

## INDULGENCES

*"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 defined conditions through the Church's help when, as a **minister of redemption, she dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions won by Christ and the saints**" (Indulgentiarum Doctrina 1).*

**CCC 1478** *An indulgence is obtained through the Church who, by **virtue of the power of binding and loosing** granted her by Christ Jesus, intervenes in favor of individual Christians and **opens for them the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints** to obtain from the Father of mercies the remission of the temporal punishments due for their sins. Thus the Church does not want simply to come to the aid of these Christians, but also to spur them to works of devotion, penance, and charity*

## ETERNAL GUILT AND TEMPORAL RESPONSIBILITY

Guilt can be forgiven by Christ, but **temporal responsibility** for sin remains and must be fulfilled. Think of a nail being driven into a board and then removed. The nail is taken out, but the hole still needs to be filled in. **Restitution, or reparation** must be made. Upon repentance and forgiveness of our sins the guilt is cleansed, but the temporal penalties are still there and need to be addressed. Jesus paid the price for our sins, but did not absolve us from the obligation of reparation and restitution. If you steal someone's car or break their window with a baseball, run over their skateboard or back fence, you may be forgiven, but you still need to **return the property and repair the damage**.

## OTHERS CAN OBTAIN LESSENING OF PENALTIES THROUGH PRAYER AND RIGHTEOUSNESS

**Matthew 9:1-8** describes how Jesus heals a crippled man and forgives his sins because of the faith of his friends. Similarly, God would have saved the wicked city of Sodom if Abraham had been able to find 10 righteous inhabitants, **Genesis 18:16-33**.

Similarly, the Church as Bride of Christ and repository of the treasury of His graces can diminish the temporal penalty stemming from sins that have already been forgiven. Even though Christ's Passion atones for the guilt, the **way** the grace of salvation is **applied to my life** or the lives of others can be modified through prayer and indulgences.

## INDULGENCES LINKED TO SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

**CCC 1471\_** *The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are **closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance.***

**Matthew 9:8** states that the Lord's disciples could forgive men's sins. **John 20:21-23** imparts a specific duty to forgive or retain sins. This mandate is fulfilled also in the Sacrament of Penance. So if the Lord gave His disciples and their successors the ability to forgive mortal sins whose penalties were eternal, then of course they can forgive or diminish the temporal punishment. The **power of binding and loosing includes the administration of temporal penalties.**

An indulgence is **partial or plenary** according as it removes **either part or all of the** temporal punishment due to sin.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

**CCC 1479** *Since the faithful departed now being purified are also members of the same communion of saints, one way we can **help them is to obtain indulgences for them,** so that the temporal punishments due for their sins may be remitted.*