

## YEAR OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI INDULGENCES

“A Jubilee also entails the granting of *indulgences*.”

Over the years there has been no small amount of confusion and even controversy about the notion of “indulgences.” During the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis invited us to look at this concept with new eyes. Indulgences are not about “counting days in purgatory” but rather about the beauty of an indulgent God.

“God’s forgiveness knows no bounds. In the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God makes even more evident his love and its power to destroy all human sin. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus, God is always ready to forgive, and he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising. Nevertheless, all of us know well the experience of sin. We know that we are called to perfection (cf. *Mt* 5:48), yet we feel the heavy burden of sin. Though we feel the transforming power of grace, we also feel the effects of sin typical of our fallen state.”

We know that sin has not only a personal impact but also a communal one. When we sin, we release evil into the world. It is within our power to seek personal forgiveness through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But it is beyond our power to erase, on our own, the communal effects of sin.

“Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins, which he truly blots out; and yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger than even this. It becomes *indulgence* on the part of the Father who, through the Bride of Christ, his Church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees that person from every residue left by the consequences of sin, enabling that person to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.”

The goodness and grace of some in our communion of saints goes far beyond what is needed for their own personal salvation. “Their holiness comes to the aid of our weakness in a way that enables the Church, with her maternal prayers and her way of life, to fortify the weakness of some with the strength of others.”

During this Year of St. Francis of Assisi, we are called to approach our indulgent God, “to approach the Father’s mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ’s redemption, so that God’s love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in His merciful ‘indulgence.’”

Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, Proclamation of Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, n. 22 with additional commentary.