

**Communication  
on the opportunity of obtaining a plenary indulgence  
in relation to the Jubilee of the 100th anniversary of the Renewal and Reform  
of the Congregation of Marian Fathers**

To the members of the Congregation of Marian Fathers, groups associated with the Congregation, and all the faithful worldwide under the pastoral care of the Congregation of Marian Fathers.

1. On December 8, 2008, the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Congregation of Marian Fathers opened the celebrations of the 100th Anniversary of its Renewal and Reform brought about in 1909 by Bl. George Matulaitis-Matulewicz. At important moments in her history and special occasions, the Church grants the faithful an opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence, so that they may experience the grace of Divine Mercy more fully. The amazing rescue of our community from annihilation because of Bl. George was the strongest intervention of God in our history. It is a an important reaffirmation of His care for our community and of the importance of our charism for the Church. Today, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of this event, we wish to draw more fully from the treasury of God's graces for our personal sanctification and for the continuation of our mission. For this reason I decided to address the Holy Father with a petition for granting a plenary indulgence to the Marians and people associated with our community.
2. According to the decision of the Apostolic Penitentiary of April 2, 2009 (Prot. No. 195/09/I), a plenary indulgence may be obtained

by the following people:

**A. Members of the Congregation of Marian Fathers and the faithful associated with the Congregation through pastoral and legal ties** (parishioners, viri aggregati, members of the Association of Marian Helpers, Eucharistic Apostles of Divine Mercy, members of the Marian Economic Committee, Confraternity of the Immaculate Conception, Padrinhos and Madrinhas, members of the Marian Spiritual Family in Lichen, as well as groups of associations similar in character) under properly fulfilled usual conditions (sacramental confession, Holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father). In addition, professed members of the Marian community should renew their religious vows, at least privately.

**B. All other faithful people** who sincerely wish to obtain a plenary indulgence associated with the Jubilee of the Congregation of Marian Fathers, in addition to fulfilling the usual conditions mentioned above, must participate in the liturgy or a pious exercise, or at least spend some time in meditation. Then they should complete such prayer with the following: the Lord's Prayer, a profession of faith, an invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and a prayer for the Congregation of Marian Fathers,

during the following appointed times and places:

**C.** From April 19, 2009 (first Sunday after Easter, called Divine Mercy Sunday) until December 8, 2009 (the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., which will conclude the Jubilee Year): as many times as they make a pilgrimage to the tomb of the Founder of the Marians, Bl. Stanislaus Papczyński, in Góra Kalwaria, or the tomb of the Renovator, Bl. George Matulaitis-Matulewicz, in Mariampole.

**D. On August 15, 2009** (the solemnity of the Assumption of the B.V.M.); **August 29, 2009** (the day of Bl. George Matulaitis-Matulewicz's first religious vows in the Congregation of Marian Fathers); **December 8, 2009** (the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M., the titular solemnity of the Congregation), by participating in jubilee celebrations at Marian churches and other sacred sites, where the Marians conduct their pastoral ministry.

3. I ask and oblige all local superiors to conscientiously inform the confreres of the granted privilege and all the pastors, shrine custodians, and leaders of the above-named groups associated with the Marians to inform all interested parties, so that everyone, who may wish so, will be able to experience the blessed fruits of the unfathomable Divine Mercy. In order to deepen our understanding of the theology of indulgences, I attach the address of John Paul II on the gift of indulgence, delivered during his General Audience on September 29, 1999. I recommend that this address be read to all the Marians and the lay faithful under our pastoral care.

To the Divine Mercy I entrust all the spiritual fruits of the Jubilee Year.

Fr. Jan M. Rokosz, MIC  
Superior General

Fr. Zbigniew Piłat, MIC  
Secretary General

Attachment:

Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary of April 2, 2009 ([Prot. No. 195/09/I](#));

John Paul II's address: *The Gift of the Indulgence*, General Audience, Rome, September 29, 1999.

JOHN PAUL II  
**GENERAL AUDIENCE**  
*Wednesday, 29 September 1999*

## THE GIFT OF INDULGENCES

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

1. In close connection with the sacrament of Penance, our reflection today turns to a theme particularly related to the celebration of the Jubilee: I am referring to the gift of indulgences, which are offered in particular abundance during the Jubilee Year, as indicated in the Bull *Incarnationis mysterium* and the attached decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary.

It is a sensitive subject, which has suffered historical misunderstandings that have had a negative impact on communion between Christians. In the present ecumenical context, the Church is aware of the need for this ancient practice to be properly understood and accepted as a significant expression of God's mercy. Experience shows, in fact, that indulgences are sometimes received with superficial attitudes that ultimately frustrate God's gift and cast a shadow on the very truths and values taught by the Church.

2. The starting-point for understanding indulgences is the abundance of God's mercy revealed in the Cross of Christ. The crucified Jesus is the great "indulgence" that the Father has offered humanity through the forgiveness of sins and the possibility of living as children (cf. *Jn* 1: 12-13) in the Holy Spirit (cf. *Gal* 4: 6; *Rom* 5: 5; 8: 15-16).

However, in the logic of the covenant, which is the heart of the whole economy of salvation, this gift does not reach us without our acceptance and response.

In the light of this principle, it is not difficult to understand how reconciliation with God, although based on a free and abundant offer of mercy, at the same time implies an arduous process which involves the individual's personal effort and the Church's sacramental work. For the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, this process is centred on the sacrament of Penance, but it continues after the sacramental celebration. The person must be gradually "healed" of the negative effects which sin has caused in him (what the theological tradition calls the "punishments" and "remains" of sin).

3. At first sight, to speak of punishment after sacramental forgiveness might seem inconsistent. The Old Testament, however, shows us how normal it is to undergo reparative punishment after forgiveness. God, after describing himself as "a God merciful and gracious ... forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin", adds: "yet not without punishing" (*Ex*34: 6-7). In the Second Book of Samuel, King David's humble confession after his grave sin obtains God's forgiveness (cf. *2 Sm* 12: 13), but not the prevention of the foretold chastisement (cf. *ibid.*, 12: 11; 16: 21). God's fatherly love does not rule out punishment, even if the latter must always be understood as part of a merciful justice that re-establishes the violated order

for the sake of man's own good (cf. *Heb* 12: 4-11).

In this context temporal punishment expresses the condition of suffering of those who, although reconciled with God, are still marked by those "remains" of sin which do not leave them totally open to grace. Precisely for the sake of complete healing, the sinner is called to undertake a journey of conversion towards the fullness of love.

In this process God's mercy comes to his aid in special ways. The temporal punishment itself serves as "medicine" to the extent that the person allows it to challenge him to undertake his own profound conversion. This is the meaning of the "satisfaction" required in the sacrament of Penance.

4. The meaning of indulgences must be seen against this background of man's total renewal by the grace of Christ the Redeemer through the Church's ministry. They began historically with the ancient Church's awareness of being able to express the mercy of God by mitigating the canonical penances imposed for the sacramental remission of sins. The mitigation was offset, however, by personal and community obligations as a substitute for the punishment's "medicinal" purpose.

We can now understand how 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" (*Enchiridion Indulgentiarum, Normae de Indulgentiis*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1999, p. 21; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1471).

*The Church has a treasury*, then, which is "dispensed" as it were through indulgences. This "distribution" should not be understood as a sort of automatic transfer, as if we were speaking of "things". It is instead the expression of the Church's full confidence of being heard by the Father when - in view of Christ's merits and, by his gift, those of Our Lady and the saints - she asks him to mitigate or cancel the painful aspect of punishment by fostering its medicinal aspect through other channels of grace. In the unfathomable mystery of divine wisdom, this gift of intercession can also benefit the faithful departed, who receive its fruits in a way appropriate to their condition.

5. We can see, then, how indulgences, far from being a sort of "discount" on the duty of conversion, are instead an aid to its prompt, generous and radical fulfilment. This is required to such an extent that the spiritual condition for receiving a plenary indulgence is the exclusion "of all attachment to sin, even venial sin" (*Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*, p. 25).

Therefore, it would be a mistake to think that we can receive this gift by simply performing certain outward acts. On the contrary, they are required as the expression and support of our progress in conversion. They particularly show our faith in God's mercy and in the marvellous reality of communion, which Christ has achieved by indissolubly uniting the Church to himself as his Body and Bride.