



## **Renewing Our Faith**

# **The Forgiveness of Sins**

# I BELIEVE IN THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

## **What does the word “forgiveness” mean in the Apostles Creed?**

The word “forgiveness” means to be pardoned or excused for something we have done wrong.

## **What does the word “sin” mean in the Apostles Creed?**

The word “sin” means breaking God’s law.

### **Trespasses: sins**

**Mercy:** the loving kindness that God has for us. God also wants us to be merciful to each other.

## **What does “forgiveness of sins” means?**

The forgiveness of sins means that God has given to the Church, through Jesus Christ, the power to forgive sins.

**In the “Our Father” we say, “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” What does that mean?**

God is full of mercy and he forgives us our sins and brings us to heaven. Christ commands each one of us to be merciful to others, forgiving them whatever wrongs they have done to us. If we want our sins to be forgiven, we must forgive others.

# SIN AND TEMPTATION

## What is sin?

Sin is separating ourselves from God's love by breaking his commandments.



## Commandment: a law of God

When we sin, we are offending God by what we are thinking, what we are saying, what we are doing and what we have failed to do.

When we sin, we are choosing to do something that we know is against God's laws.

## **What are some examples of sin?**

- Hating someone in your mind
- Not using God's name in the right way
- Getting drunk or stealing something
- Not going to Mass on a Sunday without a good reason

## **When you are guilty of sin?**

To be guilty of sin you must know that you are breaking God's law and you must freely choose to do it. A sin can be called "serious" if it breaks God's law very much. For example, deliberately making fun of God, murdering someone, or committing a adultery. These sins always deny the love of god or others. These sins are also called "grave" or "mortal" sins.



## **What was the first human sin?**

The first human sin was when Adam and Eve were tempted by the devil. They committed the sins of pride and disobedience because they both wanted to become “like God” by eating the forbidden fruit. In choosing to do the wrong thing, Adam and Eve received suffering, sickness and death. They also lost God’s gifts and graces for themselves and for future generations.

## **How can we keep from committing sin?**

We can keep from committing sin by praying and receiving the sacraments; by remembering that God is always with us; by remembering that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit; by keeping ourselves busy with work and play, by resisting temptations and avoiding the persons, places or things that may easily cause us to sin. For example: friends who do not respect religion or parties at which drugs and alcohol are used.

## **What is temptation?**

Temptation is an attraction to commit sin. Temptation comes before sin and tells us that what is wrong will actually be good for us. There are three things that lead us into temptation: the world, the flesh and the devil.

**The world:** persons or created things that lure us away from God

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**The flesh:** inner desires, also known as deadly sins:

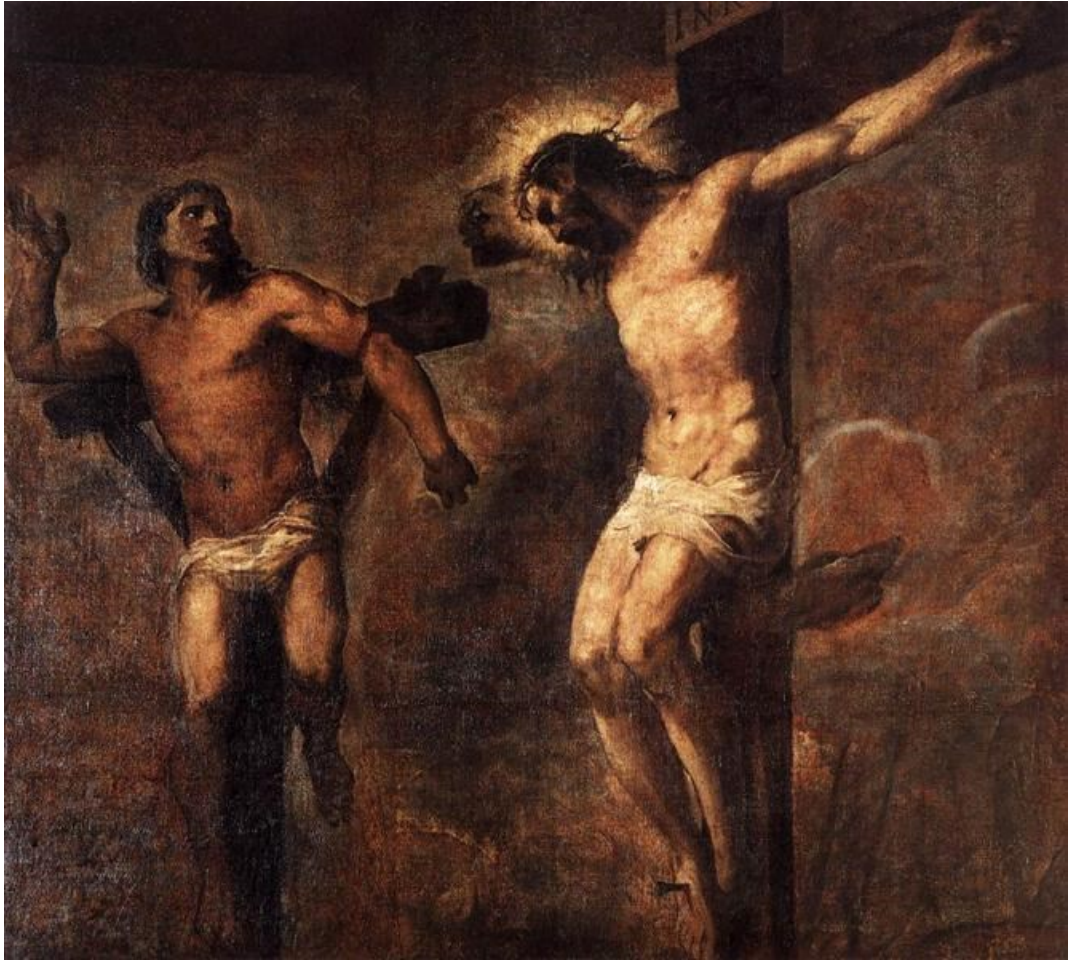
- being proud and not humble
- being greedy,
- being jealous of others,
- anger,
- looking at or treating other people in a way which is not respectful of them as a whole person
- eating and drinking more than we need,
- being lazy



**The devil:** Satan and his followers who try and make us disobey God and who hate the Christian life.



# THE SACREMENT OF CONFESSION



## Who can forgive sins?

Only Jesus can forgive sins because He is God. There are stories in the Bible where Jesus forgives the sins of those he encountered. These include the paralysed man (Lk 5:18-26); the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8:1-11), the sinful woman (Lk 7:39-50) and the good thief (Lk 23:39-43).

There is a parable that explains the forgiveness of sins from a loving father. That is the parable of the lost son, where the youngest son spent his father's money and he returned home to the arms of his loving father. The son appealed to the father and the father prepared a banquet for him and was filled with joy that his son returned home.

When you sin, you can always come back to God and ask him to forgive you and he will welcome you into his loving arms. This is what happens when we receive the sacrament of penance (reconciliation).



## **What is the Sacrament of penance?**

Penance is the sacrament that was established by Jesus Christ to forgive the sins we commit after Baptism. The sacrament also gives us the grace to avoid sins in the future. The Sacrament is also known as Confession and Reconciliation.

**Penance:** prayers or good works which the priest asks us to do after someone has confessed their sins

**Reconciliation:** restoring our relationship with God and with the Church

## **Who is the minister of the Sacrament of Penance?**

The minister of the sacrament of penance is the priest approved by the bishop.

## How do you make a good confession?

To make a good confession you need to:



- Think deeply and get a clear idea of what sins you have committed, about the areas of life where you have sinned and need God's healing grace. It helps to pray to the Holy Spirit for help in remembering.
- Be sorry for sin: remember that each of your sins is when you have turned away from God and what God has asked of you. Think about how your sins may have hurt others and offend God. Tell God your sorry and pray the prayer of contrition.



**Prayer of contrition:** a prayer in which we tell God that we are sorry for our sins.

**Oh God, I am so sorry that I have sinned against you because you are so good and with your help I will try not to sin again.**

Don't worry if you can't remember the actual words! The priest will remind you.

- Make a firm promise to do all you can to avoid sins: decide what steps you will take to avoid these same sins in the future. If you are truly sorry for your sins, you will try your hardest with the help of God not to sin again.

- Confess your sins to the priest, not trying to hide anything out of embarrassment and shame. The priest is there to give you God's forgiveness and he is glad that you have had the honesty and courage to come to the sacrament.
- The priest is never allowed to tell anyone any sin he has ever heard in Confession. This secrecy is called the "Seal of confession"
- If after you leave the Church and remember that you forgot to tell one of your sins do not worry about it. Tell the priest the next time you receive the sacrament. Try not to delay having the Sacrament of Reconciliation again

- Receive absolution and do the penance that the priest gives you: the penance the priest gives you may be some prayers or a specific action (good deed).
- Doing the penance shows that you are serious about wanting to overcome sin. You should do your penance as soon as possible.

**Absolution:** a prayer that the priest forgives our sins in the name of Christ and by the authority of the Church

## **What happens in the sacrament of penance?**

- The priest will greet you and then you will make the sign of the cross together

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- The priest may read a short bible passage, or he will ask you to confess your sins
  - Tell the priest how long it has been since your last confession
  - Tell the priest about any serious sins. The priest may ask some details to understand how serious the sin is or to clarify what you meant. For example: How often did you do that sin? Did you expect that bad thing to happen?
- After confessing all your sins, the priest will give you some advice about how to live a better Christian life. He will also give you penance



- The priest will ask you to pray the prayer of contrition
- The priest will say the words of forgiveness (absolution)

## **What does confession do to your soul?**

In confession, your sins are taken sin away from your soul. Confession puts grace back into your soul and makes it grow. Confession gives you the extra strength to stay away from sin in the future. It helps you to live a better life, closer to God and others.

## **How is the forgiveness of sins healing?**

Forgiveness of sins heals the wounds of sins and mends our injured relationship with God and others.

## How often do you have to go to confession?

The Church recommends that you go to confession at least once a year (about once a month is better).



