

## The Ordinary Jubilee Year and Indulgences

You can be sorry for something; you can confess your guilt, and the person hurt or offended can forgive you. But that does not mean to say that everything is as it was before. Take the obvious example of getting angry with someone and punching them in the eye. When apologies have been made and the incident put to one side, the effect of the grievance still remains– a black eye! Worse still when the hurt is very deep and involves a relationship, emotions and a network of other people, the temporal effects of the incident are felt over a long period of time, perhaps even life-long.

All our sinful actions affect our relationship with God, with others, with ourselves, and with the world in which we live. And although we are forgiven, the temporal effects of sin remain. Hence the need for penance, good deeds, fasting, and ultimately, Purgatory. This is where the concept of “Indulgence” comes in. We are part of the family God by our Baptism. We are part of the Body of Christ, we are members of the Communion of Saints together with all those in Heaven, the Holy Souls in Purgatory, and our brothers and sisters here on earth.

During the course of the summer, experiencing the Olympic Games and the Paralympics, somehow all of us shared in the glory, the achievements and the merits of those who were actually taking part. And it was real, not just an imaginary or a fanciful idea. If someone in our family or very close to us does well, is successful in something, earns a public honour of some description then we all hold our heads high sharing in a real sense their award. It is the same with the Communion of Saints, just as our sinful actions affect the whole body, so our good actions, when joined to the redemptive actions of Jesus, can be efficacious for us all. The merits, the prayers and the penances of Our Lady and all the saints and faithful people throughout the ages form what we call the “Treasury of the Church”.

In the person of St Peter, Jesus gave the Church the power of binding and loosing, the Power of the Keys, we call it. In this way, the Church can open the treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints in favour of individual Christians to obtain from the Father of all mercies the remission of the temporal punishment due to their sins and also to spur them on to works of devotion, penance and charity. And since the Holy Souls are also members our family, part of the Communion of Saints, we can obtain an indulgence for them, so that the temporal punishment due to their sins can be remitted. For that reason, during the course of this Ordinary Jubilee Year there are many opportunities for us to gain indulgences – partial or plenary (complete, taking away all the temporal punishment) for ourselves and for our loved ones who have gone before us.

In blessed hope

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence Patrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop of Middlesbrough