

Indulgences

Can Good Works and Rituals Really Save You?

Salvation According to Roman Catholicism

Redefining Sin

The Roman Catholic Church redefines sin by dividing it into two categories. **Moral sin** is sin only Jesus can atone (pay) for. **Venial sins** are lesser sins man must atone for in purgatory as a means of purification before he can enter heaven.

What is an Indulgence?

“Indulgence” is a Roman Catholic term that is **not** found in the Bible. The Vatican defines an indulgence as “the taking away of the temporal punishment due to sin.” (Vatican II - Flannery Pg. 70). The Roman Catholic Church defines temporal punishment as suffering in the fires of purgatory for venial (lessor) sins. Through performing certain **rituals** or **works** according to specific Vatican rules, a Catholic may obtain an indulgence, which lessens the time spent in purgatory. The amount of temporal punishment that is taken away is determined by the value of the act (Vatican II, Pg. 74, 75). According to the Catholic Church, the primary purpose for granting indulgences is to “help the faithful expiate their sins.” (Vatican II, Pg. 71).

Where Does Forgiveness Come From?

The Pope is said to have the authority and power to dispense these indulgences to Catholics from a **treasury of merit**. “This invisible **treasury** contains the **infinite merits** of Christ, as well as the merits of **Mary** and the **saints**. They are truly immense, unfathomable, and even pristine in their value before God. In the treasury, too, are the **prayers** and **good works** of the saints, all those who have followed in the footsteps of Christ the Lord and by His grace have made their lives holy and carried out the mission the Father entrusted to them. Catholics “in this way, **attain their own salvation** and at the same time cooperate in saving their brothers.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church - Para 1477).

History of Indulgences

This tradition began in the Middle Ages when **Pope Urban II** promised a **plenary indulgence** to anyone who would participate in the **Crusades**. At first, only the sins of the living could be taken away, but in 1477 Pope Sixtus IV declared they could be applied to the souls in purgatory as well. This began Rome’s works for the dead. Revenues from the sale of indulgences helped finance the construction of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. This public selling of indulgences outraged Martin Luther and sparked the Reformation in 1517. As the use of indulgences spread there were many abuses including the “collection of unlawful profits which blasphemously took away the good name of indulgences.” (Vatican II, Pg. 71) As a result, Vatican Council II had to set up twenty new rules for granting indulgences. An example is Rule #17, “The faithful who use with devotion an object of piety (crucifix, cross, rosary, scapular, or medal) after it has been duly blessed by any priest, can gain a partial indulgence. But, if this object of piety is blessed by the Pope or any bishop, the faithful who use it with devotion can also gain a plenary indulgence on the feast of the Apostle Peter and Paul, provided they make a confession of faith using any approved formula (Vatican II, Pg. 77, 78). The Council also reduced the number of plenary indulgences in order to esteem them more, realizing, “what is offered too abundantly is not sufficiently appreciated (Vatican II, Pg. 75). Vatican II also abolished the laws, which defined

the exact number of days, and years a person could escape the fires of Purgatory with each indulgence. Prior to Vatican II Catholics knew that saying the rosary would reduce the time they or their loved ones had to spend in purgatory, by 7 years. **Presently**, the Roman Catholic Church takes indulgences **very** seriously. It “condemns **with anathema** (eternal condemnation) **those who say that indulgences are useless or that the church does not have the power to grant them.**” (Vatican II, Pg. 71).

Biblical Truth Mixed with Catholic Error

There are many Roman Catholic traditions that nullify the Word of God and deny the sufficiency of Christ’s atonement, but none so flagrant as the practice of indulgences. Rome teaches that Jesus Christ completely paid the eternal punishment for sin, but then states a temporal punishment still remains to be paid by indulgences. This would be like a father completely paying off the outstanding debt of his daughter’s car loan and the bank insisting the monthly payments must continue.

A Christian Response

Those who understand and believe the Gospel know that salvation is a free gift from God. Scriptures clearly state that salvation is by grace and not by works (Ephesians 2:8, 9, & 10). **Grace** means a free gift. No one can earn or become worthy of salvation. It is given only through faith. Indulgences are works of man which nullify and oppose God’s method of salvation. Christians who have an understanding of the true meaning of the scriptures are not easily deceived. No man can by any means redeem his brother or give God a ransom for him, for the redemption of his soul is costly and he should cease trying forever (Psalm 49:7-8). When Jesus Christ is exalted as the all-sufficient Savior, He destroys the deceptive works of the devil. Jesus “appeared in order to take away **all** sins. He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross. He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the chastening for our well being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed” (1 John 3:5; 1 Peter 2:4, Isaiah 53.5). It is appalling for anyone to devalue the precious blood of Christ by substituting indulgences as a method of forgiveness of sins. Anyone who believes saying the rosary or kissing a scapula can accomplish what Christ achieved by dying on the cross is woefully blind to the truth of the Gospel of grace.

The Bible Speaks

Scriptural truths for Catholics to investigate:

- The teaching that venial sin causes only “temporal punishment” is an eternally fatal deception. All sin, no matter how small, earns eternal punishment and separation from God (Romans 1:18, 6:23, Isaiah 59:2, Galatians 3:10).
- The Bible clearly teaches that the punishment for any sin is eternal not temporal (temporary). Those who die in any sin will be thrown into the eternal lake of fire (Rev. 20:14).
- Nowhere in Scripture do we find a treasury of human merit, where the good deeds of others can be transferred to the account of another. Since no such treasury exists, the granting of indulgences is a vain delusion. Salvation from the punishment of sin cannot be bought, sold, transferred or earned by man (Psalm 49:7-8).
- It is utterly impossible for any sinner to atone for his own sins in order to satisfy the wrath of God. Only the sacrifice of infinite Christ can pay the eternal punishment God’s justice demands for sin. (Hebrews 10:10; 1 John 1:9).

- Indulgences numb the consciences of men to the seriousness of sin and its dreadful consequences. It deters them from pursuing the truth. (Acts 4:12, Rom. 3:23-26).
- Sinners are not purified by indulgences nor the purging fires of purgatory but only by the precious blood of Jesus (Titus 2:14; Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 1:3, 1 Peter 1:18, 19, Romans 5:9).
- Indulgences are nothing more than a form of Simony - the selling of the grace of God (Acts 8, 18-24). Anyone who grants indulgences usurps the place of God. Who alone can take away the punishment for sin (Isaiah 12:2).
- Peter warned that false teachers will “introduce destructive heresies...and will bring the word of truth into disrepute. In their **greed** these teachers will exploit you with **stories they have made up.**” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

Consequences of Indulgences

The false gospel of indulgences has brought shame, ridicule and contempt to the name of Christ. Indulgences have unmercifully robbed the poor and deceived them with a false hope, leaving them to die in their sins. American Catholics may deny this practice continues but in Roman Catholic Church bulletins, indulgences are offered through Masses for the release of souls from purgatory throughout the whole world. Most mortuaries have Mass cards available for Masses to be performed for the dead. Catholic clergy should take heed, “The gaining of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death”. (Prov. 21:6).

Catholics Must Repent of Indulgences

Roman Catholics who are trying to obtain the mercy of God with money should follow the advice Peter gave Simon who tried to do the same. Peter told him, “Your heart is not right before God. Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps He will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart” (Acts 8:21-22). Only when Catholics repent can they behold the thorn-crowned Savior and be purified by His precious blood.

References (Official Roman Catholic Sources)

1. Autin Flannery, Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents (New York. Costello Publishing, 1988).
- 2, The Catechism of the Catholic Church (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1994, The Holy See Pg. ii)

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This publication is taken from an article Mike Gendron wrote and is available on their website. They have a 16-page fold out tract that compares Catechism with Scripture with over a million in circulation. Their newest tract, “Which Jesus Do You Trust” is also available in Spanish. Providing a number of tracts witnessing to Catholics they focus on Jesus and His ability to save sinners completely and forever.

Imago Dei Christian Community

a community drawn to Christ

Welcome

Imago Dei is a network of Christian faith communities based in Vancouver, British Columbia, with sister groups in other locations around B.C., as well as adherents in other countries. It is a ministry that has formed around principles of spiritual direction for the encouragement of a genuine experience of growth in the Christian spiritual life.

Imago Dei provides resources for the cultivation of the practice of prayer and the life of faith. It also models and encourages small fellowship groups for those who wish to pursue, in community with others, a growing communion with God in their lives.

Our ministry is

- to encourage a deeper spirituality in the lives of Christians
- to help recognize and welcome God's transforming work in life
- to encourage a growing faith towards the life God is calling us to live in this world.



IMAGO DEI

We offer spiritual direction and various resources for individual spiritual growth to all who desire encouragement. We also represent a community of faith that meets regularly for fellowship and support.



a community drawn to Christ

We refer to Imago Dei as “a community drawn to Christ” and the uncompleted pen drawing by Rembrandt that we use for our logo represents the ongoing question that inspires us in all we do—“Who are we becoming in Christ?”.

Rob Des Cotes, who directs Imago Dei, is a graduate of Regent College and is also pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Vancouver, B.C. He teaches Contemplative Traditions at Trinity Western University, as well as courses on spirituality and the arts at Carey Theological College and Columbia Bible College.

Imago Dei is affiliated with the MB denomination of BC.

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Finding Spiritual Direction

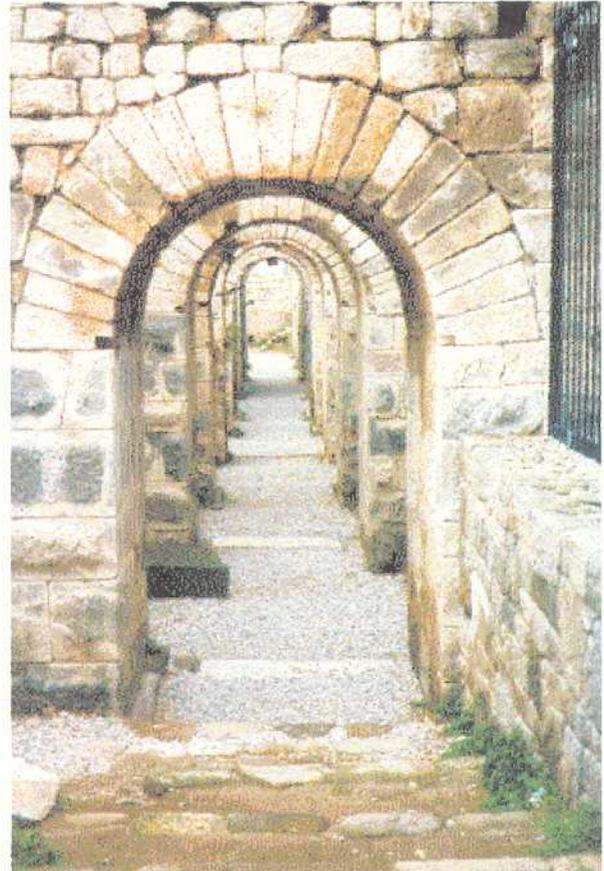
Spiritual Direction: Those wanting encouragement in the life of faith and prayer might consider the benefit of one-to-one spiritual direction. The goals of spiritual direction are:

- to help in experiencing and keeping kindled the presence of the Lord in our lives
- to help appraise our life stories in terms of God's purpose
- to help create a life-environment that is open to receiving God's graces
- to cultivate spiritual honesty with regards to all the drives and conflicts that form our unique self
- to learn how to keep growing as a Christian

If these represent your spiritual desires at this time, and if you live in the Vancouver area, you can e-mail us at info@imagodeicommunity.ca to set up a preliminary meeting time. We can also recommend other certified spiritual directors in the city.

If you live elsewhere, we would recommend Spiritual Directors International (www.sdiworld.org) as a good resource to find a qualified spiritual director in your area.

Rob Des Cotes
Director, Imago Dei





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Remarks by Supreme Knight at Imago Dei Award Dinner

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4/29/2005

Remarks by Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson at the April 28 Imago Dei Award Dinner hosted by the Archdiocese of Denver

Excellency, thank you very, very much. It is a privilege and an honor to be with you this evening.

And I'm deeply grateful for the thoughtfulness of the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Denver -- and especially to you, Your Excellency -- for this distinguished award.

It is an award, the title of which must instill a greater humility on the part of its recipient and a greater effort to do more in the days ahead. For my part, I must say that one of the greatest blessings that I have had is to be associated with so many fine Christian men, Catholic men, in the Knights of Columbus. It has been a wonderful experience for me and something I look forward to in the days ahead. And I must say, too, that if I have achieved some measure of accomplishment which this award recognizes, it is largely due to the encouragement and the assistance that I have received over the years from many good and holy priests, that I have been blessed to know and to have worked with.

Some are bishops, some are in academia, many are pastors -- and some are in very small and remote parishes. All are vastly more deserving than me to receive this award because each one of these priests has been a true "imago Dei." And so I accept this award with the recognition that, if I could do so, I would confer it on each one of those priests this evening.

Earlier this month I had, as the Archbishop said, the occasion to be in Italy and I took that time to visit the regional seminary of Bologna, which was founded by Giacomo Cardinal Della Chiesa shortly before he became Pope Benedict XV. And carved above the entrance way to the seminary are the words "*in spes Ecclesiae*" -- "the hope of the Church."

Truly, seminarians are the hope of the Church. And today, more than ever, our Church and our world need good and holy priests -- men through whom the "imago Dei" will radiate as they minister the Church's sacraments "*in persona Christi*." And I am so pleased that the proceeds of this dinner will benefit the seminarians of the Archdiocese of Denver, represented so well here this evening.



Supreme Knight with Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap., of Denver.