Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Assisi

The Appeals of Our Lady Apparitions and Marian Shrines in the World

One night in 1216, Saint Francis was visited by Christ and by the Most Holy Virgin Mary while he prayed at the Porziuncola. In them the Poor One asked that to each person, repentant and confessed, who would visit that church, they would be pardoned completely for all their sins and the consequences of their sin. Subsequently, Saint Francis went to the Pope to ask for a Papal Bull in which he would be rated all the conditions for the indulgence. The book Franciscan Sources narrates that one night in the year 1216, Saint Francis was immersed in prayer in the little church called the Porziuncola when suddenly an intense light was diffused: it was the Christ with His Most Holy Mother, encircled by a multitude of Angels. The Lord Jesus then asked him what he desired. The response of Francis was immediate: “I pray that all who, being contrite and having confessed their sins, come to visit this church, will obtain ample and generous pardon, with a complete remission of all their sins.”

That which you ask, Oh, dear Francis, is a great favor -- the Lord replied to him -- but of greater things you are worthy and greater ones you will have. I therefore accept your request, but on the condition that you ask my Vicar on earth, on my behalf, this indulgence”. Francis quickly presented himself to the Pontiff Honorius III who in those days was in Perugia and with candor told him of the vision he had. The Pope listened with attention and gave his approval, asking: “For how many years do you want this indulgence?” Francis immediately replied: “Holy Father, I do not ask for years, but souls.” Cheerful he opened the door, but the Pontiff called him back. “How is it that you do not want a document?” Francis replied: “Holy Father, for me your word is enough. If this indulgence is the work of God, He will be sure to demonstrate His work. I have no need of any document: this paper must be the Most Holy Virgin Mary, Christ as the notary and the Angels as the witnesses.” On the 2nd of August of that same year, many of the faithful went to the little church of the Porziuncola with the participation of seven Bishops from the region of Umbria. On that occasion it was Saint Francis himself who announced to the crowd of devotees the extraordinary indulgence that he had obtained from the Pope. Saint Francis said amidst tears of joy: “Brothers and sisters of mine, I want to send all of you to Paradise!” To understand the reason for the indulgence (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 1471-1474), one must keep in mind that sin has a dual consequence. A grave mortal sin deprives us from communion with God and for this reason it renders us incapable of obtaining eternal life, the deprivation of which is called the eternal suffering” of sin. Every sin, even venial, entails a damaging attachment in human beings which is in need of purification, both in this life, and after death, in the state-called Purgatory. Such purification releases souls from the so-called “temporal punishment” of sin. A conversion, which derives from a fervent charity of heart, can bring about the total purification of a sinner, so that no further penalty subsists. (Council of Trent: D3 1712-1713, 1880). The indulgence therefore is the remission of the temporal punishment before God for the sins which were already forgiven of guilt during the Sacrament of Confession. The indulgence is partial or plenary according to which three more soul partly or completely of the temporal punishment owed for the sins. Every faithful believer can earn for oneself, or for the deceased, either a partial or a plenary indulgence.