

23rd Sun A

What Even Happened To Sin?

Introduction...

I've heard people say that they never hear a sermon on "sin" anymore. Well, get ready, cause here one comes.

I Whatever Happened to Sin?

In the Gospel Jesus speaks about sin... one brother sinning against another.

My question is: Whatever happened to sin?

Of all of the Christian teachings, the reality of sin is the most easily provable.

But 'sin' has disappeared from our society's vocabulary.

Just read your newspaper or check your smart phone – all of the Bad News, including terrorism and North Korea... and closer to home: murders, robberies and domestic abuse.

Where does "sin" fit into this bad news?

It's not even a term we hear today.

We won't hear it on the newscasts nor read it in Newspaper descriptions of what's happening in our world.

We'll hear about crimes, we'll hear some actions decried as wrong and criminal, vicious and savage.

But our Christian term to describe so much of it – 'sinful' – will not be used.

As a matter of fact, in our society today, in many cases, we have even changed the name of sinful behavior to make it more acceptable.

We don't call it 'adultery' – we call it 'fooling around'.

We don't call it 'stealing' – we call it 'creative bookkeeping'.

We don't call it 'fornication' – we call it 'having fun' and 'hooking up'.
Some don't call it 'abortion' – some call it 'fetal extraction' or some such euphemism.

For us Christians, we need to be sure that we don't fall into these very harmful attitudes about doing bad things...

rationalizing our behavior,

making excuses for ourselves,

becoming comfortable with *sin*...

just watch Judge Judy if you want to see sinful behavior excused and rationalized.

We Christians need to be very careful that we don't buy into these attitudes and behaviors, which seem acceptable to many in our society today.

Sometimes I think that many people don't go to confession today because they don't want to take responsibility for the wrong that they do, and they don't want to change their behavior....

For example, today people ask: What's wrong with gossip – which deliberately hurts the reputation of another person – even if what we say is true?

Other people do it all of the time. Why can't I?

Gossip hurts the good name of others, even if they don't deserve that good name because of the way they act.

Let's read again that second reading:

Brothers and sisters: owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another...

The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not kill; you shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no evil to the neighbor...

Why are some behaviors or some attitudes considered sinful?

Because the Church says so? NO.

Because God says so? NO.

Something is sinful because it hurts us or others.

It's a sin against a loving attitude toward others and treating people with respect, even if they don't do that to us.

Envy hurts us and can hurt others.

Envy settles in our hearts and eats away at our peace of mind, turns a blind eye to our many blessings and cancels out any gratitude we might have for our blessings.

Greed hurts us and can hurt others –

Why share what we have with others?

Why not want more and more stuff?...

So many are buried under the Kingdom of Stuff.

Some ask: What's wrong with some Internet porn – it's not hurting anyone?

– ah, but it's hurting you!

It's hurting the way men relate to women and even look at women.

Pride or arrogance hurts us and can hurt others...

arrogance is not an acceptable Christian attitude –

If we are blessed with wonderful personal qualities,

blessed with a good education and a good job,
blessed with a good family –
we give thanks for these blessings
as we recognize that not everyone is so blessed.
We are not necessarily better than others –
perhaps we are more blessed than them.
And what is our response to our blessings?
Arrogance because of our blessings is not an acceptable Christian attitude.
Gratitude is our attitude!
As Christians and disciples of Jesus we use our blessings to help others when
we can.

II Sin and Healing

We need to examine our conscience,
look at our behaviors,
and ask if we are allowing ourselves to slip into sinfulness.
We have to ask, “Am I living the way Jesus wants me to live?
Am I acting the way Jesus wants me to act?
Then we need to get on our knees and ask to help us to live according to His
Will... to live a life worthy of our calling, as St. Paul encourages us to do.

We can't live this way without loving God's grace.
We can live this way without the help and encouragement of others.
To do this I think we need to have Jesus firmly planted in our hearts.
Is Jesus firmly planted in our hearts?
Do we turn to Jesus each and every day, and more than once a day... in
prayer.

Mother Theresa described prayer as "making room in our hearts for God and Jesus."

Do we make room in our hearts for Jesus,
or are our hearts cluttered with so much of our own junk and agenda,
worries and cares, resentments and jealousies?

It's hard to live a life following Jesus and doing what God wants us to do
without Jesus in our lives...

As a matter of fact, we can't do it without the Lord's help...

the pressures around us in our society are too much.

All of us need God's help

and we need good friends and family to encourage us and challenge us to
live as God would have us live...

and we need to encourage our family and friends to do the same.

What area of your life do you need the Lord's help with?

Do you have any unchristian attitudes or behaviors that you need God to
help you change?

Do you have Jesus firmly planted in your heart?

Conclusion

As we come to this Mass we offer ourselves together with Jesus to our
heavenly Father.

We remember God's love for us poured out on the Cross.

We receive the Lord into our hearts at Communion.

Ask Jesus to firmly plant himself in your hearts each day,
and help you to be the kind of people he wants you to be....

a true and faithful disciple of Jesus.

In John's account of the Last Supper we hear Jesus tell his disciples that
they are in the world, but not of it.

From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.

Now you see what that means.