



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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December 9, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our Holy Father Benedict XVI, on the eve of the Solemnity of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 28, 2008, declared a special year of grace in honour of the Apostle St. Paul. His Holiness stated on that occasion:

"Dear Brothers and Sisters, as in early times, today too Christ needs apostles ready to sacrifice themselves. He needs witnesses and martyrs like St. Paul. Paul, a former violent persecutor of Christians, when he fell to the ground dazzled by the divine light on the road to Damascus, did not hesitate to change sides to the Crucified One and followed Him without second thoughts. He lived and worked for Christ, for Him he suffered and died. How timely is his example today! And for this reason I am pleased to announce officially that we shall be dedicating a special Jubilee Year to the Apostle Paul from 28 June 2008 to 29 June 2009, on the occasion of the bimillennium of his birth, which historians have placed between the years 7 and 10 AD."

To mark this special year of Grace, this dedicated year to St. Paul, the great evangelizer, it would be a good and worthy practice to not only ask for St. Paul's intercession in our time of need but also to take some time to read prayerfully his Letters in the New Testament. It would also be fruitful, if one had the opportunity, to read something about the life of this great saint.

In conjunction with these practices, Pope Benedict XVI has granted a Plenary Indulgence to the Faithful on this occasion of the 2000th Anniversary of the birth of St. Paul the Apostle. This special Grace, which we call an Indulgence, can be received by fulfilling the conditions prescribed for obtaining such a Plenary Indulgence, coupled with a visit to one or more of the three churches in the Diocese of Victoria dedicated to this Year of St. Paul.

- 1) St. Andrew's Cathedral – in a certain sense the mother church of the Faithful of the Diocese.
- 2) St. Peter's Parish church in Nanaimo – dedicated during this Year of St. Paul because of the close association of both Peter and Paul in founding the Church in Rome.
- 3) St. Paul's Church on Salt Spring Island - one of the oldest churches of the Diocese and the only one dedicated to St. Paul.

There is available in the church vestibule, a handout which explains the Church's teaching on indulgences and provides information about each of the dedicated churches.

May this Year of St. Paul be a year of Grace for all of us in our Diocese and through the intercession of St. Paul may we progress in holiness.

Yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Richard Gagnon
Bishop of Victoria

What is an Indulgence?

Today there are common misunderstandings about indulgences. The very word itself has a negative connotation for many, bringing to mind the sad period when the Protestant Reformists, particularly Martin Luther, ridiculed the Church for the way that certain Church leaders abused the teaching on indulgences by selling them as merchandise to buy pardon for sins committed.

It is indeed understandable that the idea of indulgences be rejected by many people. In actual fact, however, the Church's teaching on indulgences is something valuable and well worthwhile. It is linked to other beautiful teachings of the Church such as the Communion of Saints, Grace and Forgiveness of Sins. For a more in depth understanding of this question it would be good to refer to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 1471-1479).

Briefly speaking, an indulgence "is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church ..." (CCC 1471). Furthermore, it is worth knowing that an indulgence can be partial or plenary according to whether or not it partially removes or completely removes the temporal punishment due to sin. In fact, the faithful Christian can gain an indulgence for themselves or apply it to those who have died – much as we pray for the souls of the Faithful Departed on All Souls Day.

Now, if our serious sins are already forgiven in the Sacrament of Reconciliation or in those cases of deep repentance when we cannot go to confession, and our life and health are seriously compromised, what do we mean by the "temporal punishment" due to sin? We are speaking here of the effects of our venial sins, those sinful actions and thoughts which we struggle with constantly in our quest for holiness. It seems that, as sinners, we have a tendency to be attached to things in this world and love God and our neighbour imperfectly. Even though we repent of serious sin which deprives us of eternal life (mortal sin) we often remain attached to selfishness, resentments and complacencies relative to the call of our Baptism. In all of these types of things in our human condition we must be purified through Prayer and Penance in this life or in Purgatory in the next if we are to enter into the Kingdom where there can be no sin. The reason for this is because a true love of God and neighbour demands a total self-giving just as the Lord has given himself to us totally and continues to do so in the Holy Eucharist. This is the purpose of Lent, for example, where we seek holiness through Prayer, Penance and Fasting. As St. Paul would say to us: "... the old man must be replaced by the new..." (Eph. 4:22, 24)

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And this is where the Doctrine of the Communion of Saints comes in. It is worth knowing that the Christian who seeks to purify himself or herself of these sinful attachments to self and the things of this world in order to live the vocation of holiness, is not alone. In fact *“the life of each of God’s children is joined in Christ and through Christ in a wonderful way to the life of all other Christians in the Mystical Body of Christ”* (CCC 1474). There is a link of charity as we say, between those now in heaven, those expiating their sins in Purgatory and those still living on earth. Between all of these members of Christ is an exchange, a spiritual exchange of good things we call graces. First of all and by far the most important Grace is the Redeeming Grace won for us by the merits of Jesus Christ through his Cross and Resurrection. Yet in a limited way, Jesus has allowed all of us to join him in this work of Salvation starting with the prayers and good works of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints and then through the spiritual faith and good works of the faithful in this world and the next. All of this Grace is called the “Treasury of the Church” because it is linked together and the holiness of one affects and profits others well beyond the harm that the sin of one could cause others.

An Indulgence then, is obtained through the Church which, through the power of “binding and loosing” granted by Christ, imparts to the Christian, the Grace of the forgiveness of the temporal punishment due to our sins. It is, as the Catechism teaches, an opening to the individual of the *“treasury of the merits of Christ and the Saints to obtain from the Father of Mercies the remission of the temporal punishment due to their sins”* (CCC 1478). The Church, in fact, is constantly open this great treasury of Grace every time we receive the Body of the Lord or any of the Sacraments. We should also realize that the use of the word punishment here is not a reference to a sort of vengeance on God’s part but in fact is the reality stemming from the very nature of sin itself – sin affects our relationship with God..

In Pope Benedict’s Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, he states:

“...the practice of indulgences, which involves not only the doctrine of Christ’s infinite merits but also that of the communion of saints, reminds us how closely we are united to each other in Christ...and how the supernatural life of each can help others.”

In reference to this, we can see that the conditions for gaining indulgences, including Sacramental Confession and Holy Communion, are means to effectively sustain the faithful on their journey of conversion and the rediscovery of the centrality of the Eucharist in the Christian life.

St. Paul, pray for us!

Conditions to obtain a Plenary Indulgence:

Plenary Indulgences can be acquired only once each day. (Unless one is at the moment before death, in which case he or she may acquire another. An exception to the “usual conditions” being on All Souls Day – November 2 – when the Faithful may gain more than one Plenary Indulgence, only for the souls in Purgatory.)

The following are “the usual conditions” for receiving a Plenary Indulgence:

- Have the intention of gaining the Indulgence
- Receive the Sacrament of Penance (within several days before or after the prescribed action of the Indulgence, though the same day is best, if possible)
- Receive the Eucharist (within several days before or after the prescribed action of the Indulgence, though the same day is best, if possible).
- Pray at least one Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be for the intentions of the Holy Father. The traditional practice, if one desires, would be to pray six of each of the above prayers (within several days or after the prescribed action of the Indulgence, though the same day is best, if possible). In addition to this practice, one would also pray the Creed for the intentions of the Holy Father when visiting one of the dedicated churches for the Indulgence.
- Perform the prescribed action of the Indulgence. During this Year of Saint Paul, until June 29, 2009, this prescribed action would be to visit one of the dedicated churches of:
 - St. Andrew’s Cathedral, Victoria
 - St. Paul’s Church, Fulford Harbour, Salt Spring Island
 - St. Peter’s Church, Nanaimo
- The Plenary Indulgence can also be gained outside of the context of the Year of St. Paul by visiting a church on the day of its consecration or on its feast day.
- Be free from all attachment of venial sin, in other words, having the sincere intention of being free from venial sin.
- In the case of individuals who cannot travel to the designated churches due to age or ill health, it is sufficient to simply have the intention and desire to do so and to fulfill the other conditions marking a Plenary Indulgence.

ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

740 VIEW STREET, VICTORIA

TEL.: (250) 388-5571

Open to the general public: Mondays through Fridays, 7:00 am to 5:00 pm and Saturdays and Sundays, closed after the conclusion of the 5:00 pm Masses.

Mass schedule:

Monday: 12:10pm

Tuesday to Friday: 8 am, 12:10 pm

Weekends:

Saturday: 9:30 am, 5:00 pm.

Sunday: 8, 9:30, 11 am, 5 pm

Reconciliation:

Friday 11:30 am-12 pm; Saturday 10:30 am, 3 pm; 1st Friday 10:30 am; or by appointment

Morning Prayer: Tuesday –Friday 7:30 am; Saturday 8:30 am

Our Lady of Perpetual Help Devotions: Wednesday 12:40 pm

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

301 MACHLEARY STREET, NANAIMO

TEL.: (250) 753-3570

The Church is open during the office hours: Monday to Friday, 10 am – 4 pm

Mass schedule:

Tuesday: 7 pm

Wednesday and Thursday: 9 am

Friday: 7 pm

First Saturdays: 9 am

Weekends:

Saturday: 5 pm – Family Mass

Sunday: 8:30 am; 10:30 am

Reconciliation:

Friday: 6 – 6:45 pm

Saturday: 4 – 4:45 pm

Adoration:

Begins on Monday 7 am, closes with Benediction on Friday 6:45 pm

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH, SALT SPRING ISLAND
(FULFORD HARBOUR)

Served by Our Lady of Grace (Parish Church)

135 Drake Road (Ganges), Salt Spring Island

Tel.: (250) 537-2150

Mass schedule:

8 am Sunday except for the 1st Sunday of the month.

The church is not open to the public except at Mass times. Confession by appointment