

Sacrament of Reconciliation Preparation
Parent Session 4
Choosing the Good

Warm Up: What does God want from us?

How would you answer these questions to a friend who is not a believer?

- *Why did God create us?*
- *What does He want for us?*
- *How do we respond to God as His creature?*

*How you define the nature of Christian life if you viewed it as being:
a Slave,*

a Mercenary

or a Child?

Opening Prayer

Help me understand, dear Father in heaven,

- That you want my good
- That you want me to live a full life
- That you want me in heaven with you forever

Help me trust, dear Father in heaven, that, not only do you want these things for me, but that you can bring them about.



Amen.

Making Moral Choices: Choosing Good and Avoiding Evil

- God is inviting us into a relationship as His beloved child
- As His beloved child, we are called to seek holiness and perfection through His Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ

- Jesus' Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, makes what is humanly impossible into reality—Christ lives and acts in us
- God doesn't want us "good enough"—He wants us to experience the joy and vitality of being fully human; God's commands guide us to become the saints God designed us to be
- Our moral choices give us the chance to cooperate with God's plan—to achieve spiritual excellence

What does Goodness offer us?

“The person who abandons himself totally in God's hands does not become God's puppet, a boring 'yes man'; **he does not lose his freedom.** Only the person who entrusts himself totally to God finds true freedom, the **great, creative immensity of the freedom of good.** The person who turns to God does not become smaller but greater, for through God and with God **he becomes great, he becomes divine, he becomes truly himself.**”

(Pope Benedict XVI, 12/8/2005)

What is the Essence of a Human Act?

- ***Any human action is composed of three elements:***
 1. The **OBJECT** (what I am going to do; the means)
 2. The **INTENTION** (why I am going to do it; the end in view)
 3. The **CIRCUMSTANCES** (extent of action, what happens during and after action)

Because of our rationality and freedom, human acts can be good or evil

Moral Goodness...

- Requires the goodness of both OBJECT and INTENTION
- ***An evil object (means) is not justified by a good intention (ends)***
- **Example:** Kevin is very concerned about his son's future: he's not very motivated to work hard and his grades are not very good. Because he wants his son to have a good chance at a living wage, Kevin bribes a college counselor to 'fast track' his son's admission application.
- ***An evil intention makes an act evil even if a good object (means) is used***
- **Example:** Marge is planning to take her two kids on a trip to Disneyland during the summer. She booked the trip for the time when her ex-husband wanted the kids for a family reunion on his side, so that the kids would beg to be with her instead.

Circumstances...

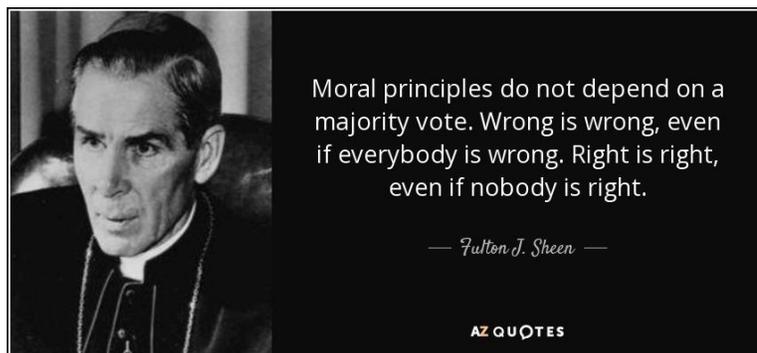
- ***The circumstances cannot change the moral quality of acts themselves***
- ***The circumstances can increase or decrease the moral goodness of an act***
- ***The circumstances can affect one's personal responsibility for the act***
- **Example**: No matter how inexpensive the item stolen, shoplifting is still stealing; but if a child is forced to shoplift by a parent, the child's moral responsibility is lessened.

Case Study for Application:

Chris is preparing to enter college. He has recently been offered a scholarship to his first choice college—a full ride! When he arrives there, he discovers that his SAT score was mistakenly copied by the scholarship committee—the error made his score much higher and probably won him the scholarship. Chris told his 3 closest friends about the error. Andrew told him, “Hey, it’s not your problem. You didn’t lie or do anything wrong, so just take what’s given to you.”

Shannon replied, “Yeah, but if he gets a scholarship he didn’t earn, that means someone who should get the money won’t. That’s not fair.” Sam turned to Chris and said, “But you can’t afford tuition without the scholarship. Because you need it so badly, it’s okay to keep it.”

Can you identify the object (means), intention (ends) and circumstances to consider in this moral choice?



Making Judgments About our Moral Choices:

- In what we say and do, we are **obliged to follow faithfully what we know to be just and right**
- We must be cautious, though, and seek to recognize rationalizations and excuses that cloud our conscience
- We are responsible for **forming** our conscience—not just letting our ‘feelings’ dictate our choices but using rational judgment rooted in God’s revealed Truth (found in Scripture & Doctrine)



“Conscience is a judgment of reason whereby the human person recognizes the moral quality of a concrete act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing, or has already completed.” (CCC 1778)

Rules of moral choices that always apply:

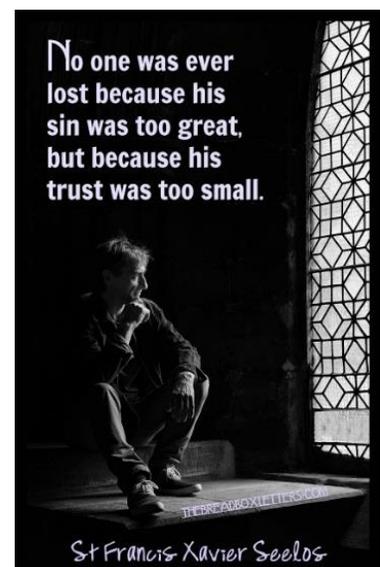
- **One may never do evil** so that good may result from it
- Follow the **Golden Rule**: “Whatever you wish done to you, do to others”
- Love, true love, fulfills the law—to **love is to will and seek the good for another**
- *As Christians, our goal is to **love as Jesus loves**—to seek how much we can do, not how little we can get away with offering*

Moral Choices that involve Evil Means and/or Ends are Sins

- We choose to do what we know to be wrong
- We choose to not do what we know to be good
- Sin is an offense against reason, truth and love;
- Sin breaks or harms a relationship, it’s not just breaking a rule

What is a Mortal Sin?

- All sins are an offense against God
- **Mortal Sin:** destroys life of grace in our hearts through grave violation of God’s law and reflects:
 - serious matter,
 - full knowledge,
 - full consent



“If any one sees his brother committing what is not a deadly sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those sins which are not deadly. There is sin which is deadly; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not deadly.” (1 John 5:16-17)

What is a Venial Sin?

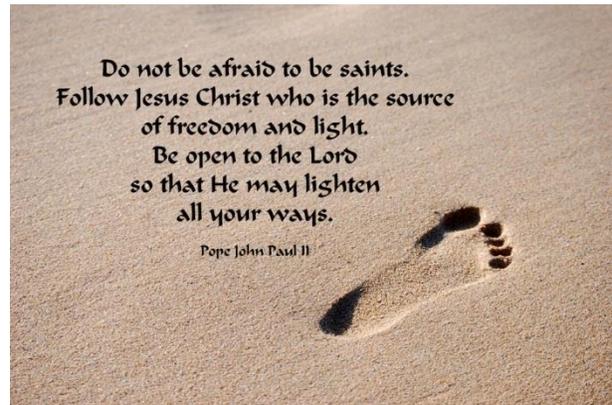
- Sins that wound or harm the life of grace within us, but do not destroy our connection with God
- Sin creates a proclivity to sin—so even venial sins should be confessed and avoided

Can every sin be forgiven?

- *“Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.” (Mt 12:31)*
- The ‘unforgiveable sin’ mentioned by Jesus—we sin against the Holy Spirit when we reject the need for forgiveness and refuse to repent
- God’s mercy is limitless, all can be forgiven—*if we ask for forgiveness with a contrite heart*

The Goal of the Christian Life? To Become Saints!

- Our Christian life is not reducible to avoiding sin—our goal is to have a vibrant, full life with God (just like the goal of health is not just to avoid illness)
- Intimate union with God—to know, love and serve Him in this life so as to live forever with Him in heaven
- Being a true child of our beloved Father and a true brother/sister of Jesus Christ
- Driven by love!– not fear! not greed!
We are beloved children, not slaves or mercenaries.



“Of all visible creatures, only man is able to know and love his creator. He is the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake, and he alone is called to share, by knowledge and love, in God’s own life. ...He is called by grace to a covenant with his Creator, to offer him a response in faith and love that no other creature can give in his stead.” (CCC #356-357)

Why Does God Allow Us to Struggle Against Evil?

- God honors our freedom and seeks our love—God IS love and desires to draw us into an eternity of abiding in His communion of love. To seek love is to allow the possibility of the other rejecting love, to permit the choice.
- The battle of earthly life and the struggle to do good strengthens, instructs, purifies and transforms us
- Allowing grace to take root in our lives and come to fruition takes a lifetime
- Love requires sacrifice, freedom, decision and perseverance—it's a 4-dimensional thing!

“Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. ... God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ... God disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ... Strive ... for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”

From Hebrews 12:3-14

Closing Prayer: The Love of God

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, not things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35-39)

