

Rahner's Interpretation of Indulgence in »Misericordiae vultus«?

Abstract

The *Misericordiae vultus* bull speaks about indulgences in a manner that could seem reminiscent of Karl Rahner's interpretation: temporal punishment due for sins would represent the painful consequences of sin, therefore it could not be remitted by an authoritative intervention; as such, the indulgence would essentially be (authoritative) prayer. Taking over this interpretation would mean leaving behind the traditional definition of indulgence and only using the word to designate a different reality. However, taking into account the fact that the discipline of jubilee indulgences has not changed according to Rahner's interpretation, this shows that the Holy Father speaks about a secondary effect of the indulgences, without wanting to introduce a new definition of them.