

What Do You Need to Reconcile in Your Life?

This is my Commandment: Love one another as I have loved you ~ John 15

Are there places in your life where you feel stuck? Where you experience tension, anxiety, hurt, unforgiveness, and pain? Come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where you can experience God's healing and mercy.

The essential meaning of sin is found in the Greek word *amartia*, which means "to miss the mark." The same word is used when an archer misses the bull's eye, or when traveling down the road, you make a wrong turn. It is the same idea – when you've sinned, you've missed the mark and gone off in the wrong direction. For the Christian, the way toward "the mark" is the path of love. You're called by the Lord Jesus to love in all life's interactions – this includes loving even your enemies. Sin occurs when you choose *not* to love - when instead of building up a relationship, you neglect, hurt, or break it down. Sin is rooted in self-centeredness. This self-centeredness looks at life and others in terms of what it can or cannot do for me. In this stance the heart loses its ability to see others and eventually hardens toward life and relationships. Our sin is a spiritual cancer that will gradually destroy our ability to love. As our self-centeredness becomes inflamed it will consume us and destroy all that is good. We will become dead before we die.

As you deepen your spiritual life – your relationship with God and others - you will become more acutely aware of your sin. You will begin to notice times when you are less than loving in your daily interactions. You'll begin to recognize the frequency of your sin as well as develop insight into the situations and issues that precipitate it.

This awareness of your own inability to "hit the mark" will not cause you to beat yourself up or to see yourself as a "bad" person. Instead, it will move you to cry out in a heartfelt, healthy way, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Your focus will not be on your guilt, but on the goodness of God and His mercy for you. It will help you turn to God to be bathed in His understanding, mercy, care, forgiveness, and love. Jesus Christ revealed to us that God is never cheap - He has already given us His mercy and forgiveness in abundance. It is within us, waiting to be released so it can permeate the very fiber of who we are. By intentionally opening our hearts to our God, His mercy and forgiveness will flood our very consciousness. It will then flow through us to others who sin against us. In turn, we will no longer be cheap in sharing our forgiveness and mercy with those who've hurt us. We will become less prone to making others pay for the pain they've inflicted. Eventually we will be able to love others, even in very difficult situations. The mercy and forgiveness given will be passed along in abundance to others.

As Catholics, we've been given a special gift to help us release God's mercy and forgiveness within us. This gift is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It is not about judgment and condemnation but about God's mercy and forgiveness. He wants to love and care for you as His beloved son or daughter. Let Him love you.

Please take advantage of this wonderful Sacrament of God's mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner, for I always trust in your mercy.

I sin when I do not love others.

I always need to look at *what I bring to a relationship*, not what the other person brings or how the other responds to me. I sin when I do not love another, no matter what he/she has done, or not done, to or for me.

There are times when my behavior is not loving – this is when I sin.

What do these sins look like, concretely?

How do I manifest these sins in my life – overtly or subtly? Be gentle and trust in God's mercy.

I'm not loving when I am:

ungrateful
cold
critical
judgmental
greedy
cruel
physically abusive
selfish
condescending
obsessively controlling
gossiping
vulgar
disrespectful
stealing
violent
a racist
manipulating others
cheating
bossy
sexually obsessive
compulsive
abusing substances
holding onto unforgiveness
undermining
sarcastic
unjust
non-participatory
putting unrealistic demands on others
opinionated
irresponsible
lustful
destroying life
indifferent to the poor and broken

indifferent
non-communicative
not listening to another
not compassionate
coveting other's possessions
emotionally abusive
self-absorbed
cheap
arrogant
lying
jealous
crude
negative
trash-talking
promiscuous
dishonoring God
self-righteous
squandering my time and resources
exploiting others or the earth
destroying another's reputation
vengeful
obsessing on the future or the past
withholding life-giving responses
cynical
punitive
inattentive
lazy
prejudiced
apathetic
deceitful
insensitive
enabling
unfaithful to a commitment