

Session 2: SIN AND FORGIVENESS

Lord, have mercy

God has made us for communion with him, for friendship with him. When we reject his invitation to love, we sin: we freely and willingly reject God. Through sin, we turn away from our vocation to live with God: we choose death. Yet God's gracious forgiveness, given in Christ, is greater than sin. The name 'Jesus' means 'God saves'. Jesus is the Lord who can save us from sin, despair and death.

Prayer

All-powerful Father,

Christ your Son became man for us.

May he free our hearts from sin and bring us into your presence. Amen.

Judas betrays the Lord of love with a kiss



Duccio di Buoninsegna, Christ taken Prisoner, 1308-1311. Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena. © 2012. Photo SCALA, Florence.

Scripture

Judas, one of the Twelve, came up and with him a number of men armed with swords and clubs, sent by the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the traitor had arranged a signal with them saying, 'The one I kiss, he is the man. Arrest him, and see he is well guarded when you lead him away.' So when the traitor came, he went up to Jesus at once and said 'Rabbi!' and kissed him. The others seized him and arrested him.

(Mark 14:43-46)

ANCHORING YOU IN THE FAITH



1. Professing the Faith

Activity 1

Look closely at the picture as the Scripture passage is read out loud and identify the people being mentioned.

Notice and describe:

- the different types of people present
- the different reactions as Judas kisses Jesus

To **sin** is to act willfully against God and his plan of love for us. A sin is an act which says 'No' to God. It is an abuse of the freedom he gives us and intends us to use for good. A sin is an act against love: against *God* who is love; against our *neighbour* whom we are called to love; against ourselves whose vocation is to love. God gives us life and intends us to share his own life. When we sin, we refuse God's gift of life and we choose death. All sin is destructive. To sin is to act against our own good.

Where does sin come from? God wills us and creates us good; he did not intend evil, suffering and death. But through an act of disobedience, which the Church calls **Original Sin**, man and woman rejected God's plan of love. Because we are made to belong to each other, all of us are affected by this first choice against him. This first sin is like a defect which has been passed on to everyone.

Some **angels** also made that choice for evil. Angels are created, invisible spirits. Like us, they have the ability to know and love God and are called to serve him. Each of us is entrusted by God to the care of one of them: our Guardian Angel. Like us, angels were given freedom to choose God. Some of them abused this freedom and chose to disobey and reject God forever. These are Satan and the fallen angels.



3. Living the Faith

God's mercy and forgiveness break the power of sin.

Activity 3

Read the Scripture:

Peter sat among them. Then a maid, seeing him as he sat in the light and gazing at him, said, 'This man also was with him.' But he denied it, saying, 'Woman, I do not know him.' And a little later someone else saw him and said, 'You also are one of them.' But Peter said, 'Man, I am not.' And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, 'Certainly this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean.' But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying.' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter... And [Peter] went out and wept bitterly.

(Luke 22:54-62)

- Look at how Peter's denial is different from Judas' betrayal.
- Compare the way Judas and Peter act after having sinned, what each one does.



2. Celebrating the Mass

At the beginning of Mass, we acknowledge our sin in the **Penitential Rite**.

The Penitential Rite has two parts:

- we acknowledge our sins and we ask God to forgive us:
'I confess'/'Lord, have mercy.'
- we receive God's forgiveness through the Church:
'May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and lead us to eternal life.'

'Penitential' comes from 'repentance' or 'conversion', which means 'turning around'. We reject with sorrow the wrong we have done. We repent: we turn away from our sins and we ask God to forgive us.

Whenever we pray the Penitential Rite, we seek to be fully reconciled with God. We prepare ourselves to receive him in our lives.

The rejection of sin we make at the beginning of Mass is real and genuine: apologies make no sense if we intend to carry on sinning. We may fall into sin again, of course; but our sorrow is real, and our intention not to sin is genuine, as we ask God to forgive us and beg for his grace to support us.

Activity 2

Look up in a missal the prayer 'I confess to almighty God', which we say at the beginning of Mass.

- Look at the kinds of sins listed there
- Think of concrete examples of sins that may fit the different categories given in the 'I confess'

The **Gloria** is the song of praise of the whole Church, which is sung or said after the Penitential Rite on Feast days and on Sundays (except during Advent and Lent). Reconciled to God, we give praise to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit for who he is and for what he has done for us. We joyfully praise God together with the angels.

Whereas Judas hung himself in despair, Peter wept in sorrow over his sin. Peter ultimately was able to turn to Christ, even though he had betrayed Christ with his threefold denial.

The remedy for sin is God's healing mercy – if we refuse this, there is no other remedy for sin. The power of the Cross means that God in Christ has suffered the ultimate consequence of our sins, so that we may enjoy his forgiveness and his gracious, totally undeserved, gift of eternal life. This gift can never be taken for granted.

Christ forgives us in the sacrament of reconciliation, or **confession**. In confession, we express our repentance – our sorrow for sins and our desire to change – and we receive absolution, the mercy and strengthening grace of God. If we are aware of serious sin in our life, we are to seek God's forgiveness in confession before receiving Holy Communion.



4. Praying with the Church

Think and Pray

The Father's mercy is poured out in the forgiveness granted to us in his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

- Holy Spirit, give me the wisdom to see the truth about myself, my thoughts, words and actions, in the light of your love!
- As you become aware of areas of sin and darkness in your life, pray to the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to seek the Father's mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Read and Pray

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness

In your compassion blot out my offence.

O wash me more and more from my guilt

And cleanse me from my sin.

Indeed you love truth in the heart;

Then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.

O purify me, then I shall be clean;

O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

(Psalm 50)

Prayer

Pray the Our Father, paying special attention to the words 'forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.'

Eternal Father,

Your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires.

Forgive our failings, keep us in your peace and lead us in the way of salvation.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Anchoring your Family in the Faith

Teach your children that they will always find forgiveness in God. Your own readiness to forgive will show them how constantly God loves them.

Let children see that apologising for wrongdoing is a sign of strength, not of weakness.

Make going to Confession a true celebration as a joyful return to the Father.

Assure them of the unceasing care and protection of their Guardian Angel and teach them the Guardian Angel prayer, to say at night or in the morning.

For further reading and prayer

Bible: Genesis 3; Psalm 51; Luke 15:11-32.

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: 60; 61; 73; 75; 296; 299; 300; 302-306; 392; 393.