

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time
June 21, 2020

“Question - Is original sin the only kind of sin? Answer - Original sin is not the only kind of sin; there is another kind of sin, which we commit ourselves, called actual sin.” (Baltimore Catechism, *“Lesson Fifth on Sin and its Kinds, Question 51*)

In our second reading taken from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans (*Romans 5:12-15*), Saint Paul speaks of the entrance of sin into our human existence. Some here were raised in a time when sin and its effects were frequently preached from the pulpit. Weekly attendance in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) was a common family practice. In our day, we often listen to homilies reflecting upon the Mercy of God. However well developed, researched, and presented these homilies on God’s Mercy are, we need to understand that they present only one side of the coin. We must begin to realize that it is sin, particularly the sins we commit, which necessitates the need for the Mercy of God. Over the next few weeks, I would like to focus upon sin; what it is and how it affects us. It is my hope that by examining sin, we may develop a greater appreciation of our need for God’s Mercy and a meaningful desire to avoid sin and its causes.

Let us begin our reflection by first defining what sin is. ***A sin is the free transgression of a divine law.*** At its core, it is a rejection of God and His authority over humanity. It is more than just an incorrect behavior. It is also not viewed as a psychological weakness or character flaw. It is freely choosing to reject the love of God. These terms may seem rather harsh, but consider it this way: God is all good. His Love impels Him to provide humanity with laws which, when followed, can allow humanity to live peacefully in and through His Love. When we reject one of His laws, from the most serious to the most minute, we reject Him who provided us with that divine law. In its most profound way, sin IS choosing to separate oneself from Love, from God who is Love.

Where did sin come from? Sacred Scripture tells us, in the Book of Genesis, that sin is a result of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As Catholics, we refer to the subsequent fall as the “Original Sin” of which we are all born into. Pope Benedict XVI once explained the Original Sin of humanity in this way: “The human being does not trust God. Tempted by the serpent, he harbors the suspicion . . . that God is a rival who curtails our freedom and that we will be fully human only when we have cast Him aside.” Some may want to distance themselves from the notion of “Original Sin” making light of the story in Genesis. They laugh at the idea of talking serpents and eating a forbidden fruit. Yet, we cannot discount, so lightly, the reality that there is a dimension in all people which seeks to solely please oneself. My wants, my desires are first and foremost. Man would, it appears, rather trust false notions of happiness than submit his will to the happiness offered by God. And where do so many of these false notions take man? Further and further into a pit of self-destruction, hopelessness, and despair. Yet even though mankind is wounded by sin, with God’s assistance mankind is fully capable of realizing the true life sustaining good offered by and through God. We are wounded, but not destined to remain so. God, Himself, has sought to that.