



## An Indulgence of Mercy

This Jubilee Year the Divine Mercy will take flesh in many different ways for those who seek it. One such opportunity is that of gaining an indulgence. "An indulgence," the *Catechism* teaches, "is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven . . . through the action of the Church." The Church forgives on the authority of Jesus Himself. On the night of His Resurrection our Lord entrusted the fruit of His victory over death into the hands of His Apostles and commanded them to dispense to sinners the treasury of grace which His sorrowful Passion drew forth from the infinite depths of the Father's merciful love. "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them," Jesus said; "whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."

Forgiveness of sin is one thing; healing the ongoing effects of sin is quite another. Like infection in the body, sin corrupts our thinking, our feeling, and our willing; serious habitual sin leads to self-inflicted spiritual destruction; it evicts the life of grace from the soul. After a surgeon removes a cancerous tumor (which we could liken to a priest forgiving a mortal sin), the patient goes to the recovery room to begin to heal the potentially lethal damage the tumor has done to the body. So it is with the cure of the soul. Divine forgiveness removes the malignant tumor of sin, but even the best confession cannot call back the sin-spreading consequences of what we've done or failed to

do. They continue to play themselves out independent of our best intentions. Wounding words shouted out publicly, for example, harden the hearts of absent others through the reports of bystanders who pass on the bad news indiscriminately. Within ourselves we can detect sin's ongoing corruptive effects on our memory in what St. Francis de Sales calls our "affection for past sins." They've been confessed and forgiven, and we've ceased to commit them, but we recall them with a strange, lingering attachment, as if a low-grade spiritual infection still circulated in the blood stream of our soul.

Jesus is the Divine Physician who came to heal us through and through, and the indulgences of the Church offer a remedy for the unhealthy spiritual state we find ourselves in. It is customary in a Jubilee Year for the Pope to extend these sin-destroying favors to already pardoned sinners who perform specified religious acts or works of charity in order to gain freedom "from every residue left by the consequences of sin," in the words of Pope Francis. You will find information on how to take advantage of this truly special offer on the diocesan website and in printed materials available in your parish and at the Holy Doors in Baker City and Powell Butte. Don't let this Holy Year pass you by. Put yourself in a position to let the Mercy of God take you by surprise.