



Boston Catholic Journal

Nihil nisi Jesum



Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

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I have sinned ... what now?



We are sinners. It is an ineradicable part of our human nature as the patrimony of Original Sin — and all its deleterious vestiges — passed on to us from our first Parents, Adam and Eve. In a word, it has its “*hooks*” in us, specifically *concupiscence* (our inherent inclination to sin), and try as we may, the barbs remain deeply embedded. They cannot be removed. This *inclination* to sin remains with us all our lives. That primal poison, Original Sin itself, is cleansed from us

through our Baptism, but the wound remains ... and remains open to the infection of sin. It must be kept sterile, free from the pathogens that surround it, awaiting the first opportunity to breach the barrier of *grace* and metastasize, to spread the deadly infection into every area of our lives. This requires Actual Grace — and Actual Grace depends upon our cooperation with God in avoiding sin and the near occasion of sin, much as we would avoid a virulent bacterium that we know, once exposed to, is perilous to us. God calls us away from it — from sin — and we must cooperate with that divine call to avoid what will seriously harm us, and may likely kill us. It is quite that serious.

But we are fallen in our nature, and lifelong heirs to that dangerous patrimony from Adam and Eve. We fall. Despite the clear admonition by God and even the canons of reason, we sin.

What then?

As one who comes to his senses and realizes that the beautiful Belladonna was deadly — and turned out to be “Deadly Nightshade” — we seek the remedy. We are not slow in doing so, but act at once, in fact, *instantly* when the realization is upon us that our very lives are now in very real danger.

In the case of mortal sin, no worldly doctor or hospital will avail us anything. There is one and only one antidote and its stages unfold progressively. Let us look at them:

First we cast away the deadly nightshade and flee from the corpse! We run from it as if our lives depended on it — and they do. We flee from the *occasion* that introduced us to it and with all our hearts we are determined to return to it no more. We place distance between ourselves and the peril.

Immediately we seek the remedy, imploring the Actual Grace that will bring us to forgiveness by God. The longer we wait, the more the poison of sin courses through us and the deadlier its consequences, the uglier its blight. We do not have the time or the leisure examine it in retrospect or to dispute its causes. It is imperative that we act at once!

What to do

We fall to our knees (*literally*, not figuratively) and at once implore God’s forgiveness — *never* presuming it! To comfortably *presume* the forgiveness of God is itself a sin — the *sin of presumption*, in other words, the presumption that God *must* and will forgive us *no matter what*. If we approach God with the mistaken notion that He is *obligated* to forgive us because He is God, we are quite wrong: **God is not our debtor: we are His!** We cannot approach God to seek what we mistakenly believe is *ours* — in this case forgiveness — *by right!* This is nothing short of compounding sin with insolence!

We express in the greatest anguish possible ... our sincere sorrow for *what* we have done and to *Whom* we have done it! We do not plead excuses! That is another poison altogether. We do not lay the blame on others, or appeal to “mitigating” circumstances: we justly and completely assume it ourselves: ***totally and in absolute humility***. It is ***our*** fault — no matter the circumstances and no matter our weakness or susceptibility to the sin. God knows far better than we do, and any “attenuating circumstances” (if any) He is well aware of — far more than you are.

Ask forgiveness *in* the Name of Jesus Christ and *through* Jesus Christ and plead for the *intercession* of Mary, Mother of Mercy. Call upon the Saints to plead your cause! Invoke the Holy Company of Martyrs to pray *with* you and *for* you and to *assist* you in your prayer, that it be absolutely sincere and acceptable to God, the Father of Mercies.

And then make the “firm resolution” — the genuine and heartfelt resolution to sin no more — especially in the sin for which you now express your sorrow. If you are “ashamed” that is quite beside the point. That is selfish self-love: you have disappointed *yourself* ... and this is far removed from recognizing that you have sinned against God Himself! You feel yourself a fool. That, too, is beside the point, even though you have behaved like a fool and deserve the derision due a fool.

How, you may ask, do you know that your resolution to sin no more this way is real? A pretty good test is to be found in the answer to this question: If you could go back in time and encounter that temptation to sin exactly as you had when you fell into it, would you ***really*** “***not*** do it again”? Only you can answer that, and the likelihood of your forgiveness by God very much depends upon it. It is a fairly good test of ***sincerity***.

First and foremost

- ***Your first act*** is to immediately *recognize* and *acknowledge* that you have sinned against God ... ***the instant*** that the sin is committed or enacted.
- Go to your knees before your God, confess your sin and express your sincerest sorrow.
- You **MUST** go to Confession! God’s priest is the only person on earth able to absolve you of your sin through the ***Sacrament of Penance***.
- It is true that *perfect sorrow* is conducive to God's forgiveness. He is a loving Father. But Christ gave His priests the sacramental ability to forgive sins in Him and through Him and His Church. If it was given, it must be used.

Rise up! And sin no more!

Avoid sin as the most horrible, despicable, and mortal enemy that it is. There is no greater atrocity in this world than sin. *None*. It is the province and allurements of the evil one. Look upon a Crucifix and contemplate the price for your sin: see how it marred Him Who is the “Innocent of the Father”. It literally cost Christ His life!

If you fall again, get up again. **The last sin is *despair***: it is the last sin for it is the second death. However often you sin, it is never the excuse for sinning again, but do not despair: neither is the mercy of Almighty God to be outdone by our proclivity to sin! Indeed, “The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on them that fear him.” (Ps. 103.17)

Remember, man, that God *is merciful* ... and that God is *also just*. For this reason Saint Paul tells us that we work out our salvation in fear and trembling. Do not presume upon God’s mercy. “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” (Exodus 33.19 and Romans 9.15)

Christ is the propitiation for our sins. Love Him. Adore Him. Serve Him. And cleave to Him Who alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He *died* for your sins. At the very least you must own up to them.

Away now to Confession ...!

Editor

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