

## Is it necessary for priests to tell people about the Plenary Indulgence for Divine Mercy Sunday?

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church** explains that: “the **doctrine and practice of indulgences** in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the sacrament of Penance”. (Catechism 1471)

This indicates clearly that **indulgences are the doctrine of the Catholic Church**. The Catechism then explains **Doctrine/Dogma** as “The revealed teachings of Christ which are proclaimed by the fullest extent of the exercise of the authority of the Church’s Magisterium. The faithful are obliged to believe the truths or dogmas contained in divine Revelation and defined by the Magisterium. (88)

The Catechism further clarifies in 1472. To understand **this doctrine and practice of the Church** (pertaining to the plenary indulgences), it is necessary to understand that sin has a *double consequence*. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called the “eternal punishment” of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the “temporal punishment” of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain.<sup>83</sup>

## What is Doctrine?

In Catholic teaching, a **truth** whose acceptance is necessary for the faithful, **whether or not infallibly taught**. **All the teaching in the Catechism of the Catholic Church**, including those parts not formally defined as **dogma**, **must be accepted** with a religious submission of intellect and will by all believers.

This truth may also be from a theological conclusion, such as the canonization of a particular saint.

**Any truth taught by the Church** as necessary for acceptance by the Faithful **is doctrine**. In 1998 the Motu Proprio of the pope stated that all the teaching of the Magisterium of the Church must be accepted even when not presented as dogma, even when they are not defined. **These must be accepted by all.**

Pope John Paul II’s apostolic letter *motu proprio, Ad Tuendam Fidem*, updated the Code of Canon Law. Canon 750 now states:

Canon 750.2. Furthermore, each and everything set forth definitively by the Magisterium of the Church regarding teaching on faith and morals must be firmly accepted and held; namely, those things required for the holy keeping and faithful exposition of the deposit of faith; therefore, **anyone who rejects propositions which are to be held definitively sets himself against the teaching of the Church.**

Canon 752: “While the assent of faith is not required, **a religious submission of intellect and will is to be given to any doctrine which either the Supreme Pontiff or the College of Bishops, exercising their authentic magisterium, declare upon a matter of faith and morals, even though they do not intend to proclaim that doctrine by definitive act.** Christ’s faithful are therefore to ensure that they avoid whatever does not accord with that doctrine.”

*Lumen Gentium* # 25, confirms it: “**This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will.**”

We must always remember what Jesus said to Saint Peter: “Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

We can see the “will” of the Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, Pope John Paul II in the words of the Special Plenary Indulgence for Divine Mercy Sunday:

### ***Duty of honouring Divine Mercy***

The faithful with deep spiritual affection are drawn to commemorate the mysteries of divine pardon and to celebrate them devoutly. They clearly understand the supreme benefit, **indeed the duty**, that the People of God have to praise Divine Mercy with special prayers and, at the same time, they realize that by gratefully performing the works required and satisfying the necessary conditions, they can obtain spiritual benefits that derive from the Treasury of the Church. "The paschal mystery is the culmination of this revealing and effecting of mercy, which is able to justify man, to restore justice in the sense of that salvific order which God willed from the beginning in man, and through man, in the world" (Encyclical Letter *Dives in misericordia*, n. 7).

### ***Second Sunday of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday***

And so **with provident pastoral sensitivity** and in order to impress deeply on the souls of the faithful these precepts and teachings of the Christian faith, **the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, moved by the consideration of the Father of Mercy, has willed that the Second Sunday of Easter be dedicated to recalling with special devotion these gifts of grace and gave this Sunday the name, "Divine Mercy Sunday"** (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Decree *Misericors et miserator*, 5 May 2000).

### ***Plenary Indulgence***

To ensure that the faithful would observe this day with intense devotion, **the Supreme Pontiff himself established that this Sunday be enriched by a plenary indulgence.... so that the faithful might receive in great abundance the gift of the consolation of the Holy Spirit. In this way, they can foster a growing love for God and for their neighbour, and after they have obtained God's pardon, they in turn might be persuaded to show a prompt pardon to their brothers and sisters.**

### ***Duty of priests: inform parishioners, hear confessions, lead prayers***

**Priests** who exercise pastoral ministry, **especially parish priests, should** inform the faithful in the most suitable way of the Church's salutary provision. **They should promptly** and generously be willing to hear their confessions. On Divine Mercy Sunday, after celebrating Mass, Vespers, or during devotions in honour of Divine Mercy, with the dignity that is in accord with the rite, **they should lead the recitation of the prayers** that have been given above. Finally, since "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Mt 5,7), when they instruct their people, priests should gently encourage the faithful to practise works of charity or mercy as often as they can, following the example of, and in obeying the commandment of Jesus Christ, as is listed for the second general concession of indulgence in the "*Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*".

**This Decree has perpetual force, any provision to the contrary notwithstanding.**

Archbishop Luigi De Magistris,  
*Major Pro-Penitentiary*

Fr Gianfranco Girotti, O.F.M. Conv.,  
*Regent*