

**The Unforgivable Sin against the Holy Spirit  
(10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)**

**Genesis 3:9-15—The Curse of the Serpent**

1. “Serpent” (Hebrew *nachash*) = ultimate culprit in the Fall of Man and Woman
2. Curse of the Serpent: “cursed” to go upon its “belly” and “eat dust”
3. Woman’s “Seed” = will “strike/crush” (*soph*) your head

**Psalm 130—With the Lord there is Mercy, and Fullness of Redemption**

1. The LORD: much “forgiveness” and “redemption” (130:4, 7)

**2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1—Momentary Affliction vs. Eternal Weight of Glory**

1. “Slight Momentary Affliction” → “Eternal Weight of Glory” (4:17)

**Mark 3:20-35—Jesus Accused of Being Possessed by Beelzebul**

1. Nazareth: setting in Jesus’ “home,” meaning his “hometown” (3:19)
2. The Crisis in Nazareth: two possible interpretations
  - a. #1: Jesus’ “friends” think he is “beside himself” (3:21; RSV)
  - b. #2: Jesus’ “relatives” think he is “out of his mind” (3:21; NAB)
3. Beelzebul: Aramaic for “Lord of the Flies” = prince of demons (cf. 2 Kings 1:2-3)
4. Parable of Divided Kingdom: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” (3:23)
5. Parable of the Strong Man:
  - a. Strong Man = Devil
  - b. Thief = Jesus
  - c. Goods = Souls
  - d. Binding = Exorcisms
6. Sin against the Holy Spirit:
  - a. Forgiven = “All sins and blasphemies” (3:28)
  - b. Unforgivable = “whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit” (3:29)
  - c. Reason: “for they had said, ‘he has an unclean spirit’” (3:30)

**St. John Paul II on the Sin against the Holy Spirit**

“[B]laspemy” does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in *the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit...* [T]he blasphemy against the Holy Spirit consists precisely in *the radical refusal to accept this forgiveness*, of which he is the intimate giver and which presupposes the genuine conversion which he brings about in the conscience. *If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this “non-forgiveness” is linked, as to its cause, to “non-repentance,” in other words to the radical refusal to be converted.* ...Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, then, is the sin committed by the person who claims to have a “right” to persist in evil—in any sin at all—and who thus rejects Redemption. One closes oneself up in sin, thus making impossible one’s conversion, and consequently the remission of sins, which one considers not essential or not important for one’s life... This is what Sacred Scripture

usually calls “hardness of heart.” In our own time this attitude of mind and heart is perhaps reflected in the loss of the sense of sin... Pope Pius XII had already declared that “the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin,” and this loss goes hand in hand with the “loss of the sense of God.” (John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 46; CCC 1864)

## Questions for Discussion and Reflection (10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B)

1. Why is Genesis 3 and the curse of the Serpent chosen for the first reading for this particular Sunday? What does the promise of the “seed” of the Woman crushing the head of the Serpent have to do with Jesus’ ministry in Mark 3?

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2. What is the meaning of Jesus’ parable of the “Strong Man”? How does Jesus see his own exorcistic ministry?

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3. What is the “sin against the Holy Spirit”? What did John Paul II teach in his encyclical on the Holy Spirit? (cf. CCC 1864)

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## For Further Study

1. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church and the World [May 18, 1986]. A profound and challenging encyclical letter on the much overlooked figure of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the Church. Highly recommended.