

APOSTLES OF THE REAL PRESENCE
Devoted to Restoring the Faith and Understanding in the Real Presence of
Jesus Christ in the Eucharist

THE LOSS OF THE SENSE OF SIN IN SOCIETY TODAY

In these days of a lost sense of morality, compassion and sin, where many sinful ways are now even being considered as acceptable, we will revisit the authentic Catholic moral teachings of Jesus Christ related in Sacred Scripture and in the Sacred Traditions of our Fathers of the early church, to provide Catholics with a concise reference and explanation relative to mortal sins. It is hoped that it will also be helpful as an incentive to many people for more frequent use of the Sacrament of Confession. With Jesus Christ truly present Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist, much more care and effort must be taken to purify our souls beforehand, so that Catholics will not be receiving Our Lord Jesus Christ unworthily.

Observations Relative to Confession and Holy Communion. I'm sure many of you have noticed that when you attend Mass we see practically everyone go up and receive Holy Communion, while if we go to Confession, we see only a handful of people confessing their sins. There are several possible reasons for this significant imbalance. Three of the predominant reasons for this imbalance is the wide spread loss of the sense of sin through the justification of our sins within our own conscience, the loss of the faith and understanding in the real presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in the Holy Eucharist (see "Holy Communion and the Real Presence of Jesus"), and lastly, an erroneous assumption by some people that we do not have to confess our sins to a priest in order to obtain pardon of our sins from God (See "Getting Comfortable in Confessing My Sins"). The first mentioned problem is the main subject within this writing. We will first try to understand this current loss of the sense of sin, and secondly, we will attempt to restore the proper sense of sin by revisiting the authentic moral teachings of the Catholic Church through a concise reference and explanation of mortal sins.

The Redefinition and Justification of Sin. As Pope Pius XII said, "The sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin". As long as the Roman Catholic Church exists in Her current form, as long as Her teachings on moral issues remain inviolate, Her very existence will be a rebuke to those committing immoral acts, and will cause people to feel guilty. So if the emphasis can be changed from personal repentance and sanctification to instead the removal of the sensation of guilt while continuing and justifying their past and current behavior, people can be free from guilt and modern society in general will eventually accept their immoral acts. The ultimate goal is unlimited personal freedom without guilt. So the first step in the process of eliminating the need for personal repentance is to redefine the concept of sin. If people can go as far as to claim that since they do not believe they are sinning, then they are not sinning, and have no need for repentance and the Sacrament of Confession. In almost every case, Catholics falling away from the church, begin the process of moral disintegration by questioning the need for the Sacrament of Confession. (Brian Cloves, *Call to Action or Call to Apostasy?*, Human Life International, Front Royal, VA, 1997, 17-22, 46-50.)

Justifying Sin Through Our Conscience. To eliminate the Sacrament of Confession is to say that we are not accountable to anyone above ourselves, and that we may freely choose whatever course of action feels good or does us good, as long as we justify it with our "conscience". This is not a truth-based, but a feeling-based way of life. A person's conscience is a very flexible entity, and can be easily twisted into any shape required to cover the sin(s) he/she happens to be committing at the time. Most Catholics who have fallen away from the True Faith, do so gradually. Through rationalization of their behavior, once they have adequately justified one particular sin, it is simple for them to excuse additional sins also. When a person's conscience has excepted certain sins in themselves, they necessarily become "tolerant" of the same sins in others, since to condemn the same sin in others would cause them to be a hypocrite and would make them inconsistent. Therefore they tend to accept in others whatever sins they practice and justify in their conscience, even those that are explicitly condemned in Scripture, such as fornication, adultery and homosexual acts. Many people also feel that a particular sinful behavior should be legalized or accepted because it is "happening anyway". Some go so far as to claim that if you carefully examine your conscience and then decide that an abortion, the killing of an innocent unborn child, is the most moral act you can do at the time, you are not committing a sin and have no need for the Sacrament of Confession. (Brian Cloves, *Call to Action or Call to Apostasy?*, Human Life International, Front Royal, VA, 1997, 17-22, 46-49, 80)

Intrinsic Evil, "It is not licit to do evil that good may come of it" (cf. Rom 3:8). The primary and decisive element for moral judgment is the object of the human act, which establishes whether it is *capable of being ordered to the good*

and to the ultimate end, which is God. Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature “incapable of being ordered” to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in His image. These acts, in the Church’s moral tradition, which and in themselves, independent of circumstances, are always seriously wrong, have been termed “intrinsically evil”.

For example, in reference to contraceptive practices whereby the conjugal act is intentionally rendered infertile, Pope Paul VI teaches: “Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, it is never lawful, even for the gravest reasons, to do evil that good may come of it (cf. Rom 3:8) - in other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judged unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of the individual, of a family or of society in general.”

The Apostle Paul emphatically states: “Do not be deceived: neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the Kingdom of God” (1 Cor 6:9-10). If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or particular circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it. They remain “irremediably” evil acts; and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person. Saint Augustine writes, “As for acts which are themselves sins, like theft, fornication, blasphemy, who would dare affirm that, by doing them for good motives, they would no longer be sins, or, what is even more absurd, that they would be sins that are justified?” Consequently, circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act “subjectively” good or defensible as a choice. (Pope John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth*, Pauline Books & Media, Boston, MA, 100-103)

Conscience and the Truth, A Call to Personal Repentance and Conversion. The relationship between man’s freedom and God’s law is most deeply lived out in the “heart” of the person, in his moral conscience. “For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged (cf. Rom 2:14-16)”. The way in which one conceives the relationship between freedom and law is thus intimately bound up with one’s understanding of the moral conscience. Here the cultural tendencies referred to above - in which freedom and law are set in opposition to each another and kept apart, and freedom is exalted almost to the point of idolatry - lead to a “*creative understanding of moral conscience*”, which diverges from the teaching of the Church’s tradition and her Magisterium. Conscience, as the ultimate concrete judgment, compromises its dignity when man shows little concern for seeking what is true and good, and conscience gradually becomes almost blind from being accustomed to sin. We are called to *form our conscience*, to make it the object of a continuous conversion to what is true and to what is good. It is the “heart” converted to the Lord and to the love of what is good which is really the source of *true* judgments of conscience.

The Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth. Her charge is to announce and teach authentically that truth which is Christ, and at the same time with her authority to declare and confirm the principles of the moral order which derive from human nature itself. It follows that the authority of the Church, when she pronounces on moral questions, in no way undermines the freedom of conscience of Christians. This is so not only because freedom of conscience is never freedom “from” the truth but always and only freedom “in” the truth, but also because the Magisterium does not bring to the Christian conscience truths which are extraneous to it; rather it brings to light the truths which it ought already to possess, developing them from the starting point of the primordial act of faith. The Church puts herself always and only at the *service of conscience*, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit (cf. Eph 4:14), and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of man, but rather, especially in more difficult questions, to attain the truth with certainty and to abide in it. (Pope John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth*, Pauline Books & Media, Boston, MA, 72-73, 80-82)

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