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What is an "Urbi et Orbi" Blessing?

Professor Johannes Grohe of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross explains the “Urbi et Orbi” (“to the city and to the world”) blessing given by the Pope at Christmas and Easter.

12/14/2020

The *Urbi et Orbi* blessing is a blessing given by the Pope to the city of Rome (*urbi*) and to the whole world (*orbi*), on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. The Pope can choose to impart the

blessing at other times,
extraordinarily; as he did last March.

Normally, the Pope gives the blessing from the so-called “*loggia delle benedizioni*,” or “balcony of blessing” in St. Peter’s Basilica. The first place we find the words “*Urbis et Orbis*” is in the title of the Lateran Basilica (*omnium Urbis et orbis ecclesiarum Mater et Caput*), and therefore mark the first cathedral, built in Rome under the Emperor Constantine.

The blessing dates back to the time of the Roman Empire and was extended to all Catholics over time.

The fundamental characteristic of this blessing is that it grants remission due for sins that have already been forgiven. Our sins are forgiven in the sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession, re-establishing us in God’s grace. The disorder introduced by the sin still needs to be repaired and

compensated for, through the penance imposed in the sacrament, through good works, and through purification in Purgatory.

The *Urbi et Orbi* blessing and other plenary indulgences completely remit the reparation or compensation still due, allowing us to enter Heaven directly, if we do not fall into sin again. To obtain the indulgence, it is important to repent of sins and resolve to confess and receive the Eucharist as soon as possible.

The *Urbi et Orbi* blessing is effective for everyone who receives it with faith and devotion, including for those who connect to it online or through the TV, radio, or other mass media.

Formula of the *Urbi et Orbi* papal blessing (with the original Latin)

May the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, in whose power and authority we trust, intercede for us before the Lord.

Sancti Apostoli Petrus et Paulus, de quorum potestate et auctoritate confidimus, ipsi intercedam pro nobis ad Dominum.

℞: Amen

Through the prayers and merits of Blessed Mary ever Virgin, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, may Almighty God have mercy on you and forgive all your sins, and may Jesus Christ bring you to everlasting life.

Precibus et meritis beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis, beati Michaelis

Archangeli, beati Ioannis Baptistæ et sanctorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli et omnium Sanctorum misereatur vestri omnipotens Deus et dimissis omnibus peccatis vestris, perducatur vos Iesus Christus ad vitam æternam.

℞: Amen

May the almighty and merciful Lord grant you indulgence, absolution and the remission of all your sins, a season of true and fruitful penance, a well-disposed heart, amendment of life, the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit and final perseverance in good works.

Indulgentiam, absolutionem et remissionem omnium peccatorum vestrorum, spatium verae et fructuosae penitentiæ, cor semper penitens et emendationem vitæ, gratiam et consultationem sancti Spiritus et finalem perseverantiam in bonis operibus, tribuat vobis omnipotens et misericors Dominus.

℞: Amen

And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you forever.

Et benedictio Dei omnipotentis (Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti) descendat super vos et maneat semper.

℞: Amen

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(05/05/2025)