

## Blessings and Indulgences

An indulgence—unlike merit (heavenly reward)—is a remission of the suffering of purgatorial purging from any residual soul-damaging effects of past sins—some even after all *guilt* is dissolved by repentance, which triggers the mercy of God. An indulgence, in remitting purgation or “soul damage,” may be total (“plenary”) or partial, as determined by the Church authority (Matt 16:19 and 18:18), and/or by the sovereign will of God. The most recent Catholic handbook on indulgences, official since 2004, is called the Manual of Indulgences. All previous indulgence norms are now abrogated.

Described below are a few commonly listed blessings that induce special indulgences; these are referred to as “A-B-C-D Blessings.” Only rosaries can receive all of the ABCD blessings; other religious articles can receive only the Apostolic blessing.

First, the “A” blessing is the plenary-indulgenced “Apostolic blessing,” which can be directed either to properly disposed *persons* or to religious *objects* to be used instrumentally to gain the indulgence—somewhat the way a flag is used to inspire patriotism.

One form of this apostolic indulgence is granted to persons *in articulo mortis* (that is, dying, not merely in danger of death) who are contrite for all of their sins. If the dying person is unable to fulfill the conditions for a plenary indulgence (confession, Communion and prayer for the Pope), then those conditions would not oblige, as long as the dying person has had a personal history of at least some kind of regular prayer during his or her lifetime. This plenary indulgence can be received even if there is neither a priest nor a deacon present to impart the blessing. *Either* a cross or a crucifix should be used, if available.

Another personal application of the Apostolic indulgence occurs when it is conferred at a parish mission by the conducting priest to persons who have attended at least part of the mission services. It imparts to those people a plenary indulgence granted by the Apostolic See.

With regard to *religious articles* that carry this plenary indulgence, the articles must be blessed with this Apostolic blessing on the Feast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul (June 29<sup>th</sup>). When such articles are used devoutly they bestow on the user a plenary indulgence, (if he or she has fulfilled the regular conditions for a plenary indulgence, namely, a prayer for the Pope, a worthy confession and Communion within two weeks before or after their devout use). Thus, only religious *objects* blessed on the above-mentioned feast can be used to convey that plenary indulgence at any time. Other blessed religious articles carry a partial indulgence

The “B” part of this blessing is the dispensation from the obligation to recite the whole prayer of the blessing for the six-decade or 18-decade Brigidine Rosary; this blessing can now be imparted on the “regular” five-decade rosary with which the Brigidine and receive the same indulgences.

The “C” part of this blessing is the Crosier blessing. It is to be imparted to rosary beads themselves. Priests in former days would apply to the superior general of the Crosier Fathers for permission to impart this blessing on “regular” five-decade Marian rosaries. The prayers would then provide a partial indulgence (500 days) for each Our Father or Hail Mary recited. Sometimes whole religious congregations were granted this faculty. This blessing is only for rosaries, not for other types of religious articles.

The “D” blessing is the Dominican blessing, which is also only for rosary beads. The priest with the former faculty would be able to grant all the indulgences of Dominican Rosary with the mere tracing of the sign of the Cross.

These blessings are fine to impart for rosaries, but the new norms grant the indulgences more in “the spirit of the action itself,” with less emphasis on the acquisition of indulgences. Any rosary that is blessed appropriately by a priest or deacon in good standing will be sufficient for users of such a rosary to receive the entire treasury of indulgences offered to those who devoutly pray the rosary and meditate on its mysteries.

But in all honesty a simple blessing of the religious articles is sufficient to receive all the graces that were formerly given in the ABCD blessing for rosaries. Thus, the ABCD blessing is not necessary or perhaps even appropriate, as when it may confuse many lay people and give the idea that religious articles blessed in this fashion are in some way more special than those blessed according to the present simplified norms of indulgence. They can be given by any priest or deacon in good standing with the Church.

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