

August 2nd, Feast of the Portiuncula

Our Seraphic Father Francis in keeping with his special love for the Blessed Virgin was especially fond of the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels known as the Portiuncula. It was here in the designs of Divine Providence that he started the Order of Friars Minor, inaugurated the Order of the Poor Clares and brought his sojourn on earth to his holy end. In this chapel according to tradition our Holy Father obtained the famous indulgence which the Supreme Pontiffs confirmed and extended to many other churches. On account of the many blessings conferred here the celebration of a liturgical feast was granted for this day which marks the anniversary of the dedication of this chapel.

In visiting the church, it is required, according to Norm 16 of the same Apostolic Constitution, that "one Our Father and the Creed be recited."

Also granted that the indulgence can be gained not only once, but as often as anyone, who has been to confession and to holy Communion, visits the appointed church on Portiuncula day and prays 6 Our Fathers, Hail Mary's, and Glory Be's for the intention of the Holy Father. Besides, the indulgence can be applied to the holy souls in purgatory.

ON THE PORTIUNCULA INDULGENCE

It cannot be denied that this indulgence is one of the most precious favors that come to us from the treasury of the divine mercy. Not only the Vicar of Christ but Christ Himself granted it at the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of Mercy. It is recorded that when the pope first granted his approval St. Francis departed without having obtained a written document as a testimonial. When his attention was drawn to the fact, St. Francis remarked: "God Himself will testify to this indulgence." Was that not actually verified by the great confidence of all Christians? One may well say of this indulgence what was said of the gracious condescension of our Lord in the Incarnation: "Through the heart of the mercy of our God, the Orient from on High has visited us unto the remission of sins." (Luke 1:78) Who would not use this day of grace well?

Consider how extraordinary are the graces of the Portiuncula indulgence. If we have contritely confessed our sins and gone to holy Communion, we can gain this indulgence as often as we visit the designated church and for the intention of the pope. In the event that we have really gained the plenary indulgence so that there remains no further punishment to be remitted, we can help the holy souls each succeeding time if we apply the indulgence to them. How many souls may be waiting for this day, to be aided by your charity and mercy. Shall their trust in you be in vain?

Consider that the effects of the Portiuncula indulgence depend on the disposition of him who sets out to gain it. It was the spirit of penance and of trust in God that made St. Francis worthy of obtaining this indulgence. His entire life was one continuous act of penance, and when this great grace was granted to him, our Lord and His Blessed Mother, and a great number of angels appeared to him: this increased his confidence still more. With a similar disposition of mind and heart you will assuredly share the benefit of the indulgence. Awaken in yourself the true spirit of

penance and of great confidence, so that our Lord may also say to you: "Go, and as you have believed, so be it done to you." (Matt 8:13)

The above indulgences are contained in the Apostolic Constitution The Doctrine of Indulgences, Norm 15.