

*What About Mortal Sin?*

*If you see your brother sinning and it is not a mortal (deadly) sin, pray for him. All wrongdoing is sin but there is such a thing as mortal sin as well as sin that is not mortal. (from 1 John 5:16-17)*

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC#1033) we learn that to die in unforgiven mortal sin means we have no place to spend eternity except hell.

(CCC#1857) tells us three things necessary for a sin to be deadly (mortal);

- 1.) It must be a serious sin, such as a direct violation of one of the Ten Commandments, or interpretations thereof as universally held by God's Church.
- 2.) We must fully understand what we are doing and how offensive it is to God.
- 3.) We must freely and deliberately make the choice to do it anyhow.

All sin is always forgivable so long as we are still alive, repent and use the visible means of reestablishing our relationship with God that Jesus provided. The first visible means is Baptism which cleanses us of all sin, but only once. Mortal sins committed after Baptism can be cleansed away by sacramental Confession to a validly ordained priest. (John 20:21-23) Our Church teaches (CCC#1452-53) that in danger of death mortal sins can be forgiven by perfect contrition and a true intention of sacramental confession if and when we can. Perfect contrition means our sorrow is motivated by love of God and not just by fear of hell. Imperfect contrition, (fear of hell) however, is sufficient in the confessional.

Serious sins committed knowingly and willingly are mortal sins. A few examples of serious sins follow:

- Deliberately avoiding obligations like Sunday Mass, care of family, Church support, daily prayer, love of God and neighbor, etc.
- Disregard of Church law on sex and marriage.
- Adultery, pre-marital sex, homosexual activity, pornography, etc.
- Conspiring against a bishop or pastor.
- Murder, abortion, deliberately hurting another, suicide attempts, etc.
- Oppressing the poor, withholding fair wages.
- Artificial birth control and refusal to seriously study Church teaching.
- Drug abuse, stealing, practicing non-Christian spirituality, etc., etc.

St. Paul, (1 Corinthians 27) warns us of the danger of receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus when we are not in the state of sanctifying grace. In mortal sin we break from sanctifying grace which is earned by Jesus for us. This grace is necessary for any union with God, whether in Holy Communion or in heaven.