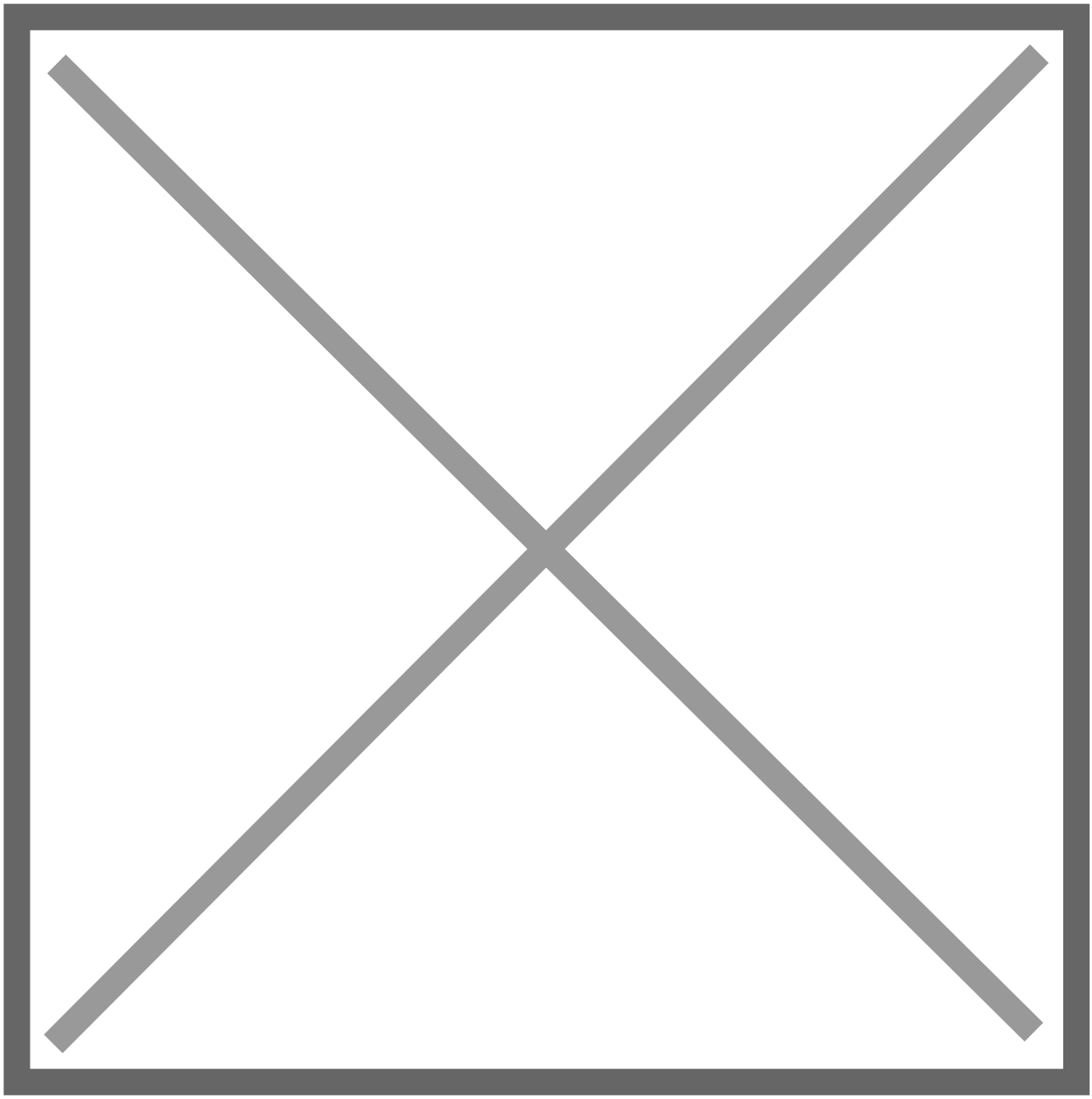
Spirituality
Vatican



Women are pictured in a file photo praying on All Souls' Day at a cemetery in Port-Au-Prince, Haiti. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic response measures restrict most gatherings, the Vatican has extended the usual plenary indulgence to souls in purgatory from just the first week in November to include the entire month. (CNS/Reuters/Eduardo Munoz)

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Plenary or full indulgences traditionally obtained during the first week of November for the souls of the faithful in purgatory can now be gained throughout the entire month of November, the Vatican said.

Also, those who are ill or homebound and would not be able to physically visit a church or cemetery in the prescribed timeframe still will be able to receive a plenary indulgence when meeting certain conditions, the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal that deals with matters of conscience, said in a notice released Oct. 23.

The tribunal also asked that priests be particularly generous throughout November in offering the sacrament of reconciliation and in administering Communion to those who are infirm.

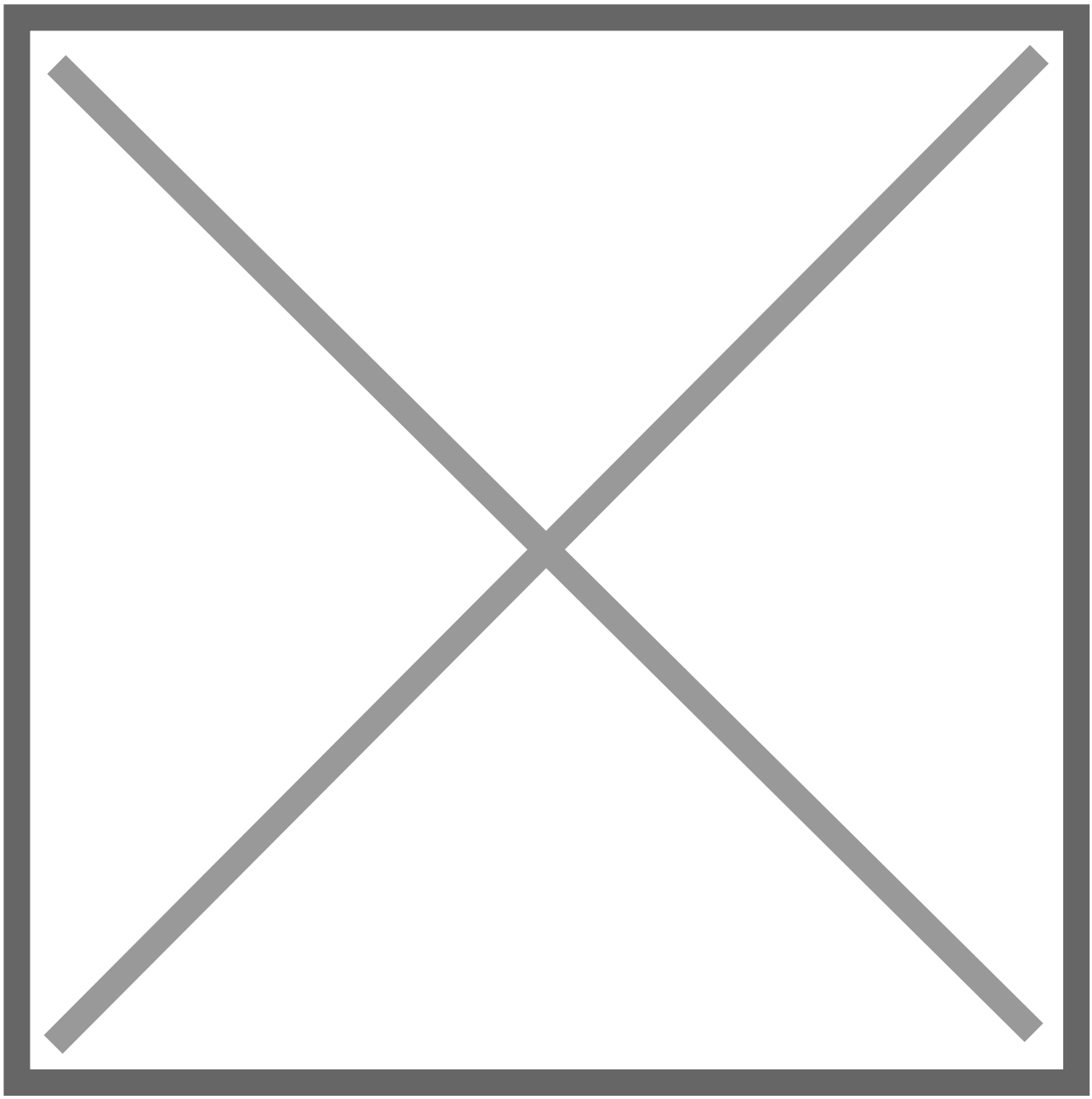
The new provisions were made after a number of bishops asked for guidance as to how the faithful could perform the works required for receiving a plenary indulgence given the ongoing pandemic and restrictions in many parts of the world limiting the number of people who can gather in one place, Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, told Vatican News Oct. 23.

Traditionally, the faithful could receive a full indulgence each day from Nov. 1 to Nov. 8 when they visited a cemetery to pray for the departed and fulfilled other

conditions, and, in particular, when they went to a church or an oratory to pray Nov. 2, All Souls' Day.

Bishops' conferences in countries where large numbers of faithful traditionally go to confession, attend Mass and visit cemeteries during the week had asked how the faithful could be accommodated given COVID-19 restrictions or in the case that a member of the faithful was ill, in isolation or in quarantine, the cardinal said.

The Vatican decided to extend the time one can receive a full indulgence to include the whole month of November, he said. Typically, only a partial indulgence is granted after the first week of November.



A woman is pictured in a file photo near the graves of her husband and son at Allouez Catholic Cemetery in Allouez, Wis. Because COVID-19 pandemic response measures restrict most gatherings, the Vatican has extended the usual plenary indulgence to souls in purgatory from just the first week in November to include the entire month. (CNS/The Compass/Sam Lucero)

The full indulgence traditionally offered Nov. 2 for those who visit a church or an oratory and recite the Our Father and the Creed can also be gained any day in

November, he added.

Those who cannot leave their homes or residence for "serious reasons," which includes government restrictions during a pandemic, he said, also can receive a plenary indulgence after reciting specific prayers for the deceased or reflecting on a Gospel reading designated for Masses of the dead before an image of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin Mary, or by performing a work of mercy.

In all cases, one also must fulfill the normal requirements set by the church for all plenary indulgences, which demonstrate a resolve to turn away from sin and convert to God. Those conditions include: having a spirit detached from sin; going to confession as soon as possible; receiving the Eucharist as soon as possible; praying for the pope's intentions; and being united spiritually with all the faithful.

Cardinal Piacenza said his office also strongly urged all priests to celebrate Mass three times on All Souls' Day, as allowed for in a 1915 document by Pope Benedict XV.

The hope is that the availability of more Masses that day would help everyone wanting to attend Mass to do so while respecting capacity limits in churches and places of worship, he said.

The church teaches that prayer, particularly the Mass, and sacrifices may be offered on behalf of the souls in purgatory. The feast of All Souls differs from the Nov. 1 feast of All Saints precisely because it offers prayers for the eternal peace and heavenly rest of all those who died in a state of grace, but not totally purified.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."

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