

## SUPPLEMENT TO THE THIRD PART, QUESTION 26

### Of Those Who Can Grant Indulgences (In Four Articles)

We must now consider those who can grant indulgences: under which head there are four points of inquiry:

- (1) Whether every parish priest can grant indulgences?
- (2) Whether a deacon or another, who is not a priest, can grant indulgences?
- (3) Whether a bishop can grant them?
- (4) Whether they can be granted by one who is in mortal sin?

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#### Whether every parish priest can grant indulgences?

Suppl. q. 26 a. 1

**Objection 1.** It would seem that every parish priest can grant indulgences. For an indulgence derives its efficacy from the superabundance of the Church's merits. Now there is no congregation without some superabundance of merits. Therefore every priest, who has charge of a congregation, can grant indulgences, and, in like manner, so can every prelate.

**Objection 2.** Further, every prelate stands for a multitude, just as an individual stands for himself. But any individual can assign his own goods to another and thus offer satisfaction for a third person. Therefore a prelate can assign the property of the multitude subject to him, and so it seems that he can grant indulgences.

**On the contrary,** To excommunicate is less than to grant indulgences. But a parish priest cannot do the former. Therefore he cannot do the latter.

**I answer that,** Indulgences are effective, in as much as the works of satisfaction done by one person are applied to another, not only by virtue of charity, but also by the intention of the person who did them being directed in some way to the person to whom they are applied. Now a person's intention may be directed to another in three ways, specifically, generically and individually. Individually, as when one person offers satisfaction for another particular person; and thus anyone can apply his works to another. Specifically, as when a person prays for the congregation to which he belongs, for the members of his household, or for his benefactors, and directs his works of satisfaction to the same intention: in this way the superior of a congregation can apply those works to some other person, by applying the intention of those who belong to his congregation to some fixed individual. Generically, as when a person directs his works for the good of the Church in general; and thus he who presides over the whole Church can communicate those works, by applying his intention to this or that individual. And since a man is a member of a congregation, and a congregation is a part of the Church, hence the intention of private good includes the intention of the good of the congregation, and of the good of the whole Church. Therefore he who presides over the Church can communicate what belongs to

an individual congregation or to an individual man: and he who presides over a congregation can communicate what belongs to an individual man, but not conversely. Yet neither the first nor the second communication is called an indulgence, but only the third; and this for two reasons. First, because, although those communications loose man from the debt of punishment in the sight of God, yet he is not freed from the obligation of fulfilling the satisfaction enjoined, to which he is bound by a commandment of the Church; whereas the third communication frees man even from this obligation. Secondly, because in one person or even in one congregation there is not such an unailing supply of merits as to be sufficient both for the one person or congregation and for all others; and consequently the individual is not freed from the entire debt of punishment unless satisfaction is offered for him individually, to the very amount that he owes. On the other hand, in the whole Church there is an unailing supply of merits, chiefly on account of the merit of Christ. Consequently he alone who is at the head of the Church can grant indulgences. Since, however, the Church is the congregation of the faithful, and since a congregation of men is of two kinds, the domestic, composed of members of the same family, and the civil, composed of members of the same nationality, the Church is like to a civil congregation, for the people themselves are called the Church; while the various assemblies, or parishes of one diocese are likened to a congregation in the various families and services. Hence a bishop alone is properly called a prelate of the Church, wherefore he alone, like a bridegroom, receives the ring of the Church. Consequently full power in the dispensation of the sacraments, and jurisdiction in the public tribunal, belong to him alone as the public person, but to others by delegation from him. Those priests who have charge of the people are not prelates strictly speaking, but assistants, hence, in consecrating priests the bishop says: "The more fragile we are, the more we need these assistants": and for this reason they do not dispense all the sacraments. Hence parish priests, or abbots or other like prelates cannot grant indulgences.

This suffices for the Replies to the Objections.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that a deacon, or one that is not a priest cannot grant an indulgence. Because remission of sins is an effect of the keys. Now none but a priest has the keys. Therefore a priest alone can grant indulgences.

**Objection 2.** Further, a fuller remission of punishment is granted by indulgences than by the tribunal of Penance. But a priest alone has power in the latter, and, therefore, he alone has power in the former.

**On the contrary,** The distribution of the Church's treasury is entrusted to the same person as the government of the Church. Now this is entrusted sometimes to one who is not a priest. Therefore he can grant indul-

gences, since they derive their efficacy from the distribution of the Church's treasury.

**I answer that,** The power of granting indulgences follows jurisdiction, as stated above (q. 25, a. 2). And since deacons and others, who are not priests, can have jurisdiction either delegated, as legates, or ordinary, as bishops-elect, it follows that even those who are not priests can grant indulgences, although they cannot absolve in the tribunal of Penance, since this follows the reception of orders. This suffices for the Replies to the Objections, because the granting of indulgences belongs to the key of jurisdiction and not to the key of orders.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that even a bishop cannot grant indulgences. Because the treasury of the Church is the common property of the whole Church. Now the common property of the whole Church cannot be distributed save by him who presides over the whole Church. Therefore the Pope alone can grant indulgences.

**Objection 2.** Further, none can remit punishments fixed by law, save the one who has the power to make the law. Now punishments in satisfaction for sins are fixed by law. Therefore the Pope alone can remit these punishments, since he is the maker of the law.

**On the contrary,** stands the custom of the Church

in accordance with which bishops grant indulgences.

**I answer that,** The Pope has the plenitude of pontifical power, being like a king in his kingdom: whereas the bishops are appointed to a share in his solicitude, like judges over each city. Hence them alone the Pope, in his letters, addresses as "brethren," whereas he calls all others his "sons." Therefore the plenitude of the power of granting indulgences resides in the Pope, because he can grant them, as he lists, provided the cause be a lawful one: while, in bishops, this power resides subject to the Pope's ordination, so that they can grant them within fixed limits and not beyond.

This suffices for the Replies to the Objections.

**Objection 1.** It would seem that indulgences cannot be granted by one who is in mortal sin. For a stream can no longer flow if cut off from its source. Now the source of grace which is the Holy Ghost is cut off from one who is in mortal sin. Therefore such a one can convey nothing to others by granting indulgences.

**Objection 2.** Further, it is a greater thing to grant an indulgence than to receive one. But one who is in mortal sin cannot receive an indulgence, as we shall show presently (q. 27, a. 1). Neither, therefore, can he grant one.

**On the contrary,** Indulgences are granted in virtue of the power conferred on the prelates of the Church. Now mortal sin takes away, not power but goodness. Therefore one who is in mortal sin can grant indulgences.

**I answer that,** The granting of indulgences belongs to jurisdiction. But a man does not, through sin, lose jurisdiction. Consequently indulgences are equally valid, whether they be granted by one who is in mortal sin, or by a most holy person; since he remits punishment, not by virtue of his own merits, but by virtue of the merits laid up in the Church's treasury.

**Reply to Objection 1.** The prelate who, while in a state of mortal sin, grants an indulgence, does not pour forth anything of his own, and so it is not necessary that he should receive an inflow from the source, in order that he may grant a valid indulgence.

**Reply to Objection 2.** Further, to grant an indulgence is more than to receive one, if we consider the power, but it is less, if we consider the personal profit.