

Tridentine Community News

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The Apostolic Blessing at the Hour of Death

Holy Mother Church grants to her priests significant powers. The ability to forgive sins *in persona Christi* in the Sacrament of Confession is one such faculty. The ability to consecrate bread and wine so that they become the Body and Blood of our Lord is another. A third such privilege – not so well known – is invoked only for gravely ill individuals: The Apostolic Blessing for the Dying, also known as the Apostolic Pardon.

The “Last Rites” for a person in danger of death should consist of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction; the Sacrament of Confession (which in the Extraordinary Form may be performed during the Sacrament of Anointing); *Viaticum*, or Holy Communion; the Apostolic Blessing; and if time allows, the Prayers in Aid of a Departing Soul.

In Confession, the person is forgiven of his sins. In charity, Holy Mother Church allows for one more spiritual gift to be given to the dying soul: the Apostolic Blessing, which remits all temporal punishment due for sin. This blessing permits the soul to go directly to heaven if he dies before committing any further sins. The text follows:

Ordinary Form

Option 1: *Ego facultate mihi ab Apostolica Sede tributa, indulgentiam plenariam et remissionem omnium peccatorum tibi concedo, in nomine Patris, et Filii, † et Spiritus Sancti. R. Amen.*

By the authority which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a full pardon and the remission of all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, † and of the Holy Spirit. **R. Amen.**

Option 2: *Per sancrosancta humanae reparationis mysteria, remittat tibi omnipotens Deus omnes praesentis et futurae vitae poenas paradisi portas aperiat et ad gaudia te sempiterna perducat. R. Amen.*

Through the holy mysteries of our redemption, may almighty God release you from all punishments in this life and in the life to come. May He open to you the gates of paradise and welcome you to everlasting joy. **R. Amen.**

Extraordinary Form (must be recited in Latin)

Ego, facultate mihi ab Apostolica Sede tributa, indulgentiam plenariam et remissionem omnium peccatorum tibi concedo, et benedico te. In nomine Patris, et Filii, † et Spiritus Sancti. R. Amen.

By the Faculty which the Apostolic See has given me, I grant you a plenary indulgence and the remission of all your sins, and I bless you. In the Name of the Father and the Son † and the Holy Spirit. **R. Amen.**

We suggest that our readers have the text of this prayer handy, should a loved one be in danger of death. Do not assume that a visiting priest knows this prayer or has the text with him. Ideally, one should have a prayer book with the official words of the prayer to offer the priest. Currently-in-print books containing the Apostolic Blessing are, for the Extraordinary Form, Volume I of the Weller edition of the *Rituale Romanum* (published by Preserving Christian Publications, www.pcbooks.com, (866) 241-2762); and for the Ordinary Form, the Handbook of Prayers (published by Our Sunday Visitor, www.osv.com, (800) 348-2440).



When a Priest Is Not Available

Lest anyone despair of the difficulty of finding a priest to impart the Apostolic Blessing to a loved one before death, we reprint below some pertinent text from the 2006 Manual of Indulgences. In case of unavailability of a priest, one who is aware of the privilege may gain a Plenary Indulgence on his own at the hour of death. Unlike the norm with other Plenary Indulgences, there are no other conditions. The person does not have to pray for the Holy Father, receive Holy Communion, or receive Confession. We pray that all of our readers commit the knowledge of this priceless gift of the Church to memory.

AT THE POINT OF DEATH

§1. A priest who administers the sacraments to someone in danger of death should not fail to impart the apostolic blessing to which a plenary indulgence is attached.

§2. If a priest is unavailable, Holy Mother Church benevolently grants to the Christian faithful, who are duly disposed, a plenary indulgence to be acquired at the point of death, provided they have been in the habit of reciting some prayers during their lifetime; in such a case, the Church supplies for the three conditions ordinarily required for a plenary indulgence.

§3. In this latter case, the use of a crucifix or a cross in obtaining the plenary indulgence is commendable.

§4. The faithful can obtain this plenary indulgence at the hour of death, even if they have already acquired a plenary indulgence on the same day.

§5. The catechetical instruction of the faithful should ensure that they are duly made aware and frequently reminded of this salutary benefaction of the Church.