



# Appendix

# The Sin Against the Holy Spirit

Questions about the sin against the Holy Spirit may come up in this study. Pope St. John Paul II explains this sin in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et Vivificantem*.

“ Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable? How should this blasphemy be understood? Saint Thomas Aquinas replies that it is a question of a sin that is “unforgivable by its very nature, insofar as it excludes the elements through which the forgiveness of sin takes place.”

According to such an exegesis, “blasphemy” does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit, working through the power of the Cross. If man rejects the “convincing concerning sin” which comes from the Holy Spirit and which has the power to save, he also rejects the “coming” of the Counselor....If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this “non-forgiveness” is linked, as to its cause, to “non-repentance”, in other words to the radical refusal to be converted....Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then, is the sin committed by the person who claims to have a “right” to persist in evil — in any sin at all — and who thus rejects Redemption.

*Dominum et Vivificantem*, 46, 47

# Making a Good Confession

## PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION:

Oh most merciful God! Prostrate at your feet, I implore your forgiveness. I sincerely desire to leave all my evil ways and to confess my sins with all sincerity to you and through your priest. I am a sinner; have mercy on me, Oh Lord. Give me a lively faith and firm hope in the Passion of my Redeemer. Give me, for your mercy's sake, a sorrow for having offended so good a God. Mary, my mother, refuge of sinners, pray for me that I may make a good confession. Amen.

## HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION:

- You have the option to go to confession anonymously (behind a screen) or face-to-face.
- After the priest greets you in the name of Christ, make the Sign of the Cross. He may choose to recite a reading from Scripture, after which you say, *“Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been [state how long] since my last confession. These are my sins.”*
- Tell your sins simply and honestly to the priest. You might even want to discuss the circumstances and the root causes of your sins and ask the priest for advice or direction.
- Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then say an Act of Contrition for your sins. The priest will then absolve you of your sins and will pray the Prayer of Absolution. This prayer is a beautiful affirmation of God's mercy. Listen to its powerful words: *“God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”*
- Afterwards, spend some time thanking and praising God for the gift of his mercy. Fulfill your penance as soon as possible.

**ACT OF CONTRITION:**

Oh my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended you and I detest all of my sins because of your just punishment, but most of all because they have offended you, my God, who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of your grace, to sin no more and avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

A simple prayer from the heart is also acceptable:

Lord, I am sorry for my sins. I thank you for your forgiveness, strength and love.

**DO YOUR PENANCE:**

When we go to Confession, we are cleansed and freed from our sins. Although the absolution we receive takes away the sin, it does not, however, remedy all the problems that sin causes. When we sin, we weaken ourselves as well as our relationship with God and our neighbours. We must repair the harm caused by our sin (e.g. return stolen goods or restore the reputation of someone about whom we have gossiped). That is why the priest gives us a penance.

The penance given usually depends on the gravity of the sin committed. Penances can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service to neighbour, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of suffering that brings us closer to Christ. The sacrament of Confession is not complete until you do your penance. It should be done immediately in the church, if it is a penance of prayer. Otherwise, it should be done as soon as possible.

## **EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

**I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods besides me.**

Did I fail to love God, to make him first in my life, to thank, trust and love him as he deserves? Did I fail to pray? Have I doubted or denied my faith? Was I careless in saying my prayers? Do I give God time every day in prayer? Do I make a god out of my work, possessions, or image in the eyes of others so that these rule my life instead of God? Am I angry toward God because of illness or misfortune? Have I been involved with magic, horoscopes, Ouija boards or fortune telling?

**You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.**

Did I curse or swear? Did I use God's name in vain, lightly, carelessly, by blasphemy? Have I used foul language or jokes? In conversation, have I passively listened to slander and to jokes demeaning the Church or God's authority?

**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation? Did I leave Mass early without good reason? Have I received communion at least once a year? Did I receive communion in a state of serious sin? Have I been to confession recently? In any of my previous confessions, did I lie to or deliberately conceal something from the priest? Have I allowed myself to become so dominated by my work and chores that I have not set aside Sunday for spiritual and family activities?

**Honour your father and your mother.**

Did I honour and obey my parents? Did I respect my brothers and sisters? Did I respect others with lawful authority, especially teachers and professors? Did I speak rudely to them? Did I speak about them to others in a derogatory way? Did I fail to help my parents (at home, or in their time of need)? Did I spend time with my family, or avoid them? Do I blame my parents for my own shortcomings?

**You shall not kill.**

Did I give in to feelings of anger or jealousy? Did I keep hatred in my heart? Have I ever struck anyone in anger, intending to injure the person? Did I fight, give a bad example or cause scandal? Have I abused alcohol or drugs? Have I had or in any way permitted or encouraged abortion? Have I nurtured thoughts about suicide?

**You shall not commit adultery & you shall not covet your neighbour's wife.**

Did I consent to impure glances or thoughts? Did I give my mind over to lustful thoughts or fantasies? Have I encouraged them by stares, curiosity or impure conversations? Did I neglect to control my imagination or desire of other people? Was I immodest in dress or behaviour? Did I look at pornography, impure books, magazines or videos? Am I guilty of impurity with myself, premarital sex or adultery? Do I live chastely according to my state in life (married, single, consecrated celibate)?

**You shall not steal.**

Have I stolen? What or how much? Did I return it or make up for what I stole? Have I cheated on tests or homework? Did I waste time at work? Did I do graffiti? Have I been extravagant in my manner of life, to the neglect of the poor at home and abroad?

**You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.**

Have I lied, gossiped? Have I talked about other people behind their backs? Do I always tell the truth? Am I sincere? Did I reveal secrets that I should have kept confidential? Am I critical, negative or uncharitable in my talk? Have I injured the reputation of others by speaking about their failures and sins with little desire or intention to help them? Have I condoned prejudice and hatred toward people of other nationalities, races or religions?

**You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.**

Is my heart greedy? Am I jealous of what another has? Am I envious of others because I don't have what they have? Do I habitually compare myself with others? Do I work, study, and keep busy to counter idle thoughts? Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others? Is my heart set on earthly possessions or on the treasures of heaven? Do I give to those in need, so as not to cling to my possessions?