

# A MESSAGE TO SINNERS ONLY

(continued)

## *A Sinner's Worth To Christ:*

A sinner to Christ is the youngest son whose father prepared for him a feast with the fattened cow and the betrothal ring. He is anxiously looking forward to seeing him upon his return. To the priest and preacher, the sinner may seem a person who needs to be scolded, reprimanded and punished. But the sinner's position with Christ is as if He tells him, "My son, your sin is my own, do not worry about your return. Come, the best I have is yours. All my angels are happy about your arrival. Do not think about offering any excuses, for I love you and need nothing except you. Come, and I will prepare a feast for you to celebrate and to enjoy your presence."

It may seem to the priest and preacher that he is a mediator between the sinner and Christ. This is not true because the link between the sinner and Christ is the cross and the shed blood. Nobody can intercede on the sinner's behalf. To Christ, the human is the most precious being, and for Him he was worth the ransom of the cross. What the sinner needs from the priest and the preacher is to see Christ in them, His love and fellowship and to feast with them upon the fattened cow. The one task of the priest and preacher is to present the sinner to Christ and to present Christ as a true father to the sinner.

"Like a true father You suffered with me who has fallen... and as a true light you shone on the lost and ignorant." (Part of the Gregorian mass)

Christ used to approach the sinner with the words "Your sins be forgiven" and he would be healed! The only thing the sinner as a sick person had to do was simply go to Christ to be healed. Then Christ would tell him, "Your sins be forgiven." The greatest gift, power and healing a priest can offer a sinner is to tell him, "Your sins be forgiven."

All Christ intended when He gave the apostles, and after them the bishops and priests, the power to forgive sins was that when the sinner heard the words of the

bishop or priest, “Your sins be forgiven” he would instantly believe that his sins were forgiven in heaven and he had become a son of God. By giving such a role, Christ wanted to cheer and comfort the sinner, giving him the confidence that God has forgiven him his sins. The one whose sins remain upon him is he who has not yet believed in the blood of Christ, i.e. in His death and resurrection. The forgiveness of sins can only be based on Christ’s shed blood. As for him who has departed from faith in Christ, “the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29), he will undergo the Last Judgment.

What is the sin that is to be forgiven and the sin that is not to be forgiven? The answer lies in Christ’s own words, “Therefore I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven” (Mt 12: 31). Without the Holy Spirit no one is able to pronounce that Christ is God, for faith in Christ and in His blood comes only through the Holy Spirit.

Without going into detail, the sinner has merely to tell the priest his sins. Psychoanalysis is not our concern here. The main purpose of the confession of sins is for the sinner to acknowledge them before Christ. As for the details, Christ knows them better than the sinner.

One may ask, “What is the judgment about repetitive return to sin?” The cause of repetitive sin is an obstacle to coming under grace. He who is under grace does not return to sin, for its power has released the will: “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). Until grace prevails, as Christ told Peter the Apostle, the repetition of sin will not increase the cost of the sin, even if it reaches “seventy times seven” (Mat 18:22). Sin is always subject the ready power of forgiveness. That which increases the cost of sin is a disdain for the power of forgiveness and consequently for Christ’s blood. It is impossible to be under grace and to sin.

One may ask, “What is the ruling for him who believes his sins are too many and feels they will not be forgiven?” The answer that sinners and, indeed, everyone must hear is that, on the cross, sin has eternally lost its existence, power and fear.

Sin no longer has the power of death, because Christ died once and for all for the sake of sinners and all sin. Sin’s effect is now limited to old humankind. The new humanity is no longer subject to sin. The new humanity is the new creation of mankind through the resurrection from the dead, which we received through baptism and the participation in Christ’s flesh and blood. “We know that anyone born of God does not sin” (1 Jn 5:18). After having received the earthly nature

from Adam, the new nature now in us through Christ is heavenly. “Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven” (1 Cor 15:49). This new nature in us is from the nature of the Son of God who resurrected from the dead. In His flesh and in blood, He revealed himself to His disciples in the upper room. “See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have” (Lk 24:39). It is for this reason that Paul the Apostle said: “Because we are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones” (Eph 5:30).

Having risen from the dead and we with him to enter eternal life, Christ is no longer subject to the power of death. As St. Paul said, “For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him” (Rom 6:9). Death no longer has power over us either. So sin has no more power over us, because we entered Christ’s grace and now live in it. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God” (Rom 5:1, 2).

St. John says: “No one born of God (through baptism) commits sin; for God’s nature (God’s Spirit) abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born (from above, with water and the Spirit through baptism) of God” (1 Jn 3:9).

What then is the source of our sin that we commit day after day? Daily sin comes only from the old body that is born in sin and is under the influence of the world. Both the body and the world will perish. On the other hand, we who are born of God and declared God’s children are not of this world, rather, we are witnesses against it. Our true nature no longer comes from the old body of dust, which we now subjugate and repress. By the Spirit, we have received the new man which will last eternally and through which we will inherit God’s Kingdom with Christ. The fruit of the Spirit within us is what bears witness to this truth.

The sins of the old body, therefore, are limited to the present. We confess our sins in order to receive a dismissal of the charges and forgiveness. With renewed mankind, sins have no power to bring death or judgment. We have entered eternal life with Christ through the resurrection and have become forever immune to eternal death. Because we are united to Christ it is impossible for us to enter judgment. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).

We will not enter the Kingdom of God in the old human form of dust because its destiny is death and ruin. “For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality” (1 Cor 15:53). Saint Paul said that sins are dead works, powerless to harm the conscience. “How

much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb 9:14).

Dear sinner, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light” (Eph 5:14). Rise and serve!

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## **How can we attain abidance in Christ?**

[Christ gave us the example of the branch abiding in the vine to teach us what abiding in Christ means. The branch stays connected to the vine in order to receive the sap which it depends on for its fruitfulness and for its very life. If the flow of sap ceases then the life of the branch and its fruitfulness ends, it withers and is cut off from the vine. Christ made it clear with the warning: “Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away.... If a man does not abide in me, he is cast forth as a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into fire and burned” (Jn 15:2, 6). Either we abide in Christ, gain life and fruitfulness or do not abide, be unfruitful and die.

We may conclude from this that he who says he abides in Christ but is unfruitful, is not actually abiding in Christ and is in danger of being cut off and cast away.

From this truth Christ concluded the teaching: “He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). Christ explains this reciprocal abidance with a warning: I ask and require that you abide in Me as I abide in you not merely as a commandment but because without Me you cannot do anything. If you do anything without Me it will be an act without gain or fruit, without glory to the Father and will cause your branch to be cut off from the vine, which is a spiritual death sentence.

So we can be sure that abiding in Christ is a matter of life or death. Are you dear reader and listener living with Christ, abiding in Him or are you living without Him? In other words: Are you dead or alive?]

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