

All that Will Ever Really Matter in this Life

Q: What is our most “important task” in this life, or as St. Alponus de Liguori said, “Our most important affair”?

A: To gain our eternal salvation. To that end, one must remove Hell as a possibility; seek Heaven with all of his/her strength; and eliminate or minimize a stay in Purgatory.

Q: What is Heaven?

A: Heaven is where God is, together with His mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all of the angels and saints. It is a place of absolute perfection, joy, happiness, and fulfillment. Heaven will last for all eternity. It is also referred to as eternal salvation. It will never end. It is a place of the most true and pure exhilaration and joy. To describe this, St. Francis of Assisi said, “Every moment will seem as if it is new.” There is no pain, no sadness, no sickness, and no death in Heaven.

Q: What is Hell?

A: Hell is the worst place that can ever befall a soul. It is an eternity of a hundred times the greatest pain you will have ever experienced during your life, but it is non-consuming. It too will last for all eternity. It will never end. There are no breaks, reprieves or perhaps in Hell. Everyone hates everyone. In the 9th Chapter of Mark, Our Lord Jesus repeats three times about Hell, “...it is where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.” It is also referred to as eternal damnation. There is no thing or person in this life, worth suffering the loss of Heaven, and incurring the pains of Hell.

Q: What is Purgatory?

A: Purgatory is a spiritual realm where souls go who have died, when they have not been condemned to Hell, yet are still not cleansed of sin, and the punishment due to sin, to enter Heaven. It is “...a realm in which spirits endure severe punishment and in the process become cleansed of sin and its ill effects.” The punishment in Purgatory is equal to the severity of the punishment in Hell, but it is finite. It will end upon the purification of the soul of all un-confessed, un-repentent and un-forgiven venial sins, and the stain of all sins throughout your life.

Q: Why do you use the word “soul” instead of “you”?

A: Because after death, your soul will leave your body, be judged, and be sentenced. The sentence will be carried out immediately...and for all eternity. Then, at the end of time, when Our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, your body will rejoin your soul, and the same sentence that was pronounced on your soul after you died, will be pronounced again on your body and soul, in front of everyone who has ever lived, and you will go, either to an eternal bliss in Heaven, or an eternity of pain and remorse in Hell.

Q: Why are you here...in this life?

A: You are here to use your free will, to prove your worthiness to live forever with God in Heaven, His Son Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and all of the angels and saints.

Q: Who determines your worthiness?

A: Our Lord Jesus Christ, will solely determine this, judge you, and sentence you, immediately following your death. This event is called your Particular Judgment. Present will be you, Our Lord, your Guardian Angel, Satan, and the Blessed Virgin Mother, if you have made her an important part of your life, as an Advocate and Intercessor to her Son. There will be no family, friends, parents, sons or daughters. Satan's purpose for being there will be to prove you do not belong in Heaven, but to him...forever...in Hell. He will be the most aggressive and arrogant prosecutor you have ever witnessed, and all of his efforts will be to get your soul to Hell, as Our Lord is judging you.

Q: What must I do to gain eternal salvation?

A: You must follow God's commandments.

Q: What are God's commandments?

A: The two greatest of God's commandments are: you must love God with your whole heart, your whole soul, and your whole mind; you must love your neighbor as yourself.

Q: What happens when I fail to follow God's commandments?

A: You commit actual sin.

Q: What is actual sin?

A: Actual sin is an offense against God. There are two types of actual sin. Venial sin is a lesser offense against God. It does not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace. It weakens charity in the soul. One can still get to Heaven if he/she has unrepented, un-confessed and un-forgiven venial sins on his/her soul, but they do merit temporal punishment in Purgatory. Mortal sin is a grave offense against God. It deprives the soul of sanctifying grace. If not redeemed by repentance and forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom (in Heaven), and eternal damnation in Hell.

Q: Can one enter Heaven with venial sins on his/her soul?

A: No. No one may enter Heaven with any sin, or the stain of sin, on his/her soul?

Q: What do you mean by the stain of sin?

A: When one commits sin, there are always two components to every sin: the infraction of the sin itself; and the punishment due to the infraction. This punishment is referred to as the stain of sin.

Q: If one cannot enter Heaven with any venial sin, or the stain of repented, confessed and forgiven sins on his/her soul, how does one rid his/her soul of the same?

A: One's soul must be cleansed in Purgatory.

Q: Do all souls go to Purgatory?

A: If a soul is not condemned to Hell for all eternity, yet still has un-confessed, venial sins, and/or the stain of sin on his/her soul, that soul must be cleansed in Purgatory before entering Heaven.

Q: For how long?

A: We do not know. It might be hundreds of Earth years. When all un-confessed venial sins and the stain of all sins, ever committed throughout one's life, have been purged from one's soul, that soul will enter Heaven.

Q: Are there any other ways to cleanse one's soul from un-confessed, venial sins and the stain of all sin committed throughout one's life, and thus eliminate or greatly reduce Purgatory?

A: Yes, there are 5 ways:

1. You die for your faith. This can happen in several ways, but the end result is because you accept Our Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior; because you believe He came down from Heaven, was born, suffered and died for you and your sins; and because you believe that He was resurrected from the dead; your life is demanded of you; or
2. You receive the Sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic faith, before your death; and you do not commit any sins whatsoever, between that moment and the moment of your death. You may only be baptized once; or
3. You receive the Sacrament of the Last Rites, along with the Apostolic Blessing, before you die; before you commit any sin; and before your soul leaves your body. We should all pray each day for a happy death. This is the definition of a happy death. However, God does not promise a happy death to anyone. You pray that you have the chance to receive the Sacrament of Penance, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and the Sacrament of the Last Rites with the Apostolic Blessing, from a priest before you die, but it may not be provided you; or
4. Because you ask for God's Infinite and Divine Mercy prior to your moment of death; because you have shown mercy to others; and because you completely trust in Jesus Christ as Our Lord and Savior, God through His infinite and Divine Mercy, removes all sin and stain from sin on your soul. The opportunity to do this is not guaranteed to anyone; or
5. You receive a partial (removes part of the punishment due to sin) or plenary (removes all punishment due to sin) indulgence.

Because the first four ways to eliminate or greatly reduce the soul's stay in Purgatory, are not guaranteed and/or likely to happen to the largest number of souls, the fifth way can better put you in charge of your destination. While the following is most extensive, at some point in your future, you will thank God you took the time to read and digest the rudiments of this tremendous gift from Him...the indulgence.

“The word indulgence (from the Latin *indulgentia*, from *indulgeo*, to be kind or tender) originally meant kindness or favor; in post-classic Latin it came to mean the remission of a tax or debt. In Roman law and in the Vulgate of the Old Testament (Isaiah 61:1) it was used to express release from captivity or punishment. In theological language the word is sometimes employed in its primary sense to signify the kindness and mercy of God. But in the special sense in which it is here considered, an indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has been forgiven. Among the equivalent terms used in antiquity were *pax*, *remissio*, *donatio*, *condonatio*.”

What an indulgence is not...

To facilitate explanation, it may be well to state what an indulgence is not. It is not a permission to commit sin, nor a pardon of future sin. Neither could be granted by any power. It is not the forgiveness of the guilt of sin; it supposes that the sin has already been forgiven. It is not an exemption from any law or duty, and much less from the obligation consequent on certain kinds of sin, e.g., restitution; on the contrary, it means a more complete payment of the debt which the sinner owes to God. It does not confer immunity from temptation or remove the possibility of subsequent lapses into sin. Least of all is an indulgence the purchase of a pardon which secures the buyer's salvation or releases the soul of another from Purgatory. The absurdity of such notions must be obvious to anyone who forms a correct idea of what the Catholic Church really teaches on this subject.

What an indulgence is...

An indulgence is the extra-sacramental remission of the temporal punishment due, in God's justice, to sin that has been forgiven, which remission is granted by the Church in the exercise of the power of the keys, through the application of the superabundant merits of Christ and of the saints, and for some just and reasonable motive. We must never attempt to quantify God's Infinite and Divine Mercy, so it is important to remember, in the case of all indulgences, we pray for the stated benefits of the indulgence to be granted by Our Lord. Regarding this definition, the following points are to be noted:

- In the Sacrament of Baptism, not only is the guilt of sin remitted, but also all the penalties attached to sin. In the Sacrament of Penance, the guilt of sin is removed; but there still remains the temporal punishment required by Divine Justice, and this requirement must be fulfilled either in the present life or in the world to come, i.e., in Purgatory. An indulgence offers the penitent sinner the means of discharging this debt during his life on earth.

- ② Some writs of indulgence—none of them, however, issued by any pope or council (Pesch, *Tr. Dogm.*, VII, 196, no. 464)—contain the expression, "indulgentia a culpa et a poena", i.e. release from guilt and from punishment; and this has occasioned considerable misunderstanding (cf. Lea, "History" etc. III, 54 sqq.). The real meaning of the formula is that, indulgences presupposing the Sacrament of Penance, the penitent, after receiving sacramental absolution from the guilt of sin, is afterwards freed from the temporal penalty by the indulgence (Bellarmine, "De Indulg"., I, 7). In other words, sin is fully pardoned, i.e. its effects entirely obliterated, only when complete reparation, and consequently release from penalty as well as from guilt, has been made. Hence Clement V (1305-1314) condemned the practice of those purveyors of indulgences who pretended to absolve "a culpa et a poena" (Clement, I. v, tit. 9, c. ii); the Council of Constance (1418) revoked (Sess. XLII, n. 14) all indulgences containing the said formula; Benedict XIV (1740-1758) treats them as spurious indulgences granted in this form, which he ascribes to the illicit practices of the "quaestores" or purveyors (*De Syn. dioeces.*, VIII, viii. 7).
- ② The satisfaction, usually called the "penance", imposed by the confessor when he gives absolution is an integral part of the Sacrament of Penance. An indulgence is extra-sacramental. It presupposes the effects obtained by confession, contrition, and sacramental satisfaction. It differs also from the penitential works undertaken of his own accord by the repentant sinner — prayer, fasting, alms-giving — in that these are personal and get their value from the merit of him who performs them, whereas an indulgence places at the penitent's disposal the merits of Christ and of the saints, which form the "Treasury" of the Church.
- ② An indulgence is valid both in the tribunal of the Church and in the tribunal of God. This means that it not only releases the penitent from his indebtedness to the Church or from the obligation of performing canonical penance, but also from the temporal punishment which he has incurred in the sight of God and which, without the indulgence, he would have to undergo in order to satisfy Divine justice. This, however, does not imply that the Church pretends to set aside the claim of God's justice or that she allows the sinner to repudiate his debt. As St. Thomas says (*Supplement.25.1 ad 2um*), "He who gains indulgences is not thereby released outright from what he owes as penalty, but is provided with the means of paying it." The Church therefore neither leaves the penitent helplessly in debt nor acquits him of all further accounting; she enables him to meet his obligations.

- ② In granting an indulgence, the grantor (pope or bishop) does not offer his personal merits in lieu of what God demands from the sinner. He acts in his official capacity as having jurisdiction in the Church, from whose spiritual treasury he draws the means wherewith payment is to be made. The Church herself is not the absolute owner, but simply the administratrix, of the superabundant merits which that treasury contains. In applying them, she keeps in view both the design of God's mercy and the demands of God's justice. She therefore determines the amount of each concession, as well as the conditions which the penitent must fulfill if he would gain the indulgence.

The HANDBOOK of INDULGENCES, Norms and Grants, from the Catholic Book Publishing Company, not only lists all of the partial and plenary indulgences, but it also details the dispositions (conditions and requirements) that are required to gain them. There can be other dispositions for receiving indulgences, and in particular plenary indulgences. These are noted in The HANDBOOK of INDULGENCES, Norms and Grants. The requirements for gaining a plenary indulgence, in addition to the performance of the indulgenced work, are:

1. Free from the attachment to sin*:
2. Prayer for the Pope's intentions (can be satisfied by reciting once the Our Father and Hail Mary); and
3. Sacramental confession; and
4. Eucharistic communion; and

* Attachment to sin can briefly be explained as follows: A standard temptation to a particular immoral action can afflict anyone. If a person has never before committed that sin, he is usually able to resist the temptation should he choose to do so. But once he has committed that sin, his ability to resist committing it weakens and it becomes a problematic area in his life. For example, someone who has never told a lie will not only find it difficult to lie, he will also find it easier to resist the temptation to lie. But once he starts lying, he will not only find lying easier, he will also find it more difficult to tell the truth. Thus he becomes "attached" to the sin of lying. Freeing oneself from such attachments is difficult because we must struggle hard to re-orient ourselves to choosing the moral option. Once you go through the process of removing all "attachment to sin from your life," you will understand...it is much more than avoiding the near occasion of sin. ***It's the thought or action before the thought or action.*** If this condition, or any condition of the indulgenced work is absent, or not met in accordance with the granted norm, the indulgence is partial.

These conditions may be carried out several days preceding or following performance of the prescribed work. But it is more fitting that the communion and the prayer for the Pope's intentions take place on the day the work is performed. Conformance to all of the above constitutes what is known as being "fully disposed". If a person is not fully disposed or if the prescribed work and the conditions are not fulfilled, the indulgence will only be partial.

Again, we do not know how long, in days or years, the punishment will be required by God in Purgatory for souls with any venial sin and/or the stain of sin on their souls. We also do not know how long the days or years are in Purgatory.

Here is just one way that you can gain a plenary indulgence, which you may do once each day, on a daily basis. A plenary indulgence can always be gained for a Poor Soul in Purgatory, when you are "fully disposed":

Enter the church approximately 30 minutes before confessions are heard, followed by your assistance at Mass.

Begin the process by saying, "I am here to receive a plenary indulgence (if you are there to receive a plenary indulgence for a Poor Soul in Purgatory... you would say you are there to receive a plenary indulgence for a specific Poor Soul), and I perform the indulgenced work for the intentions of the Holy Father."

Recite once the Our Father and Hail Mary.

Recite the Marian Rosary, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, which is the indulgenced work.

Make a good confession.

Receive Holy Communion during Mass.

How much easier could it be for you, to have your soul as clean and white as it was immediately following your Baptism, than this? Or, to get a Poor Soul out of Purgatory?

You can do this once each day, every day.

The 12-year Prayers of St. Bridget of Sweden

Opportunities of Sure Salvation

“The soul who prays them can choose three others whom Jesus will then keep in a state of grace sufficient to become holy.”

The Magnificent Promises of the 12 Years Prayers

1. The soul who prays them will suffer no Purgatory.
2. The soul who prays them will be accepted among the Martyrs as though he had spilled his blood for his faith.
3. The soul who prays them can choose three others whom Jesus will then keep in a state of grace sufficient to become holy.
4. No one in the four successive generations of the soul who prays them will be lost.
5. The soul who prays them will be made conscious of his death one month in advance.

** If the soul praying these prayers dies before the entire 12 years of prayers have been completed, the Lord will accept them as having been prayed in their entirety, because the intention of the soul was to complete them as directed. If a day or a few days are missed due to a valid reason, they can be made up for later, at the soul's earliest opportunity.

**Prayers Honoring the 7 Times Jesus Spilled His Precious
Blood for Us, as Revealed by Our Lady to St. Bridget,
and Approved by Pope Clement XII**

The 12-Year Prayers

O Jesus, now I wish to pray the Lord's Prayer seven times in unity with the love with which You sanctified this prayer in Your Heart. Take it from my lips into Your Divine Heart. Improve and complete it so much that it brings as much honor and joy to the Trinity as You granted it on earth with this prayer. May these pour upon Your Holy Humanity in Glorification to Your Painful Wounds and the Precious Blood that You spilled from them.

First Prayer: The Circumcision

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You the first wounds, the first pains, and the first Bloodshed as atonement for my and all of humanity's sins of youth, as protection against the first mortal sin, especially among my relatives.

Second Prayer: The Suffering on the Mount of Olives

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You the terrifying suffering of Jesus' Heart on the Mount of Olives and every drop of His Bloody Sweat as atonement for my and all of humanity's sins of the heart, as protection against such sins and for the spreading of Divine and brotherly Love.

Third Prayer: The Flogging

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You the many thousands of Wounds, the gruesome Pains, and the Precious Blood of the Flogging as atonement for my and all of humanity's sins of the Flesh, as protection against such sins and the preservation of innocence, especially among my relatives.

Fourth Prayer: The Crowning of Thorns

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You the Wounds, the Pains, and the Precious Blood of Jesus' Holy Head from the Crowning with Thorns as atonement for my and all of humanity's sins of the Spirit, as protection against such sins and the spreading of Christ's kingdom here on earth.

Fifth Prayer: The Carrying of the Cross

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You the Sufferings on the way of the Cross, especially His Holy Wound on His Shoulder and its Precious Blood as atonement for my and all of humanity's rebellion against the Cross, every grumbling against Your Holy Arrangements and all other sins of the tongue, as protection against such sins and for true love of the Cross.

Sixth Prayer: The Crucifixion

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, through Mary's unblemished hands and the Divine Heart of Jesus, I offer You Your Son on the Cross, His Nailing and Raising, His Wounds on the Hands and Feet and the three streams of His Precious Blood that poured forth from these for us, His extreme tortures of the Body and Soul, His precious Death and its non-bleeding Renewal in all Holy Masses on earth as atonement for all wounds against vows and regulations within the Orders, as reparation for my and all of the world's sins, for the sick and the dying, for all holy priests and laymen, for the Holy Father's intentions toward the restoration of Christian families, for the strengthening of Faith, for our country and unity among all nations in Christ and His Church, as well as for the Diaspora.

Seventh Prayer: The Piercing of Jesus' Side

Pray 1 Our Father, 1 Hail Mary, then: Eternal Father, accept as worthy, for the needs of the Holy Church and as atonement for the sins of all Mankind, the Precious Blood and Water which poured forth from the Wound of Jesus' Divine Heart. Be gracious and merciful toward us. Blood of Christ, the last precious content of His Holy Heart, wash me of all my and others' guilt of sin! Water from the Side of Christ, wash me clean of all punishments for sin and extinguish the flames of Purgatory for me and for all the Poor Souls. Amen.

The Prayer of St. Gertrude, below, is one of the most famous of the prayers for souls in Purgatory. St. Gertrude the Great was a Benedictine nun and mystic who lived in the 13th century. According to tradition, Our Lord promised her that 1,000 souls would be released from Purgatory each time it is said devoutly.

The Prayer of St. Gertrude

Eternal Father, I offer Thee the Most Precious Blood of Thy Divine Son, Jesus, in union with the masses said throughout the world today, for all the holy souls in Purgatory, for sinners everywhere, for sinners in the universal church, those in my own home and within my family. Amen.

Never underestimate the power of prayer!