

## Jubilee Year 2025. Card. De Donatis (Apostolic Penitentiary): “The Plenary Indulgence settles all outstanding issues before God”

"The administration of mercy, from the standpoint of the Penitentiary, is an authentic experience of the infinite love of the Father for each one of us." Cardinal **Angelo De Donatis**, Major Penitentiary, explains [the new rules](#) for obtaining an indulgence during the Jubilee Year 2025. **Your Eminence, you preside over a special body within the Church: the Tribunal of Mercy.** The Apostolic Penitentiary is the organism of the Roman Curia that is responsible for administering God's mercy in the name and on behalf of the Holy Father. It is therefore a tribunal, but it is a very special tribunal. In fact, its jurisdiction extends only to the internal tribunal, that is, to the intimate sphere of the relations between the faithful and God, with no repercussions in the public sphere. This confers on its activity a series of peculiar characteristics - free initiative on the part of the faithful, total discretion, its remitting legal character - which make it, as it were, a "tribunal of mercy":

The only judgement that can be pronounced is pardon, absolution, grace!

Some years ago, [Pope Francis said](#): "This is the type of Tribunal that I truly appreciate! Because it is a 'tribunal of mercy' to which one turns to obtain that indispensable medicine for our souls, which is Divine Mercy!". **What is the administration of mercy?** In its internal jurisdiction, the Apostolic Penitentiary grants, first of all, absolution from reserved censures, dispensation from infractions in order to receive or exercise the Sacrament of Holy Orders and other graces, usually through confessors. It is also responsible for the granting and use of indulgences, which could be called a "surplus" of divine mercy and which will be the central theme of the coming Jubilee. I can testify, then, to the fact that the administration of mercy, from the perspective of the Penitentiary, amounts to the reality of experiencing the Father's infinite love for each one of us and how boundless is the mercy of God, who never tires of embracing his long-lost son, no matter how grave his sin, no matter how far he has gone astray! **Will the forthcoming Jubilee also be a time of individual grace?** It is, in fact, the hope of the Holy Father and of the entire Church that the forthcoming Holy Year may be enjoyed by each individual as a propitious occasion, **a year of grace to rediscover one's intimate relationship with the Lord. This can be achieved through the multiple opportunities offered, and above all, in personal and community prayer.** The intention of Pope Francis in establishing a year of prayer preceding the Jubilee of 2025 was in fact to encourage the rediscovery of a desire to stand in the presence of the Lord, listen to Him and adore Him.



Prayer prepares our hearts to receive the spiritual gifts that the Jubilee offers, thereby experiencing the tenderness of God's love in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and in the obtaining of Indulgences. Each baptised person, having renewed and rejuvenated their relationship with God, will in turn bear witness with their brothers and sisters, experiencing the law of love in the various environments in which they are present. No commitment for the world will succeed if a personal encounter with the Creator does not first take place in each of us, in a 'heart to heart', life-transforming dialogue. In his [Bull of Indiction](#), the Holy Father

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refers to a moment in history in which "heedless of the horrors of the past, humanity is confronting yet another ordeal, as many peoples are prey to brutality and violence", and calls all Christians to become pilgrims of hope. What does this mean in practical terms? Every Jubilee Year brings with it a desire for hope, the opportunity to re-establish the proper relationship with God and with our brothers and sisters. However, Pope Francis has wished to call on the faithful to become pilgrims of hope even more explicitly in the coming Holy Year. The reason for this is that the political and social developments that are currently unfolding on a global scale – such as the numerous wars near and far, the violence perpetrated against innocent civilians, and the economic difficulties caused by human exploitation and social injustice – appear to contradict and stifle this horizon of hope in all respects. Moreover, on an individual level, many people are burdened by a variety of difficulties, including unemployment, emotional distress and family challenges, which have led in some cases to a loss of hope for a brighter future.

The Jubilee Year is designed to demonstrate that a different world is possible if we embrace Christ as our guiding principle and make Him the foundation for our lives, the bedrock for our aspirations.

Is this a Holy Year to start anew? The Holy Year can truly be a year of grace and profound renewal, both for the individual and the community. A few days ago, the Holy Father addressed the inmates and staff of the Montorio prison, located near the city of Verona. He encouraged them with the following words: "In a few months, the Holy Year will commence. This year will be one of conversion, renewal, and liberation for the entire Church. It will be a year of mercy, during which the past can be laid to rest and momentum can be gained towards the future. It will be a year in which change can be celebrated, and in which, when necessary, individuals can return to being truly themselves, giving their very best. Let this also be a sign that helps us to rise again and to take back, with confidence, our lives every day." Let us embrace these words, cherish them in our hearts! What is the difference between a sacrament of confession and absolution and obtaining a plenary indulgence? Since the first jubilee, celebrated in the year 1300, Pope Boniface VIII desired that the jubilee indulgence provide pilgrims with the forgiveness not only of sin – which is ordinarily obtained through sacramental confession – but also of all those 'residues' that we carry with us as a consequence of sin. From a technical standpoint, the Church defines indulgence as the remission of the temporal punishment due to sins. Even after sacramental absolution of the sin, the consequences for the sins committed and the duty of reparation on the part of the repentant remain. Indulgence also pardons these debts and settles all outstanding issues before God. The believer who meets the necessary conditions and obtains the indulgence may be considered as if they were to re-emerge from the baptismal font, thereby restoring them to the state of grace that was conferred at baptism. This represents a veritable miracle of grace! The plenary indulgence, then, may be considered a concrete sign of God's mercy? An indulgence may be defined as a complete and total manifestation of the divine mercy of God, a gift that supplements the pardoning of sins, which the priest bestows when he absolves us of our sins. It is a manifestation of the magnitude to which God's love transcends any potential for evil perpetrated by humankind. The granting of the Jubilee indulgence is the Pope's own prerogative as the successor of the Apostle Peter, to whom Jesus promised: "Whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19). He draws this 'surplus' of divine mercy, which not only obtains the remission of sins but also of temporal punishments attached therein, from the Church's infinite spiritual treasure, formed by Christ's sacrifice on the cross and by the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints. In a world where corporeality is prevalent, the possibility of obtaining benefits for the soul is

difficult to envisage. Nevertheless, the indulgence serves to remind us of the necessity to nurture our spiritual dimension... The contemporary context, which tends to prioritise corporeal desires, makes it more important than ever to rediscover the spiritual dimension. In such a context, it is all too easy to feel as though we are falling back on earthly matters and becoming increasingly incapable of lifting our eyes to the skies. Indulgences represent a valuable instrument for the rediscovery of this spiritual dimension. It is possible to attain indulgences with relative ease during the day through simple practices, such as reciting an ejaculatory prayer, making a small penitential gesture or act of charity, or devoting a small amount of time to reading a passage from Scripture. The aforementioned actions, to which a partial indulgence is attached as stipulated in the [Enchiridion indulgenziarum](#), assist in attuning our hearts to that of Jesus, preventing distraction caused by the numerous activities that define our daily routines. Moreover, the plenary indulgence in connection with the Jubilee Year is of particular significance in this respect. Let us consider the image of the pilgrimage, which is intimately entwined with the Jubilee practices. Indeed, those who embark on a pilgrimage undertake a physical and spiritual journey of conversion and re-orientation of their lives towards holiness.



Isn't indulgence only about the spiritual dimension? The practice of indulgences is a wonderful synthesis of the two dimensions, the spiritual and the corporeal. To favour only the spiritual aspect and to ignore the physical and material needs that we all have would be just as restrictive. The Church's wisdom has always taught the right balance between the two dimensions, and it is not by chance that the Apostolic Penitentiary's regulations for obtaining an indulgence in the coming Holy Year, for example, grant it to those who perform works of charity and mercy, including corporal works of mercy, towards their brothers and sisters. In this way, we will fulfil Pope Francis' wish to be "tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardship." ([Spes non confundit](#), 10). Why do the works of penance include abstaining, at least for one day a week, from futile distractions, "real but also virtual distractions, such as the use of the media and/or social networks"? To temporarily distance ourselves from our many activities, some of which are superfluous, and from the countless stimuli that today's society offers us, especially through digital devices and social networks, which we can hardly do without, means to take the time to rediscover that "*unum necessarium*" that Jesus indicated: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Lk 10:41-42). This is a very useful exercise, a penitential

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exercise, but it should not be seen as an end in itself. Its purpose is to enable us to fix our gaze on Jesus Christ and to forget everything else. Indeed, the purpose of the hoped-for rediscovery of silence and inner life is not a sterile withdrawal into oneself, but a readiness to welcome the One who comes to dwell among us. Our 'inner cell', as so many saints and mystics have called it, thus becomes a "holy door" wide open to heaven. Is it also an opportunity to regain control of time, which is too often misspent? Abstaining from futile distractions is also an invitation to re-evaluate time. It is the only asset we cannot buy. We often complain that we never have time to spend in prayer or to be alone with the Lord. But how differently we could have used our time, and how many moments we could have devoted to God and our neighbour, if we were to reflect on the number of minutes we waste during the day! Is the Plenary Indulgence also of great value to souls in Purgatory? The theological foundation of indulgences lies in the doctrine of the *Communion of saints*, because they draw from that infinite treasure of grace which consists of the merits of Christ, the Virgin Mary and all the martyrs and saints of the Church's two thousand years of history. This link between the pilgrim Church on earth and the triumphant Church in heaven is also open to the Church of Purgatory, made up of the baptised who have yet to complete a journey of purification before the final beatific vision.

From the very beginning, therefore, the Church provided for the possibility of granting an indulgence, not for oneself, but for a deceased person.

This is a most sublime gesture of piety and charity which does not contradict personal freedom - one can only obtain an indulgence for oneself or for a deceased believer, not for another living person who, as a free being, can choose whether or not to accept the gift of mercy - but which fulfils a bond of charity for those who no longer deserve it on earth.

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