

Plenary Indulgence Options for the  
“Year of St. Joseph”  
+ December 8, 2020 through December 8, 2021 +

The Apostolic Penitentiary of the Vatican, which is the dicastery of the Roman Curia that oversees the practice of Indulgences, has issued a Decree granting different options to gain a Plenary Indulgence for the “Year of St. Joseph” that was proclaimed by Pope Francis on December 8, 2020 – the *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*. The special Year in honor of the Guardian of the Redeemer will last from December 8, 2020 through December 8, 2021 and has been announced in honor of the 150th Anniversary of Pope Pius IX’s proclamation in 1870 of St. Joseph as the “Patron of the Universal Church” (*Quemadmodum Deus*).

In the Decree, specific and varying options for the granting of Plenary Indulgences for the duration of the Year have been announced to honor St. Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church and “to perpetuate the entrustment of the whole Church to the powerful patronage of the Custodian of Jesus.”

During this “Year of St. Joseph” the faithful will have the opportunity to commit themselves “with prayer and good works, to obtain, with the help of St. Joseph, head of the Heavenly Family of Nazareth, comfort and relief from the serious human and social tribulations that besiege the contemporary world today.”

The decree notes that devotion to St. Joseph has grown extensively throughout the history of the Church, “which not only attributes to him high reverence after that of the Mother of God, his Spouse, but has also given him multiple patronages.”

At the same time, the Magisterium of Holy Mother Church continues to discover “old and new greatness in this treasure which is St. Joseph, like the master in the Gospel of Matthew who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old” (Cf., *Matthew 13:52*)

Therefore, the gift of Plenary Indulgences, granted through a Decree of the Apostolic Penitentiary by mandate of Pope Francis, “will be of great benefit to the perfect attainment of the appointed purpose.”

According to the universal *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, an Indulgence is “the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sin whose guilt has already been forgiven. A properly disposed member of the Christian faithful can obtain an Indulgence under prescribed conditions through the help of the Church, which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the Saints. An Indulgence is Partial if it removes part of the temporal punishment due to sin, or Plenary if it removes all punishment.” (CCC, 1471)

### **Conditions for the Plenary Indulgence**

According to the Vatican Decree, the Plenary Indulgence is granted to the faithful under the three *usual conditions*. The three usual conditions for receiving a Plenary Indulgence are Sacramental Confession (which, under the “usual conditions,” means going to Confession within 20 days *before* or within 20 days *after* the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought); also, the reception of Eucharistic Communion on the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought; and prayer for the Pope’s needs and intentions on the day the Plenary Indulgence is sought (which, under the “usual conditions” is understood to be an *Our Father* and *Hail Mary*; or, one may also recite the *Creed*). Also required is a spirit that is sincerely and willfully detached from any sin, mortal and venial. Those who fulfill these conditions can participate in the varying Plenary Indulgence options during the “Year of St. Joseph” on the following occasions and manners indicated by the Apostolic Penitentiary:

## Plenary Indulgence Options

- The Plenary Indulgence is granted to those who will meditate for at least 30 minutes on the Lord's Prayer (the Our Father), or take part in a Spiritual Retreat of at least one day that includes a meditation on St. Joseph. "St. Joseph, an authentic man of faith, invites us", the Decree reads, "to rediscover our filial relationship with the Father, to renew fidelity to prayer, (and) to listen and correspond with profound discernment to God's will."
- The Plenary Indulgence can also be obtained by those who, following St. Joseph's example, will perform a Spiritual or Corporal Work of Mercy. St. Joseph "encourages us to rediscover the value of silence, prudence, and loyalty in carrying out our duties," the Decree notes.
- The prayerful recitation of the Holy Rosary in families and among engaged couples is another way of obtaining the Plenary Indulgence, in order that "all Christian families may be stimulated to recreate the same atmosphere of intimate communion, love, and prayer that was in the Holy Family" of Nazareth.
- Also, everyone who entrusts their daily activity to the protection of St. Joseph, and every faithful who invokes the intercession of St. Joseph so that those seeking work can find dignifying work, can also obtain the Plenary Indulgence. On May 1, 1955, Pope Pius XII instituted the Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker "with the intent that the dignity of work be recognized by all, and that it inspires social life and laws, based on the fair distribution of rights and duties."
- The Plenary Indulgence is also granted to the faithful who will recite the Litany to St. Joseph (for the Latin tradition), or the *Akathistos* to St. Joseph (for the Byzantine tradition), or any other prayer to St. Joseph proper to the other liturgical traditions, for the persecuted Church *ad intra* and *ad extra*, and for the relief of all Christians suffering all forms of persecution; because, as the Decree notes, "the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt shows us that God is there where man is in danger, where man suffers, where he runs away, where he experiences rejection and abandonment."
- In addition to these options, the Apostolic Penitentiary also grants a Plenary Indulgence to the faithful who will recite any legitimately approved prayer or act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, for example, "*To you, O blessed Joseph...*" especially on December 27 (the Solemnity of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph), March 19 (the Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary), on May 1 (the Memorial of St. Joseph the Worker), on St. Joseph's Sunday (according to the Byzantine tradition), on the 19th of each month during the Year, and on every Wednesday during the Year, which is a day traditionally dedicated to the memory of St. Joseph in the Latin Church.

The Vatican Decree also recalls the universality of St. Joseph's Patronage of the Church, noting that St. Teresa of Ávila recognized him as "a protector for all the circumstances of life." Pope St. John Paul II also said that St. Joseph has "a renewed relevance for the Church of our time, in relation to the new Christian millennium."

- Amid the ongoing Covid-19 health crisis, the gift of the Plenary Indulgence is also extended to the sick, the elderly, the dying and all those who for legitimate reasons are unable to leave their homes. They, too, can obtain the Plenary Indulgences if they are detached from any sin and have the intention of fulfilling, as soon as possible, the three usual conditions and recite an act of piety in honor of St. Joseph, offering to God the pains and hardships of their lives.

The Apostolic Penitentiary also encourages priests during the “Year of St. Joseph” to pastorally facilitate the celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and the administration of Holy Communion to the sick with a willing and generous spirit.

\*Adapted from the Vatican News article, *Church Grants Plenary Indulgence for the Year of St. Joseph*, Vatican City, December 8, 2020.



