

WHAT IS SIN?

February 7, 2021

Fifth Sunday in
Ordinary Time



Sin is not a popular subject but it is deeply rooted in our Jewish and Christian tradition. The Hebrew word most often translated as “sin” in the Old Testament means “to miss the mark.” This reminds us that our aim should always be towards God. To choose anything that doesn’t bring us closer to him is to “misaim” and fail to live up to the life we have been called to as disciples.

Jesus’ message was deeply concerned with turning away

from sin and pursuing holiness. His first public proclamation was “Repent, and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:15) The

“IF YOU ACT RIGHTLY, YOU WILL BE ACCEPTED; BUT IF NOT, SIN LIES IN WAIT AT THE DOOR: ITS URGE IS FOR YOU, YET YOU CAN RULE OVER IT.”

:: Genesis 4:7

Greek word used in the Gospels for “repent,” *metanoia*, literally means “change your mind.” This is not a mental act, but a change of perspective — to see the world and our actions through his eyes, turn away from sin, and reorient our lives to his will and commandments.

The Church is concerned with our behavior because she is concerned with our eternal souls. Even small sins can contribute to our habit of choosing evil over good. The Church wants to help us stay on the path of discipleship so that we can enjoy the Kingdom of heaven with Jesus and the saints!

The Church recognizes two types of sin. Venial sins wound the life of Christ within us, but not mortally. Venial sins are forgiven through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, reception of the Holy Eucharist, or an Act of Contrition.

Mortal sins (sometimes



Watch the video:

youtu.be/Jd0bvCoWMdY

referred to as “serious sins”) concern grave matter, such as the Ten Commandments. Examples of mortal sin include murder, abortion, stealing from the poor, and neglecting the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Because they destroy the life of grace within us and require “a new initiative of God’s mercy” to restore it (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1856), mortal sins must be forgiven through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

We are fortunate that the Church has provided so many ways for us to access God’s mercy. As we prepare for the beginning of Lent, prepare your heart to respond to Christ’s call: “Repent, and believe in the gospel!”



“AS ST. PAUL AFFIRMS, ‘WHERE SIN INCREASED, GRACE ABOUNDED ALL THE MORE.’ BUT TO DO ITS WORK GRACE MUST UNCOVER SIN SO AS TO CONVERT OUR HEARTS AND BESTOW ON US ‘RIGHTEOUSNESS TO ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.’”

:: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1848

Family Discussion Questions

1. How do members of your family ask for forgiveness from one another when someone has been hurt or wronged?
2. How has God’s mercy and forgiveness been evident in your life?
3. What habits – your own or your family’s – may be limiting your freedom to choose good and follow God’s commands? How could you institute better habits that lead to virtue rather than vice?

Family Challenge

Go to Confession at your parish. If that isn’t possible, gather as a family and read the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Reflect in silence on your need for God’s mercy, then recite the [Act of Contrition](#) together.

Additional Videos

- Praying in a State of Mortal Sin: youtu.be/G6KDiOh_Pn8
- What if I Die Before Confessing a Mortal Sin?: youtu.be/wMLhfHkfm5E

Other Resources

- [*Little Sins Mean a Lot: Kicking Our Bad Habits Before They Kick Us*](#) by Elizabeth Scalia (Our Sunday Visitor, 2016)



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The ministries of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana are supported by generous contributions to the Catholic Ministries Appeal.