

Jesus said: "Hear me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that enters one from outside can defile that person; but the things that come out from within are what defile." Is he correct about that? Food doesn't defile us, so yes, he is right about that. What about certain types of media such as pornography? That comes from outside and does horrible things to us. What about immodesty we see in commercials or what we see people wearing out on the street or sometimes even in the church? Doesn't that defile us? Or what about things we see in the news and the way we react to it? Can't that defile us by leading us into anger, fear or despair? So, Jesus must be wrong. No. Jesus is always right. That stuff I just mentioned, either we seek it out, or we mishandle it once it enters in through our senses. Do we let it pass through our senses or do we grab on to it and dwell on it? What Jesus is doing in that quote I opened with is giving us ownership of our sins.

That's a weird statement, I know, because do we really want to take ownership of our sins? No...and that's the point. It is very easy to blame our sins on someone else or some outside influence. The devil made me do it. I had too much to drink. My dog ate it. We give outside influences too much control over our interior lives and when we do this, it is almost as if we are making ourselves their victims.

There are definitely outside influences that can make us more susceptible to sin--stress, addictions, difficult living situations, certain medical conditions, but once we recognize these things, we can control for them and that puts us back in the driver seat. Or at least in the passenger seat where we can talk to the real driver who is God. We are not superheroes--dealing with sin requires graces that only come from God, but we need to cooperate with those graces when he gives them to us.

But there is actually something deeper here that I want to talk about and it's even more dangerous--and more heartbreaking really--than failing to recognize the source of sin. Pope Pius XII talked about it as early as 1946 and Saint John Paul II spoke and wrote about it often. Pope Pius said that the greatest sin in the world today is that man has lost the sense of sin." It's not that we don't recognize where it comes, it's that we simply don't recognize it at all; some people—including some Catholics, maybe some of you right here—actually deny it exists.

Again, there are outside influences at work. We live in an age where relativism reigns supreme. "My religion is just as good as yours. There is no such thing as absolute truth; truth depends on your point of view. There are no

absolute moral norms. Sin is an outdated notion from the middle ages; If it feels good, do it. My individual happiness is what really matters.” All of that is what relativism means.

We need to reawaken that sense of sin—not to make us feel bad; I will say why in a second. We need to recognize that there is a difference between good and evil; between right and wrong. We need to recognize once more that there is absolute truth and we need to rediscover how to speak that truth and to speak it with charity.

I said that this loss of sense of sin was heartbreaking and that we need to rediscover it. Do you know why that is? It is because if don't recognize sin, if we don't recognize the need for repentance for our sins, we deny God the opportunity to forgive us. Jesús died on the Cross for our sins. If don't we acknowledge them, what did he suffer and die for?

I've mentioned this before. Mother Teresa had a handwritten sign next to the crucifix in her home in Calcutta that simply said, “I Thirst.” Jesús thirsts for our love. He thirsts for our companionship. He thirsts for our sins. We can't quench his thirst if we don't first recognize our sins.

One way to do this is through an examination of conscience. There are lots of versions available through Catholic bookstores and on the internet. There are smartphone apps. If nothing else, use the 10 Commandments as a guide. As I have told you dozens of times, there is also an examination of conscience posted on the parish website underneath our confession schedule. We should all make an examination of conscience a habit before we go to bed each night. Review our day and see where God was present in it. See the times where we strayed. Then say a prayer of thanksgiving for all our blessings and express our sorrow for our sins.

Take advantage of the sacrament of reconciliation on a regular basis. Frequency depends on the person but a good rule of thumb is to go monthly. In her apparitions at Fatima, Mary recommended the Five First Saturdays Devotion--this includes going to Confession, receiving Holy Communion, praying the Rosary, and meditating on scripture for 15 minutes on the first Saturday of five consecutive months. I have been told that this is Our Lady's way of suggesting that we should go to Confession monthly. A little bit more about Confession next weekend.

Jesus thirsts for us. He thirsts for our sins so that he can take them away from us and forgive, clean, and heal us. Isn't it time to quench Jesus' thirst?