



Archdiocese of Winnipeg

Office of the Archbishop

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MEMORANDUM

To: All Parishes
All Clergy

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From: Archbishop Gagnon

Date: March 20, 2020

Re: The Holy See's Decree on granting Special Indulgences during the COVID- 19 Pandemic

Today the Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See issued a decree in response to the pastoral, spiritual and sacramental concerns for those affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Basically there are two items for our information. (cf. attached)

- 1) Plenary Indulgence: the decree grants a plenary indulgence to coronavirus patients quarantined by health authorities in hospitals and in their homes if "with a spirit detached from any sin, they unite spiritually through the media to the celebration of the Holy Mass or the recitation of the Holy Rosary or to the pious practice of the Way of the Cross or other forms of devotion or if at least they will recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, offering this trial in a spirit of faith in God and charity toward their brothers and sisters, with the will to fulfil the usual conditions [sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion and prayer according to the Holy Father's intentions as soon as is possible.]" (*According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church an indulgence is "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins where fault has already been forgiven. #1471. Indulgences are either partial or plenary depending on if they remove part or all of the temporal punishment due to sin.*)

The Plenary indulgence can also be obtained by the faithful, health care workers, family members and all those exposing themselves to the risk of contagion caring for the sick, under the same conditions stated above.

To help us understand what an indulgence means I reference my letter on the Year of Mercy in December, 2015 in which I explained: "Put simply, a Plenary Indulgence remits all of the temporal punishment due our sins after our sins have been forgiven. When we sin in a serious way, there remains lingering effects of our sins both on ourselves and on others including an attachment to the things of this world over our attachment to the Kingdom. If we do not atone in some way for these effects due to our sins in this life, then we will in Purgatory. Through our lived faith in Christ, our prayers, the Eucharist, our good works and sacrifices, we make atonement for these effects of our sins we call temporal punishments.

A Plenary Indulgence, which can be received once per day, is a special Grace given to the Church, which allows for the removal of this temporal punishment due our sins. The Plenary Indulgence can also be applied to the Souls in Purgatory through our prayers as they are joined to us through Baptism and we can offer our prayers and spiritual works for their benefit.”

- 2) Sacrament of Reconciliation: in a note attached to the decree it is explained that the diocesan bishop has complete discretion over the administration of collective absolution (general absolution) should there arise a sudden need to impart Sacramental absolution to a number of people at the same time. The Priest is obliged to inform the diocesan bishop as soon as possible. Individual confession remains the ordinary way of celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I would ask that you make the information about Indulgences known to your parishioners.

The decree can be found on the Archdiocesan website: www.archwinnipeg.ca