

Brothers and Sisters,

On Jan. 10, 2026, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed a “Special Year of St. Francis” to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the saint’s death. This jubilee year will extend until January of 2027. One of the special aspects of this year is that all Catholics are granted the opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence.

The Church offers indulgences in order to lessen the degree of satisfaction for temporal punishment that we may have to experience in Purgatory. By means of the authority that Christ gave his Church (to St. Peter, the apostles, and their successors) in the “power of the keys,” the power to “lose and bind,” and the power to “forgive and retain sins” (Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23), the Church has the ability to confer the satisfactions from the treasury of the merits of Christ and his Saints upon the faithful for their sanctification. The Church does this by means of granting indulgences. An indulgence is a declaration of the lessening of all (a plenary indulgence) or a part (a partial indulgence) of the temporal punishments (punishment in this life, “in time”) that are due because of an individual’s sin. Indulgences are granted after the person seeking them performs the particular prescribed acts of penance, prayer, good works, charity, etc. to which the indulgence has been attached.

The decree for the Year of St. Francis states: “to all the faithful without distinction who, with a spirit detached from sin, will participate in the Year of St. Francis by **visiting in the form of a pilgrimage any Franciscan conventual church, or place of worship in any part of the world named after St. Francis or connected to him for any reason**, and there they will devoutly follow the Jubilee rites or spend at least a suitable period of time in pious meditation and will raise prayers to God so that, following the example of Saint Francis, sentiments of Christian charity towards one’s neighbor and authentic wishes for harmony and peace among peoples may spring up in hearts, concluding with the Our Father, the Creed and invocations to the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Francis of Assisi, St. Clare and all the saints of the Franciscan Family.” Prayers for the Pope’s intentions must be offered, and an individual must go to confession and receive Holy Communion within a few days (about 20) before or after making the visit. The elderly or infirm who can’t make such a visit may still obtain the indulgence, under the usual conditions, by spiritually participating in the Jubilee Year. Indulgences can be obtained not only for a living person’s particular benefit, but also for the holy souls in Purgatory.

There are two churches in our Diocese one can visit to obtain this indulgence: St. Francis by the Sea, 45 Beach City Road, Hilton Head Island and St. Francis of Assisi Mission, 103 West Mauldin Street, Walhalla. The chapels at St. Francis Hospitals, downtown and eastside, in Greenville also qualify.

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