



Act of Perfect Contrition

We began the Lenten season on Ash Wednesday with the words of our Lord Jesus, “Repent and believe in the gospel.” In the context of the current Coronavirus pandemic, recourse to the most efficacious means of expressing our repentance, namely the sacrament of Reconciliation, has been made increasingly difficult and, in some instances, impossible. In light of this difficulty, I point out two important pastoral helps that come to us from the Holy See.

The Apostolic See reminds us that when sacramental reconciliation is impossible, the faithful should be encouraged to make an act of perfect contrition, which is a request for forgiveness motivated by the love of God and entails the firm resolution to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation as soon as possible. The Catechism of the Catholic Church assures that such an act obtains for the individual the forgiveness of sins, even mortal sins. (cf. CCC, no. 1452)

In addition, the Apostolic See has granted the gift of new indulgences to be utilized by the faithful for obtaining special graces of pardon and forgiveness at this unsettling time. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven. (cf. CCC, no. 1471) The faithful can obtain indulgences for themselves, or they can offer them for the faithful departed in Purgatory. There are three groups who can avail themselves of these new indulgences: 1) those suffering from the Coronavirus; 2) healthcare workers, family members and all who care for those who are sick with the Coronavirus; and 3) all the faithful who implore God for an end to the epidemic, relief for those who are afflicted and eternal salvation for those whom the Lord has called to himself.

To obtain the indulgence, the faithful are to perform, with a spirit of contrition, the prescribed spiritual exercise (see below), followed by one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the intentions of the Holy Father. Normally indulgences also require going to Confession and receiving Holy Communion, however in light of the current situation I am exercising my authority to waive those requirements. Nonetheless, those who avail themselves of these new or any other indulgences must have contrition for their sins and the intention of receiving these sacraments as soon as possible.

The following are the prescribed spiritual exercises for which the new indulgences are offered:

1. For those suffering from the Coronavirus:
 - a. Participation via the media (e.g. television, livestream, etc.) in the Holy Mass, recitation of the Holy Rosary, the Way of the Cross or any other devotion;
 - b. Recitation of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a pious invocation to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
2. For healthcare workers, family members and all who care for the sick:
 - a. As above.
3. For all the faithful:
 - a. Visit to the Blessed Sacrament;
 - b. Eucharistic adoration;
 - c. Reading of the Holy Scriptures for at least half an hour;
 - d. Recitation of the Holy Rosary;
 - e. The Way of the Cross;
 - f. The Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

You can find the decree of the Apostolic See concerning these new Indulgences here:

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2020/03/20/200320c.html>

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