



Sermon for 3/13/22

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Clarity Is Charity 3

In the recent Synod listening sessions, I heard the call for clarity in doctrine from the people of Sts. Peter and Paul. Thus, was born a sermon series called Clarity is Charity. This is the third part of that series. In this sermon I would like to present clearly the fall of man, better known as the doctrine on **original sin**, its effects **and** its remedy. This is of utmost importance in our day because there is a loss of the sense of sin and a lack of understanding of the need for repentance and the act of faith by which we cooperate with God's plan of salvation for humanity.

Let's be clear: Man is broken. We are not as we are supposed to be. This is the first and clearest truth that we must profess. CCC 386 *"Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile."* Pope St. John Paul II summed up the problems of our modern world when he says, CCC 407 *"Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature inclined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals."* Sin stems from the breakdown of right relationship of mankind with God. CCC 386 *"... to try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the profound relation of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as **humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him.**"* CCC 387 *"Without the knowledge Revelation gives of God we cannot recognize sin clearly and are tempted to explain it as merely a developmental flaw, a psychological weakness, a mistake, or the necessary consequence of an inadequate social structure, etc. Only in the knowledge of God's plan for man can we grasp that **sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons [given] so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another.**"*

Let's be clear: Humanity suffers from a brokenness that we call original sin. It afflicts all humanity, and it must be acknowledged as an innate brokenness that must be healed if we hope to overcome its effects. We ignore this reality to our own peril. All sin stems from the original sin and is an abuse of the freedom God gives us, and it is a distortion of love.

We recall from the last sermon that CCC 396 *"God created man in his image and established him in his friendship."* But this relationship requires freedom. *"...man can live this friendship only in free submission to God."* **Let's be clear: Freedom is not merely a license to do anything. Free Will is given to us to do what is right.** CCC 1733 *"There is no true freedom except in the service of what is good and just. **The choice to disobey and do evil is an abuse of freedom and leads to 'the slavery of sin.'**"* CCC 396 *"Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom."* CCC 397 *"Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command. This is what man's first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness."* CCC 398 *"In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Constituted in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully 'divinized' by God in glory. Seduced by the devil, he wanted to 'be like God', but 'without God, before God, and not in accordance with God'."* This led to grave consequences. CCC 400 *"The harmony in which [man and woman] had found themselves, thanks to original justice, is now destroyed: the control of the soul's spiritual faculties over the body is shattered; the union of man and woman becomes subject to tensions, their relations henceforth marked by lust and domination. Harmony with creation is broken: visible creation has become alien and hostile to man. Because of man, creation is now subject 'to its bondage to decay'. Finally, the consequence explicitly foretold for this disobedience will come true: man will 'return to the ground', for out of it he was taken. Death makes its entrance into human history."*

Let's be clear: Original sin was an abuse of the freedom God had given to humanity. It was the inward turn of selfishness and pride that put man above God and His law. The effects of original sin are the darkening of the intellect and the weakening of the will and ultimately death. Through original sin human relations with one another and with all creation were broken and death entered into the world.



Man, thus broken, is in need of salvation: CCC 1949 *“Called to beatitude [blessedness] but wounded by sin, man stands in need of salvation from God.”* All need to be saved. CCC 588 *“...since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves.”* Our God comes to save us in his son Jesus Christ. CCC 389 *“The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the ‘reverse side’ of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ.”* **Let’s be clear: Our ruptured friendship with God requires God’s intervention to heal.** The remedy for this broken condition requires Divine Intervention, which we call Grace. CCC 1996 *“Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.”* **Let’s be clear: We cannot save ourselves.** CCC 430 *“Since God alone can forgive sins, it is God who, in Jesus his eternal Son made man, ‘will save his people from their sins’.”*

However, our cooperation is required. CCC 306 *“God is the sovereign master of his plan [of salvation]. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures’ cooperation.”* Quoting the Council of Trent, the Catechism says, CCC 1993 *“When God touches man’s heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God’s grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God’s sight.”* **Let’s be clear: God will not save us against our own will. We have to choose to accept his freely offered salvation.** How are we saved? We hear in the Gospel of Mark 1:25, *“Repent and believe the good news.”* Repentance is necessary for salvation. CCC 490 *“The movement of return to God, called conversion and repentance, entails sorrow for and abhorrence of sins committed, and the firm purpose of sinning no more in the future. Conversion touches the past and the future and is nourished by hope in God’s mercy.”* CCC 1431 *“Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time it entails the desire and resolution to change one’s life, with hope in God’s mercy and trust in the help of his grace.”* **Let’s be clear – we cannot be saved unless we repent of our sins.**

The Act of Faith is also necessary for salvation. CCC 155 *“In faith, the human intellect and will co-operate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.’* CCC 161 *“Believing in Jesus Christ and in the One who sent him for our salvation is necessary for obtaining [...] salvation. “Since ‘without faith it is impossible to please (God) and to attain to the fellowship of his sons, therefore without faith no one has ever attained justification, nor will anyone obtain eternal life ‘But he who endures to the end.’”* **Let’s be clear: One must profess faith in Jesus Christ in order to be saved. There is no other name by which man can be saved.** CCC 172 *Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples and nations, the Church has constantly confessed this one faith, received from the one Lord, transmitted by one Baptism, and grounded in the conviction that **all people have only one God and Father.***

Thus far in this sermon series we have established that truth is objective and knowable by the human mind and intellect, and that aiding this capacity to understand truth, God reveals himself to us in Divine Revelation. We teach clearly that man was made in the image and likeness of God and was made for friendship with him and that this is his greatest dignity. We have clearly defined the breakdown of that original friendship through original sin and the need to repent and believe in Jesus Christ to be saved. In the next few weeks of Lent, we will be conducting the scrutinies for the catechumens preparing for the saving sacrament of Baptism. Through that sacrament, friendship with God is graciously restored by the washing away of sin. In those scrutinies we will hear the Good News proclaimed by Jesus that he brings pure life-giving water to our thirsty souls, light to the blindness of our mind and new life to our moribund flesh. This is also a preparation for us all to renew our own Baptismal Promises by which we renounced sin and professed faith in Jesus Christ. At Easter I propose to make a clear and charitable invitation to all to renew that faith, not according to our own design or with caveat or stipulation, but freely, wholly, and completely to profess Jesus Christ with a religious submission of intellect and will to the faith He entrusted to His Catholic Church.