

Ask Mason & Teo



What's an indulgence and how do I get one?

Hello Mason & Teo, I heard the pope was granting plenary indulgences for those that went to pray before St. Damien's relic. What's an indulgence? How do you get them? (Mystified)

Dear Mystified, We are so blessed to have St. Damien in our midst to intercede for us.

The term "indulgence" comes from a Latin word meaning "kindness" or "favor." It eventually came to mean the remission of a tax or debt.

God allows the Catholic Church to attach to certain actions or prayers an indulgence, which, as the Catechism of the Catholic Church describes it, is a "remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven."

The catechism continues by saying that the one who gains an indulgence must be "duly disposed" to do so and must fulfill "certain prescribed conditions."

What does this all mean?

Imagine for a moment that you are a child playing baseball in the yard and your ball accidentally shatters your neighbor's window. As a good child, you confess your mistake to your neighbor and the neighbor forgives you. But the window is still broken. Now you have to fix the damage.

After you sin, you may have gone to confession and been forgiven by God, but you still owe a "debt" to God. You must still fix the damage done to your soul by sin. Hence, an indulgence is a "treasure" the church grants us to repay the debt we owe God for our sins and to heal our "damaged" souls.

One can acquire indulgences for oneself and for the souls in Purgatory. One cannot obtain indulgences for another living person. They have to get their own. The Catholic Church is able to grant indulgences because she draws on the infinite merits of Christ, Mary and all the saints, including St. Damien.

Jesus gave the church the authority to grant indulgences when he gave St. Peter the keys to the kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 16:19. It was like giving St. Peter the combination number to the heavenly treasure vault.

Two kinds of indulgences

There are two kinds of indulgences, partial or plenary. "Plenary" means "full." A plenary indulgence takes away all the punishment due to our sins. If someone received a plenary indulgence and died immediately afterward, that person would go straight to heaven.

The grace available in an indulgence is infinite because it comes from the merits of Christ, but our sorrow for our sins is a

large factor in receiving these graces. One of the conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence is that you have to be truly sorry for your sins and never want to commit them again. This repentance opens your soul to receive the full effect of God's grace in the indulgence.

Conditions for an indulgence

The conditions for gaining a plenary indulgence are:

- 1) Perform the action or say the prayer to which the indulgence is attached;
- 2) Be free from all attachment to sin, including venial;
- 3) Confess your sins with true sorrow for having offended God;
- 4) Receive Holy Communion;
- 5) Pray for the intentions of the Holy Father (the usual prayers are the Our Father, Hail Mary and the Apostles Creed).

Pope Benedict XVI granted Catholics who visit and pray before the relic of St. Damien the opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence.

The decree was signed on Sept. 15 by Bishop John Francis Girotti, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, the Vatican tribunal that deals with indulgences and with matters related to the sacrament of penance.

The decree stated that the indulgence may be received "during the entire journey of the relic."

The indulgence was offered to those who attended a sacred function in St. Damien's honor or engaged in "pious reflection for a fitting period of time" where his relic is displayed.

The practice of indulgences neither takes away nor adds to the work of Christ. It is really his work, through his body, the church, in raising up children in his own likeness.

"The Christian who seeks to purify himself of his sin and to become holy with the help of God's grace is not alone. The life of each of God's children is joined in Christ and through Christ in a wonderful way to the life of all the other Christian brethren in the supernatural unity of the Mystical Body of Christ, as in a single mystical person" (CCC 1474).

Indulge in indulgences today and you will find your journey to heaven on earth pleasing to God as it was for St. Damien.

Mason and Teo Matsuda are parishioners of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Ewa Beach and have served in youth and young adult ministries for years. Write to them at yaadvice@yahoo.com.



Carmelite Brothers Eliseus, Peter Joseph, Elias, Jean-Marie and Gabriel Marie, critique a roast of Mystic Monk Coffee at the Carmelite monastery in Clark, Wyo., in late October. The attention the monastery's roasting business and its coffee has been getting also has attracted more young men to the community.

Brews Brothers

Monks' thriving coffee business helps attract young men to monastery

By Sheila Archambault
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON

A small Carmelite monastery in Clark, Wyo., has seen its coffee sales take off in the last couple of years, and the growing awareness of its coffee business has brought an added benefit to the community — more members.

"In the past two years, the monks themselves have grown from six to 15 monks and all the new monks are under 25, some right out of high school," said Susie George, a neighbor of the monks who helped with marketing and computer work for the coffee business, in a letter e-mailed to Catholic News Service.

One young man from Australia said he has found his place in life there.

Carmelite Brother Paul Marie told CNS in a Nov. 4 phone interview that he was searching for more in life than just "conforming to society" and the Wyoming religious order has provided that for him.

Brother Paul said he discovered the monastery by searching for re-

ligious orders online but was initially attracted to the Carmelite order because of the joy and spiritual aspect of the community and the fact that some of his favorite saints — including St. John of the Cross and St. Therese — were Carmelites.

He also found he has a place in the cloistered monks' coffee business.

Brother Paul started his work in packaging and then helped in operations, shipping the coffee products and ordering coffee beans. They call their product Mystic Monk Coffee.

Now he heads up the team, thanks "to his previous business experience — he managed an electronics department store at the age of 17," Carmelite Brother Elias told CNS by e-mail.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the job is "working with a lot of good monks," said Brother Paul.

Originally from Australia, he said tea is much more popular than coffee in his home country, but he has grown to love coffee. His favorite type of Mystic Monk Coffee is what the monastery calls Midnight Vigils Blend, with the name based on the monk's midnight prayers.

While Wyoming's climate isn't made for growing coffee, the monks import coffee beans from many of the world's coffee-grow-

ing regions, frequently blending them to get just the right taste and aroma.

The monks have a new Christmas blend. Brother Paul said it is their "most complicated blend," using eight different kinds of beans, each roasted at different temperatures.

Because business is growing, "we have installed a new coffee roaster and had to move our packaging operation into our monastery garage," Brother Elias said.

Orders are coming in from all over, he added. Some customers live in Malta, Sweden, New Zealand, Guam and Israel.

According to George, the monastery's neighbor, the Carmelite monks' coffee business has blessed the Clark community by providing employment, including giving a job to a young man who "came all the way from Missouri to be around the monastery and the monks realized that he could use a good steady job to help him figure things out."

But she pointed to an "unexpected blessing." "My daughter, Bridgett, who was looking for a husband for some time, found the man of her dreams at the monastery — a young man who came to work for the monastery ... to find direction in life," George added.

"The example of (the monks') lives dedicated to prayer and serving God cannot help but affect all who come into contact with them," she said.

More information about the Wyoming monastery and its Mystic Monk Coffee is available at the Web site www.mysticmonkcoffee.com.

Movie reviews

Well-mannered vampire

The Twilight Saga: New Moon (Summit): Lovelorn gothic romance sequel in which a well-mannered vampire (Robert Pattinson), anxious to protect the mortal high school student (Kristen Stewart) who has captured his heart from the less controlled members (especially Jackson Rathbone) of the undead clan with which he lives, breaks off their relationship and disappears, but the American Indian friend (Taylor Lautner) to whom she turns for solace not only wants to be more than mere pals, he has a supernatural secret of his own. With temptations of the flesh kept at bay for fear of temptations of the blood in director Chris Weitz's adaptation of the second book in Stephenie Meyer's best-selling series of young-adult novels, the chaste but intermittently violent proceedings play out against a picturesque background ranging from the misty Northwest to the sunny hills of Tuscany. Considerable action violence, a vague sexual reference, at least one mildly crass term. A-II (PG-13)

CNS photo/Summit



The Blind Side (Warner Bros.): Inspirational family drama, based on real events, in which a wealthy white couple (Sandra Bullock and Tim McGraw) in Memphis, Tenn., offer shelter to a homeless black student (Quinton Aaron) from their children's (Lily Collins and Jae Head) school and, as he becomes an increasingly integral part of their clan, help him to hone his football skills while also hiring a determined tutor (Kathy Bates) to raise his academic standing. Driven by Bullock's field-sweeping performance as the feisty, religiously motivated adoptive mother, writer-director John Lee Hancock's unapologetically Christian tale of human solidarity across racial and class divides, adapted from Michael Lewis' 2006

best-seller "The Blind Side: Evolution of a Game," is funny, shrewd and ultimately uplifting. Brief nongraphic marital love-making, at least one profanity, a few sexual and drug references, a half-dozen crass terms. A-III (PG-13)

Fantastic Mr. Fox (Fox): Droll stop-motion animated adventure, set in the animal world of rural Britain, in which the titular vulpine creature (voice of George Clooney), now a respectable newspaper columnist with a wife (voice of Meryl Streep) and son (voice of Jason Schwartzman), tries to recapture his wild past as a chicken thief poaching on local farms, but his renewed raiding, abetted by his daring nephew (voice of Eric Anderson), enrages a trio

of mean-spirited farmers whose escalating countermeasures endanger the whole burrowing community. A touch of menace and a fleeting joke about Mrs. Fox's youthful indiscretions aside, director and co-writer Wes Anderson's clever, lovingly crafted adaptation of Roald Dahl's 1970 children's book offers sophisticated family entertainment, with abundant fun for youngsters and a few insights into the tensions and paradoxes of human nature for adults. A-I (PG)

Old Dogs (Disney): Passable comedy in which a sports marketing executive (Robin Williams) learns, seven years after the fact, that his quickly annulled second marriage produced fraternal twins (Conner

Rayburn and Ella Bleu Travolta) whose mother (Kelly Preston), on the eve of being imprisoned briefly for an environmental protest, entrusts the kids to his care, distracting him from work on a major business deal, much to the annoyance of his longtime partner and best friend (John Travolta). Its morally murky back story aside, director Walt Becker's dizzy dad escapade is mostly harmless, though a talented cast can do little with David Diamond and David Weissman's thin, derivative script. A drunken wedding, a few instances of vaguely sexual and mildly scatological humor, some rough slapstick. A-II (PG)

Planet 51 (TriStar): Delightful animated comedy based in a galaxy far, far away where little

Ratings

Conference of Catholic Bishops Office for Film & Broadcasting classifications: A-I – general patronage; A-II – adults and adolescents; A-III – adults; L – limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling; O – morally offensive.

Motion Picture Association of America ratings: G – general audiences, all ages admitted; PG – parental guidance suggested, some material may not be suitable for children; PG-13 – parents are strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13; R – restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian; NC-17 – no one 17 or under admitted; NR – no rating.

- 2012A-III (PG-13)
- Astro BoyA-II (PG)
- The Blind SideA-III (PG-13)
- The BoxL (PG-13)
- A Christmas CarolA-I (PG)
- Cloudy With a Chance of MeatballsA-II (PG)
- Couples RetreatL (PG-13)
- Fantastic Mr. FoxA-I (PG)
- The Fourth KindA-III (PG-13)
- Law Abiding CitizenO (R)
- The Men Who Stare at Goats ..A-III (R)
- Michael Jackson's This Is It ...A-II (PG)
- Old DogsA-II (PG)
- Paranormal ActivityL (R)
- Pirate RadioO (R)
- Planet 51A-I (PG)
- The Twilight Saga: New MoonA-II (PG-13)
- Where the Wild Things Are....A-II (PG)

green aliens live in a 1950s "Happy Days"-style suburbia, complete with white picket fences, backyard barbecues and monster movies playing at the drive in. When a real alien, in the shape of a human astronaut (voice of "The Rock," Dwayne Johnson), drops from the sky, all heck breaks loose as this E.T. tries to return home with the help of a gaggle of teens led by a shy would-be astronomer (voice of Justin Long). Some mildly suggestive humor aside, co-directors Jorge Blanco, Javier Abad and Marcos Martinez's generally wholesome film, which features positive life lessons about friendship, loyalty, and acceptance of others, offers fun for all ages. A-I (PG)

OUR TURN



Therese J. Borchard | The liberated woman: Why is she so unhappy?

According to a recent Time magazine story by Nancy Gibbs, it's expected that by the end of the year the majority of workers in the United States will be women. Today, she says, more and more women are the primary breadwinner in their household (almost 40 percent) or are contributing significant income to meet the family's bottom line.

The survey Gibbs cited said that 84 percent of families negotiate the rules, relationships and responsibilities more than did earlier generations. Has women's liberation made for happier women? Ah ... no. Writes Gibbs: "Among the most confounding changes of all is the

evidence, tracked by numerous surveys, that as women have gained more freedom, more education and more economic power, they have become less happy." Why? I think it goes back to what Uncle Ben told Peter Parker before Peter became Spiderman: "With great power comes great responsi-

bility." And all that responsibility we have now is extremely stressful.

The trends that were supposed to lead to more fulfillment for women – more participation at home by dads, the freedom to work and opportunities that weren't there 40 years ago – have somehow backfired, resulting in more drained, depressed women.

For example, as Marcus Buckingham explained in his recent piece on the Huffington Post, dads with nonteen kids spent two hours with them on an average weekday in 1977. Now they spend three hours per weekday, and Gen Y dads actually are up to 4.3

hours per day.

You would think that would result in a much-needed sigh from working moms. Instead it somehow adds to the stress because, if she isn't at home, then she's at work or doing something else on her to-do list.

Russell Bishop, senior editor-at-large of the Huffington Post, has a theory. He explains in his post "Women Are Unhappy? And You're Surprised?":

"My theory is that over the past 40 years, as American society exited the 'Father Knows Best' or 'Leave It to Beaver' mentality of the 50s and 60s, we seem to have increasingly equated success and fulfillment with jobs, career advancement, position title, bank accounts and other symbols of success.

"If you were one of those statistical women who took on job, career or economic goals as your 'symbols' of success, you just

might have wound up sacrificing what mattered most in hopes of greener pastures at the other end of job, career or economic goals."

I wholeheartedly agree with Russell. I also am guilty of buying into a false picture of success and happiness, which is why I read this passage from Henri Nouwen every morning as part of my meditation:

"Somewhere deep in our hearts we already know that success, fame, influence, power and money do not give us the inner joy and peace we crave. Somewhere we can even sense a certain envy of those who have shed all false ambitions and found a deeper fulfillment in their relationships with God.

"Yes, somewhere we can even get a taste of that mysterious joy in the smile of those who have nothing to lose."