

On the first of November the Church celebrates the Solemnity of All Saints, a Holy Day of Obligation, honoring all those faithful in heaven, the known and unknown saints. The feast began the traditional Octave of All Saints, November 1-8.

November 2nd is the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed, also known as All Souls Day, a day set aside to pray for all the dead. All Souls Day shifts the Church's focus on praying for the Faithful Departed throughout November. The need and duty of prayer for the dead has been acknowledged by the Church. It is recommended in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Macc. 12: 46). This duty is expressed in public and private prayers but especially in the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the repose of souls.

The prayers are particularly directed for the souls who are being purified in Purgatory, waiting for the day when they will join the saints in heaven. The celebration of Mass is the highest means the Church can provide for charity for the dead, but we can also relieve their sufferings through our prayers, sufferings and penances. We can particularly help the Poor Souls by doing acts and prayers that have indulgences attached to them.

Indulged Acts for the Faithful Departed

There are many indulgences, applicable only to the Souls in Purgatory, that can be obtained during the month of November. From the fourth edition of the *Enchiridion of Indulgences*, 1999:

1. A *plenary indulgence*, applicable only to the souls in purgatory, is granted to the faithful who,
 - on any and each day from November 1 to 8, devoutly visit a cemetery and pray, if only mentally, for the departed;
 - on All Souls' Day (or, according to the judgment of the ordinary, on the Sunday preceding or following it, or on the solemnity of All Saints), devoutly visit a church or an oratory and recite an Our Father and the Creed.
2. A *partial indulgence*, applicable only to the souls in purgatory, is granted to the faithful who,
 - devoutly visit a cemetery and at least mentally pray for the dead;
 - devoutly recite lauds or vespers from the Office of the Dead or the prayer *Requiem aeternam* (Eternal rest).

Incorporating Indulgences Acts Through November and the Year

A partial indulgence can be obtained by devoutly visiting a cemetery and praying for the departed, even if the prayer is only mental. There are a few cemeteries that have car paths, allowing one to "visit" even if you stay in the car.

The "Eternal Rest" prayer gains a partial indulgence and can be prayed all year. Passing a cemetery and praying the "Eternal Rest" can help out the souls in need.

Eternal rest grant to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

The "Eternal Rest" prayer can be inserted in between decades of the rosary, and can be added to the end of the "Prayer Before Meals":

Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts,
Which we are about to receive,
from Thy bounty,
through Christ, our Lord, Amen.
And may the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God,
rest in peace. Amen.

How to Gain an Indulgence

An **indulgence** is "the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sins already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned, which the follower of Christ with the proper dispositions and under certain determined conditions acquires through the intervention of the Church which, as minister of the Redemption, authoritatively dispenses and applies the treasury of the satisfaction won by Christ and the saints. An indulgence is partial or plenary according as it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due sin"

To obtain this remission there are proper dispositions and certain conditions predetermined by the Church that must be met. Firstly, one must have the intention to gain the indulgence, and perform the works at the time and in the manner prescribed.

To gain a **Plenary Indulgence** (only one per day), the faithful must be in the state of grace and the following conditions must accompany the prescribed act:

1. have the interior disposition of complete detachment from sin, even venial sin;
2. receive the **sacrament of confession**
3. receive the **Holy Eucharist** (it is certainly better to receive it while participating in Holy Mass, but for the indulgence only Holy Communion is required)
4. and recite **prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father** (one Our Father and one Hail Mary is suggested as a minimum, but any other additional prayers may be added).

All attachment to sin, even venial sin, must be absent. If some of the above conditions are not fulfilled, the indulgence becomes partial.

More details about the timing of these requirements:

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.**