

Topic

● I SIN:

- A Grasping the reality and the nature of "sin" is the key to understanding and appreciating both "forgiveness" and "reconciliation"
 - 1 Sin is not a "thing"
 - 2 It's easy for Catholics to feel that it is some kind of stain on our souls!
 - 3 The definition in the old Catholic examination of conscience implied sin was a thing because we were to ask ourselves regarding any and every action or thought we experienced:
 - a Is "it" a sin?
 - b Was "it" serious?
 - c How often did I do "it"?
- B A comparison with human law implied the same conclusion, (i.e. that "sin" is a "thing,") by using crime as an analogy to sin
 - 1 Crime "breaks man's law"
 - a I do some "thing," "action"
 - b I have a blot on my record
 - (1) A felony
 - (2) Or a misdemeanor
 - (3) Or "points" on my driving records
 - 2 In a similar fashion, we thought, sin "breaks God's law"
 - a Sin seems to imply the same thing -- I do something -- something wrong, something that violates what I think is one of God's laws
 - b As a result, I have a blot on my soul, on my spiritual record
 - (1) Original -- almost like having a defective gene that produces some illness
 - (2) Mortal -- like a terminal illness
 - (3) Venial -- like a cold or bad flu
 - 3 This pattern of thinking implies that sin is an action apart from me
- C Religion will and must always have a language problem
 - 1 It is natural for me to assume that the words used in religion have the same meaning as when these same words are used in other areas of my life
 - 2 It is easier for Americans to make this error
 - a Many Europeans are multi lingual
 - b Most Americans speak only one language
 - c Linguists discover rich shades of meaning to religious terms
 - (1) There are major differences in the meaning of "remember" in
 - (a) English: "recall"
 - (b) Latin: "imitate"
 - (c) Greek: "make present"
 - (d) Hebrew: very different: "God, You recall"
 - (2) And there are problems with the English meanings of each of the three traditional Christian virtues today
 - (a) Faith: is not "believe about," but "believe in," "commit to"
 - (b) Hope is not "wish," but "confidence," "certitude"
 - (c) Charity is not "almsgiving" but "loving service"
- D No one single Hebrew or Greek word lies behind the word translated in English as "sin"
 - 1 Actually, there are many different words used in the Bible and all are translated for us by the one English word "sin."

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- a In the original languages, each of these words are used with unique shades of meaning
- b So our one word reflects a variety of thoughts
- 2 **All these different shades of meaning are lost in English since they are swallowed up into one generic term**
- E The most common Hebrew word in the Bible for "sin" means "missing the mark"
 - 1 [Use the target, balloons, and puzzle]
 - 2 Sin is not a "thing" apart from me
 - 3 But rather, it is an integral part of me
 - a It is my failing to be who I was called to be
 - b It is my failing to become all I could be, should be
 - c It is my distorting who I was planned and designed to be
 - 4 Sin is my distance off center from the bull's eye of a target, my "missing the mark" God set for me
 - a God has a plan
 - (1) For me
 - (2) For me as part of His people the Church
 - (3) For me as part of humanity
 - b Sin is the distance I am off what God planned me to be
 - (1) How far I am less than the person God desires me to be; created me to be
 - (a) Less filled with love, with a sense of being lovable
 - (b) Less loving
 - (2) **How much I am filled with something other than what God desires**
 - (a) Filled with other things, dreams, schemes that are good, but that don't help to make me lovable
 - (b) Filled with other values: desire for power, approval, control, advancement
 - (3) **How far less I am**
 - (a) As an individual
 - (b) As part of His people the Church
 - (c) As part of the family of humanity
 - 5 **Examples:**
 - a **Balloons:**
 - (1) I fail to fill out all my potential
 - (2) And so I am less a person than you need me to be
 - (3) And I have less to offer than you need from me
 - b **Jigsaw puzzle**
 - (1) I fail to complete myself to integrate with you
 - (2) The beauty of your life is affected by my failure to be fully me
 - F A correct understanding of the English word leads to some interesting conclusions:
 - 1 Sin is always its own immediate punishment!
 - a This resolves a religious puzzle, mystery
 - (1) How can a loving God punish?
 - (2) How can a God who died to help sinners punish sinners?
 - b My answer is that
 - (1) God can't punish
 - (2) God doesn't punish

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- (3) Sinners punish themselves!
- (4) They punish themselves at the very moment God is acting to save them from this punishment!
- c There is an explanation to this riddle
 - (1) God doesn't punish me for my having missed the mark, but He tries to help me
 - (a) He helps me become complete
 - (b) He helps me avoid punishment, escape the automatic consequences of sin
 - [1] My inner feeling of emptiness, of something missing within me
 - [2] My guilt
 - [3] My fear
 - (2) Since God made me, God knows what I need for my health
 - (a) Physically
 - (b) Emotionally
 - (c) Intellectually
 - (d) Socially
 - (e) Spiritually
 - (3) God gives all of us "menus" for health
 - (a) The Commandments of the Old Testament show us what unhealthy activities to avoid
 - [1] **These commandments are basically social: they are rules given to a people, not to individuals**
 - [a] If obeyed, they would create a community of peace
 - [b] People felt inner serenity would follow
 - [c] **Jesus showed us that peace comes from inner harmony, not outward harmony**
 - [2] Hating and harming affect me and keep me from being filled with love as I was created to be
 - [3] Stealing puts things above people and prevents me from growing with right values, from relating with others in a wholesome manner
 - [4] Using people as sexual objects for my satisfaction, coveting, keeps me from knowing the joy of healthy relationships
 - [5] Committing adultery challenges the stability of family and society
 - (b) The commandments of the New Testament show us the healthy activities we should perform
 - [1] They begin with my letting God love me
 - [2] Then they continue with allowing others to love me
 - [3] Loving self allows me to grow healthily
 - [4] Loving others allows the cycle of love to grow in me
 - (c) "Obedience," then, equals "wholeness," not a blind following of arbitrary rules, not a following done out of a fear of punishment
 - [1] **Blind obedience leads to a relationship with God based on fear, not love**
 - [2] Such an improper dread of God inhibits my growth -- fearing God, I cannot at the same moment, receive the love from God that I need in order to be me
 - [3] **Only an awe of the God who loves me so mysteriously can help me grow**
 - [a] Awe at a love offered so freely
 - [b] Awe at a love offered so completely
 - [c] Awe at a love offered so universally
 - [4] 1 John 4:7

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- [a] Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.
- [b] 9 This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
- [c] 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.
- [d] 13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.
- [e] 14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15 If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.
- [f] 16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.
- [g] 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.
- [h] 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.
- [i] 19 We love because he first loved us.
- [j] 20 If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.
- [k] 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.
- (d) **Violations of these guidelines result in my being less than God intends me to be**
- d **God's gift of the Commandments of both Testaments can be likened to a dietician offering a diabetic a menu of healthy and unhealthy foods**
 - (1) The dietician doesn't punish the diabetic with a coma for violating the menu
 - (2) The diabetic hurts himself, herself, by taking foods known to be harmful
- e **Sometimes it can be difficult for us to see sin as including its own punishment**
 - (1) Sinners sometimes seem to prosper politically and financially
 - (2) They seem able to trample on good people, to triumph over them
 - (3) Actually, they never have peace in their hearts, a true light in their eyes
 - (4) Their desperate need to accumulate more, control more, conquer more, proves they are not satisfied with themselves, within themselves
- 2 **Who gets hurt by sin?**
 - a **It is very important, if we are to have a healthy Christian life, for us to realize that sin hurts more than just the sinner himself/herself**
 - b **Is God affected?**
 - (1) **The old "Act of Contrition" implied He is – a traditional prayer used in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession)**
 - (a) **"Having 'offended' Thee"**
 - (b) **"But most of all because I have 'offended' Thee, my God, who art all good and deserving of all my love."**
 - (2) **In one sense, God is not offended**
 - (a) **To see God as hurt is an "anthropomorphic" way of looking at God**
 - [1] **God is seen with human traits; God is seen as human**
 - [2] **The angry God of the Old Testament is an example of this**
 - [a] **An offended God**
 - [b] **A God hurt by our sin, acting to avenge His honor**

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- [3] **Jesus revealed a very different God: a Forgiving Father**
 - [a] This revelation is not the result of a change in God
 - [b] Rather it flows from a clearer revelation to us of the eternal God
- (b) **Philosophers tell us that a perfect God can't be hurt**
- (3) **In another sense, God is hurt**
 - (a) He is not hurt or angry because of His wounded honor
 - [1] The "Crowning with Thorns" is a Sacrament showing God accepts humiliation
 - [a] Mark 15:15
 - {1} *So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. 16 Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort.*
 - {2} *17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. 18 And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*
 - {3} *19 They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. 20 After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him.*
 - [2] He accepts this humiliation as a way of serving us as we are
 - [3] Jesus "did not cling" to His honor as God
 - [a] "He took on the form of a servant"
 - [b] And then He served us to the point of death
 - [c] **Because of this -- accepting humiliation, not being offended by it -- God bestowed on Him the name above every other name**
 - {1} Philippians 2:5
 - {a} *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.*
 - {b} *7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on the cross!*
 - {c} *9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.*
 - {d} *11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*
 - (b) But a loving God, a Father, is hurt: hurt because of the pain we suffer
 - [1] God hurts like a parent hurting for a child who is damaging himself/herself by staying in a bad relationship
 - [2] The parent, and God, want something better for each child, for all children
 - [3] The parent, and God, hurt for the child of theirs receiving less than they need
 - [4] **A loving God does have His heart pierced on our behalf**
- c **The self is hurt – always and automatically**
 - (1) I was made by a God of love
 - (a) I was made in the image of this God of love
 - (b) **I was made to be loved**
 - [1] If God must love -- and God must -- then God must love me, must accept me
 - [2] So I was made to be fully loved and accepted by God!
 - (2) Sin is simply accepting less love than I need at any moment

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- (a) **I'm attracted by the wonder, the reflected beauty of the universe**
 - [1] Some person
 - [2] Some thing
 - [3] Some activity
- (b) These have beauty, but not enough to give me all the love that I crave
- (3) And so, by turning to them and away from God
 - (a) I am filled with the goodness, the wonder in them
 - (b) But I am not completely filled inside me
 - (c) **I am always less than I should and could be**
- (4) Examples of sin are surprising
 - (a) Sin is my not being all I can be physically
 - [1] My not exercising
 - [2] My not eating a healthy diet
 - [3] My not resting and playing
 - [4] **Failures which result in my body lacking the vigor and freshness God wants for it**
 - [5] These failures are simple to see with a child as parents direct him/her to unhealthy habits in each of these areas
 - (b) Sin is my not being all I can be emotionally
 - [1] **Allowing some emotions to run my life**
 - [a] Anger
 - [b] Jealousy
 - [2] The emotions are themselves good but as a human, my life should be governed by my mind and will, not by my feelings
 - [3] **Suppressing other feelings I was made to have**
 - [a] Anger
 - [b] Fear
 - [4] If I suppress feelings, they have a negative subconscious affect on my behavior
 - [5] **Carrying guilts, depressions, anxieties because of unhealthy feelings**
 - (c) Sin is my not being all I should be intellectually
 - [1] **Not developing all the areas of my mind**
 - [2] Not keeping abreast of world events
 - [3] **Not developing a mature religious knowledge**
 - (d) Sin is my not being all I should be spiritually
 - [1] The reason is not important
 - [2] The results are the same
 - [a] **Feeling I have a God who hates me**
 - [b] Feeling I have a strict God constantly watching me
 - [c] **Thinking I have a legalistic God always binding me**
- d Others are hurt -- always and automatically
 - (1) **I'm God's gift to you!**
 - (2) **1 Corinthians 12:6**
 - (a) *There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. 7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

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- (b) .. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.
- (3) 1 Corinthians 12:25
 - (a) so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. 27 Now you [you all] are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.
- (4) When I fail to develop all my potential, I cheat you
 - (a) I have talents you need
 - (b) You may become ill and die because I haven't claimed my healing charism!
 - (c) You might live crushed with guilt and suicide because I haven't claimed my preaching charism
- e I can hurt you
 - (1) Directly: by taking out my emptiness (anger) on you
 - (2) Indirectly: by being less a person than you need to bring to you all the love God wants you to experience in your corner of the world today [Balloons and Jigsaw Puzzles]
 - (3) Socially: by creating an atmosphere of sin
 - (a) I make it harder for you to live a moral life, to live for God's love
 - (b) I make it easier for you to live an immoral life style, to live for the approval and love of others rather than of God
 - (c) Divorce is a good example of the social affects of sin
 - [1] 100 years ago society placed strong pressure on people to make their marriages work -- divorce was difficult to achieve and socially frowned upon
 - [a] As a consequence, most marriages lasted
 - [b] Many lasted that shouldn't have -- women (usually) were condemned to lives of abuse
 - [c] But many of these marriages should have lasted and did, and these have blossomed into loving relationships
 - [2] Today there is a subtle pressure to divorce -- marriage is difficult to sustain
 - [a] "You don't have to put up with that"
 - [b] "I'd see a lawyer if I were you"
- (d) **We are all affected by the social atmosphere we breathe**
- II CATEGORIES OF "SIN"
 - A Remember: Sin is the absence of God
 - 1 And God is One who loves
 - 2 Sin is the absence of being loved
 - B Categories
 - 1 Original Sin
 - a The concept derives from the Biblical story of Adam and Eve, "The Man" and "The Woman"
 - (1) For centuries this story was accepted as factual, a conclusion no longer held
 - (a) **Adam/Eve are not major characters in the Old Testament**
 - [1] **There are only two references to them outside the first five chapters of Genesis**
 - [2] If they were indeed historical, if there had been an early memory of them in Israel; there would be references to them all through the Bible, especially in the prophetic booklets
 - [3] The Adam/Eve Story is a late story added after most of the Old Testament was already written
 - [4] **It was added to explain basics truths about living today, not to give historical facts about yesterday**

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- (b) We should read the story to uncover its most basic teaching
 - [1] Genesis 2:4
 - [a] *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,*
 - [b] *5 when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up--for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground; 6 but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground--*
 - [c] *7 then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed.*
 - [2] Genesis 3:24
 - [a] *He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.*
 - [3] Genesis 4:1
 - [a] *Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of the LORD." 2 Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.*
 - [4] Cain and Abel were not born and/or living in the circle of perfect love, (their "Garden of Eden,") God wished for them
 - [a] Not because of anything they did
 - [b] But because of the action of others, of their parents, of actions that occurred before they were born!
 - (c) This story teaches us that at times we are not living in the circle of love God intends for us, we are not in our "Gardens of Eden"
 - [1] Our exile is not caused by our sin, failure, weakness
 - [2] Rather, it is caused by the sin, the failure, the weakness of others
 - [a] Parents
 - [b] Spouses
 - [c] Children
 - [d] Teachers
 - [e] Friends
 - [f] Enemies
 - [g] Superiors
- (2) It deals with a basic reality of each of our lives
 - (a) A dad has a headache and yells at his children
 - [1] They do not receive the love they need and deserve
 - [a] As a result, they can feel they are not "good," not "okay"
 - [b] They must become good, must act good, must be perfect to be loved anew
 - [2] This feeling of not being "okay" was not caused by any action of the children
 - (b) A teacher has a fight with her boy friend and chews out a student
 - [1] The berating was not the result of the student's actions
 - [2] It flowed from the teacher's actions and reactions
- b The teaching of the Adam/Eve Story is most important and relevant for all of us
 - (1) We are affected by actions that originate outside ourselves
 - (2) We are affected by sin that originates outside ourselves
- 2 Mortal/Venial – this is a traditional Catholic distinction

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● a It is not a Biblical distinction

● (1) Making the distinction can be harmful

- (a) It can imply that only some sins are serious
- (b) This most definitely is not the Biblical view
- (c) All sin is a revolt against God and serious
- (d) One sin would have unleashed all the pain and suffering of our history

● (2) But the distinction can also be helpful

- (a) It can allow us to understand how our acts affect us and the community
- (b) All sin is serious, but not all sin led Paul to expel someone from the Church

● [1] 1 Corinthians 5:1

- [a] It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?
- [b] 3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present I have already pronounced judgment 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus on the man who has done such a thing. When you are assembled, and my spirit is present with the power of our Lord Jesus,
- [c] 5 you are to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
- [d] 6 Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? 7 Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.

● (c) Not all sin led to the loss of an experience of God's Kingship

● [1] Galatians 5:18

- [a] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.
- [b] 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.
- [c] I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- [d] 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.
- [e] 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

● [2] Many "sinful actions" were not included in this list

● [3] Paul certainly did not think that any and all lapses from Christian perfection denied one the Kingdom

● (d) It can allow us to know when we need reconciliation with the Church

● b Sin is not the outer act

● (1) Sin is the inner absence of being loved and/or loving

● (2) But the outer action can usually be seen as an index of my inner disposition

- (a) If I deliberately slap your face, I'm not being friendly
- (b) If I hand you roses, I care about you

● (3) Some actions are so serious that they show the relationship with the Church and with others is broken

- (a) Murder indicates a total disrespect for life
- (b) Adultery indicates a betrayal of marital stability, of family protection and warmth

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- (4) Other actions show a disrespect for God, others, and/or our own welfare, but they are not so serious that the bonds with them are shattered
 - (a) **These bonds are only weakened, strained**
 - (b) Arguments between spouses indicate some love is still present
 - (c) An employee can rip pens off from work and still be loyal to a corporation
- (5) **Using the outer action as a standard assumes the action is performed freely**
 - (a) Otherwise the action doesn't really mirror an inward disposition
 - (b) And it assumes an absolute and equal freedom for each of us all the time
- (6) Using the outer action as a standard, sadly and inevitably, leads to legalism
 - (a) **A decision was needed:**
 - [1] When is a relationship strained?
 - [2] When is it broken?
 - (b) **Example:**
 - [1] **Stealing**
 - [a] **If I steal a day's wages from your family,**
 - {1} I seriously threaten your welfare
 - {2} This theft was more serious in primitive society
 - {3} This theft shows a complete break with your welfare, with you, with society, with the Church
 - {4} This theft is mortal to my relationship with you
 - [b] **If I steal less than this, possibly two eggs from your coop**
 - {1} I harm you and your family
 - {2} But I can still keep a relationship with you
 - {a} I can still care about your welfare
 - {b} I can still act and pray for your spiritual and material welfare
 - [2] Legalism is necessary and dangerous: some standard are needed for theft from large corporations
 - [a] **Stealing a day's earnings from General Motors is nearly impossible**
 - {1} If all lesser theft is found "venial," this finding could legitimate wanton stealing from corporations
 - {2} Such indiscriminate theft would be mortal to society's health
 - [b] **Therefore, an arbitrary limit was set**
 - {1} Thirty years ago the one I was taught was that stealing over \$100 a day from a corporation seriously threatened society
 - {2} Stealing less didn't threaten society and individuals so seriously as to disrupt all relationships
 - (c) Standards are needed to guide people
 - (d) But moral minimalism can result from applying these standards
 - [1] People learn what they need to shun in order to avoid Hell
 - [2] **Christianity can be lived trying to back into Heaven**
 - [a] **It is not lived by following Jesus but by avoiding Satan**
 - [b] It loses all its beauty and becomes negative in its slant and attitude
 - (e) This attitude would be very different from the attitude of early Christianity
 - [1] It is not based on a joy of being loved and loving
 - [2] It is not based on a thrill of a community accepting and loving us NOW
 - [3] It is based on the fear of pain we might experience after death

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- (7) **Standards are needed for our general education**
 - (a) We need warning signs to show how far we might be drifting from love
 - (b) **We do not need them as minimal guides for avoiding Hell**
- (8) **There is a major weakness in using a standard like this: it allows people to judge only single actions**
 - (a) A single violent act can, indeed, be an index of a fractured relationship
 - (b) **But many relationships die slowly from attrition**
 - [1] There has not been one eruptive, shattering occurrence
 - [2] **Rather, there has been a slow erosion of the bonds uniting people, a couple**
 - [3] **This erosion was never symbolized or expressed in one dramatic "mortal" act**
 - [4] After it all ended, the couple honestly wondered, "Where did we go wrong?"
 - [5] Or they felt they just "Fell out of love."
- c Thus, there is a serious modern challenge to this distinction, however
 - (1) Instead of looking at and weighing the gravity of individual actions, we should look to our root decision
 - (2) **Am I growing in my love for God, self, others?**
 - (3) **Or am I growing away from these loves?**
 - (a) Small acts can help show me my answer
 - (b) Inaction (which is far harder to see under a legalistic morality) can be a clue to a serious problem
- 3 **Mortal (from "deadly") Sin**
 - a **A mortal sin breaks my relationship with the Church -- and effectively my relationship with God**
 - (1) It is crucial to recall that God keeps His relationship with me
 - (2) Jesus died on behalf of sinners, showing God's love for sinners
 - b **Such an action reveals a complete disrespect for the welfare of others or of another**
 - c **Reconciliation, therefore, is needed before I use the Eucharist to express a full communion in the Spirit of Jesus between me and the other person**
 - (1) The external act must be serious, completely disruptive to a relationship
 - d There are strict requirements if the external act is to be a valid indicator of an internal decision
 - (1) **The action must be serious in affect on relationships with self or others -- showing these bonds are shattered**
 - (2) **The person must be aware that this act is serious**
 - (3) **And the person must be free while performing it**
 - (4) **If any single one of these three requirements is missing, the action can't be a mortal, a deadly action to the relationship**
 - e **Modern psychiatry has offered great challenges to the application of this theory**
 - (1) **"The Unconscious"**
 - (a) We have learned that the "Unconscious" can have an affect, sometimes dramatic, on our conscious actions
 - (b) **Post-hypnotic suggestion is an example of how the unconscious can affect our actions**
 - [1] A person acting under post-hypnotic suggestion swears that he/she is free in performing an action
 - [2] Actually, the act is performed under the will, the control, of another
 - [3] **This example proves that forces outside our consciousness can determine or affect our actions**
 - [4] That's all we mean by the "unconscious" affecting us
 - (c) **Many unconscious forces affect people**

Topic

- [1] Phobias are examples of such influences
- [2] Another example can be our tendency to feel uncomfortable around certain kinds of people
- (2) Habits:
 - (a) A single sin, slip, can be easy to stop
 - (b) **A lifelong pattern will be much more difficult**
- (3) Social conditioning:
 - (a) **We must respect our own life before we can see murder or abortion as serious**
 - (b) **Many ghetto youths were cursed by almost everyone from their earliest memories**
 - [1] They experience no sense of their inner value or dignity or worth
 - [2] Therefore, they cannot see any life as possessing dignity
- (4) Social pressure
 - (a) **Such pressure is more powerful at certain moments of life and in certain cultures**
 - (b) **American teens are extremely vulnerable to such social pressure**
 - (c) Social pressure often influences people
 - [1] To smoke
 - [2] To drink alcoholic drinks
 - [3] To use pot and other drugs
 - [4] And even to have their first sexual experiences
 - (d) Insecurity might make some exceptionally vulnerable to this pressure
- (5) Feelings and their resultant drives
 - (a) **These are not the same for everyone**
 - (b) **Anger may control one person's life**
 - (c) **Sexual urges may dominate another person's**
 - [1] I counsel many sober alcoholics who need to "dump" their guilt and shame
 - [2] **Standard questions help me weigh their sexual experiences**
 - [a] I ask men if they consider themselves average, below, or above in their sexual drive?
 - {1} If less, there can be great shame for American males
 - {2} In one six month period, two specific men responded "Average"
 - [b] Then I asked a follow up question, "At your sexual peak, how frequently did you engage in any kind of sexual experience?"
 - {1} One of the above two answered "At least twice daily"
 - {2} The other: said "Twice a year"
 - [3] **Imagine them counseling each other regarding a sexual problem!**
 - (d) Our outsides can look the same while our insides are churning oceans of differing drives
 - (e) We can't use the same objective standard to judge the progress of a boat on a calm lake and a boat on lake whipped up by a hurricane force
 - f **Looking at their root decisions can help each person**
 - (1) **Inside they can determine if they are growing open to love and loving**
 - (2) **Or if they are closing themselves to love and loving**
 - g Church law states that where "Mortal Sin" is present, (since relationships are broken,) the Sacrament of Reconciliation is needed before Communion
- 4 Venial (from "small")
 - a Any sin not "Mortal" is considered "Venial"; this includes a sin which is

Topic

- (1) Mortal in gravity but the person doing it didn't know it was a serious sin
 - (a) A person missed Mass on a day required
 - (b) But the person was unaware
 - [1] What day it was
 - [2] How much God wanted the person at Mass that day
- (2) Mortal but the person didn't have sufficient freedom when performing the action
 - (a) Family needs kept a person from attending Mass
 - (b) Job responsibilities kept a person from attending Mass
- (3) Not mortal
 - (a) A person forgets to say any daily prayers
 - [1] The omission is not hurting God in any fashion
 - [2] Possibly the person is hurting him/herself in a minor way by not attending to God's love
 - (b) A person gossips about someone
 - [1] What is shared does not destroy a reputation
 - [2] The relationship she/he has with the one gossiped about is weakened, but not broken
- b These harm relationships with God, self, and Church
- c But the relationships themselves continue
- d Church Law teaches
 - (1) Reconciliation is not required since the bonds are not broken
 - (2) The very act of Communion reestablishes these bonds with and to the Christian community
- III CONCLUSION
 - A We were made by a God of Love in the image of this God
 - 1 To be loved
 - 2 And to love
 - 3 To be loved perfectly
 - 4 And to love perfectly
 - B But we "miss the mark;" we sin
 - 1 The way has not been prepared by others
 - a John the Baptizer teaches a basic lesson
 - (1) Jesus could not minister until John was arrested
 - (a) Mark 1:14
 - [1] Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."
 - [2] 16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."
 - [3] 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.
 - (2) This is a symbolic way of teaching that someone had to prepare the way before Jesus could minister to others
 - b Jesus can't minister until the path is prepared
 - c Jesus can only minister to the degree the path is prepared
 - (1) Originally we need this way prepared before He (love) is first experienced
 - (2) Constantly we need this way prepared so He (Love) may deepen our experience of Him

Topic

- d To the degree others don't do their work, the way is not smoothed
 - (1) They themselves didn't have others prepare the way properly so they could experience love
 - (2) And, through human failure, they weren't able to do all they could to prepare the way for us
 - (3) Or they were absent from our lives at moments when we most needed them
 - (a) Death
 - (b) War, military service, work
 - (c) Divorce or separation
 - (d) Illness
- e And we suffer
 - (1) From the results of "Original Sin"
 - (2) From sin originating outside of us
 - (3) From the sin of others
- 2 And we ourselves contributed to our "missing the mark"
 - a Lured by the beauty of the world
 - b Lured by the beauty of others
 - c Distracted from the Beauty of God
 - (1) We needed His beauty
 - (2) We wanted the other wonders, the other "beauties," of creation
 - (3) The cravings for them seemed identical to us as the craving for God
- 3 The consequence was that, again, we experienced less love than we needed
- 4 Therefore we failed to love others as we were created to love them
 - a Enough
 - b At times, at all!
 - c Our relationships, therefore,
 - (1) Are fractured
 - (2) Or are totally ruptured
- 5 We didn't develop our ability to love
 - a Love is not an automatic response
 - b It requires effort and practice
 - (1) Denying self
 - (2) Becoming aware of others and their needs
- C Our external actions can be clues, warning signals
 - 1 But these actions are not always valid indicators
 - 2 We must listen to our inner disposition
 - a We should not compare our insides to the outsides of others
 - (1) Positively
 - (2) Negatively
 - b We must remember the story of the experimental garden plot
 - 3 We should not become self-obsessed with examining our motives and examining our conduct
 - 4 We are called to
 - a Look at the cross and remember how we are loved

Topic

- b **Look at others and see how they need this love**
- c In short
 - (1) We are sin
 - (2) And Jesus is forgiveness
 - (3) **What will we claim as the basic reality of our living today?**
 - (a) Our sin?
 - (b) Or His forgiveness?
- IV **ADDITION -- IMPORTANCE OF A CORRECT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF LIFE**
 - A **Modern Christians, including Catholics, have no concept of the social nature of religion, of salvation**
 - 1 They only want to "save" themselves
 - 2 The God who made them
 - a Wants to "save" each of them
 - b And also wants them to be instruments of "saving" everyone else
 - 3 Back to the "Animal Puzzle"
 - a God did not create us to be isolated pieces
 - b He made us to live in harmony with all others and with each other
 - (1) We have individual beauty
 - (2) But the whole has a beauty greater than the sum of its parts!
 - c God gave us talents to use to bless others
 - 4 One of the consequences of all of our sin is that we fail to bless others with the love God intended
 - a We become a contributor to "Original Sin" in their lives!
 - b We rob them of their heritage — as Jacob did to Esau
 - c We make it difficult — or impossible — for them to be the masterpieces intended by God
 - (1) Think of the "balloons"
 - (2) We fail to give them the air, the love, they need for healthy development
 - (3) We make it impossible for them to be all they were created to be
 - B **Yet current Christian preaching ignores this social aspect of reality and creation**
 - 1 People are encouraged to "Save themselves — and to Hell with everyone else"
 - a Many Protestants are told to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior — for their own sakes only
 - b Many Catholics are told to believe in Jesus and be baptized — for their own sakes only
 - 2 And then they are warned not to louse up their salvation by serious sin
 - a Some Christians don't even receive this warning
 - (1) They are assured that once they believe in Jesus, they are saved forever!
 - (2) They are saved regardless of what they do or don't do to others!
 - b If other Christians louse up their salvation by serious sin
 - (1) Many Protestants are told to ask God to forgive them — for their own sakes only
 - (2) Many Catholics are told to go to Confession — for their own sakes only
 - (3) And the impression is offered that everything is all right again
 - 3 Everything is not right again
 - a Others are hurting — they suffer a lack of love in their lives
 - b And a loving God
 - (1) Loves us
 - (2) And loves them

Topic

- c Because of both loves, He wants us to amend the damage we have done
 - (1) Not by saying "I'm sorry"
 - (2) But by taking positive actions to replace the love we have not offered, to heal the scars we have inflicted
 - (3) By loving and serving those we have ignored