confession (going to Confession within 20 days *before* or within 20 days *after* the indulgence is sought). A person should be of the spirit that is sincerely and willfully detached from any sin, mortal and venial.
- 2.** Receive Holy Communion while participating fully, actively, and consciously at Mass.
- 3.** Pray for Pope's needs and intentions: The Creed, Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be.

Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Holy See made provision that persons who are currently unable to go to Mass or confession because of public health restrictions may defer reception of those two sacraments until they are able to do so. Those who are sick, suffering, or homebound may also receive the plenary indulgence as much as they are able and by offering their sorrows and sufferings to God through Saint Joseph, consoler of the sick and patron saint for receiving a good death.

Special opportunities indicated by the Apostolic Penitentiary for the Plenary Indulgence:

- ❖ Meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on Saint Joseph
- ❖ Perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, inspired by the life and example of Saint Joseph
- ❖ Pray the rosary together as a family, or an engaged or married couple, modeling the virtues of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph
- ❖ Dedicate with confidence their daily work to the protection of Saint Joseph the Worker, including the efforts of those who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking more dignified work
- ❖ Devoutly recite the Litany of Saint Joseph or another suitable prayer in each liturgical tradition (*Akathistos* to St. Joseph, Byzantine), especially for the intentions of persecuted Catholics in the Church and around the world, and for all the relief of all Christians who suffer persecution in the world
- ❖ Devoutly recite another approved prayer to Saint Joseph on various feasts of Saint Joseph: March 19 (his solemnity), May 1 (St. Joseph the Worker), or St. Joseph Sunday (according to the Byzantine tradition), or on the 19th day of each month, or each Wednesday, traditionally dedicated to honor his memory with pious devotions

Making a pilgrimage to a local designated site to satisfy the normal conditions is encouraged.

The local designated pilgrimage sites in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown will be:

Saint Joseph Church, Bellwood
Saint Joseph Church, Renovo
Saint Joseph the Worker Church, Williamsburg
Saint Joseph Mission Church at Hart's Sleeping Place, Carrolltown

Schedules for prayer at the Churches as well as additional prayer opportunities will be published by the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, March 19, 2021.

