

Homily Guide
Sunday, February 27, 2011
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Sin

Sin comes from the Aramaic word for Sinai which is often translated as "Dirt or Dirty." In context this is why Baptism washes away our sins and makes us clean.

Sin makes us dirty, Baptism makes us clean.

Mortal Sin -vs- Venial Sin

Venial Sins are those lesser sins that effect our relationship with God, but do not totally destroy it. Venial sin is when we are walking with God and something causes us to stumble.

Mortal Sin is a sin that completely destroys a person's relationship with God and leads to eternal punishment. Mortal sin is a sin that causes us to backslide, not just stumble. In order to get back on track with must pick ourselves up and go to confession and get back on track.

Scriptural References to Mortal and Venial Sin:

1 John 5:16 - If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

We see in John's Epistle that there are sins that lead to death and sins that do not. That is what the Catholic Church refers to as "mortal" and "venial" sins.

Conditions for Mortal Sin

- 1 - Grave Matter. It must be something that is very serious.
- 2 - Committed with Full Knowledge. You cannot accidentally commit sin. It must be something you understand to be of grave matter and know is wrong and yet you do it anyway.
- 3 - Done Freely. You cannot be forced or coerced into doing a mortal sin. It must be done without external force.

Grave Matter - Generally the Ten Commandments are the ruler by which we measure Grave Matter.

Done Freely:

Sometimes, there is some factor that seriously interferes with our ability to make a free choice. These cases reduce our culpability for sin. Perhaps some factor slightly reduces the malice of our action. Other times, if we're seriously unfree, it may reduce the gravity of our responsibility for the sin, making it a venial sin. (See *Catechism*, 1735, 1860, 1862)

Mitigating Factors:

- Physical force or other strong coercion
- Great fear or anxiety
- Extreme fatigue
- Hidden or deep-seated emotional wounds
- Long-established habits

It's also the case that sin tends to pull us into a downward spiral. What begins as a small matter becomes a habit. It dulls our perception of sin. We get used to sin; it doesn't seem so bad. Little by little, we "up the ante" and slide into mortal sin.

