**How Do You Abandon Your Sinful Life?**

No one ever wants to be identified as a sinner or associated with one for that matter. The irony here is that all of us carry the desire to commit sin (concupiscence) to one degree or another whether we admit to it or not. The very thought of being labeled as such would offend the common soul and yet they would be the first to tell you “yes, I know I’m not a perfect person but that’s between me and God.” An interesting point in this thought process is the attempt we make to reclassify sin as either a mistake or a momentary lapse of judgement instantly removing any semblance of moral and ethical value and in turn diminishing the need to hold ourselves accountable for our very actions.

If we take the time to truly reflect on what sin really is, in a simple way sin the act of the loving yourself more than others. This type of mindset typically places our Lord at the bottom of the spiritual Marianna trench. Thus when the theological virtue of love is directed toward yourself rather than others it can be difficult to recognize your own faults let alone change them. Taking it a step further, seeing the love God has for us can appear to be a novelty rather than a reality. A clear danger in this type of mindset is an easy disregard for anything divine and holy and thus devoid of any moral compass by which a person would base their actions. Ironically St. John gives us a great perspective and reminds us just how much God truly loves us;

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” (1 Jn 3:1-4)

**The Need for Clarity and Change**

One of the many challenges our sinful habits present is calling sin something else altogether. A great example is when St. Peter had the opportunity to acknowledge his relationship with Christ when he was directly accused of being one of his followers. His response was that he never met the man called “the Christ.” Let’s keep in mind that St. Peter’s response is quite significant since he spent so much time with Him and was made the first Vicar of Christ that in a span of a few seconds he denies ever knowing or following Christ.

Part of the ability to change our way of life rests on recognizing our own self-worth in light of Jesus Christ. St. Leo the Great echoes this value very clearly;

recognize your dignity and, how that you share in God’s own nature, do not turn to your former base condition by sinning. Remember who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God. (CCC 1691)

**Abandoning Our Sinful Life**

Incorporated into *Christ* by Baptism, Christians are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” and so participate in the life of the Risen Lord. Following Christ and united with him, Christians can strive to be “imitators of God as beloved children, and walk in love”by conforming their thoughts, words and actions to the “mind... which is yours in Christ Jesus,” and by following his example (CCC 1694).

From the moment we are baptized into the Kingdom of God we become dead to sin and alive in Christ. Our entrance into the Kingdom of God brings us into the reality that we are literally God’s children. A good way to begin the process of abandoning our sinful life is by ***recognizing that sin does not need to be our end in this life or the consequences of it in the next***. The moment we embrace our baptismal call we give credence to our very existence as children of God and thus turn toward a desire for God’s grace. Our human vocation is God Himself; this is where we are called. God desires us to be in fraternal unity with Him which means a constant and active relationship with Him.

A ***second important step*** we can take to abandon our sinful ways is to seek Christian holiness by renouncing sin and seek reconciliation with God in Christ through the sacrament of reconciliation. Through the sacrament of penance we are able to be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect (Mt 5:48) by renouncing our sinful ways. Our spiritual progress is intimately tied with our willingness to seek Christ and avoid the occasions of sin that may draws us back into our habitual vices.

**One last important step** is what the Catechism calls the ***way of perfection*** by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes (CCC 2015). The way of Cross allows us to deny ourselves and freely follow Christ (Mt 16:24) in order to ascend to the fullness of the Christian life and perfect charity.

To that end St. Gregory of Nyssa reminds us that:

Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none.