
PRESENTATION THREE

Estimated Reading Time: approx. 1 to 2 hours

Espoused Forever: The Sacraments of Matrimony, the Eucharist, and Penance

PRESENTATION GOALS

- ☞ To explore the meaning of the Sacraments of the Church and how they help us live out our vocation to holiness, particularly in marriage.
- ☞ To explore the meaning and theology of the sacramental bond that is forged in Matrimony when two Christians are united to each other in Christ.
- ☞ To discover a new appreciation for the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation and their intimate connection with the Sacrament of Matrimony.
- ☞ To understand why the Mass is at the heart of our lives as Catholic Christians and why regular Confession is crucial to the success of marriage and one's spiritual life.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

While C.S. Lewis⁶⁶ was teaching at Oxford, one of his students said that “we read to know we are not alone.” There is a lot of truth and wisdom in his statement. Our experience of reading novels, autobiographies, works of fiction, and history provides us with the assurance that we all share something in common and that we can learn from one another and grow from each others’ experience. Reading is a powerful medium that can foster interpersonal relationships, friendships, and marriages.

When we read Sacred Scripture, we also have been given the promise that we are not alone. The Word of God is a living word, and when we read it we come to discover we are in relation to God and one another. Jesus came among us to lead us back to God, to lead us out of our sin and selfishness and into

greater self-sacrifice and unconditional love. One of the greatest fears today is to be alone, the fear of being unloved, not wanted, cared for, alienated, and isolated. Even in some marriages, spouses can find themselves alone, unloved, and isolated. Why? As we spoke about during the first presentation, Original Sin has left us wounded with an inclination to sin and when we give into our own selfishness, especially in marriage, we find ourselves alone and alienated from our spouse and ultimately God.

Chapter 1 of St. John's Gospel reveals:

In the beginning was the Word,⁶⁷ and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through Him, and without Him nothing came to be. What came to be through Him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we saw His glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.⁶⁸

We read how God the Father sent his Only-Begotten Son into the world to dispel our fear of being alone, unloved, unwanted, and isolated from God and one another because of sin. Through the Word of God, we know for certain that Jesus promised never to leave us and that he would be with us until the end of time. But knowing that he is not with us physically, how does Jesus remain with us? We know that he established the Church, the visible sign of unity and salvation for the world and that as members of his Body, we share in his life-giving Sacraments. St. Leo the Great said, "What was present in Christ has passed over into his sacraments." So the Sacraments of the Church are God's way of saying, "I am present among you in a real and tangible way."

We can define a Sacrament as an efficacious⁶⁹ sign of grace instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us through the work of the Holy Spirit (cf. CCC 1131). There are Seven Sacraments of the Church.

The Latin word "*sacramentum*" simply means "oath" or a pledge or promise to give something, like the covenant promises given in the Old Testament. In the early Church, it became associated with an action: the ritual worship of the Christians. "Around the year 112, a Roman governor named Pliny the Younger said that the Christians in his province of Bithynia met before dawn to sing hymns and bind themselves by oath to Christ, as they shared "an ordinary kind of food."⁷⁰ Every time we receive a Sacrament, we too bind ourselves by oath to Christ who never ceases to sanctify us and make himself communion with us.

The Greek word used for Sacrament, *mysterion*, stresses the invisible power of the sacramental sign; this term finds its root from the Greek verb "to close one's eyes." It stresses the invisible effects of the Sacrament. Because they are external or perceptible promises of the immense reality of grace, of God's covenant of mercy with his children, Sacraments are signs but they are effective signs, not merely symbolic ones. They cause what they signify. We see these prefigured throughout the Old Testament and thus fulfilled and instituted by Jesus Christ in New Testament.

Each Sacrament consists of two parts, matter and form. The matter is essentially the physical element, such as water for Baptism, and the form is the words that are used. Moreover, through the Sacraments, God communicates something to us that we cannot necessarily see, but we know by faith it has the power to transform our wounded nature. It is what we call grace. Grace can be defined as a free and unmerited gift of God that generously strengthens, elevates, and sanctifies our sinful nature and enables our free-will to choose his life-giving Commandments in order to give us a share in the divine nature or as St. Peter said so well, "His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion. . . that

through them you may come to share in the divine nature.” So why would God choose this way of communicating himself to us? Or better yet, why would God choose to save us this way?

To say that God became flesh speaks volumes. God became flesh in order to take on our sinful human nature and crucify it to the Cross. By dying in the flesh as a human being, Jesus, both God and man, raised our corruptible nature and clothed it with immortality. St. Bernard once said, “Through flesh came sin and death, so through the flesh our salvation must come.”

When you really think about it, Catholicism is a very sensual (corporeal/physical) religion. God utilizes tangible, visible, ordinary, humble elements of the natural world, such as bread, wine, olive oil, and water in order to communicate his grace to us.

David Lang, author of *Why Matter Matters*, illustrates the importance of material reality in the life of a Christian. He states that God, in his great wisdom, has joined together the material and spiritual realities so as to design a sacramental universe where humble, ordinary natural materials signify divine mysteries, and thus convey grace for our salvation.

It is through this conjunction of matter and form that we grasp the meaning of a sacrament and what it accomplishes. We learn that, by God’s almighty power, using these humble signs as instruments, the recipient of the sacrament enters into either a different, or else deeper, supernatural relationship with God and other people. The recipient may be empowered to carry out some new tasks that will be meritorious toward everlasting happiness in heaven. (This is what happens most notably in the Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders, as well as Matrimony, but each sacrament has its own unique or special purpose.) If received worthily, every sacrament imparts to the soul the gift of an enhanced participation in God’s very own eternal life.⁷¹

Pope Benedict XVI said that “God touches us through material things, through gifts of creation that he takes up into his service, making them instruments of the encounter between us and himself.”

In the Sacrament of Baptism, water is used as the basic element and fundamental condition of all life. But remember, it truly effects what it signifies. When the priest or deacon pours water over the person’s head and says, “[Name], I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” the person becomes a new creation and is cleansed of Original Sin; he (she) becomes a member of the Church and is incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ; he (she) receives the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit and the virtues of faith, hope, and love; he (she) shares in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly role of Christ, and he (she) is sealed with an indelible mark on their soul for eternal life.

Through Baptism, men and women are transformed, by the power of the Holy Spirit, into a new creation in Christ. This new life in the Holy Spirit heals men and women from sin and elevates them to share in God’s very own divine life. It is within this new Christian context that Jesus has raised marriage between the baptized to the dignity of a sacrament. He heals marriage and restores it to its original purity of permanent self-giving in one flesh.⁷²

It is interesting to note that olive oil is used in four of the seven Sacraments. Olive oil has many functions in the natural world, but sacramentally, it can be associated with giving strength and consolation, mission, and mercy.

In popular etymologies a connection was made, even in ancient times, between the *Greek word “elaion”—oil—and the word “eleos”—mercy*. In the various sacraments, consecrated oil is always a sign of God’s mercy. So the meaning of priestly anointing always includes the mission

to bring God's mercy to those we serve. Even the name that we bear as "Christians" contains the mystery of the oil.

In four sacraments, oil is the sign of God's goodness {mercy} reaching out to touch us: in baptism, in confirmation as the sacrament of the Holy Spirit, in the different grades of the sacrament of holy orders and finally in the anointing of the sick, in which oil is offered to us, so to speak, as God's medicine—as the medicine which now assures us of his mercy and goodness, offering us strength and consolation, yet at the same time points beyond the moment of the illness towards the definitive healing, the resurrection (cf. Jas 5: 14). Thus oil, in its different forms, accompanies us throughout our lives.⁷³

Remember the Good Samaritan and how he came along and helped the man half dead? When he saw him, he did not walk away, but rather, he saw the man and felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. He brought him to the inn, a symbol of the Church and paid whatever it took to get him well. This is what Jesus does to us. He welcomes us into this world, wounded and destined for death. He feels compassion on us and desires to cleanse us in the waters of Baptism and confirm us with his life-giving Spirit. As we make our journey through life as prodigal children, Jesus meets us on the road of life to reconcile us back to God through the Sacrament of Penance. He knows that we need more than just physical food to nourish our bodies, so he gives us bread and wine for the journey, medicine of immortality, which is his Body and Blood in order to feed our souls. When we are sick and dying, he comforts us with the oil of mercy in the Anointing of the Sick and soothes our wounds of sin, alienation, and the fear of being alone. And for many of us, we are called to share in a particular vocation in the life of the Church, either to the priesthood or marriage.

Pope Benedict XVI said, "The priest's mission is to combine, to link the earthly and spiritual realities that appear to be so separate... that is, the world of God far from us, often unknown to human beings and our human world." The priest is both the dispenser of holy gifts offered to God and the one who offers humanity's gifts to God. The priest's mission then is to be a mediator, a bridge that connects, and thereby to bring human beings to God, to his Redemption, to his true light, to his true life.⁷⁴ Of course, priests come from families who foster the seed of vocation through prayer, support, and much love.

Marriage is a very special and unique vocation because as husband and wife you will be given the gratuitous grace on your wedding day to make manifest to the world around you Christ's love for his Bride, the Church. The primary purpose of this Sacrament is twofold: As we mentioned in Presentation One, in marriage you will embrace a special call, a vocation that has as its end, eternal life with God. But you will not accomplish this alone. Once you enter into marriage, you will have the awesome responsibility of helping your spouse get to Heaven.

Through the vocation of marriage, you have the awesome responsibility of getting yourself, your spouse, and your children to Heaven. How will you do this? The means to achieving this end consists of living out the vocation with the help of God's grace you received in the Sacrament, which is a grace that keeps on giving.

Remember, after God created man *and saw that it was not good for man to be alone, he gave life to woman from the flesh of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh*, a communion of love. Jesus, though he was in the form of God, emptied himself, and from his wounded side flowed the great Sacrament of Salvation, the Church, to draw all people into God's divine life. Therefore, we are not alone. All of the Sacraments are visible signs of God's grace; the means by which we know that we are not alone in our sin and suffering, our failures and our shortcomings, our

temptations and trials. If a couple is cooperating with God's grace regularly in the Sacraments, they can be guaranteed to get through anything, because anything is possible with God.

The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify men, to build up the Body of Christ and, finally, to give worship to God. Because they are signs they also instruct. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. That is why they are called "sacraments of *faith*."⁷⁵

The Sacraments are "powers that comes forth" from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant.⁷⁶

Take a five minute break and think about two things you learned from this section.

THE VISIBLE SIGN OF AN INVISIBLE REALITY

As we said in the last chapter, God, in his great wisdom, has joined together the material and spiritual realities so as to design a sacramental universe where humble, ordinary natural materials signify divine mysteries, and thus convey grace for our salvation. Each Sacrament contains a matter and form by which God communicates his grace to humanity through his Church. So if we take a closer look at marriage, what would be the matter and form of this Sacrament? How is grace given and who is the minister of the Sacrament?

In most of the Sacraments, the deacon, priest, or bishop is the ordinary minister who validly confers or administers the Sacrament,⁷⁷ but marriage is a bit different. In the Western Church, the man and woman are the ministers of the Sacrament, and the deacon, priest, or bishop acts as the Church's witness. The matter and form consist in the act of consent by which a man and woman mutually give and accept each other in order to establish an irrevocable covenant that by its very nature is ordered to their own well-being and to the procreation and education of children. Marriage is based on the mutual consent of the two parties, that is, on their will to give themselves, each to the other, mutually and definitively. After the exchange of vows, if it is between two baptized persons, Jesus bestows his divine grace upon the couple. However, for a Catholic, marriage must be contracted in the Church⁷⁸ before a bishop, priest, or deacon and two witnesses with the approval of the Church, for otherwise it would not be a source of divine grace.

In every contract two elements are to be distinguished, the offering of a right and the acceptance of it; the former is the foundation, the latter is the juridical completion. The same holds true of the sacramental contract of marriage; in so far, therefore as an offering of the marriage right is contained in the mutual declaration of consent, we have the matter of the sacrament, and, in so far as a mutual acceptance is contained therein, we have the form.⁷⁹

The couple's irrevocable commitment to each other exchanged in the wedding vows is subsequently fulfilled by a total and unreserved gift of self within the conjugal love act. The consummation of marriage thus gives concrete expression to the wedding vows, confirming and strengthening their total and free consent. Consummation is the realization of the couple's mutual, unitive, and fruitful love. Moreover, a marriage once consummated by the two-in-one-flesh union of the spouses becomes absolutely indissoluble because, as Jesus says, "What God has joined, let no man separate." Although not required for validity, consummation nevertheless completes the meaning of the Sacrament and makes it impossible for any power on earth to dissolve a sacramental marriage validly contracted.

"This one at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh."

Man and woman communicate love through their physical bodies. Man is made for woman and woman is made for man, i.e., the complementarity of the sexes. They complete one another physically and spiritually. "As a consequence [of God's plan for marriage], husband and wife, through the mutual gift of themselves, which is specific to them alone, develop that communion of persons, in which they perfect each other, so that they may cooperate with God in the generation and rearing of new lives."⁸⁰

Remember what Adam said when God created his wife Eve, "This one at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh." The day you exchange your vows, you will become one flesh. What does this mean? God chose to reveal in the most intimate way how man and woman become one flesh: The bride comes forth from the bridegroom, consequently, they not only complete one another, they complement one another, because where the flesh is one, so is the spirit. So you could say that, as a result of your exchange of vows, you have finally found your lifelong companion, your true love. None of this could be possible without God and his divine grace.

As Christians we believe that it takes three to get married: God, man, and woman. Without God, marital love is incomplete. The presence of Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana is a sign that he not only blesses the love between man and woman, but he also transforms our idea of human love and infatuation into something so extraordinary and divine that he ordained it to be a Sacrament; a visible sign that gives us grace. God instituted marriage at the beginning of creation, and Jesus, the God-Man confirmed it and raised it to the dignity of a Sacrament. Human love, being raised to the supernatural order, is much deeper and richer because in the Christian Sacrament of Matrimony divine love irradiates or enlightens human love, transforming what is good and making it holy.

By taking natural water and changing it into wine, Jesus demonstrates the transforming power of God's grace. Wine was regarded as an indispensable element in meals (marriages) so when they ran out of wine, Jesus not only performs a miracle so that the festivities could continue, but most importantly he shows us that what was human, the love of husband and wife, is now divine. Thus, husband and wife are joined in a covenant of unconditional love and sealed with an indissoluble bond by God's divine grace so as to resemble the union of Christ with his Church.

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS, RENEWED AT EACH MASS, IS A TEMPLATE FOR THE SELF-GIVING THAT TAKES PLACE IN MARRIAGE.

This is God's divine plan. God's divine plan for marriage manifests the sacramental union of man and woman, which symbolizes the intimate union between Christ, the Bridegroom, and his Bride, the Church, where our Lord not only gives himself away to us for our salvation but gives couples in the Sacrament of Matrimony a grace so that their love for one another will grow more and more each day. This grace will help you to want to perfect yourself and your beloved, to overcome your selfishness, and to give yourself completely.

The Wedding Feast at Cana, and thus all sacramental marriages, is very Eucharistic in its relation to marriage. We heard how Eve was taken from the side of Adam to symbolize oneness and unity or better yet communion between the spouses. The wine at the wedding feast not only helped create a festive atmosphere, it pointed to a greater and more awesome mystery; the communion of love that would become a reality for those who share in the Body and Blood of Christ. The Blood that came forth from the side of Christ as he hung from the Cross enables us to share more intimately in the divine life of God.

“For the miraculous transformation of water into wine at Cana prefigures the second transubstantiation at Mass, when our Lord, acting through his priest, converts wine to his Precious Blood. And just as the male-female couple at Cana were united in one flesh to each other, so also we become spiritually one with Christ by receiving his Body and Blood in the Eucharist (under the appearances of bread and wine) in Holy Communion.”⁸¹ Just as the new life of a child is begotten by the husband's “seed of life” in the womb of his wife, so is the spiritual growth of the Church's members actualized by the Groom (Christ's) flesh (the Bread of Life). The Mass therefore takes on the aspect of a wedding banquet.⁸²

The reception of Holy Communion should be a mystical experience that sustains us and provides lasting and meaningful spiritual support and consolation. But most importantly, the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, renewed at each Mass, is a template for the self-giving that takes place in marriage. Husbands and wives offer themselves to each other, surrendering themselves for the sake of the good of the other. When married couples worship together, there is a spiritual communion that takes place when kneeling side-by-side, heads bowed in prayer. The bond of love is renewed; souls are opened to the Spirit's healing. And so, the Eucharist must be at the heart of your lives, because communion with God here on earth is a foretaste of what our communion will be like with God in Heaven; your communion on earth with Christ in the Eucharist will strengthen your communion in marriage.

When we are properly disposed to receive the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, God's grace can be so much more fruitful, in that his grace can purify our human nature from all our selfishness and self-love, in order to make us perfect and holy. The grace that you will receive on your wedding day will be a grace that keeps on giving. Never take it for granted and never underestimate the transformative power it can have in your marriage. Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open to you” (Mt 7:7).

Christian spouses are called to this imitation of Christ, an imitation that is possible only because, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the couple receives a participation in his love. As a sacrament, marriage signifies and makes present in the couple Christ's total self-gift of love. Their mutual gift of self, conferred in their promises of fidelity and love to the end, becomes a participation in the love to the end by which Christ gave himself to the Church as to a Spouse (see Jn 13:1).

By the power of the Holy Spirit, spouses become willing to do the acts and courtesies of love toward each other, regardless of the feelings of the moment. They are formed by the self-giving love of Christ for his Church as his Bride, and so they are enabled to perform acts of self-giving love to the benefit of themselves, their families, and the whole Church. The Sacrament of Matrimony, like the Sacrament of Holy Orders, is a Sacrament directed toward the salvation of others; if [these Sacraments] contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. Those who receive these sacraments are given a special consecration in Christ's name to carry out the duties of their particular state in life.⁸³

THE EFFECTS OF GRACE GIVEN THROUGH THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

- ☞ Helps you grow in holiness.
- ☞ Deepens your relationship with one another and with God.
- ☞ Gives you strength to overcome difficulties and to find in them opportunities for spiritual and personal growth.
- ☞ Guides you in making important decisions together.
- ☞ Enables you to communicate openly and honestly with one another.
- ☞ Helps you to turn away from the sin and temptation we all face throughout our lives.
- ☞ Shows you truly how to love and forgive as God loves and forgives.

Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the Church of what happened on the Cross; they are for one another and for the children witnesses to the salvation in which the sacrament makes them sharers. Of this salvation event marriage, like every sacrament, is a memorial, actuation and prophecy: As a memorial, the sacrament gives them the grace and duty of commemorating the great works of God and of bearing witness to them before their children. As actuation, it gives them the grace and duty of putting into practice in the present, towards each other and their children, the demands of a love which forgives and redeems. As prophecy, it gives them the grace and duty of living and bearing witness to the hope of the future encounter with Christ.⁸⁴

Take a five minute break and make note of two things you learned from this section.

ONE IN BODY AND SOUL

The Eucharist is the primary Sacrament that will sustain and strengthen your marriage.

Since it is Christ's presence within the family that truly makes it a domestic church, their participation in the Eucharist, especially the Sunday Eucharist, is particularly important. In the Eucharist, the family joins itself to Jesus' sacrifice to the Father for the forgiveness of sins. Furthermore, it is in receiving Holy Communion that the members of the family are most fully united to the living and glorious Christ and so to one another and to their brothers and sisters throughout the world. It is here, in the risen and Eucharistic Christ, that spouses, parents, and children express and nurture most fully the love of the Father and the bond of the Spirit.⁸⁵

Many years ago, I came across a story about a woman who had painstakingly journeyed from complete atheism to the Catholic Faith. She looked into many non-Christian religions and Christian communities, and she had come to understand that it is more logical to believe in God than not to.

One day she asked an evangelical clergyman to help her find God. The best he could do was to say that God is everywhere. The woman said that his answer left her feeling upset and discouraged. She said it was no use telling her that God was everywhere; she wanted to find God somewhere. Finding God somewhere is at the heart of our Catholic Faith, especially in the Eucharist. The Italian author, Luigi Santucci, had a profound, yet simple way to express how God, in Christ Jesus, at the Last Supper decided to stay and live among us forever.

At this point I see his eyes wandering around over the remains of the bread on the table-cloth, and then shining with an ineffable inspiration: this, this would be his hiding place. That's where he would take refuge.

That night they wouldn't capture him in his entirety; they'd think they'd done so, they'd think they'd dragged him away from his companions... he had hidden himself in that bread. Rather as in Galilee, when they wanted to seize him and kill him or make him king, he had the knack of hiding himself and disappearing from sight. So he stretched out his hand over the already broken bread, broke it into smaller bits and, raising it in the air, pronounced the words: "This is my body, it's been given for you."

He really did leave to his followers a Christ that no-one could ferret out and wrench from their hands. A little earlier Jesus had washed their feet; he degraded himself with the muddiest part of their physical being. Now he wanted to do more: he wanted to go down into their souls... and gradually melt into all the fibers of their body.

The primary significance of the Eucharist isn't mystical but physical, almost a clinging to the material being of his friends who would stay on and live. He said "This is my body" with a tenderness that first and foremost exalted it itself. Not "This is my spirit" or "This is generalized goodness or well-being" possibly they wouldn't have known what to do with such things.

It was necessary to them that he should remain with the only thing we really know and attach our hearts and memories to: the body; and that it should be a desirable, acceptable body. That evening Christ measured out for us all the millions of evenings before we'd see him face to face; he measured out the long separation. He knew that men forget things within a few days... That's why he looked over that table-cloth for the easiest, most familiar and most concrete thing: bread. So as to quench hunger and give pleasure. Above all so as to stay... he had to throw between himself and me that never-ending bridge of bread... "Do this in memory of me."⁸⁶

“[The Eucharist is] the memorial of the love with which he [Christ] loved us to the end, even to the giving of his life. In his Eucharistic presence he remains mysteriously in our midst as the one who loved us and gave himself up for us.”⁸⁷

On the day of Passover, the Apostles would have taken the lamb to the Temple and made a sacrifice of it. They would have prepared the water for the ablutions, the bitter herbs (which were representative of the bitterness of slavery); the unleavened bread (in memory of their ancestors who had to interrupt their baking in the sudden flight from Egypt) and the wine. And then, while they were eating, surrounded by those whom Jesus had chosen and who believed in him, he would have given them his final teaching: the institution of the Eucharist,⁸⁸ the visible sign of God’s sacrificial love and mercy; and the institution of the new and everlasting Priesthood, the office that would perpetuate and make present this ongoing sacrifice for future generations.

This is what eventually led the woman, who was searching for God somewhere, into the Catholic Church. She found the Blessed Sacrament of the altar to be the somewhere of God’s encounter with us. God desires to make himself present within the somewhere of our existence. There are many people who can accept that God is everywhere, but who cannot conceive of encountering God somewhere. There are many people today who are embracing a New Age or Pantheist ideology, which essentially teaches that “All is God” and that the “sacredness of nature” or the universe is the only thing deserving the deepest kind of reverence, while they desperately try to search for the “god” within themselves. This obviously denies any personal relationship with a Creator God. Materialism (another threat to finding God somewhere) goes so far as to deny the reality of the Transcendent, in that we should view everything, people and material things (creation), as an end in itself without God as the final end/cause of everything. This ideology has devastating consequences: it leads us to use, manipulate, and destroy the gifts of God’s creation and most importantly, the precious gift of human life.

But as Catholic Christians, we evangelize and witness to our secular, materialistic culture, that God became incarnate in a particular culture and religion; he was born of a Virgin and died for our salvation so as to reveal that he has made himself communion with us and desires that we all share in this communion.

At Mass, we come together as God’s people, as his Body, the Church, in a particular place, at a particular time, to make present now what happened then in the upper room and on the Cross. Our Lord suffered on the Cross sometime in the past, but his Sacrifice is made actual at every moment of history. His sacrifice is not just something that happened 2000 years ago, but is a drama as real now as then.

What happens is that the Mass incorporates us into the present redeeming act of Christ, or as Pope Benedict XVI said, “introduces us into the Being of Christ, into Divine Being.” That is why we use the expressions *to reenact, to re-actualize, and to make present*.

Our Lord took the occasion of the Last Supper to create the somewhere of his presence for those who love him. The somewhere is his Church, the Body of Christ; and those who gather around the priests of the Church, who have been ordained to offer this sacrifice to the Father, become the living sign of unity and salvation in the world.

Jesus ordains things in such a way that his sacramental presence will never be lacking until the end of the world. As Catholics, we truly believe that Jesus’ words over the unleavened bread and cup of wine at the Last Supper transform the wine into his own Blood and bread into his Body.

And when the Apostles drank from the cup and ate the bread, they actually partook of the Body and Blood of the Son of God, under the appearance of bread and wine. Thus, the New Covenant was ratified. So, the Sacrament of the Eucharist not only signifies a family bond between God and his people but

actually affects it. Consequently, the Eucharist is a sign that makes us family, part of the Mystical Body of Christ destined as people to become partakers of the divine nature.

We all have a desire for this union, for this sanctification, because by participating in the very life of the Creator, we are being transformed into the likeness of his being and we know that if he does not remain in us and we in him, spiritually and physically, he becomes an abstraction, a concept or nice idea that is unable to raise us up out of our sinfulness now and in eternity. Consequently, we end up losing our way and become abandoned once again to our foolish and sinful ways.

We go to Mass — participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass — again and again because we know what it means to have our fill, yet we remain hungry; hungry for the life and union that is promised to those who live and would die for the Flesh and Blood of Jesus Christ.

Attending Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation is an absolute requirement for Catholics. The mandate is enshrined in the Third Commandment as well as the first of the Precepts of the Church. Those who truly believe that Christ becomes present in a powerful way as his sacrifice on Calvary is re-presented through the actions of the priest at the altar cannot imagine absenting themselves from such a celebration.

(Excerpt from Dorothy Day's Autobiography: *The Long Loneliness*. The chapter on *Love Overflows* speaks about her experience of being a mother, her conversion to the Catholic Faith, and the importance of practicing the Catholic Faith, especially on Sunday).

“Thou shall love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind.” This is the First Commandment. The problem is how to love God? We are only too conscious of the hardness of our hearts, and in spite of all that religious writers tell us about feeling not being necessary, we do want to feel and so know that we love God.

“Thou wouldst not see seek Him if thou hadst not already found Him,” Pascal says, and it is true too that you love God if you want to love Him. One of the disconcerting facts about the spiritual life is that God takes you at your word. Sooner or later one is given the chance to prove his love. The very word “*diligo*,” that Latin word used for “love,” means “*I prefer*.” It was all very well to love God and His works, in the beauty of His creation which was crowned for me by the birth of my child. Forster [her husband] had made the physical world come alive for me and had awakened in my heart a flood of gratitude. The final object of this love and gratitude was God.

No human creature could receive or contain so vast a flood of love and joy as I often felt after the birth of my child. With this came the need to worship, to adore. I had heard many say that they wanted to worship God in their own way and did not need a Church in which to praise Him, nor a body of people with whom to associate themselves. But I did not agree to this. My very experience . . . my whole make-up, led me to want to associate myself with others, with the masses, in loving and praising God.

Without even looking into the claims of the Catholic Church, I was willing to admit that for me she was the one true Church. She has come down through the centuries since the time of Peter, and far from being dead, she claimed and held allegiance of the masses of people in all cities where I had lived. They poured in and out of her doors on Sundays and Holy Days, for novenas and missions. What if they were compelled to come in by the law of the Church, which said they were guilty of mortal sin if they did not go to Mass every Sunday? They obeyed that law. They were given a chance to show their preference. They accepted the Church. It may have been an unthinking, unquestioning faith, and yet the chance certainly came, again and again,

“Do I prefer the Church to my own will,” even if it was only the small matter of sitting at home on Sunday morning with the papers? And the choice was the Church.

I had known enough of love to know that a good healthy family life was so near to heaven as one could get in this life. There was another sample of heaven, of the enjoyment of God. The very sexual act itself was used again and again in Scripture as a figure of the beatific vision. . . . It was through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God.

From the time Tamar Teresa was born I was intent on having her baptized. What driving power joy is! When I was unhappy and repentant in the past I turned to God, but it was my joy at having given birth to a child that made me do something definite. I wanted Tamar to have a way of life and instruction. We all crave order, and in the Book of Job, hell is described as a place where no order is. I felt that belonging to the Church would bring that order into her life which I felt my own had lacked. . . . I felt that only faith in Christ could give the answer. I knew little about the Sacraments, and yet here I believed, knowing that without them Tamar would not be Catholic. Tamar was baptized in July . . . in the Church of Our Lady, Help of Christians, the seed of life was implanted in her and she was made a child of God.⁸⁹

If someone gives you a gift the natural response is to say thank you. But if someone gives you the gift of their life, a simple thank you would never be enough. The act of self-sacrifice requires an infinite amount of thanksgiving. All of us were destined for death because of sin, but because of God’s gracious mercy, and Sacrifice of his only Son, we are now destined for eternal communion with God through his Son, Jesus. That is why the Eucharist, in Greek, means “Thanksgiving.”

God gave us the perfect act of thanksgiving, worship, praise, adoration, and reparation for sin until he comes again in glory. This action, the offering of Christ’s sacrifice to the Father, is the perfect thank you gift we can give to God the Father. God gives this act of thanksgiving to us because our thanksgiving by itself can never be enough. Our thanksgiving adds nothing to his greatness, but makes us grow in his grace.

When Jesus said, “This is my Body,” he literally meant, “This is myself.” Each time we receive communion and share in this feast, we experience a sense of joy at the thought of knowing that God desires our company; he desires to share not just a part of himself, but his entire life with us, in conversation, friendship, and communion.

A priest once commented, in the words of Ronald Knox, after distributing communion in St. Peter’s Square with thousands of people crying out *“Padre, Padre, per favore”* (“Father, Father, please”), he said, “Throughout the long history of the Church, through a whole series of dramatic successes and failures, despite the stupidity and wickedness of so many Christians, the command *do this in memory* of me has been and continues to be obeyed. It is as though Christians, in all of their sin, have realized from the beginning that the spiritual life depends upon the Eucharist the way that physical life depends upon food, oxygen, and water.”

He said, “Those people in St. Peter’s Square embodied a truth that is deep in our Catholic Tradition, though too infrequently stated: ‘The Eucharist is not a luxury, but a necessity, for without it, we would, in the spiritual sense, starve to death.’”

In the Eucharist, Catholic married couples meet the one who is the source of their marriage. In this sacrifice of the new and eternal covenant, Christian spouses encounter the source from which their own marriage covenant flows, is interiorly structured and continuously renewed. Pope Benedict XVI explains how, in the Eucharist, the very meaning of marriage is transfigured: the

imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable: it had meant standing in God's presence, but now it becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood.

Moreover, Pope Benedict points out that the sacramental mysticism he mentions is social in character. The Eucharist makes the Church because those who receive the Eucharist are united more closely to Christ. Through it Christ unites them to all the faithful in one body the Church. In the Eucharist, spouses encounter the love that animates and sustains their marriage, the love of Christ for his Church. This encounter enables them to perceive that their marriage and family are not isolated units, but rather that they are to reach out in love to the broader Church and world of which they are a living part.

Marriage continually sends the believing Catholic back again to the Eucharist. Here is where the gratitude that has become a life-giving habit in a marriage can be fully and completely expressed. Eucharist, after all, means "thanksgiving." In the Eucharist one thanks God the Father for his supreme gift, the gift of his risen Son, who, in turn, bestows most fully the divine life and love of the Holy Spirit. Marriage is a school for gratitude. By celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christian spouses profess their gratitude to God for the sublime gift bestowed on them of being able to live in their married and family lives the very love of God for people and that of the Lord Jesus for the Church.⁹⁰

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF HOLY COMMUNION?

- ☞ You experience communion with Christ himself.
- ☞ You participate in Christ's saving Death and Resurrection.
- ☞ It increases your love for others, especially your spouse, impelling you to serve one another out of reverence for Christ.
- ☞ It reinforces the unity of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ.
- ☞ It removes venial sins and preserves you from mortal sin.
- ☞ It diminishes sinful love of self and strengthens you against temptation.

When a soul has understood the greatness of... life, when it has grasped that the wellspring of it is to be found in union with Christ through faith and charity, it aspires to the perfection of that union; it seeks the fullness of life that it should, in accordance with the thought of God, possess within itself.

It is indeed true that all the efforts of human nature, left to itself a distance from Christ, are not able to advance us one step in the achieving of that union, in the birth and development of the life it brings forth. It is God alone who gives us the seed germ and the growth; we care for the plant, we water it, but the fruits of life are produced only because God causes the sap of His grace to rise within us.

God gives us incomparable means of keeping alive this sap within us, "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him... and I will raise him up on the last day."⁹¹

Take a five minute break and make note of two things you learned from this section.

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM”

The Sacrament of Penance is another very powerful Sacrament that will assist you in marriage and help heal the wounds of sin and division.

When Christian couples receive the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony, Christ dwells with them, gives them the strength to take up their crosses and so follow him, to rise again after they have fallen, to forgive one another, to bear one another’s burdens, to “be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ,” and to love one another with supernatural, tender, and fruitful love. . . . The imitation of the love of Christ for the Church also calls for a healing of the relationship between man and woman.⁹²

Reconciliation, or Confession, is a Sacrament in which Jesus Christ himself, through the actions of the priest, forgives the sins committed after Baptism. It is important for all people, but an essential tool for marriage. We all need to forgive and to be forgiven, and this Sacrament will heal the wounds in you and in your marriage.

Many avoid Confession because they feel embarrassed or humiliated by the thought of acknowledging actions of which they are not proud. We prefer to bury our sins under the rug, trying to forget about them, and just move on. Or we believe we can ask God to forgive us in the sanctuary of our own prayer, and just leave it at that.

For venial sins, this is indeed the case. We need not receive sacramental absolution in order to be forgiven; however, mortal sins *require* that we confess to a priest and receive his absolution. But just because Confession is not necessary for the forgiveness of venial sins, that does not mean that it is not helpful. In fact, it is more than helpful.

For those who save the Sacrament for when they really need it (i.e., when they have committed a *mortal* sin), it can be extremely difficult to break past the inertia of not going, and actually go into the confessional. How much easier and less threatening it feels when there is the habit of going to Confession regularly, perhaps once a month. In the end, it is much easier to make a special trip after a serious sin if going to Confession is a regular practice anyway.

Those who confess their sins with some regularity report positive effects on their spiritual lives and in their relationships. Calling ourselves to accountability, acknowledging our faults and failures, our weaknesses and misdeeds, is an immensely human act. It places us in touch with our soul and puts us into an incredibly receptive spiritual posture. Few people really do a decent examination of conscience if they are not going to Confession with regularity. They generally just wait and respond only if something

they have done starts to bother them or makes them feel uneasy. If the nagging will not go away, they seek to do something about it. An examination of conscience helps us to see the sins that do not bother us so much, and which we might otherwise ignore if we do not actively seek to examine our moral history to see what might be there. Since all sin damages our relationship with God and with one another, even the sins we “forget” will have lasting effects on our spiritual and relational life.

Conscience and Confession: Coming Back to God

FRANCIS CARDINAL GEORGE, OMI (1937–2015)

About 80 years ago, the noted English journalist and thinker, G. K. Chesterton, came into the Catholic Church. Surprised by his conversion, some of his friends asked him, “Why?” Chesterton answered, “To get my sins forgiven.” The forgiveness of sins begins with Baptism. We enter the baptismal font creatures of God and emerge disciples of Jesus Christ. Our relationship to God changes because we are in Christ. That baptismal relationship cannot be abolished, but it can be broken, become merely formal, no longer life-giving, if we deliberately sin grievously after Baptism, Christ has given the Church another Sacrament, a “second Baptism.” In the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation, Christ uses the ordained priest and the ministry of the Church to get rid of people’s sins after Baptism. Sin confessed and adequately repented is abolished and the sinner can begin again his or her life in Christ. Sin which is not deadly or mortal is also forgiven, of course, through the Eucharist and through asking for forgiveness in our daily prayer.

Jokes are sometimes made about Catholic guilt. But guilt is healthy if it is a sign that one has taken responsibility for one’s life and actions. Guilt becomes morbid or obsessive only if one is never able to escape from one’s sins. Practicing Catholics acknowledge their failures, as measured by objective moral norms, but they know the forgiveness of God. Only when people feel they cannot be forgiven does life become a horror story.

Penance is the Sacrament we need and use all through our lives as Christ’s disciples in order to be fully reconciled with God when our sins distance us from him or even break our relationship to him. In the beautiful words of St. Francis de Sales, Penance is “the Sacrament of reconciled friends.” It is the Sacrament of ongoing conversion, for there are depths in the personalities of each one of us which have still to be brought under Christ’s sway.

We discover where we are in our journey toward holiness in examining our conscience. Such an examination helps us to see us as God sees us. Even though it seems discouraging to dig into our sinfulness and lay it before the Church, it is also liberating to discover how God is working constantly to transform us and how whatever we do, no matter how sinful it might be, can be healed by God’s mercy. Recalling our sins by name, preparing for the Sacrament by examining the state of our lives frankly and honestly before God is necessary for conversion, for turning from our sins and back to God. The examination of conscience is thorough when it looks not only at our actions but also at our thoughts and words and omissions (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2041 ff.) and does so using the Gospel and the moral teaching of the Church as a sure and certain norm.

The basic requirements for a good Confession, besides consciousness of one’s sins, is the intention to return to God, as the prodigal son in the Gospel wants to return to his father. (Lk 15: 11–32) What the prodigal son finds on his return is a self-righteous brother, who doesn’t believe in forgiveness, and a

merciful father, who is eager to forgive. But not even God can forgive someone who is not sorry for his sins. A profound sorrow for our sins and a desire to make amends are part of the contrition necessary to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Another part of contrition is the resolution, out of the love one has for God, not to sin again. Without such a resolution not to sin again, our contrition can be a mere feeling or sentiment which vanishes as quickly as it comes and leaves us captive to habits of sin.

How does one receive the Sacrament of Penance? After examining his conscience, the penitent approaches a priest with contrite heart and lays his or her sins before the Church. It is customary to begin the confession of sin by asking the priest for his blessing. Then the penitent says how long it has been since his or her last good confession. Sometimes the priest will read a brief passage of Scripture to remind the penitent of God's desire to forgive our sins. Then the penitent confesses all the grave sins committed since his or her last confession and often adds venial sins that particularly trouble the penitent. Those who have difficulty in confessing should simply ask the priest for help.

The priest hearing the confession may ask a question in order to clarify something that has been confessed. This is not out of curiosity but only to help the penitent make a complete and integral confession. The priest receiving a confession in Christ's name is bound in the strictest way and without exception never to reveal anything he has heard in a sacramental confession. Respect for the penitent's conscience governs the rules for the Sacrament. This "seal of confession" enrages some people and has been attacked by enemies of the Church over the centuries. It is being attacked in some state legislatures today.

The priest may give his penitent some spiritual advice. He will ask the penitent to accept some small penance and then he will wait for the penitent to express sorrow for his sins. This can be done in one's own words, rejecting sin, expressing love of God and one's firm purpose not to sin again. There are, however, set acts of contrition which mention all this, and it is useful to memorize one of them. I still use the act of contrition I learned in the second grade.

The priest then declares: "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." To these words of absolution, the penitent responds "Amen." Here the compassion and boundless mercy of our heavenly Father meet our honest contrition. We are forgiven and set free. As [St.] John Paul II has written on Penance and Reconciliation, "Our faith can give us certainty that at that moment every sin is forgiven and blotted out by the mysterious intervention of our Savior." The absolution is not some general declaration that God forgives sins. It is, rather, an act of Christ which restores full friendship and communion with God by judging the sins and the repentance of the particular penitent who has just confessed. The priest may conclude with a few verses of Scripture or with a prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary on behalf of the penitent whom he tells to go in peace.

Various booklets are available to help one prepare for and receive the sacrament of reconciliation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has produced an excellent guide, "Celebrating the Sacrament of Penance: Questions and Answers" (800-235-8722). A useful and inexpensive leaflet produced locally is "A Short Guide for Confession," available from the Midwest Theological Forum (www.theologicalforum.org; 630-541-8519). Both leaflets are available also in Spanish.

Only if we are fully reconciled to God can we become effective peacemakers among ourselves. The world needs peacemakers. The world needs reconciled and forgiven sinners. The world needs saints, and God is eager to make saints. In an address to Americans several years ago, Pope Benedict XVI said, "To those

who have been far away from the Sacrament of Reconciliation and forgiving love, I make this appeal; come back to this source of grace. Do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you. He will heal you, and you will be at Peace with God.”

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Francis Cardinal George, OMI
Archbishop of Chicago

The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

The three words, “I love you,” are probably the three most important words in a marriage. The three words, “I am sorry,” run a close second. Sacramental Confession prepares us for working through the reconciliation we need in all of our relationships, especially the marriage relationship. Even the healthiest marriages experience hurt and sin, and learning to express contrition for sins, even if those sins are small ones, is an essential part of married life.

What are some of the effects of sacramental Confession?

- ✪ It forgives sin, thereby restoring sanctifying grace.
- ✪ It remits eternal punishment caused by mortal sin.
- ✪ It imparts actual grace to avoid the sin in the future.
- ✪ It reconciles the penitent person with the Church.
- ✪ It remits part of the purgatorial punishment.
- ✪ It gives peace of conscience and spiritual consolation.⁹³

Pope Ven. Pius XII outlined some of the benefits of frequent Confession in his encyclical, *Mystici Corporis Christi* (June 29, 1943):⁹⁴

- ✪ Genuine self-knowledge is increased.
- ✪ Bad habits are corrected.
- ✪ Conscience is purified.
- ✪ Christian humility grows.
- ✪ The will is strengthened.
- ✪ Lukewarmness and spiritual neglect are resisted.
- ✪ Self-control is increased.

Of Putting Up With Others' Faults

What we cannot change in ourselves or in others we ought to endure patiently until God wishes it to be otherwise. Perhaps it is this way to try our patience, for without trials our merits count for little. Nevertheless, when you run into such problems you ought to pray that God may find it fitting to help you and that you may bear your troubles well. If anyone who is spoken to once or twice will not listen and change his ways, do not argue with him, but leave it all to God, for He knows well how to turn bad things into good.

He knows how to accomplish His will and how to express Himself fully in all His servants. Take pains to be patient in bearing the faults and weaknesses of others, for you to have many flaws that others must put up with. If you cannot make yourself as you would like to be, how can you expect to have another person entirely to your liking? We would willingly have others be perfect, and yet we fail to correct our own faults.

We want others to be strictly corrected, and yet we are unwilling to be corrected ourselves. Other persons' far-ranging freedom annoys us, and yet we insist on having our own way. We wish others to be tied down by rules, and yet we will not allow ourselves to be held in check in any way at all. It is evident how rarely we think of our neighbor as ourselves!

If everything were perfect, what would we have to endure from others for God's sake? But now God has so arranged things that we may learn to bear each other's burdens, for no one is without faults, no one is without burdens, no one is wholly self-sufficient, and no one has enough wisdom all by himself. That being the case, we must support and comfort each other; together we must help, teach and advise one another, for the strength that each person has will best be seen in times of trouble. Such times do not make us weak; they show what we are.⁹⁵

Take a five minute break and make note of two things you learned so far.

A Guide to Confession

HOW TO GO TO CONFESSION

*G*ou always have the option to go to confession anonymously, that is, behind a screen or face to face, if you so desire.

1. 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.”
2. 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.
3. Listen to the advice the priest gives you and accept the penance from him. Then make an Act of Contrition for your sins.
4. The priest will then dismiss you with the words “The Lord has freed you from your sins. Go in peace.” And you respond by saying: “Thanks be to God.”
5. Spend some time with Our Lord thanking and praising him for the gift of his mercy. Try to perform your penance as soon as possible.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

1. ***I am the LORD your God. You shall not have strange gods before me.***
 - Do I give God time every day in prayer? Do I seek to love him with my whole heart?
 - Have I been involved with superstitious practices or have I been involved with the occult?
 - Do I seek to surrender myself to God’s word as taught by the Church?
 - Have I ever received communion in the state of mortal sin?
 - Have I ever deliberately told a lie in confession or have I withheld a mortal sin from the bishop or priest in confession? Are there other “gods” in my life: money, security, power, people, etc?
2. ***You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.***
 - Have I used God’s name in vain: lightly or carelessly?
 - Have I been angry with God?
 - Have I wished evil upon any other person?
 - Have I insulted a sacred person or abused a sacred object?

3. Remember to keep holy the LORD's Day.

- Have I deliberately missed Mass on Sundays or Holy Days of Obligation?
- Have I tried to observe Sunday as a family day and a day of rest?
- Do I do needless work on Sunday?

4. Honor your father and your mother.

- Do I honor and obey my parents?
- Have I given my family good religious example?
- Do I try to bring peace into my home life? Do I care for my aged and infirm relatives

5. You shall not kill.

- Have I had an abortion or encouraged or helped anyone to have an abortion?
- Have I physically harmed anyone?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs?
- Did I give scandal to anyone, thereby leading him or her into sin?
- Have I been angry or resentful? Have I harbored hatred in my heart? Have I encouraged or condoned sterilization? Have I participated in or approved of euthanasia?

6. You shall not commit adultery.

- Have I engaged in any sexual activity outside of marriage? Have I been faithful to my marriage vows in thought and action? Have I used any method of contraception or artificial birth control in my marriage?
- Have I been guilty of masturbation or viewing pornography?
- Do I seek to control my thoughts and imaginations?
- Have I respected all people, or have I thought of other people as mere objects?
- Have I been guilty of any sexual activity with people of the same sex?
- Do I seek to be chaste in my thoughts, words, and actions?
- Am I careful to dress modestly?
- Have I practiced "*in vitro*" fertilization?
- Did I permit a vasectomy or tubal ligation to avoid children?

7. You shall not steal.

- Have I stolen what is not mine?
- Have I returned or made restitution for what I have stolen?
- Do I waste time at work, school, and home?
- Do I gamble excessively, thereby denying my family of their needs?
- Do I pay my debts promptly?
- Do I seek to share what I have with the poor?
- Have I cheated anyone out of what is justly theirs?

8. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*

- Have I lied? Have I gossiped?
- Do I speak badly of others behind their back?
- Am I sincere in my dealings with others?
- Am I critical, negative, or uncharitable in my thoughts of others?
- Do I keep secret what should be kept confidential?
- Have I injured the reputation of others by slanders?

9. *You shall not desire your neighbor's wife.*

- Have I consented to impure thoughts?
- Have I caused them by impure reading, movies, television, conversation, or curiosity?
- Have I behaved in an inappropriate way with members of the opposite sex: flirting, being superficial, etc.?

10. *You shall not desire your neighbor's goods.*

- Am I jealous of what other people have?
- Do I envy the families or possessions of others?
- Am I greedy or selfish?
- Are material possessions the purpose of my life?

ACT OF CONTRITION

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended thee, and I detest all my sins because I dread the loss of Heaven and the pains of Hell; but most of all because they offend thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen.

Click on this link or use the QR to answer some quick questions about Presentation 3



Note: This takes you to an outside Microsoft Form; answer these individually (not as a couple)

You're doing great!

Once you are done answering the questions, move on to reading the next PDF **Presentation 6** within Module TWO.