

**Homily for the Second Sunday of Lent - Year A
March 5, 2023**

**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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Bishop of Springfield in Illinois**

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

On this Second Sunday of Lent, our Gospel reading is traditionally about the Transfiguration, that remarkable event when Jesus was shown in His magnificent divinity as the Son of God. We are given this account early in Lent to remind us that our Lenten practices should help us to strive to be more like Christ so that our Heavenly Father may be well pleased with us as His adopted sons and daughters through baptism.

One of the ways that we grow in holiness is through pious practices that grant indulgences. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment for sins, whose guilt is forgiven, which a properly disposed member of the Christian faithful obtains under certain and clearly defined conditions through the intervention of the Church, which, as the minister of Redemption, dispenses and applies authoritatively the treasury of the expiatory works of Christ and the saints. An indulgence is partial or

plenary according to whether it removes either part or all of the temporal punishment due sin.

Last year on December 8th, as we began our Diocesan Year of the Eucharist and opened our Centennial Celebration of the 100th anniversary of the transfer of our diocese from Alton to Springfield, I announced that I had received a decree from the Holy See granting a plenary indulgence under the usual conditions for the Christian faithful who visit our Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception here in Springfield or the Church of Ss. Peter and Paul in Alton between the 8th day of December 2022 and the 9th day of December 2023.

The “usual conditions” to gain a plenary indulgence are excluding all attachment to sin, even venial sin, performing the indulgenced work, and fulfilling the three conditions of sacramental confession, Eucharistic Communion, and prayer for the intention of the Pope. The “indulgenced work” for this plenary indulgence is to attend a liturgical service celebrating the jubilee or at least spending a suitable period of time devoted to prayers for the people of our Diocese to be faithful to the Christian vocation and recite the Lord’s Prayer, profess the Creed, and offer invocations to the

Immaculate Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary and Saints Peter and Paul.

The three conditions may be fulfilled several days before or after the performance of the prescribed work; it is, however, fitting that Holy Communion be received and the prayer for the intention of the Holy Father be said on the same day the work is performed.

The condition of praying for the intention of the Holy Father involves reciting one Our Father and one Hail Mary or any other prayer according to one's individual piety and devotion, if recited for this intention.

Those of you who come regularly to our Cathedral have the advantage of receiving this plenary indulgence frequently, even daily, during this Year of the Eucharist. Nevertheless, even you may not be able to come to the Cathedral every day, so I wanted to call to your attention to the partial indulgences that may be gained every day in the course of your daily lives and ordinary activities.

There are four general concessions by which the Christian faithful are encouraged to infuse their daily lives with a Christian spirit and strive toward the perfection of charity. These four general concessions or grants are as follows:

1. A partial indulgence is granted to the Christian faithful who, while carrying out their duties and enduring the hardships of life, raise their minds in humble trust to God and make, at least mentally, some pious invocation. This can be done, for example, by offering to God the hardships encountered in one's daily work or tasks.
2. A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who, led by the spirit of faith, give compassionately of themselves or of their goods to serve their brothers and sisters in need. There are a variety of ways to do this, such as volunteering at St. John's Breadline, donating clothing to the St. Martin de Porres Center, or making a monetary contribution to Catholic Charities or some other charity that helps the poor.
3. A partial indulgence is granted to the Christian faithful who, in a spirit of penance, voluntarily abstain from something that is licit for and pleasing to them. The Lenten requirements of fasting between meals on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent are actually quite mild and minimal. Thus, we are also encouraged to do voluntary penances. By holding our appetites in check, we are moved to regain mastery of our bodies and conform ourselves to the poor and suffering Christ.

4. A partial indulgence is granted to the Christian faithful who, in the particular circumstances of daily life, voluntarily give explicit witness to their faith before others. This grant encourages the faithful to profess their faith openly before others, for the glory of God and the building up of the Church.

In addition to these four general concessions of partial indulgences that can be gained on a daily basis, there are many other prayers and pious practices by which the faithful can gain partial indulgences and, in some cases, plenary indulgences as well. For example, the faithful can obtain a plenary indulgence each day of the year by the devout reading or listening to the Sacred Scriptures for at least a half an hour, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament for at least one-half hour, praying of the Way of the Cross, or recitation of the rosary in a church or an oratory or in a family, a religious community, or in general when several of the faithful are gathered to pray together. Many other prayers impart a partial indulgence.

A full listing of the indulgences granted for various pious practices, prayers, litanies, devotions, and invocations can be found in the *Manual of*

Indulgences, published in 2006 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and which is available online by searching for *Manual of Indulgences*.¹

I encourage us to become more familiar with the Church's teaching on indulgences and take advantage of this wonderful means of growing in holiness and grace. As Jesus was transfigured on the mountaintop, may our lives be changed this Lent to resemble more closely the likeness of Jesus for all to see.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Manual of Indulgences* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006).