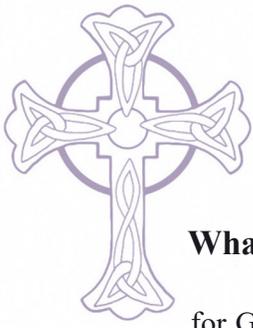




St. Stephen Parish FIRST RECONCILIATION General Information

- **First Reconciliation is on Wednesday, December 9th at 6:00 p.m. in St Stephen Church.**
- **Please arrive by 5:50 p.m.**
- **Please take the time to bath, eat a delicious dinner, and come dressed in your Sunday best.**
- **First Reconciliation is a solemn event for reflection. We ask that family members and friends keep conversations to a minimum and monitor younger siblings.**
- **Only students will be seated in the front pews and family and friends will be seated behind them.**
- **We will be meeting in the church lobby afterwards for a quick snack to celebrate.**
- **Please practice the Act of Contrition with your child. He/She will be required to memorize and recite it.**



Foundations of Catholic Morality

What is Sin?

Sin is an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity.

When we sin, we choose self over God, revolting against God in an act of disobedience. The passion narratives in the gospels illustrate well the many forms of sin: unbelief, hatred that leads to murder, mockery, cowardice, cruelty, betrayal, denial, flight from the truth.

In brief, sin is a failure to love ourselves, others, and God resulting in a breach in covenant love. The heart of the gospel is that Jesus Christ came to extend God's forgiveness to sinners. Without a healthy concept of sin, people tend to see little need for Jesus, the one who frees us from sin. Christians do not harp on sin out of a morbid attraction to evil; bad news is not the Christian message. Rather, we talk of sin to stress the good news that God forgives us and in the person of Jesus has rescued us from its effects. To receive Christ's mercy means that we must admit our sins.

There are many ways to classify sins, for example, those directed against God, neighbor, or self. A traditional grouping lists sins of the spirit and sins of the flesh. Another classification labels sins as those of thought, word, deed, or emission. Yet another categorization distinguishes between original sin and personal sin. And sin can be categorized according to its gravity, determined principally by the moral object. Thus, we speak of mortal sin and venial sin.

What is Original Sin?

Original sin refers to that condition of disharmony into which all humans are born. This condition is inherited.

It is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothed it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death (Paul IV, Credo of the People of God, 16).

Universal human experience confirms the Catholic teaching that we are born into a sinful state. The evil we see around us, the anger we have within us toward others and ourselves, the good resolutions we so often break are all evidence of the sin which is part of humanity's condition.

What Is Personal Sin?

Personal (or "actual") **sin** is any free and deliberate action, word, thought, or desire that turns us away from God's law of love (The Ten Commandments). It can be seen as a weakening (venial sin) or killing (mortal sin) of our relationship with our loving God.

What Is Mortal Sin?

Mortal sin is serious sin. Mortal sin includes attitudes, desires, or actions (or failures to act) that kill our relation to God and others (including our fellow Christians). Mortal sin destroys love in the human heart by gravely violating God's law (The Ten Commandments). No disciple of Jesus takes it lightly. To sin mortally, the sin must include:

- *grave matter* – For example, murder, adultery, and apostasy are serious, gravely wrong actions.

- *sufficient reflection* – This means that we know full well that what we propose to do is seriously wrong, that is, is sinful and opposed to God's law, but we do it anyhow.
- Full *consent of the will* – This means that we do the action with freedom and not under the influence of limiting factors like force, fear, or blinding passion. Sin committed with malice, by deliberately choosing evil, is the worst kind of sin.

The church teaches that just like it is possible for us to love, human freedom also makes it possible for us to sin mortally. Mortal sin results in the loss of love and deprives the sinner of sanctifying grace. If a person does not repent and receive Christ's forgiveness and dies in a state of mortal sin, he or she will merit eternal separation from God: hell. A Christian should do everything possible with God's help to avoid mortal sin or to repent immediately and ask for God's forgiveness if he or she should commit deadly sin. For Catholics, the sacrament of reconciliation is the normal means by which mortal sins are forgiven.

What Is Venial Sin?

Venial sin partially rejects God; it is a stumbling block on the path of following Jesus. Venial sins typically involve slight matter. Or, with venial sins full consent of the will is lacking or ignorance is present in the sinner. These sins are not deadly. Unlike mortal sin, they do not destroy sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, or eternal happiness.

The theft of a small item, a sarcastic word, or not praying regularly are examples of venial sins.

Venial sin is something Christians should try to eradicate from their lives. The danger of all sin is that we can become attached to it. Repeating sinful acts can give a foothold to vices, bad habits that turn us from love. These vices, especially the so-called deadly or **capital sins** = *pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust*--can lead us to sin mortally.

Venial sin also weakens love, attaches us to created goods rather than God, and merits temporal punishment.

All sin is personal. Sin also often involves cooperation in the sins of others and can produce social and institutional structures contrary to God's will. These so-called "structures of sin" result from our personal sin and both cause an evil society and lead people into committing sins.

Concluding Thoughts

Traditionally, we speak of a person who has turned completely away from divine love and has killed a relationship with God as being in "the state of mortal sin." To correct this situation the sinner must repent, that is, turn back to God, admit his or her wrongdoing, and acknowledge the need for forgiveness. The Father always offers the grace, the invitation, to accept divine love again.

Catholics celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation in which God's healing love is presented to us as a sign which reassures us of divine love. The point of Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is that God's love is steadfast and that God always extends mercy to us. However, we need to repent, to admit our wrongdoing, and to turn to our loving Lord to accept his love. In brief, a helpful way to image Christian morality is to see it as saying "yes" to God's love, letting it shine on us, and then living a life of light and love that shines out to others.



The Ten Commandments

We show we love God when:

1. We think first of what God wants when we make choices.
2. We only use God's name with love and respect.
3. We keep Sunday as God's special day of prayer and rest.



We show we love ourselves and others when:

4. We listen to and obey those who care for us.
5. We care for all living things.
6. We care for our bodies and respect others.
7. We do not take anything that is not ours.
8. We are truthful and fair.
9. We are faithful to those we love.
10. We help people to have what they need to live.

Which commandments are hardest to follow?

Why?

Who can help you do better?

Will you talk to her or him about it?

How to Examine Our Conscience

1. When I make choices, do I sometimes forget to think first about what God wants me to do?
Have I done what God wants?
2. Have I used God's name in a bad way?
3. Have I forgotten God on Sunday?
4. Have I disobeyed the grown-ups who take care of me?
5. Have I forgotten to give my body the good food and sleep it needs?
6. Have I hurt someone by what I have said or done?
7. Have I taken money or anything that is not mine?
8. Have I always told the truth?
9. Have I been unfair to others - especially those who are different than I am?
10. Have I refused to help people who are in need?

*Why do we examine our conscience?
How will you get ready to celebrate the
Sacrament of Reconciliation?*

ACT OF CONTRITION

**My God,
I am truly sorry for my sins
with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong
and failing to do good.**

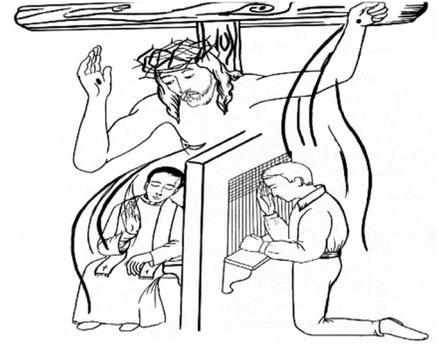


**I have sinned against you,
whom I should love above all things.**

**I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance,
to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.**

**Our Savior, Jesus Christ,
suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy.
Amen.**

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION
(Form for Confession)



I Look into My Heart:

(Examination of Conscience)

I think about what Jesus has taught and how I have lived.

I Go to the Priest:

The priest welcomes me in the name of Jesus and the whole Church.

I sit or kneel down by him.

I Make the Sign of the Cross

I Confess My Selfishness or Sins:

As if I were speaking to Jesus, I TELL THE PRIEST ABOUT THOSE WORDS AND ACTIONS I FEEL SORRY ABOUT.

I Listen to the Priest:

The priest helps me to see how I can be more caring and less selfish. The priest gives me a penance or prayer to say when I get back to my place in Church.

I Say I am Sorry:

I tell God I am sorry for my selfishness or sins. I SAY A PRAYER OF SORROW - THE ACT OF CONTRITION.

I Receive a Sign of God's Forgiveness (Absolution):

The priest extends his hand and says:

"I forgive you _____ in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

I Thank God with the Priest:

The priest says: "Go in peace."

I say: "Thank you Father"

After Confession:

I kneel and give thanks to God for having forgiven me. I ask his help for doing better.

I say whatever penance or prayer the priest has given me.