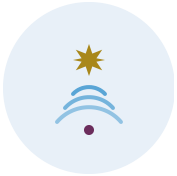
CHAPTER 9 OF 11 · PREACHED OCTOBER 25, 2026 · 30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Sins That Cry to Heaven

Sins against the neighbor

Exodus 22:20-26 · Psalm 18 · 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10 · Matthew 22:34-40 (the Greatest Commandment)



I The Teaching

In the Readings: The Two Tablets

> *"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart... You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* (Matthew 22:37, 39)

- The first chapter looked at sin as turning away from God. This chapter turns to the other tablet: what sin does to the people around us
- Exodus 22 is one of the texts behind a strong old phrase in the Catechism: sins that "cry to heaven" (CCC 1867)

> *"If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry."* (Exodus 22:22)

Nature

- All sin is first against God, but many sins wound the neighbor directly: above all those who can least defend themselves
- The Church speaks of social sin in three senses (John Paul II, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia 16): every sin affects society; some sins attack social life directly; and some unjust situations and structures make sin easier
- Even so, moral responsibility always rests finally on persons. "Society did it" is never the whole explanation, but neither is "I personally didn't do anything" a full defense

Kinds: The Sins That Cry to Heaven

CCC 1867 lists the sins the tradition says rise before God on their own, because their victims have no other advocate.

- **The blood of Abel:** Willful murder of the innocent. "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10).
- **The sin of the Sodomites:** The outcry against Sodom (Genesis 18:20; 19:13). Ezekiel 16:49, which Tanquerey cites under sloth, adds a detail worth noting: pride, excess of food, complacent ease, and not helping the poor and needy.
- **The cry of the people oppressed in Egypt:** The oppression of a people held in bondage. "I have heard their cry... I know well what they are suffering" (Exodus 3:7).
- **The cry of the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan:** Exploiting those with no protector: this Sunday's first reading, almost word for word (Exodus 22:20-22).

- **Injustice to the wage earner:** Withholding a worker's just pay. "The wages you withheld… are crying aloud" (James 5:4; cf. Deuteronomy 24:14-15).

In the Readings

- Exodus 22 names three of them directly: the alien, the widow and orphan, and, through the ban on interest and on keeping a poor man's cloak overnight, the exploitation of the poor that avarice breeds (see the chapter on greed)
- Tie-back to greed: "insensibility to mercy," avarice's first daughter, is the interior root of every sin on this list

Effects

- God takes the side of the victim: "My wrath will flare up" (Exodus 22:23). These sins are grave precisely because they strike the defenseless
- They corrode communities, not just souls: mistrust, division, and the normalizing of injustice
- They also blind the one who commits them: the habit of not seeing the poor becomes, over time, an inability to see them

Remedies

- The Greatest Commandment is the remedy stated whole: love of neighbor rooted in love of God. Neither half survives long without the other
- The corporal and spiritual works of mercy as concrete, habit-forming acts: since virtue grows by repeated action
- Justice in the ordinary places: paying people fairly and promptly, honest dealing, noticing who in the parish is a widow, an orphan, or a stranger
- Examination of conscience that includes omissions: not only "whom did I harm?" but "whose cry did I not answer?"

Living It Out in Ordinary Life

- "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth" (1 Jn 3:18); charity shown through concrete details of service.
- The order and universality of charity (Friends of God 226-231; Furrow 825), and refusing collective egoism as a family, clique, or nation (Furrow 303, 315).
- Catholics may not abstain from public life; we have a duty to help solve the community's problems (Furrow 303, 310-311; Gaudium et Spes 42-43, 75). Structures of sin are answered partly by Christians present where decisions get made.
- No split between faith and daily life (Gaudium et Spes 43): exemplary citizens who fulfill their duties and exercise their rights (Furrow 300).
- Work as service (Friends of God 55-72): the wage-earner's cry is answered by employers and workers who sanctify their work through justice.

Taking It Home

- The Thessalonians "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"; the first chapter's point and this one's, joined together
- The cry of the poor reaches God either way. The only question is whether it reaches us first

II Examination of Conscience

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth. Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit, help me to see my sins clearly, to be truly sorry for them, and to trust in your mercy. Amen.

How to read the ◆ GRAVE MATTER tag

A question with this tag concerns a serious matter. A sin is mortal only when grave matter is chosen with full knowledge and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857), and fear, habit or other factors can lessen responsibility. If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest.

This chapter's examination looks at sins against the neighbor, especially those who can't defend themselves, and at the good we leave undone.

The blood of Abel: innocent life

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I taken part in, encouraged or paid for an abortion? (CCC 2272) God's mercy is greater than any sin; the priest will help.
- ☐ Have I treated the lives of the unborn, the disabled, the sick or the elderly as less valuable?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I harbored a deliberate desire to see someone dead or gravely harmed? (CCC 2302)

Sodom: pride, plenty and ease

- ☐ Like Sodom in Ezekiel 16:49, have I lived in pride, plenty and complacent ease while not helping the poor and needy?
- ☐ Has comfort made me deaf to the needs around me?

The oppressed: freedom and dignity

- ☐ Have I treated anyone with contempt because of race, nationality, poverty or background?
- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I exploited or abused someone under my power? (CCC 2414)
- ☐ Have I supported, by silence or by spending, things that oppress others?

The stranger, the widow, the orphan

- ☐ Have I spoken about immigrants or the poor with contempt?
- ☐ Have I taken advantage of someone in a weak position: elderly, grieving, sick or alone?
- ☐ Do I know the names of the widowed, lonely or newcomers in my parish and neighborhood?

The worker's wage

- ☐ ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I withheld just pay from those who work for me, or paid late without reason? (CCC 2434)
- ☐ Have I treated workers (contractors, servers, cleaners, sitters) with respect and fairness?

Social sin: the part I play

- [ ] Have I told myself "society did it" to excuse my own part in an injustice?
- [ ] Have I fulfilled my duties as a citizen, voting with a well-formed conscience and caring for the common good?

Sins of omission: whose cry did I not answer?

- [ ] Have I looked away from people in need because I could not fix everything?
- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Have I refused to help someone in serious need when I could have? (CCC 2447; Matthew 25:45)
- [ ] Whose cry have I heard this month and not answered?

The remedies: have I tried?

- [ ] Do I practice at least one work of mercy every week?
- [ ] Do I give generously to the poor, and support the Church's works of charity?
- [ ] Have I learned the name of someone I usually walk past without a word?
- [ ] Do I examine myself each night on omissions, not only on what I did?

For particular states of life

Married

- [ ] Do we, as a couple, share what we have with people in need?

Single adults

- [ ] Do I use my freedom and time to serve those in need?

At work

- [ ] ◆ GRAVE MATTER Are my business practices just to workers, customers and suppliers? (CCC 2409, 2434)
- [ ] Do I treat the lowest-paid people at work with the same respect as the highest?

Parents

- [ ] Am I teaching my children to notice and serve the poor?

Young people

- [ ] Do I include the kid who sits alone, or join in when others are mocked?

Beneath the surface

These are not accusations but invitations to let Christ heal what lies underneath.

- [ ] Do I avoid seeing the poor because I feel powerless before the size of the need?
- [ ] Do I believe the lie that my small act does not matter?
- [ ] Have I vowed to keep my distance so I will not be overwhelmed?
- [ ] Can I remember my own poverty before God ("You were once aliens yourselves," Exodus 22:20), and let Him be my strength (Psalm 18)?

Act of Contrition

O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishments, 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 sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin. Amen.

III Meditation: The Face at the Intersection

With the Gospel of the day, Matthew 22:34-40

Find a few quiet minutes and take a slow breath.

God is near you now, and He is your strength. You can pray the words of this Sunday's Psalm with confidence: "I love you, Lord, my strength."

When you are ready, hear the scholar of the law ask Jesus: "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" And hear Jesus answer with two that can't be pulled apart: love the Lord your God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.

• • •

Now picture a place you pass every week. An intersection on your way into Nashville. A man stands at the corner with a cardboard sign. You look straight ahead. When the light turns green, you feel relief. Stay in that moment. What was going on in you?

• • •

Most of us don't oppress anyone. Our sin against the poor is usually not seeing. And often what's underneath is a feeling of powerlessness: the need is so big, I can't fix it, so I look away. Tell the Lord honestly where you feel that.

• • •

Hear God speak in this Sunday's first reading: "You shall not oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt." Remember your own poverty before God. There was a time you were the one standing at the light, spiritually, and He stopped for you. Sit with that memory.

• • •

Now let a face come to mind. Not "the poor" in general. One person. A widow at church who sits alone. A neighbor whose name you never learned. A new family at your child's school. A coworker carrying something heavy. Hold that face before God.

• • •

You can't answer every cry. But you can answer the one in front of you. Ask Him: "Lord, what is the one thing You want me to do for this person this week?" Wait for an answer. It might be small: a name learned, a meal dropped off, a phone call.

Close by praying from this Sunday's Psalm: "I love you, O Lord, my strength, O Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer." Then add: "Be my strength, Lord, so I can stop for the one in front of me."

How to Use This Guide

The Teaching

Each chapter begins with the outline of that Sunday's homily: the readings, what the sin is, the sins it gives rise to (its "daughters"), what it does to us, and its remedies. Read it slowly. Look up the references that catch your attention.

Examination of Conscience

Use it before Confession, or as a nightly examen. You don't have to answer every question at once; let the Holy Spirit show you what matters. Each examination ends with questions for particular states of life and a few questions about the wounds beneath our sins.

Meditation

A guided prayer with that Sunday's Gospel. Find a quiet place and read it slowly. Where you see a pause, stop and stay with the Lord for a while.

Questions tagged ◆ GRAVE MATTER concern serious matters. For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must all be present together: grave matter, full knowledge, and deliberate consent (Catechism 1857). Fear, habit, ignorance, immaturity and other factors can lessen responsibility (Catechism 1735, 2352). The tag does not mean you have committed a mortal sin. It means the question deserves special care.

Mortal sins should be confessed, in kind and number as best you can recall, before receiving Holy Communion (Catechism 1385, 1456-1457). If you are unsure about anything, bring it to Confession and ask the priest. That is why he is there.

Come to Confession

Saturday	7:30 AM and 3:30 PM
Sunday	7:30 AM, 10:00 AM, 1:00 PM (Spanish) and 5:00 PM
Monday–Friday	5:30 AM and 8:15 AM
Wednesday	also 5:00 PM

Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church
1729 Stop 30 Rd, Hendersonville, TN 37075
(615) 824-3276 · ololcc.org