The Sadness of Sin & Our Social Vocation

(Sin & the Human Community: Person in Society and Participation in Social Life)

(CCC 1846-1927)

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# Sin (1846-1876)

Sin exists despite the gift of conscience and the virtues, due to weakened will and darkened intellect

“I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Rom 7:15).

# The Good News

Jesus Christ

The living presence of God and his mercy

Jesus means salvation – God saves

Institution of the Eucharist: “for the forgiveness of sins” (Mt 26:28)

Need to acknowledge need for mercy, ask for it

St. Augustine: The God who created you without you, will not save you without you (*Sermo* 169, 11, 13: PL 38, 293)

God: always ready, waiting for us to admit our sins, ask forgiveness, receive grace to help us sin no more

“Where sin abounds, grace abounded all the more” (Rom 5:20) Conscience brings sin to light, ask forgiveness, receive grace

# Sin – What Is It, How Do We Recognize It

An offense against God

Counter to reason, truth, and right conscience

A failure in genuine love for God and neighbor

Caused by perverse attachment to certain goods (CCC 1850, 1849)

Turns us away from God, his love

A state of separation from God

Shows love of self to be greater than love of him

 “Have this in mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped…” (Phil 2:5-6)

Diminishes the good, or charity in our hearts

A failure in love of others AND God

# Sin in Salvation History

God intervening in the lives of mankind to save us from ourselves

Sin as old as mankind – beginning with Adam and Eve

Forms much of the plot the Sacred Scripture

Satan – the instigator of sin

In Adam and Eve, in many of those in Scripture:

Especially at Jesus’ passion and death

Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial, the cruelty of the soldiers to Jesus, Pilate’s cowardice, the anger of the mob

Turned against God, chipped away at their own goodness, affected others

Sin (like goodness) resides in the heart

Like the weeds in the wheat (Mt 14:24-30, CCC 827)

We are ALL weeds and wheat

# Greater and Lesser Offenses

Distinguished by three things: the object of the sin (what evil results from it), the virtue it opposes and the commandment it violates Seriousness of sin in the New Testament

“Be sure of this, that no immoral or impure man, or one who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (Eph

5:5) See also Gal 5:19-20; Rom 1: 28-32; 1 Cor 6: 9-10; Col 3: 5-9; 1 Tim 1:910; 2 Tim 3: 2-5

Church follows Scripture in specifying mortal (deadly) and venial *L. venialis –* pardonable

Mortal sin: eradicates charity/love in the heart – causes total separation from God

Venial sin – damages, lessens charity in the heart Charity completely destroyed requires an infusion of it

Sacrament of Penance/Reconciliation

Examination of conscience, admission of sin, confession to the priest, forgiveness, penance and reconciliation – mending the separation, restoring charity

“O happy fault” – *Exultet*

Sin brought about the need for a Savior – Jesus

Through his life, death and resurrection, we see the love of God a Love exemplified by the father in The Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)

Power/strength revealed by forgiveness

True for God as well

God is at his most powerful when he forgives sin (CCC 270)

# Three Conditions for Mortal Sin

1) grave matter; 2) knowledge of its gravity; 3) full consent

Circumstances that can mitigate the seriousness – ignorance, psychological disorder

# Free Will

Great problems as well as great good

Freely choosing to sin, distancing or cutting ourselves off from God requires freely choosing to be restored to life in him – now and for eternity

# Sin – a Slippery Slope

Less serious sin leaves a wound in the heart

Left untended – it can grow worse – even to mortal sin

Many little sins make for a heavy load

Form us in the habitual disposition to do the bad – vice

# The Capital Sins

Seven deadlies**: P**ride, **A**nger, **L**ust, **E**nvy, **G**luttony, **A**varice, **S**loth (spiritual – acedia),

The leading sins on which other sins are based

The seven-headed monster of self-seeking, self-love (Archbishop Fulton Sheen)

They take root and can become a habit that is necessary (St. Augustine)

# The Unforgivable Sin

God IS love and mercy, yet, an unforgivable sin (CCC 1864)

“Therefore, I tell you every blasphemy and sin will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever says a word against the Son of man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (Mt 12:31-32)

Unforgivable because of our inability to seek and accept his mercy and forgiveness

Nothing brought to God is beyond his forgiveness

Presumption: failing to recognize that we need to ask for and be forgiven

We need to CHOOSE FOR God, choose to be restored to life in him

Sinning, directly or indirectly (by cooperating with the sin of someone else), destroys charity in our hearts (damaging love of God, self, others – society in general)

# The Effects of Sin – Personal AND Communal

Our sin hurts others

Cain kills out of envy (Gen 4:8)

Lamech, (4 generations later) kills just for being struck by another (Gen 4:23)

God started over with Noah (Gen 6)

Sin began again with his son Ham (Gen 9)

Eventually the descendants of Noah built the Tower of Babel (Gen 11) Reaching to the heavens, to make a name for themselves, to be gods

Confused language, stopped them from separating themselves from himself

Started over with Abraham (Gen 12) (God keeps trying)

Lot, and great sin in Sodom and Gomorrah

Escaped, but bore children with his daughters (Gen 19)

The cycle of sin continues from generation to generation

Sin affects self AND others; separates us from God, from others; directly/indirectly affects/changes us AND others

# Sin is Cyclical

Sin leads to more sin – our own AND others’

Sin – a cycle of behavior in us, in society

Cycle of opposition to God and his plan

In sinning, man tries to accomplish his own plan

The sin of man becomes the sin of mankind

# Sin Opposes Truth

Sin – an injury to the life we were meant to live, opposed to Jesus as Way and Truth Truth – the deepest desire of man (Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, early address as Pope)

Sinning causes us to lose love of truth (Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen)

“History never repeats itself, but it sure does rhyme?” (Mark Twain)

Our world resembles the world of the Old Testament

Full of opposition to God and his plan

Man trying to accomplish his own plan (substituting man’s truth for THE Truth)

# Sins Effects Are Their Punishment

The effects of sin are the punishment of sin

The sinner punishes him or herself

Living with the knowledge of hurt they have caused – to self and others

# ALL Sin Is Bad

More or less serious – still WRONG

Less serious sin dulls us to a sense of wrong

Eventually become more serious wrongs – even mortal or deadly

NOT God’s plan

Satan’s plan

We must not cooperate with Satan

# The Human Community: The Person and Society; Participation in Social Life

**(18771927) God’s Plan**

Man is not made for sin

Man, made in the image and likeness of God, is to be perfect

“You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48) Perfectly good, perfectly loving, perfectly merciful, perfectly holy How can we do this?

As members of the Body of Christ perfection is our common goal

With Christ as our head

“For our sake he made him to BE sin who knew no sin, so that IN HIM we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21)

# God Is Relational, We Are Relational

In himself (a Trinity of persons)

With us

We are to be relational – with him and with others

“God is like a looking glass in which souls see each other. The more we are united to Him by love, the nearer we are to those who belong to Him." (Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton)

“No man is an island.” (John Donne)[[1]](#footnote-1)

Man needs community

Man needs others to relate to

“It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him” (Gen 2:18)

Call to life in the Trinity – relational/communal as well as personal

We “work out our own salvation” (Phil 2:12) and help others work out theirs
We are social beings
Called to live and BE the love of the Father to each other
Moral, good or virtuous behavior affects society
Each has different talents to be used for the benefit of all (Mt 25:14-30)
Differences willed by God, we participate in his “plan of sheer goodness” (CCC 1) Inequalities – no excuse to not use our gifts/act
Recognize others have gifts to share

# Responsibility to Spread the Good News of Jesus Christ God wants us to help bring about blessing to the world

GOD DOESN’T DO A SOLO ACT.

Sharing the Good News – the most charitable thing we can do by word and deed – LIVE it

“It is better to remain silent and TO BE than to talk and NOT be. Teaching is good if the speaker also acts.”)[[2]](#footnote-2)

“The "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."[[3]](#footnote-3)

# Living Justly

Justice – giving their due to God and neighbor (CCC 1807) Requires guidelines/principles

# Four Basic Guidelines/Principles per the Catholic Church

1. the goodness or dignity of every human being
2. the common good or the good of the community as a whole
3. subsidiarity – a higher level community should not interfere with the community of a lower order, depriving the lower community of its functions

Higher should support the lower (ALWAYS with a view to the common good – CCC 1883)

Subsidiarity harmonizes the relationship between individuals and the society (CCC 1885)

1. Solidarity – all of us need to be aware of and concerned for others as brothers and sisters (spiritual and material needs) (See CCC 1939, 1942, 2213)

**Human Dignity**

Others are God’s creations too

# The Common Good

Of communities or societies to which we belong

The most basic – family and state Both necessary

Other societies stem from these

Allow opportunity to participate in many pursuits

Enable us to share our talents/contribute

Achieve more as a community than as individuals

(See CCC 1906; GS 26 § 1; GS 74 § 1) Three elements essential for the common good:

1. Respect for the human person (right to fulfill vocation, act in accord with conscience, and freedom of religion)
2. Social well-being (food, clothing, health, education and work)
3. Peace – necessary for security and stability

# The Political Community

The common good is most fully realized

State defends citizens, promotes the common good of all other communities

Interdependence of communities growing, encompassing greater and greater groups of people

# Dangers of Socialization

Need for balance between common good and dignity of everyone

All one human family

Called to share the goods of this world – material and spiritual Common good is universal.
All states/nations to be oriented toward a universal common good
To serve people, not have people serve them

# Subsidiarity

Balance between common good of smaller communities within larger ones

Higher level communities (e.g. the state) may tend to impose themselves on lower level communities

Take away freedom and mission of the lower level community Interfere with its ability to contribute to society.

The Church (like God) has a high regard for human freedom, allowing man to participate fully

Advocates for, teaches the principle of subsidiarity

Calls for limits on intervention by the state (higher level community)

Promotes right relationship between individuals and various societies

# Need for Authority

To assure the common good of ALL is pursued

Authority comes from God

“You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above” (Jn 19:11)

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment” (Rom 13: 1-2)

We have a role in choosing authorities

The Church considers no one form of government morally superior to another

Only requirement of the Church – government must work for the good of all

Follow the natural law

Keep public order

Respect the fundamental rights of everyone

Never allow the end to justify the means

Rules contrary to the good of all or morally wrong do not bind us

Need for balance of powers in a government

All have a role in service to the global community and the universal common good

First and foremost – assume personal responsibility for self and family

Then, as much as possible, take part in public life for the improvement of conditions of ALL life

Including future generations

Giving them the basis for a good life, reason for optimism

Authorities should set an example for us in determining what is of value

# The Great Command and How We Can Achieve It

Love of God and love of neighbor

Must have the opportunity to live with others in a civilization or society

Society must allow us to achieve our greatest good – materially but especially spiritually Society must value things properly for eternal life

Assure the means to that end are just

# Acknowledge that society exists for man, not man for society (CCC 1881; *GS* 25

§ 1)

Appeal to that part of each of us that is good and moral

Direct and form us in our need to love God and neighbor – true charity

Inspire us to give of ourselves for the sake of others recognizing what is their due – true justice

“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil 2:4)

# Closing

Sin exists – look around, look within

Affects us personally and communally

"The works of man, whether they are good or bad, are NOT always isolated, transitory acts; MORE OFTEN, especially in the case of the leaders of nations and those who are invested with public authority, they (these acts) continue to subsist after they are concluded, either in the memory of other men or in public acclaim, as a result of the CONSEQUENCES they have had and the scandal they have caused. Thus, AT FIRST SIGHT, a particular, secret crime seems to be only a private, personal deed; but it becomes SOCIAL on account of its effects.

Certainly, it is of FAITH that there is a PARTICULAR judgment, and that every man, at the instant of his soul’s departure from the body, appears before the tribunal of God to hear his eternal sentence pronounced. Yet THIS judgment cannot suffice, and it is ESSENTIAL that it should be followed by another PUBLIC judgment, in which God will not examine the actions in isolation and taken in THEMSELVES, but will examine them in their effects upon OTHER MEN, in the good or evil deriving from them for families and peoples—IN A WORD, in the consequences they produced AND which those who perpetrated them ought to have foreseen."[[4]](#footnote-4)

# Help For Coming to the Perfection We Are Called To

“Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov 1:7) Truly know fear (revere) of the Lord

Know who He is and who we are in light of him

Live by it

Act as the image and likeness of God Perfectly good, loving, merciful and holy

“He (God) has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does he Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8).

1. John Donne, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, 31

[(http://triggs.djvu.org/djvueditions.com/DONNE/DEVOTIONS/Download.pdf)](http://triggs.djvu.org/djvu-editions.com/DONNE/DEVOTIONS/Download.pdf) Accessed 8.4.18) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to the Ephesians,* (See also LOH book III, Monday of the Second Week in Ordinary Times, Office of Readings, pp. 84-85) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* 1975, *41* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 4 Charles Arminjon, The End of the Present World, (Manchester: Sophia Press, 2008), 94 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)