

**Holy Trinity Catholic Church**  
**RCIA Class Transcript**  
**Sin and Morality**  
**Lecturer: Father Francis Peffley**  
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The first thing we're going to cover tonight is "Conscience and God's Law." During the first two classes we covered a little bit about what's called *Natural Law*. It's an important topic, because a lot of people deny Natural Law, which is the law that God has imprinted in our minds and in our hearts. According to Natural Law, it's something that even a child, or a pagan would know. For example, there are certain things that are right, and certain things that are wrong. Stealing is wrong. Lying is wrong. Killing is wrong. These things are written on our hearts. It's called the Natural Law, which is anything that God has implanted upon our heart or our conscience, that when we do things that violate the Natural Law, we do feel guilty.

There is a good kind of healthy guilt when somebody kills somebody, or somebody does something wrong; they should feel guilty. There is such a thing as good guilt that gets somebody to repent, and not to do those terrible things again. There is also such a thing as unhealthy guilt, and we want to avoid that.

The Natural Law is imprinted on our hearts by God. We also have what's called *Revealed Law*. Revealed law was given to us primarily by God on Mt. Sinai to Moses. We call those the *Ten Commandments*. The two *Great Commandments* summarize the Ten Commandments: Love of God and Love of Neighbor. We have what we call both Natural Law and Revealed Law.

One of the best definitions of *conscience* is "The voice of God within us." Conscience is a very important thing to try and understand. It's really God's will, manifested in our hearts, in our intellect, and in our will. It's what we call the *Voice of Reason*, or the *Voice of God* within us.

There are examples of this in Scripture, that even long before Moses gave us the Ten Commandments, there was the story of Cain and Abel, where Cain killed his brother Abel. Even though it was before the Ten Commandments were given on Mt. Sinai, he knew it was wrong. That's why he hid himself, and when God said, "Where's your brother?", he said, "Who am I? Am I my brother's keeper?" He knew that he had done wrong. What he had done violated the Natural Law - violated his conscience.

We can tell right from wrong by our conscience. We have to have what's called a *properly-formed* conscience. For our conscience, I like to use the example of our wrist watch, that our conscience is like our watch, and our watch is only correct if it's set according to what time it actually is. Our conscience has to be formed

upon what God's law is, upon what Natural Law is. If our conscience is in harmony with what God wants, then it's called a *well-formed* conscience.

There are some examples of what we call "consciences that aren't too well formed." On one hand, we have what is called a *scrupulous* conscience. This would be a person who thinks they sin when they actually don't, or somebody thinks a temptation is a sin. In other words, a scrupulous person sees sin everywhere. They think that almost everything they do is a sin. That is not healthy. It's not healthy to have a scrupulous conscience. It's a lack of confidence in God, and in God's goodness.

On the other hand, we have what is called a *lax* conscience, which means "one that's a little bit loose." A lax conscience is somebody that thinks they never commit any sin. In other words, nothing's a sin.

What we want is called a *delicate* conscience, or a *tender* conscience. This is the kind of conscience that the saints had. They knew that some things were sins, and other things weren't. They could tell the difference. That's what we want to pray for and work towards, is to have a well-formed, tender conscience, where we know right from wrong, and we don't want to do anything to displease or offend God. We don't want to fall into either of these extremes.

It's pretty difficult to sometimes work with people in either of these categories, scrupulous or lax, because they have their own challenges. For a lax conscience you have to remind people of the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes, and the teachings of Christ. For a scrupulous conscience, you have to encourage them to trust in God's mercy and forgiveness.

We want to move now into *Actual Sin*, which is either *mortal sin* or *venial sin*. We'll talk about the occasions of sin, and finish off talking about the *Seven Deadly Sins*.

We already talked before about *Original Sin*. This was the sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, which comes to us because of our origins, of being part of the human race, all the way from Adam. Original Sin, we know, is taken away at Baptism, but the effects of Original Sin remain with us, even after we're baptized. We still have a darkened intellect. We still have a weakened will. We still have concupiscence, which is propensity towards sin. Original Sin comes to us from Adam. There's also another kind of sin which is called Actual Sin. These are sins that we actually commit. These are sins that we commit as either children or as adults; in other words, the sins that we ourselves commit. Original Sin is the sin of our First Parents, which we are not responsible for, but we inherit; it is washed away in Baptism.

I'll explain about the two kinds of Actual Sin in a moment. It might be good to talk about how people fall into sin – what are the steps. For example, how does

somebody move from temptation into sin? Usually, it goes in this category. Before a person sins, there's a *temptation*. The temptation always comes first. Normally it begins with a thought. For example, the idea comes into somebody's mind to steal something. Let's say you're at a jewelry store. The person behind the counter was showing somebody some diamond rings, and one of them was left on the counter, and the clerk didn't know about it. You're standing there, and it doesn't look like anybody's around. You see this \$5,000 diamond ring. The thought enters the mind, "You know, I'd really like to have that diamond ring." That's a temptation right there.

Generally after the thought, comes the *affection*, or the liking, for that. It begins to look very pleasing. When the person dwells upon that thought, they think, "Wow, I'd really like to have that;" they have an affection for that.

Then comes, normally, *desire*, that they really take pleasure in that thought of stealing, and they commit the sin in their heart. They're going to go for that ring. The clerk is showing somebody else a watch down the line, so they have the desire, and they're about to take it. In their heart, they have decided to steal that.

Next, they make the *resolution* to go ahead and do that, and perform the act itself, which is putting the ring in the pocket.

That's normally how most sins work. The thought, attraction, desire, and then action.

The interesting thing is Jesus says that this is obviously a serious sin, if somebody has that desire and intention to steal that, because they've already done it in their heart. Let's say the guy was about to take it. Somebody comes in the front door, and he stops, but it was his desire; so in a sense, he's already committed that sin in his heart.

Even though these are both serious sins, there is more evil attached to the actual carrying out of the action, even though they're both guilty here and guilty there. When the action is carried out, it usually causes *scandal*, which is bad example. It often has much worse consequences. In other words, the owner of the jewelry store actually loses money on that; whereas if only the desire occurred, and the ring was not stolen, the owner of the store would not lose that \$5,000 ring. There are bad consequences which make this act worse than just desire on the part of the person himself who is about to do that. That still would be, obviously, a very serious sin to do that.

Once a person does an action like that, the next time it becomes a little bit easier. Did you know that? The next time, the person gets into the habit, and what's called a *vice* is formed. The conscience begins to harden, and become very lax. Eventually, somebody could be, let's say, a bank robber, or somebody who steals things all the time. They become a hardened sinner, and they don't even

consider themselves sinful anymore. It's like living in darkness. St. John says in the Bible, "He who claims to have no sin is living in darkness." Everybody has sins, obviously. With the exception of Christ, who's the Son of God, who never sinned; and the Blessed Mother, whom we believe was given special graces from God never to commit any serious sins, or even small sins. It was a special grace from God, because Mary was conceived without Original Sin.

Not all bad actions are sinful. There are times when they might not be sinful; for example, if somebody does not know that the act is sinful. The example of this is in the Bible, when Noah got drunk, because he did not know the potency of wine. That's an example where he was not *culpable*, or not responsible for his actions. He might have been thinking, "This is just like grape juice." He woke up the next morning with a hangover. He did not realize he had made himself drunk.

Another example of this would be somebody who is taking medicine, and they actually take the wrong medicine, and poison themselves. That's not a suicide; somebody did that by accident. It's not a sin. It's through no fault of their own, in other words.

There are all sorts of examples of this. If somebody dropped a loaded revolver, and it goes off, and it kills somebody; that was not a sin, even though it was a bad action. It was not deliberate. Sin always has to be in the will. It always has to be a deliberate choice, where somebody consents to the evil; and they go ahead and do it anyway.

There are ways in which we can cooperate in other people's sins. For example, if somebody counsels somebody. Let's say a girl is pregnant; she's 16 years old, and she goes to her mother or father, and the mother or father says, "Yes, go have an abortion." That's participating in someone else's sin. The parents are just as responsible if they've counseled somebody in that direction, as the girl herself. If somebody orders somebody to commit a sin, or provokes somebody, or dares somebody, you always have these teenage boys saying, "I dare you to go steal that car," or "I dare you to go do this." The people that goaded the person on; it's a sin for them, because they're cooperating in that sin.

There are other ways that people can contribute to other people's sins: for example, teachers who teach wrong things deliberately, owners of adult book stores (that's a sinful occupation because they're leading other people into sin), those who publish bad books and magazines (they're also leading other people into sin). There are ways in which we can cooperate, even though we might not commit the sin ourselves, and encourage other people to sin; and that, of course, is wrong, and that's a sin for the people that are cooperating in other people's sins.

There are two kinds of sins: *mortal* sin and *venial* sin. Under Actual Sin, we have what's called mortal, and over here, venial. Mortal sin is "a serious offense

against the Law of God.” That’s a violation of God’s Law, in a serious way, such as: blasphemy, murder, adultery, arson, or robbery. These are examples of mortal sins. The word mortal comes from the Latin word “mors”, which means “death,” like a mortuary, or somebody tells you something, and you get “mortified” (it means you want to die!) Mortification means “a dying to one’s self.” For example, all of us are “mortals.” It means we’re all going to die.

A mortal sin is called “mortal” because there’s a death of *Sanctifying Grace* in the soul. Remember, Sanctifying Grace is God’s very life within our souls; God’s love that fills us in Baptism is called Sanctifying Grace. When the soul commits a mortal sin, Sanctifying Grace is no longer present. The soul is still alive. The soul does not die. The soul lives forever. Even though our bodies die, and whether we’re cremated, or buried in the ground, our bodies will not live forever; but our souls are immortal. Examples would be, let’s say, if you could see God’s grace within a person’s soul, let’s say their soul looked very bright, filled with light. The holier saints, like the Blessed Mother and the Apostles, maybe would have 10,000 watts shining forth. Maybe all of us would have 500 watts. Some people might have less voltage than others. Let’s say with a mortal sin, the electricity is cut. It’s just darkness, and just no light whatsoever. That’s an example of mortal sin.

Another example is a house. Let’s say somebody is living in that house. In the house, there’s warmth, light, and activity. That’s how it is, our bodies, according to the Bible, are “Temples of the Holy Spirit.” God dwells within us as a temple. If we commit a mortal sin, God leaves our soul. God is no longer present within our soul through Sanctifying Grace, which would be the example of somebody moving out of the house; and then the house is empty. What happens to that house over weeks, over months, over years - it begins to fall apart. If you don’t have anybody living there, the shutters fall off, and all sorts of things happen to a vacant house. Look at a house that’s been vacant for 10 years, as compared to a house that somebody lives in. There’s a big difference there. If our souls have God’s grace, then they’re healthy and strong; but without God’s grace, they begin to deteriorate.

(A question). The question is, “How can somebody in mortal sin still do good things?” Some of those things are what’s called “naturally good acts.” Even an atheist can be a philanthropist and give money to charity. Even an atheist or an agnostic can be generous to the poor, for example. These are naturally good actions. Somebody that’s in mortal sin would still, by God’s grace, receive what’s called Actual Graces. Sanctifying Grace is gone from the soul, but God can still give that person Actual Graces, or strength, power, and blessings from God to do good things. For example, even somebody in mortal sin would still get the grace to go to Mass every Sunday. People will still help one another.

Some actions are natural actions, and some are supernatural actions. For example, even somebody in mortal sin can still pray to God. That's a supernatural act, but that means that God gave that person that grace to pray.

(A question). The answer would be if it's unrepentant mortal sin, where the person never says they're sorry for their sins, and if they're unrepentant, the person without Sanctifying Grace in their soul cannot go to Heaven. However, people who have committed mortal sins, and who are sorry for their sins, and are forgiven by God, certainly can go to Heaven. Examples would be Mary Magdalene, who was a prostitute. She went to Heaven, because she gave up her former way of life, and lived a very holy life. St. Paul was known as Saul of Tarsus. He committed many mortal sins, killing Christians. And yet, he was sorry for his sins, and was forgiven by Christ, and went to Heaven, and became a great saint. So, people could commit mortal sins, and through God's Actual Grace, hopefully given to a person to be sorry for their sins, they can repent, and they can be forgiven, and God's grace comes back into their soul. Therefore, they can die in the state of Sanctifying Grace, and go to Heaven.

The question about missing Mass on Sunday, that's going to come under the Ten Commandments. The first three Commandments have to do with love of God. One of them is "Keep holy the Lord's Day." I'll wait until I cover Commandments #1 - 3 to go into why deliberately saying, "No, I'm not going to worship God on this day," why that would be considered a serious sin. The short answer is that there are 168 hours in the week. How many does God ask for? Only one. If we can't even give God one hour out of 168, it means God's not very much of a high priority for us. And so, it's such a small thing that God wants us to do; and that's how important it is, that God wants us to worship Him by going to church on Sunday.

They're all sorts of reasons why missing Mass on Sunday may not be a serious sin. For example, if you're very sick, and can't get to Mass, you're excused. It's not a serious sin to miss Mass if you're sick. If you're taking care of a sick child, then it's not a serious sin. They're other examples as well, when a person might not be at Mass, but it's not a sin, if they're taking care of a sick child, or they themselves aren't able to go because of health reasons. Elderly people who don't drive and can't get out of the house; they're homebound – that's not a serious sin for them to miss Mass.

(A question). The question is "How do we get out of the state of mortal sin if we're in it?" For example, somebody that's already been baptized cannot be baptized again. The only time Baptism is effective is at the first Baptism. How does somebody go from being in the state of mortal sin to the state of grace? First of all, it does require God's Actual Graces, that He gives a person, to repent and to be sorry for their sins. If the person is not Catholic, they have no other way to have their sins forgiven except through prayer.

By asking God to forgive them, repenting of their sins, being sorry for their sins, and if they have what's called *Perfect Contrition*, which is a special grace that God gives them to be sorry for their sins, not just because they don't want to go to Hell, but because their sins offended a loving, merciful, holy God. If somebody has that kind of sorrow, then God directly forgives them of their sins. A person who is not Catholic doesn't have Confession to go to; that's the only way they can have their sins forgiven, is by being repentant, and asking God for forgiveness, and God certainly will forgive that person.

In a lot of ways, it's wonderful that Jesus established the Sacrament of Confession, and so as Catholics, it's such a great blessing that we can go to Confession, and God forgives us directly in Confession of our sins. If we're Catholic, to have mortal sins forgiven, we need to confess our sins through the Sacrament of Penance; and our sins will be forgiven in Confession. If there's no way somebody can get to Confession, and let's say you're in the World Trade Center, and the plane just crashed into the building, and you only have a few minutes to live, you would say, "God, please forgive me of my sins." There's no way to find a priest and go to Confession; but God will directly forgive you your sins, if you just pray to Him. The normal way to have our sins forgiven is through Confession. An extraordinary way, in an extraordinary circumstance, if there's no priest available, we just ask God for forgiveness, and He does it directly.

The analogy would also hold for Baptism. Normally, God wants people baptized by water, like the water being poured over the baby. Let's say you have an adult who was born and raised with no religion. They'd never been baptized, but they had always wanted to be baptized, and they're in a car accident, and they're dying. If that person wanted to be baptized, then God would save that person, even if they were unbaptized. That's called *Baptism by Desire*. Remember the good thief on the cross? He probably never got baptized. As he was dying on the cross, he asked Jesus for forgiveness. Jesus forgave him on the cross, and he was forgiven his sins. We call that *Baptism by Desire*, or *Baptism by One's Intention*. God forgave the person, but again, it was an extraordinary circumstance.

The normal way would be Baptism by water. The normal way for forgiveness of sins is through Confession. But for those that aren't Catholic, they don't have Confession; so God can do an extraordinary thing, and forgive them their sins, just by sorrow. What's interesting is that the sorrow that they feel for their sins is a grace from God. You can't presume on that. Somebody should never say, "Well, I'm going to live a very sinful life, and when I'm on my deathbed at 92 years old, I'm going to say an Act of Contrition, and God will forgive me of my sins." That's a sin of *Presumption*, because, to make an act of perfect contrition requires the grace of God. To make a supernatural act of sorrow for one's sins requires God's grace. We hope and pray that God will give the person the grace to make that act of sorrow for their sins, but we can't presume on it.

Remember Constantine, who died about the year 325 or so? He knew that he wanted to become a Christian, but he delayed his Baptism until he was much older, because he wanted to pile up a lot of sins, and have them all forgiven when he got baptized as an older man. That's called *presumptuous*, because he might be in a battle, and he might get killed before he got Baptized and had all his sins forgiven. In other words, even the grace to be sorry for our sins is a gift of God.

(A question). There are only a certain number of Holy Days of Obligation, such as Christmas, and the Assumption, and the Immaculate Conception, and a few others. Those also are serious obligations for Catholics to attend Mass on those days. Again, the same requirement would go, that if somebody is sick, or taking care of a sick child, then they're excused from the Mass. If they could go, and deliberately don't, then that would be considered a serious sin. Serious sin and mortal sin are the same thing. Going to Mass on a Holy Day is just as important as going to Mass on a Sunday.

(A question). Somebody goes to a wedding on a Saturday at noontime, and asks, "Father, does this count for Sunday?" Obviously, that's a very minimalistic approach. We should be at the spiritual level where we can say, "Sure, I can go to Mass twice: once on a Saturday, once on a Sunday." People do try to kill two birds with one stone. Christmas last year was on a Monday, so they had to go to Mass on Sunday morning for the Lord's Day, to keep the Lord's Day holy; and then, there was Mass on Christmas Day. I guess people thought if they went to Mass Christmas Eve, which happened to be a Sunday, it could count for Sunday and Christmas.

(A question). If somebody is baptized validly, which means Baptism by water, in the Name of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), then that's a valid Baptism. If the person was baptized Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist, or from other Christian denominations, that's a valid Baptism. You do not need to be re-baptized; you can't get baptized again. Your first Baptism is considered equivalent to any other Christian Baptism. In some religions, they don't baptize. For example, in Jehovah's Witness, I don't think they baptize. Some other religions, for example, in any of the non-Christian religions, they don't have a Baptism. If somebody is born and raised non-Christian, when they become Catholic they get baptized. If somebody is born and raised Christian, they were baptized as an infant or a teenager with water in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that is their one and only Baptism. How a person who's been baptized as an infant has their later sins forgiven, is through Confession, which is like getting baptized again spiritually.

(A question). Somebody that's not Christian, and never heard of Jesus, for example, how they could be saved is to remember that Jesus did die for them, whether they know it or not. Jesus died for everyone, not just Christians, not just Catholics. Jesus died, and He paid the price for everybody's sins, so that

everybody has the ability and the chance to get to Heaven. That's the first thing to remember, is that the price for their salvation was already paid by Christ on the Cross.

Even a pagan in China has been redeemed by Christ. Whether or not they'll be saved would really require how much they correspond to the Actual Graces that God gives them. There's a saying in the Bible that God gives everybody enough grace to be saved. Everybody will have an opportunity for salvation. It's mysterious. We don't know how it is, whether God will come to that person on their deathbed, and give them enough grace to be saved. We know that during their lifetime, they will get enough grace to get to Heaven. If they've never been baptized, but if they follow the natural law, which is the law written on their heart (don't kill, don't commit adultery, and things like that), if they do commit those sins, and if they are sorry for their sins, then God could forgive them, if they even believe in God (most people do).

If they have violated the Natural Law, and are repentant, then God could forgive them. They could be saved, if they follow the dictates of their conscience and Natural Law, and if they have what's what's called a *Baptism by Desire*. In other words, if they knew that God wanted them to be baptized, they would do it; but they may or may not have that explicit intention. But again, we leave that sort of thing in God's hands, and we hope and pray that they, too, can be saved.

(A question). If somebody is non-Christian, and they believe that they have violated, let's say, the Ten Commandments, because those are pre-Christian (handed to Moses). A lot of Jewish people, who do not accept Jesus, still have the Ten Commandments. So, if they commit sins, they pray to God, and are sorry for their sins. If they have this perfect contrition, and God gives them the grace to be sorry for their sins, and if they are truly sorry, then God would forgive them. That would be the same with Hindus, Muslims, and other people of non-Christian backgrounds. If they're sorry for their sins, sorry for breaking the Natural Law, then God would forgive them.

(A question). Yes, because Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Jesus did die for all the Muslims, all the Jews, all the Hindus, and all the Buddhists. Jesus did die for them on the Cross, and that opened the Gates of Heaven, and gave them the possibility to be able to get to Heaven. Whether or not they do get to Heaven and are saved depends on the kind of life they've lived: whether they've followed God's commandments, and God's law; and if they have violated God's law, whether they've repented, have been sorry for that, and been forgiven by God.

What we want to do now is to talk a little bit more about mortal sin and venial sin, the difference, and how do you know what the difference is between a mortal sin and a venial sin.

There are many effects of a mortal sin. The first effect is that it deprives the person of Sanctifying Grace. It makes our soul displeasing to God. It also takes away any merits of all of our past good actions. Once we repent, we get back the merit of all of our previous good actions. Mortal sin also deprives the person of the ability to enter eternal happiness in Heaven, unless they repent.

One of the questions during the break was the passage from the Bible where Jesus said, "Every sin will be forgiven except the *sin against the Holy Spirit*." In other words, what is the unforgivable sin? It's not fornication. Suicide is a good guess. However, because of certain factors that might have led to the suicide, mainly mental illness, or severe depression, that can mitigate a person's culpability or responsibility. Therefore, it might not deprive them of Heaven. That's why we can still have a funeral Mass for someone that committed suicide. If somebody jumps from a ten-story building, from the time they jump until the time they die, there's a period of a few seconds where they could ask God for forgiveness. There's always hope, even if somebody has committed suicide, that the person could still be saved. Objectively, it's still a mortal sin to commit suicide or any kind of murder; and to kill one's self is also a serious sin. Even though it's objectively a serious sin, whether it's subjectively for that person a mortal sin, would depend upon a number of factors. We'll go into those three conditions that make up when a sin is actually a mortal sin. Even if somebody committed suicide, there is still hope that they could still be saved, even though the chances aren't very good, because it is a serious sin. Hopefully, with God's mercy, there still is a chance that somebody could still be saved if they've committed suicide.

Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is more or less the general category. That's what Jesus refers to as the sin against the Holy Spirit. The actual way it's been interpreted for the last 2,000 years is dying in the state of mortal sin, or lack of repentance, what's called the *sin of despair*. When somebody despairs of God's mercy, who doesn't want to be forgiven, who has an unrepentant heart – that's the only sin that can't be forgiven. Or, if they reject God's mercy, that's what's called the sin that cannot be forgiven – it is unrepentant mortal sin. When somebody says, "I don't want to be forgiven. I hate God. I don't want to be in Heaven," that's the only sin that can't be forgiven, is unrepentant sin where somebody doesn't ask for forgiveness, because any sin can be forgiven, as long as somebody is sorry for it. Unrepentance is the only sin that can't be forgiven.

There are three conditions that have to be met for a mortal sin to have occurred. The first is that it has to be a *serious matter*. It has to be serious in nature; namely, the thought, desire, word, action, or omission must be seriously wrong or considered seriously wrong. In other words, it has to be a *grave matter* or a *serious matter*.

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Stealing a thousand dollars, or ten thousand dollars would be serious matter. Taking a paper clip could never be a mortal sin; it's just not serious enough matter. Telling your very small lie that doesn't hurt anybody is not a mortal sin. Perjury, lying under oath, that is a serious matter.

The second condition is that the person has to have *sufficient reflection*. That means the person has to know that it's wrong, and have knowledge, having reflected upon whether or not to commit this deed or action; and having reflected upon it, goes ahead and does it anyway.

Third, the person has to have *full consent of the will*. That means it's a deliberate choice. It's the full consent of the will. Therefore, an infant could never commit a mortal sin. They just don't have serious matter, sufficient reflection, and full consent of the will. Somebody that's mentally retarded, or has Down's Syndrome, perhaps will never commit a serious sin. If a child is born to a family, and they have a serious mental handicap, even though it's a cross and a difficult thing for the parents to endure, in a sense, the child is like an angel; that child could never commit a serious sin. That's a great blessing. Children that are in this situation are really saints, because they've never offended God; because they've never been able to commit a serious sin. The spiritual director of St. Therese, the "Little Flower" of Lisieux, said at the end of her life, that as far as he knew, she never committed a mortal sin. Obviously, she committed smaller, venial sins.

Mortal sin is the greatest evil in the world. It's worse than disease, poverty, or war, because it does separate a person from God. For example, full consent of the will could come into play where, if somebody forces somebody to commit a sin, then, the person, if they were forced into it, did not have full consent. There are all sorts of examples where, under the Nazis or Communists, people were tortured to tell lies, or to do something; they were coerced. They did not have the full freedom and free consent of the will.

A venial sin is also a sin. It's an offense against God, but it's a slight offense against God. It's often times because the matter is not serious, or because the person did not have full consent of the will, or did not reflect upon that. In other words, committed the sin without sufficient reflection. This word in Latin, "venalia," means "easily pardonable." That's what the word "venial" means; it's "forgivable," or "easily pardonable."

Mortal sin destroys the life of grace in the soul. Venial sin only wounds the life of grace in the soul. People can get to Heaven if they have venial sins on their soul; they still need to be cleansed of venial sin in Purgatory, if they still have venial sins on their soul when they die. It does not stop them from going to Heaven. It does not destroy the life of grace in the soul; it only wounds it. I guess the analogy would be this: mortal sin would be compared to death, and venial sin would be compared to an illness, or a weakness. If we're in the state of grace, it means we're in a state of friendship with God. If we commit mortal sin, we break

off our friendship with God. If we're in the state of venial sins, we hurt our relationship with God.

Let's use an example from our own lives. Let's say you have a good friend, and you get into a little argument, and you fight a little bit. In the analogy, that would be like a venial offense against each other. But, if you have such a big blowout, that you have just broken off your friendship, then that would be the analogy of the mortal sin. In venial sin, we still keep the friendship with God; it just wounds our relationship with God.

There are many ways to have our venial sins forgiven. Just by asking God for forgiveness, He forgives us. When you come to Mass, and we say, "I confess to Almighty God, to you, my brothers and sisters," that forgives venial sins. It doesn't forgive mortal sins; that has to be done through Confession. But venial sins will be forgiven, at the Mass, during the Confiteor, the "I confess prayer." When you bless yourself with Holy Water, that can forgive venial sins. When you receive Jesus in the Eucharist, and you're sorry for your sins (again, if somebody is in mortal sin, they should not go to Communion, because that would be called a *Sacrilegious Communion*), but if somebody has smaller sins on their soul, and if they're sorry, Jesus can forgive your venial sins when you go to Holy Communion.

(A question). There are other reasons why people might not go to Communion. For example, they may not be Catholic, or they might have eaten within the last hour, not keeping the one hour fast. Or, they might not be in a marriage blessed by the Church. There's a number of reasons why people don't go up for Communion. However, I can see your point. Let's say somebody thinks, "Everybody is looking at me," so they go up to Communion anyway.

(A question). Generally, if somebody is in the state of grace (if they have no mortal sins on their soul. If they have committed serious sins, if they've gone to Confession, have been forgiven, then they're in the state of grace and can go to Communion. If somebody is not in a marriage blessed by the Church, they should not go to Communion, until they get the marriage recognized in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the Church. If somebody takes Communion in the state of mortal sin, that's what's called a *Sacrilegious Communion*, which is wrong to do. It's a serious sin to receive Communion if somebody's not in the state of Sanctifying Grace.

Let's say you're just late for Mass. Obviously, that's not a mortal sin. You mentioned being late at daily Mass; a person doesn't even have to come to daily Mass. Let's say a young mom has little kids, and they're rushing around, trying to get here, which is the reason why most people are late – because of the little kids. That's not a sin on your part, unless you said, "I'm just going to finish watching this TV show; it's over at nine. Then, I'll drive down to Mass, and I'll be 15 minutes late." It would be wrong to do that, to deliberately be late. Sometimes,

I'm late, because of construction on this road. There's a sign put up that says, "One-lane road ahead." There are all sorts of reasons why people can be late for Mass. Certainly, if you get there by the homily, you can go to Communion. If somebody comes really, really late (they've missed almost the whole Mass), they shouldn't just come walking in and go up to Communion. If you miss a couple of readings, because your kids took a little extra longer to get ready that day, and you had to drop one off at school, then that shouldn't stop a person from receiving Communion.

(A question). All sins are a breaking of a Commandment, but for it to be a mortal sin, it has to be a serious violation against the Commandments. It has to have sufficient reflection, and full consent of your will for it to be a mortal sin. There are many ways that the Commandments could be broken. For example, I use the example of stealing. If somebody's stealing \$5,000 from a poor widow, that's a serious sin. Stealing a couple pieces of notepaper from work is still a violation of the Ten Commandments, but that's not a mortal sin. That's just not serious enough matter, to take something small like that. And yet, both of those are violations of the Commandment "Thou shalt not steal."

Lying is another example. Telling somebody, "I really love your haircut," or something like that, might be a little white lie; that's not a mortal sin. If you are saying something contrary to what you're thinking, that isn't lying; that's a lot different than perjury under oath, which is also a form of lying, but that's mortal sin. They're both violations of the Commandment. Do you see how you can violate the Commandments, but one could be a mortal sin, but one wouldn't be?

The venial sins have a harmful effect upon a relationship with God, because they make us less fervent in God's service. They weaken our power to resist mortal sin, when we're tempted by bigger sins. They deprive us of other graces that God would want to give us.

The ways to keep from committing sin are by:

- Praying daily
- Receiving the Sacraments
- Reading the Bible
- Having daily devotions
- Going to Communion on a regular basis
- Going to Confession on a regular basis
- Realizing that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit
- Staying busy
- Avoiding the near occasions of sin
- Not putting ourselves in places where we'll be tempted

Let me explain, for a few minutes, what's called the *Occasions of Sin*. An occasion of sin would be persons, places, or things that easily lead a person into sin. Some examples of this would be bad friendships. If somebody doesn't drink

too much, but when they go out with this certain group of guys, then they drink too much. That would be an occasion of sin. These fellows are an occasion of sin. Also, there are places that could be occasions of sin for certain people. Some people just aren't tempted by going to bars; they're not going to drink too much if they go to a bar. Other people, if they go to a bar, are just going to drink too much, and that would be a sin. For some people, some places may be an occasion of sin; for others, it's not an occasion of sin.

Going to the horse track (I've never gone to the track), for me, would not be a temptation. Sure, you can go and put five dollars on a horse; for me, that's not an occasion of sin. For other people, it might be, because they'll bet \$500, or the rent money; and that would be wrong to gamble excessively. So, some places could be occasions of sin for some people, and not for others.

We should never seek out these occasions of sin. We should always avoid persons, places, or things that lead people into sin. Some people, if they go into a jewelry store, say at the mall, for teenagers, that might be an occasion of sin, because they might pick-pocket. For most of us, that's not an occasion of sin; we can go in there, and that doesn't bother us.

Let's finish up with what's called the *Seven Deadly Sins*, or the *Seven Capital Sins*. In Latin, the word "caput" means "head." These seven are the source of all other sin. You have:

- *Pride*
- *Covetousness*
- *Lust*
- *Anger*
- *Gluttony*
- *Envy*
- *Sloth.*

Pride is "inordinate love of one's own excellence," or an "excessive self-esteem." Self-esteem is good; we should have pride in ourselves, in a certain respect. But, the definition of a proud person is "somebody who overestimates himself; who believes that he himself is the source of his own excellence." Whereas, we believe that God is the source of our good qualities.

Humility is the opposite of pride. We call pride the "mother of all sins," because everything can be traced to pride. If somebody suffers from vanity, presumption, disobedience, hypocrisy, obstinacy in sin, these all come under the sin of pride. A person can be very talented, and be humble, because they believe that all their good qualities are a gift from God. They don't attribute it to themselves, but they know that it comes from God. The Bible says that, "God hates pride," and, "God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble."

Anger is a “strong feeling of displeasure, combined with a desire to punish the offender.”

Envy is a “bitter feeling at the excellence or good-fortune of those who are better, or happier, with the desire to take what they have.” Another definition is “sadness over another person’s spiritual or physical good.”

Lust is “the inordinate seeking of the pleasures of the flesh.”

Covetousness is “the excessive love for, and seeking after, wealth and worldly possessions.” Another definition is “avarice.”

Sloth is “neglect of one’s spiritual or temporal duties, through laziness.”

Gluttony is “excessive desire for indulging in food or drink.”

(One of Father Peffley’s favorite shows growing up was Gilligan’s Island. He said that each of the seven main characters of this show suffered from one of the Seven Capital Sins, or Seven Deadly Sins. The class had a fun time thinking and deciding on which character suffered from a particular sin. The Professor suffered from *pride*; Mr. Howell suffered from *covetousness*; Ginger suffered from *lust*; Skipper suffered from *anger*; Gilligan suffered from *gluttony*; Mary Ann suffered from *envy*; and Mrs. Howell suffered from *sloth*.)