

KDCCW CONVENTION BULLETIN

Plenary Indulgence Available for Visit to the Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul

As a result of the communion that exists between Christ and all the members of the Church, the Church has a treasury of spiritual goods that is inexhaustible. The source of these spiritual goods is Christ. Pope Paul VI taught that this treasury is not to be likened to a centuries-old accumulation of material wealth. It means rather the limitless and inexhaustible value that the expiations and merits offered by Christ have in the eyes of God for the liberation of all humanity from sin and for the creation of communion with the Father. The treasury of the Church is Christ the Redeemer himself: in Him the atonement and merit of His redemption exist and are at work.

Since the martyrs and saints have accomplished all that they have in union with Christ, this treasury also includes the value of all their prayers and good works. "As they followed Christ through the power of his grace, they became holy and they have accomplished a work pleasing to the Father. As a result, in working out their own salvation they have also contributed to the salvation of their co-members in Christ's Mystical Body."

Through her union with Christ, the Church has the authority to dispense this treasury. When the Church does this, in order to spur people to acts of piety and charity, the Church requires those who seek an indulgence to perform some good work or act of devotion. Furthermore, for reception of a plenary indulgence, which grants the remission of all temporal punishment due to sin, in addition to this good work or act of devotion, **the Church specifies four conditions: (1) sacramental confession, (2) reception of Holy Communion, (3) prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father, and (4) complete detachment from all sin, even venial sin.** It must not be thought, however, that such acts of ours are somehow of themselves sufficient to earn the remission of the temporal punishment for sins. Our efforts, themselves the work of God's grace, express our openness to receive God's mercy. In the work of our salvation, it is always God's grace that is primary, with a power that far exceeds all our efforts.

Just as it is because of the Communion of Saints within the Body of Christ that the Church can grant an indulgence to someone, it is likewise because of the Communion of Saints that one person can obtain an indulgence for someone who has died in order to reduce his or her temporal punishment in Purgatory. We the living are not separated from the faithful departed by death and can still do things for their benefit. As Pope John Paul II has pointed out, "the truth about the communion of saints which unites believers to Christ and to one another, reveals how much each of us can help others, living or dead, to become ever more intimately united with the Father in heaven." At the same time, all of us in the Communion of Saints need to recognize that whatever help we can give each other ultimately comes not from ourselves but from Christ. "For when the faithful gain indulgences they realize that by their own powers they cannot atone for the evil that they have afflicted upon themselves and the entire community by sinning; they therefore are moved to a healthy humility."

What a beautiful gift to give to ourselves or offer for a loved one in purgatory that might need our prayers or, even more significant, for the poor souls who have no one to pray for them.