

17 Asking Forgiveness

“The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in mercy.”

Psalm 103:8

Sometimes we break God’s Laws. We commit a sin. What happens then? What does God do, and what should we do?

Although God hates sin, He loves you very much. He is always ready to forgive you when you are sorry for the sins you committed. Jesus told this story to show how God loves and forgives.

There was once a rich farmer who had two sons. The younger son said, “Father, I know that someday when you die, my brother and I will get all your money. Well, I want my half right now.” So the father gave him the money. The son ran away and spent the money unwisely. Soon he had wasted it all, and he was now poor and hungry. He found a job herding pigs, but he was still hungry and lonely. One day, he said, “I’ve been so bad that my father won’t want me for his son anymore. But maybe I can get a job on his farm. At least that way I’ll be near my home.”

The son was wrong. His father saw him coming. He was so happy that he did not care about how bad his son had been. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and you. I am not good enough to be your son." But the father was happy to have him back. He knew that his son was sorry. He forgave his son and showered his love upon him. He invited all his friends to a big party to celebrate his son's return.

Our Heavenly Father is just like the father in the story. Sometimes we sin and "run away" from God like the younger son. That makes us sad because when we sin we offend God Who loves us very much. But God wants us to be happy. He wants us to come back to Him. All we have to do is admit that what we have done is wrong. And then we must be truly sorry that we have offended God. God will be waiting for us with open arms.

God will always **forgive** us. There is nothing we can do that is so bad that God won't forgive if we are truly sorry. It shows God that we really love Him when we tell Him we are sorry for having offended Him and want to be forgiven.

Words to Know:

sorrow forgive

Q. 38 *What is sorrow for sins?*

Sorrow for sins is the sadness we have for the sins we have done, and the wish never to do them again. We have sorrow for sins because we are sad that we have offended God, or because we fear His just punishments (CCC 1451–53).

We Pray:

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended You. I detest all my sins because of Your just punishments, but most of all because they offend You, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Your grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. *Amen.*

18

Jesus Forgives

“‘But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins’— he said to the man who was paralyzed —‘I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home.’”

Luke 5:24

There were many times when Jesus cured sick people. There were also many times when He forgave their sins. Jesus is always ready to forgive us when we are sorry for having offended Him.

Only God can forgive sins. Jesus showed that He was God by curing people and forgiving their sins. Jesus made some of the disciples His first priests. He gave them special powers. One of these is the power to forgive sins. Priests today have this power, too. God forgives our sins through them.

When God uses a priest to forgive our sins, it is called the **Sacrament** of Penance. It is also called **Confession** because we “confess,” or tell, our sins to the priest.

The priest takes the place of Jesus. When we confess our sins it is Jesus Who hears us and Who forgives us.

Before we go to confess our sins, we must get ready. We should think about our sins and be sorry for them. Then we tell our sins to the priest. Jesus forgives us when the priest says:

“I **absolve** you from your sins in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The Sacrament of Penance does more than take our sins away. It gives us grace. Grace gives us a share in God’s life, and helps us to be stronger against sin.

The priest will never tell our sins to anyone. He only wants to bring us God’s forgiveness. He wants to help us to be good.

Words to Know:

Sacrament confess absolve

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.”

John 20:23