



Bringing Home the Word

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 12, 2017

Life Without Sin

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In 1973, psychiatrist Karl Menninger wrote a book called *Whatever Became of Sin?* (Hawthorne Books). It seems that in the backlash against feelings of excessive guilt, many people embraced the notion that they weren't responsible for what they did. Their parents, or the way they were raised, or other people made them do evil things. The popular phrase "the devil made me do it" captures the sentiment of the era. Menninger wondered about the impact of a world without sin.

Therapists were right about the danger of feeling guilty all the time, and our reactions to past hurts and behaviors are a normal part of growing up. But mature adults also know that reactions come in many forms. When we choose to react to events or people with behaviors or words that hurt others or ourselves, we are responsible and have sinned. When we choose to do something that is wrong simply because it's easier than doing what's right, we've sinned—however mild or unnoticeable we think sin is.

In today's readings, Sirach and Jesus hold us accountable for our actions and our thoughts in no uncertain terms. These Scriptures are part of the underpinnings of the Church's theology of sin, which is not meant to make us crazy—it's meant to make us free to love others and ourselves in spite of their brokenness and ours. Can we be perfect? Well, that's a long road. But God wants to help us walk that road. We can begin by examining our own conscience for the places and times we've fallen short of the call to love. †

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to hurt others...
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A Word From Pope Francis

The story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. This is witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice....The question naturally arises: Can the men and women of this world ever fully respond to the longing for fraternity placed within them by God the Father? Will they ever manage by their power alone to overcome indifference, egoism and hatred, and to accept the legitimate differences typical of brothers and sisters?

—Morning
meditation, chapel
of *Domus Sanctae
Marthae*, May 15, 2015



Sunday Readings

Sirach 15:15–20

"Before everyone are life and death, whichever they choose will be given them."

1 Corinthians 2:6–10

"We speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden...and which none of the rulers of this age knew."

Matthew 5:17–37

"Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.' Anything more is from the evil one."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How do you handle feelings of guilt when they come to you?
- What can you do this week to stay accountable for your actions, while moving away from sin?



Reconciliation: Coming Home to God

By Fr. Kenneth Brown

When was the last time you celebrated the sacrament of reconciliation? The Pew Research Center reported in 2015 that only four in ten Catholics go to confession at least once a year. Is this because we don't need forgiveness? Have we come to believe that forgiveness doesn't matter any more? I suspect most of us can think of at least one moment where we wish for the chance to either forgive or receive forgiveness.

Many rightly ask: "Can't we receive

forgiveness without confessing to some person, to some priest?" Of course we can, and we do. Think of how we begin Mass. We're all invited to call to mind our sins and ask for forgiveness. And there are many other times when we can seek and receive forgiveness by simply taking a moment of reflection, reading a passage in Scripture, or writing someone a note to ask for forgiveness. But there are times when we really need and desire the sacrament in this divinely human form.

There are two responses we may have

when we stand before the mercy of God, especially if we've been away from this sacrament: tears or silence. We should not be surprised if our experience of God's love and forgiveness brings us to tears. The tears should remind us of the original cleansing we received at baptism.

The sacrament of reconciliation is a sacrament of both human and divine dimensions. All of us sin and all of us stand in need of forgiveness. Ours is a God who heals, a physician who binds up our wounded hearts, a loving parent who forgives and embraces the child who has wandered off. How could we not want this for ourselves, for our children, and all those we love? †

Source: *Catholic Update*,
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Becoming Peacemakers

By Bishop Anthony B. Taylor

The biblical understanding of peace involves far more than our usual American way of thinking of peace as having to do with the absence of conflict. We usually translate the Hebrew word *shalom* as "peace," but it actually means "everything that contributes to a person's well-being." So "peace" in the Bible has a nuance of wholeness, integrity, unity, and concord.

Notice that Jesus' eighth beatitude is about peacemaking, not peace *loving*. Sometimes out of love of peace, people are unwilling to ruffle feathers to confront threatening situations early on while the problem is still manageable. Here are four strategies for peacemaking:

1. *Preventative peacemaking.* Avoid hurtful or offensive things and seek to increase understanding and connect people.
2. *Break the cycle of hatred.* When injured, respond with nonviolent resistance and a willingness to endure and respond with love.
3. *Eliminate injustice.* Peace can't exist in a society that denies basic human rights or exploits the disadvantaged.
4. *Conquer evil with good.* Touch and soften the heart of the adversary—especially when the issue is personal.

If we limit ourselves to what we learn about other people from the news, it becomes easy to conclude that people are corrupt, violent, or greedy. But the truth is almost always more complex than what we

see in the news. We become peacemakers when we do God's work in bridging differences, healing wounds, eliminating injustice, and bringing people together. †

Source: *Liguorian*,
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Lord, you reveal the mercy of God in the world. Forgive me for the times I've hurt others out of anger and resentment.

— From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,
Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

February 13–18

Mon. Weekday:
Gn 4:1–15, 25 / Mk 8:11–13

Tues. Sts. Cyril and Methodius:
Gn 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10 / Mk 8:14–21

Wed. Weekday:
Gn 8:6–13, 20–22 / Mk 8:22–26

Thurs. Weekday:
Gn 9:1–13 / Mk 8:27–33

Fri. Weekday:
Gn 11:1–9 / Mk 8:34–9:1

Sat. Weekday:
Heb 11:1–7 / Mk 9:2–13