

Jubilee of Mercy – Jubilee Indulgence

The opportunity for a special indulgence has been the central reason for Jubilee years since their inception in 1300. It was considered a once-in-a-lifetime chance to “wipe the slate clean” and remove any residual punishment for sins that had been forgiven in sacramental absolution. Realizing that having a Jubilee only in century years – the original intent – meant that many people wouldn’t live long enough for this indulgence, Pope Clement VI declared the second Jubilee in 1350, and later popes scheduled Jubilees more frequently – every 25 years since 1475 (except 1800 and 1850).

To gain an indulgence, a person must be in the state of grace when completing the indulgenced action. For a plenary indulgence, there are four additional conditions:

- Reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Reception of Holy Communion
- Prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions
- An interior disposition of complete detachment from all sin

If any one of these conditions is not met, a partial indulgence may be gained instead. Not all of these things must be done on the same day, but should be within a short period – about 20 days – before or after the act. Only one plenary indulgence may be gained each day. One sacramental confession may suffice for several indulgences, but Communion and prayers for the Pope’s intentions must be completed for each. A person may obtain one for oneself or a deceased person, but not another living person.

For this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis gave special guidance for the Jubilee Indulgence. He directed Holy Door sites to be designated in every diocese, so that the faithful might more easily make pilgrimages to them. He said the sacraments should be celebrated with a reflection on mercy and a profession of faith should be made.

Wanting to extend the opportunities for a Jubilee Indulgence, Pope Francis said that the following would also qualify:

- The sick, elderly, or those confined to their homes – by experiencing the Lord’s closeness in their illness and suffering, receiving Communion or attending Mass or community prayer, even through radio or television
- Prisoners – in their prison chapels
- Workers of Mercy – each time one personally performs one or more of the Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy

Pope Francis granted all priests the faculty to absolve those who seek forgiveness for an abortion procured. The U.S. bishops had already given this faculty to their priests, but this had not been done universally. The Pope also said that during this Holy Year, those who celebrate Reconciliation with priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X (a schismatic group) will receive a valid and licit absolution of their sins.