

## St. Francis of Assisi Parish Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879

RCIA - Deacon P. Iacono

### ***SIN AND GUILT***

#### **I. The Basics:**

A. Sin is an utterance, a deed, or a desire contrary to the Eternal Law. It is an offense against God and is in disobedience to Him. How do we know what the Eternal Law is? The Eternal Law is found in the Bible and its understanding of sin is explained through its interpretation in light of the Tradition of the Church.

B. Sin is a transgression against the Law, but most importantly, it is a betrayal of love. Sin is the conscious turning away from God's friendship.

C. Sin leads to a weakening or collapse of our relationship with God/people. The book of *Genesis* in the Hebrew Scriptures explains that Adam and Eve freely chose sin. God is not responsible for man's sin.

D. The Hebrew Scriptures explains that sin is the failure of Israel to live by the *covenant and commands* that God had established for His chosen people. The Christian Scriptures, in the four Gospels, specifically says that sin is a real threat to humanity's spiritual and physical health; also, in the *Epistles*, St. Paul's *Letter to the Galatians* 5: 19-21, contrasts the "works of the flesh" (sin) with the "fruits of the Spirit" (virtues).

E. Jesus, our Savior, as the Son of God overcame our sins through His life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

#### **II. Types of Sin:**

A. Sin can be both **personal** evil and **social** evil. Individuals commit personal sins (sins against themselves and/or others).

Social sin is evil, which enters institutions, organizations, and society because of decisions made by groups of people.

B. Sin is both a reality (we experience it daily) and a mystery (because no phrase or definition can adequately express its entire nature).

C. Sins are evaluated according to their gravity. *The First Letter of John*, verses 16 and 17, speaks of the **distinction between mortal and venial sin.**

#### **III. Mortal and Venial Sins**

A. **Mortal sin is sin:**

1) **Whose object is grave matter (related to the *Ten Commandments*), and**

2) **Which is committed with full knowledge, and the**

3) **Deliberate consent (psychological/physical) of the person.**

(CCC # 1857, p. 455).

B. The *consequences* of mortal sin are:

1) The loss of charity - the formal breaking of your relationship with God; 2) The blocking of sanctifying grace – which leads to the death of the soul;

3) If unrepented, it will result in the exclusion from Christ’s kingdom and the eternal death of Hell. Remember, our freedom has the power to make eternal choices (CCC #1861).

C. **Venial sin concerns a less serious matter:**

1) **It weakens charity.**

2) **It manifests a disordered affection for created goods;**

3) **It impedes the soul’s progress in the exercise of Christian virtues and the practice of moral good.**

4) **It merits punishment, but it does not break the covenant (relationship) with God; nor does it deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, and consequently eternal happiness (CCC # 1863).**

#### **IV. Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit**

A. *The Gospel of Mark 3:29: “Whoever **blasphemes against the Holy Spirit** never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.”* There are no limits to the mercy of God, *but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept His mercy by refusing to repent, and rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit, leads his or her soul to final impenitence and eternal damnation (CCC #1864).*

#### **V. Why is the Sacrament of Reconciliation Important?**

A. The Sacrament of Reconciliation (synonym for Penance or Confession) washes away the stain of mortal and venial sin. Remember, there are still “consequences” to the sin. You have been forgiven, but, there is the fact that an injustice has occurred, which must be addressed and cleansed. This is where the issue of penance and Purgatory enters into the discussion.

#### **VI. Guilt**

A. Guilt is the normal psychological reaction to the fact that we have broken the relationship with God and/or our fellow man. Guilt demands a response. Our response is to return to God’s family through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Guilt can be considered “good” in that it reorients us and helps us realize we need to heal our relationship with God. The idea of “Catholic Guilt” is made fun of in the media and by comedians, but the issue is a critical one for any Catholic who is sincere about developing a relationship with another person – especially if that person is the Creator of the Universe!