

Reparation for Sin and Indulgences

Q. 211. Must we still suffer for our sins in other ways even after they are forgiven?

We must atone for our sins even after they are forgiven, either in Purgatory in the next life or by acts of penance in this life.

Sacred Scripture

Strive... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. *Hebrews 12:14*

“Bear fruits that befit repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” *Luke 3:8-9*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1472 To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church, it is necessary to understand that sin has a *double consequence*. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.¹

Q. 212. What is an indulgence?

An indulgence is the Church’s special intercession with God for the remission of temporal punishment due to sin which has already been forgiven.

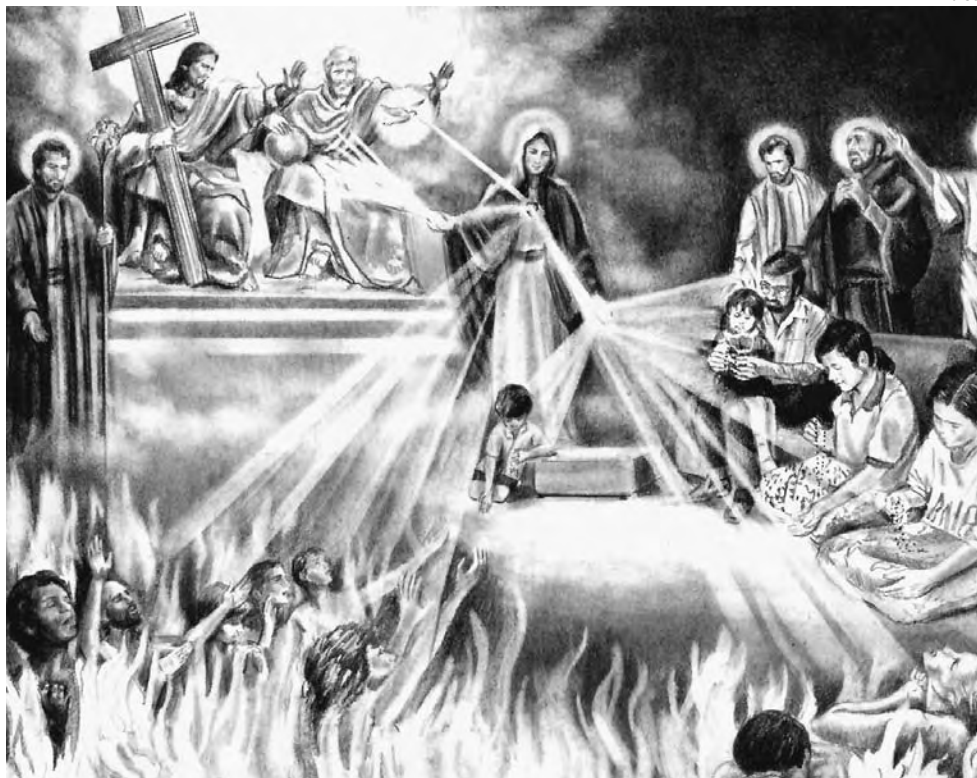
Catechism of the Catholic Church

1471 The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance.

“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.”¹

“An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.”² The faithful can gain indulgences for themselves or apply them to the dead.³

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.



Q. 213. How does the Church have the power to grant indulgences?

Making use of her power to minister the redemption of Christ, the Church intervenes to dispense the treasure of the superabundant merits of Christ and the saints, to the faithful who are rightly disposed, for the remission of temporal punishment due their sins.

Sacred Scripture

“You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” *Matthew 16:18-19*

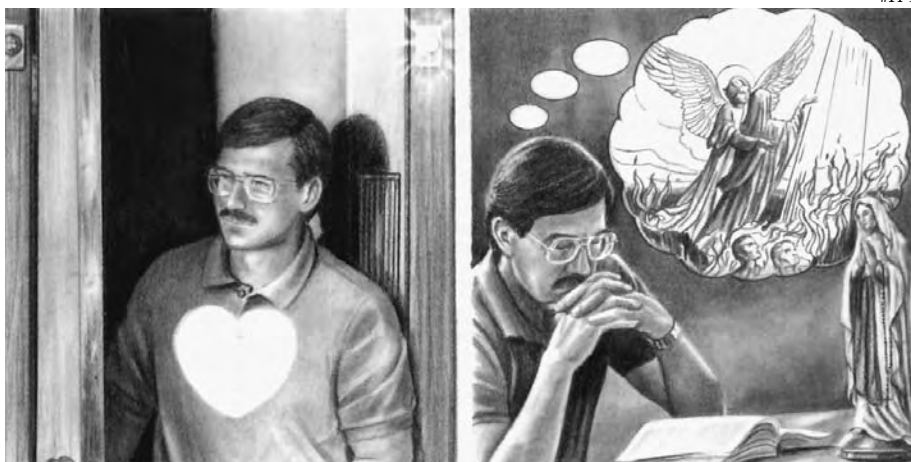
But if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.
1 John 2:1-2

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1478 An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by virtue of the power of binding and loosing granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity.¹

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

#14-1



Q. 214. What are the conditions for gaining an indulgence?

The conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence are:

- a. One must be baptized and in the state of grace.
- b. One must receive Holy Communion each time a plenary indulgence is sought.
- c. One must go to confession several days preceding or following the indulgenced action. A single sacramental confession suffices for gaining several plenary indulgences.
- d. One must have a disposition of mind and heart which totally excludes all attachment to sin, even venial sin, otherwise one can only gain a partial indulgence.
- e. One must pray for the intentions of the Holy Father, the Pope, preferably one “Our Father” and one “Hail Mary,” however, any other pious prayer may be substituted.
- f. One must have at least a general intention to gain a plenary indulgence.
- g. One must perform the indulgenced work. (For example, at least a half hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament; or the recitation of the Rosary with your family or others, or privately before the Blessed Sacrament; or at least a half hour of pious reading of Sacred Scripture; or walking the Stations of the Cross in a church or with a properly erected display of the stations.)

The conditions for gaining a partial indulgence are:

- a. One must be baptized and in the state of grace.
- b. One must be inwardly contrite [have at least a striving intention to cut oneself off from all attachment to sin].

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

- c. One must have a general intention to gain an indulgence.
- d. One must fulfill the action prescribed in one of the three general grants of indulgences (see question 217).

Q. 215. May we gain an indulgence for the benefit of the departed?

Yes, all indulgences, without exception, may be offered by way of intercession for the departed. Although we may gain indulgences for ourselves, we may not offer them for any other living person.



Sacred Scripture

“For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” *2 Maccabees 12:44-45*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1479 Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can help them is to obtain indulgences for them, so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.

Q. 216. What is the difference between a plenary and a partial indulgence?

A plenary indulgence is a complete release from the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven. Only one plenary indulgence may be obtained each day.

A partial indulgence removes part of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven. Several partial indulgences may be obtained each day.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Q. 215. Paragraph 1479.

Q. 216. Paragraphs 216-217, 1471, 1473.

Q. 217. What are some examples of partial indulgences?

The following are examples of actions that meet one of the conditions for gaining a partial indulgence (also see question 214):

- (a) If one of the faithful, while doing his duty and bearing the burdens of life, lifts his heart to God with humble trust, adding, if only mentally, a pious invocation; or (b) if he, with a spirit of faith and a merciful heart, puts himself and his goods at the service of his brethren in need; or (c) if he, in a spirit of penitence, spontaneously, and with sacrifice, deprives himself of some lawful goods.

**Sacred Scripture**

“For almsgiving delivers from death, and it will purge away every sin. Those who perform deeds of charity and of righteousness will have fulness of life; but those who commit sin are the enemies of their own lives. *Tobit 12:9-10*

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” *Matthew 25:35-36, 40*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1473 The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the “old man” and to put on the “new man.”¹

Papal Documents

In granting an indulgence the Church uses its power as minister of Christ’s Redemption...It intervenes with its authority to dispense to the faithful, provided they have the right dispositions, the treasury of satisfaction which Christ and the saints won for the remission of temporal punishment.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

The authorities of the Church have two aims in granting indulgences. The first is to help the faithful to expiate their sins. The second is to encourage them to do works of piety, penitence and charity, particularly those which lead to growth in faith and which help the common good. Further, if the faithful offer indulgences by way of intercession for the dead they cultivate charity in an excellent way. While they raise their minds in heaven they bring a wiser order into the things of this world.” *Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences*, (Paul VI, 1967), 8.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Who has the power to grant indulgences?
2. What can you do to help the souls in Purgatory?
3. Invite your family or friends to obtain indulgences for themselves or someone who has passed away. Thank the Lord for this great gift of His mercy.



#C17-21

Chapter Summary Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, move our hearts to faith, hope, love, and real sorrow for our sins; move our wills to a firm resolve to mend our ways, especially by the frequent use of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. The sight of Your five wounds fills us with compassion. By Your Cross and Passion bring us to the victory of Your glorious Resurrection, O Savior of the world.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of Righteousness, open our eyes and turn us from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that we may receive the forgiveness of our sins and a place among those made holy by faith in Your Cross.

By Your Cross, Lord Jesus Christ, the Church is redeemed, sanctified, and raised on high. Protect us, Lord, Who take refuge in Your Sacred Heart. In the sacrament of Penance, bathe us in Your Precious Blood and in the water of life which gushed from Your wounded side. We ask this in Your most powerful and holy Name. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 61

See Appendix A for more references.

Q. 211. Must we still suffer for our sins in other ways even after they are forgiven?

On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering, John Paul II, sect. 12, 21-22;

On the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World, John Paul II, sect. 45;

On Human Work, John Paul II, sect. 27;

On Reconciliation and Penance, John Paul II, sect. 31;

Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20.

Q. 213. How does the Church have the power to grant indulgences?

Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 7-10.

Q. 217. What are some examples of partial indulgences?

On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum, John Paul II, sect. 57-59;

On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 3;

Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 21;

Splendor of Truth, John Paul II, sect. 19, 89.



Thought Provokers

Please see Appendix C for the answers.

- Q. 211: Many non-Catholics and even some Catholics have difficulty with the idea of sinful human beings atoning for their sins, as well as for the sins of others. (Atonement for sins is also called reparation for sins or doing penance.) Exactly what is atonement or reparation for sins?
- Q. 212: May we merit or earn indulgences either for ourselves or for the souls in Purgatory?
- Q. 213: Can we gain indulgences for those living on earth, other than for ourselves?
- Q. 214: May the Poor Souls in Purgatory pray for us?
- Q. 215: Can the Saints in Heaven help the Poor Souls in Purgatory?
- Q. 216: When the Church speaks of temporal punishment due to forgiven sins, what is meant?
- Q. 217: If we wish to gain (not merit) an indulgence for a departed friend or relative, how do we know for sure that he or she is in Purgatory?
-