

Indulgences for the Year of Saint Joseph

The Holy See has established special opportunities for the faithful to receive a plenary indulgence during this year devoted to the honor of Saint Joseph. The Year of Saint Joseph commenced on December 8, 2020 and concludes on December 8, 2021.

An indulgence is a manner of attaining purification from the consequences of forgiven sins through the sincere practice of certain prayers and devotional exercises. All sins, even those for which we have been absolved, leave a certain effect upon our souls from which we require complete purification and continual amendment. This “temporal punishment due to sin” is what an indulgence remits. Of course, the merits gained from an indulgence are the gifts of Christ himself and underscore our reliance upon God alone for the forgiveness of sins and the purification of our souls. The Church, as teacher, lends her counsel and instruction to the faithful in order to encourage and guide them in their desire to be freed from the remaining effects of remitted sin.

The Church administers two kinds of indulgences: partial indulgences, which remit a certain degree of the temporal consequences of sins forgiven, and plenary indulgences, which remit entirely the temporal consequences due to sin. An indulgence should never be seen as a substitute for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, nor should they be seen as a license to continue in sin or to avoid growing spiritually closer to the perfect will of God. Rather, they should be seen as an extraordinary gift of mercy from our loving Savior in his desire that all might abandon the darkness of sin and enjoy the light of salvation.

Indulgences may be sought both for oneself as well as on behalf of someone who is deceased and undergoing the final purification before heaven known as Purgatory. Obviously, we who are living, in following the admonition of Saint Paul, are called to “to work out your salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12). We should pray for the conversion of all sinners. But only those who seek for themselves salvation, and those who sought in and died in God’s friendship but still in need of purification, are capable of benefitting from this extraordinary gift of Christ administered by his Church known as an indulgence.

In response to the decision of Pope Francis to lead the Church in a celebration of the memory and intercession of Saint Joseph, the Church’s Apostolic Penitentiary decreed the requirements for the plenary indulgences to be associated with this special year of commemoration.

The usual conditions for receiving a plenary indulgence apply here as well: sacramental confession, reception of Holy Communion, prayer for the intentions of the Pope, and a total detachment from sin, including venial sin.

Regarding the fulfillment of the required conditions: “It is appropriate, but not necessary, that the sacramental Confession and especially Holy Communion and the prayer for the Pope’s intentions take place on the same day that the indulgenced work is performed; but it is sufficient that these sacred rites and prayers be carried out within several days (about 20) before or after the indulgenced act. Prayer for the Pope’s intentions is left to the choice of the faithful, but an ‘Our Father’ and a ‘Hail Mary’ are suggested. One sacramental Confession suffices for several plenary indulgences, but a separate Holy Communion and a separate prayer for the Holy Father’s intentions are required for each plenary indulgence” (Apostolic Penitentiary of the Holy See).

A partial indulgence may be obtained when only parts of the requirements of a plenary indulgence are met with sincere intention.

Because of the present and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the decree issued by the Holy See makes provision that those who are currently unable to go to Mass or confession due to public health restrictions may defer the reception of the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation until they are able to do so. In addition, those who are sick, suffering, or homebound may also receive the plenary indulgence by fulfilling as much of the requirements as they are able and by offering their suffering and sorrow to God through Saint Joseph, consoler of those who are sick and the patron saint of a good and holy death.

The following prayers and devotional activities have been enriched with the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence:

- To meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father") or participate in a spiritual retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on Saint Joseph;
- To perform a corporal or spiritual work of mercy, inspired by the life and example of Saint Joseph;
- To pray the Rosary together as a family or a couple, modeling the virtues of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph;
- To dedicate with confidence their daily work to the protection of Saint Joseph the Worker, including the efforts of those who are unemployed, underemployed, or seeking more dignified work;
- To devoutly recite the Litany of Saint Joseph (see below) or another suitable prayer from other liturgical traditions, especially for the intentions of persecuted Catholics in the Church and around the world, and for the relief of all Christians who suffer persecution;
- To devoutly recite another approved prayer to Saint Joseph, for example the "To you, O blessed Joseph" especially on various feasts of Saint Joseph: March 19 (Solemnity of Saint Joseph), May 1 (Saint Joseph the Worker) or on the 19th day of each month, or even each Wednesday, the weekday traditionally dedicated to honor his memory with pious devotions.

Prayers Enriched with a Plenary Indulgence during the Year of Saint Joseph

Litany of Saint Joseph

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, have mercy. *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord, have mercy. *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ, hear us. *Christ, graciously hear us.*

God, the Father of Heaven, *have mercy on us.*

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, *have mercy on us.*

God the Holy Spirit, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Trinity, One God, *have mercy on us.*

Holy Mary, *pray for us.* (said after each line)

Saint Joseph,

Renowned offspring of David,

Light of Patriarchs,
Spouse of the Mother of God,
Chaste guardian of the Virgin,
Foster-father of the Son of God,
Diligent protector of Christ,
Head of the Holy Family,
Joseph most just,
Joseph most chaste,
Joseph most prudent,
Joseph most strong,
Joseph most obedient,
Joseph most faithful,
Mirror of patience,
Lover of poverty,
Model of artisans,
Glory of home life,
Guardian of virgins,
Pillar of families,
Solace of the wretched, Hope of the sick,
Patron of the dying,
Terror of demons,
Protector of Holy Church,
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *spare us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *graciously hear us, O Lord.*
Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us.*

He made him the lord of His house:
And ruler of all His substance.

O God, who in your inexpressible providence were pleased to choose Saint Joseph as spouse of the most holy Mother of your Son, grant, we pray, that we, who revere him as our protector on earth, may be worthy of his heavenly intercession. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

To You, O Blessed Joseph

May be recited after reciting the Most Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary

To you, O blessed Joseph, do we come in our tribulation, and having implored the help of your most holy Spouse, we confidently invoke your patronage also.

Through that charity which bound you to the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God, and through the paternal love with which you embraced the Child Jesus, we humbly beg you graciously to regard the inheritance which Jesus Christ has purchased by his Blood, and with your power and strength to aid us in our necessities.

O most watchful guardian of the Holy Family, defend the chosen children of Jesus Christ; O most loving father, ward off from us every contagion of error and corrupting influence; O our most mighty protector, be kind to us and from heaven assist us in our struggle with the power of darkness.

As once you rescued the Child Jesus from deadly peril, so now protect God's Holy Church from the snares of the enemy and from all adversity; shield, too, each one of us by your constant protection, so that, supported by your example and your aid, we may be able to live piously, to die in holiness, and to obtain eternal happiness in heaven. Amen.

Prayers from the Roman Missal

From March 19, Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that by Saint Joseph's intercession, your Church may constantly watch over the unfolding of the mysteries of human salvation, whose beginnings you entrusted to his faithful care. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

From May 1, Optional Memorial of Saint Joseph the Worker

O God, Creator of all things, who laid down for the human race the law of work, graciously grant that, by the example of Saint Joseph, and under his patronage, we may complete the works you set us to do and attain the rewards you promise. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

From the Votive Mass of Saint Joseph

O God, who in your inexpressible providence, were pleased to choose Saint Joseph as spouse of the most holy Mother of your Son, grant, we pray, that we, who revere him as our protector on earth, may be worthy of his heavenly intercession. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Salve, Redemptoris Custos

The Prayer which concludes Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter, Patris Corde, on the One hundred fiftieth Anniversary of the Proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.
Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father,
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. Amen.

Salve, Redemptoris custos
et sponsus Mariae Virginis.
Tibi Deus suum Filium commisit;
in te Maria fiduciam suam reposuit;
tecum Christus vir factus est.
O beate Ioseph, etiam nobis monstra te esse patrem,
atque duc nos in vitae itinere.

Impetra nobis gratiam, misericordiam et animum,
et tuere nos ab omni malo. Amen.