



PILGRIMS OF HOPE

WITH MARY AND ST. LOUIS DE MONTFORT



Sixth handout

The gift of indulgence

KNOW

The *indulgence* is a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God's mercy. Not by chance, for the ancients, the terms "mercy" and "indulgence" were interchangeable, as expressions of the fullness of God's forgiveness, which knows no bounds. The *sacrament of Penance* assures us that God wipes away our sins...

Still, as we know from personal experience, every sin "**leaves its mark**". Sin has consequences, not only outwardly in the effects of the wrong we do, but also inwardly, inasmuch as "every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death, in the state called Purgatory". In **our humanity, weak and attracted by evil**, certain residual effects of sin remain. These are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, is "**himself our «indulgence»**".

(FRANCIS, *Spes non confundit*, 23 passim)



LISTEN TO THE WORD

**Listen to the Word of the Lord
from the Book of Wisdom (11:24-26)**

You love everything that exists; you do not despise anything that you have made. If you had not liked it, you would not have made it in the first place. How could anything last, if you did not want it to? How could it endure, if you had not created it? You have allowed it all to exist, O Lord, because it is yours, and **you love every living thing.**

ENTER THE WORD

The word “indulgence” often causes a certain difficulty in understanding and accepting it. It may seem like a distant, archaic or bureaucratic concept. Even the methods indicated by the Church to obtain it risk reducing it to a discount of sentence rather than an incentive to undertake a good and holy life.

To grasp its authentic meaning, it is useful to reread the verses of Scripture just proclaimed that reveal God's sentiments towards every aspect of our life, including sin.

The doctrine and practice of Indulgences are rooted in the very heart of God. He **always shows himself to be indulgent** toward us, desirous that the friendship broken by sin may be mended. This happens for one reason only: his love is so strong and faithful that it never turns into disgust or, even worse, hatred towards us. When we understand this and remember that around God there is a communion of saints that expands the circle of love in which we are immersed, asking the Church for an Indulgence **is no longer a formal gesture**. It becomes rather **a joyful act**, an attempt to return as soon as possible to a communion of friendship and love for which we feel a profound nostalgia.

Imagine that you have made a mistake that has hurt someone, causing a fracture not only in their heart, but also in the fabric of relationships that you share with other friends. The resulting guilt can isolate you, making it

difficult to find the strength to mend and heal damaged relationships. However, if you discover that the person you hurt has not changed their feelings toward you and that other mutual friends are also there for you, you will want to do everything you can to repair the mistakes you made and rediscover the joy of a reconciled friendship.

In this light, the indulgence can be understood as **an opportunity** for sinners to re-enter the life of God and to rebuild relationships with others, even when everything seems compromised. It is not simply a matter of erasing the consequences of one's actions, but of seizing the opportunity to **begin living again in the best way**, contributing with one's actions to brotherhood and the Kingdom of God. The indulgence thus becomes much more than a "discount" on the penalty: it is a precious opportunity to reconcile with oneself and with others. By welcoming this opportunity, one can heal the wounds of the past and build stronger and more meaningful bonds, both in the present and in the future.

(Fr. Alessandro Ferrari)

RESPOND TO THE WORD

From Psalm 36:5-11

Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the skies.
Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.
You, Lord, preserve both people and animals.

How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!

People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from the river of delights.

For with you is the fountain of life

in your light we see light.

Continue your love to those who know you,

your righteousness to the upright in heart.
May the foot of the proud not come against me,
nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

BE CHALLENGED BY THE WORD

- Although I am certain of the Lord's Forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, I feel that sin "leaves its mark" on my life. How do I react...?
- The indulgence is not a mechanical thing, it requires signs! What do I choose to do to continue on this path...?
- In this time of grace, I have in my memory some deceased people who are particularly dear to me. I entrust them to the mercy and indulgence of the Lord.



PRAY THE WORD

O Father, who help the orphan and the widow and sustain the hope of those who trust in your love, grant that we may know how to give all that we have, following the example of Christ who offered his life for us. He is God, and lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

BE ACCOMPANIED BY MONTFORT

Hymn 7, 22-25: The solidity of Hope

All things beguile man here below,
And often he himself deceives.
He is an impostor, a phantom,
If he hopes not in the Lord.

If God does not take part
In consoling the afflicted,
In vain we trust in man,
He cannot soothe our ills.

In God alone I place my trust
And not on human succor;
Should man help and soothe me
His hands are merely borrowed.

Rely not on your misfortunes:
With you nothing has strength or
power,
But rather on the Father of Lights
From whom all perfect gifts descend.