

Reflections

Volume 103

International

Catholic Family Newsletter

March 2024

Bringing Light Into a World of Darkness

Where Will You Spend Eternity

If Only I Knew

St Mark the Apostle

[Douay-Rheims Bible](#)

For what does it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul? Matt 16:26

Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

Eternity is beyond our comprehension. A place with no time but a state of everlasting life. Death is the gate into which we will either spend eternity in Heaven or in Hell.

God made us in His image and likeness. We have a soul that wants to return to God, but the Devil, and all his dominions who are ***damned to Hell, want us to be damned also.*** The Devil and his angels rejected God and they want us to also reject God and the salvation found in Jesus Christ. **The choice is ours.**

Salvation is offered to all people through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. (Act 10:35-35 & Act 10:43-44) Two thousand years ago, Jesus

Christ, was crucified on a cross. And rose from the dead 3 days later. Some 2.6 billion people believe in His resurrection. About 1/3 of the population of the world. We are called Christians. Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of the Father.

Christians believe that even if your sins should be as great as the grains of sand on the beach, and as dark as pitch, Jesus can wipe them out and make your soul filled with His grace and light. Through Him, sins are forgiven. (Matthew 9:6)

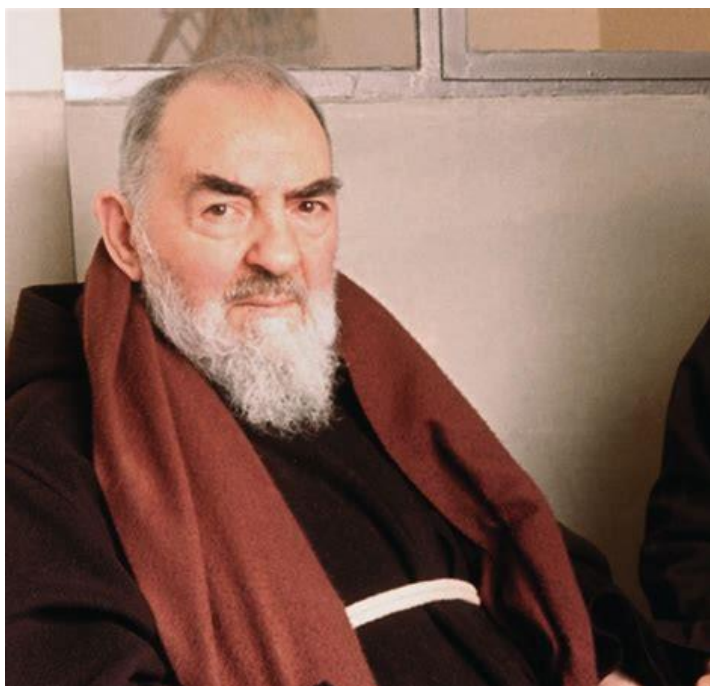
All of the sins we commit can be forgiven, except one! Jesus tells us in Matthew 12:31, **“Therefore, I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.”**

Many Catholics know about this gospel verse but have no idea, “what” this sin is, that cannot be forgiven. So, what is this sin?

Looking at the Catechism of the Catholic Church, blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the “deliberate refusal” to accept God’s mercy and forgiveness (no. 1864). There are no limits to the mercy of God, but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy Spirit. Such hardness of the heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.

Therefore, the greatest sin we can ever commit is to turn our backs on God and reject the gift of salvation He offers us in Christ.

Pray for grace to overcome serious sin and Jesus will give you that grace. It is a journey, that you must take, to constantly ask Jesus to walk with you every day. If you know of family members that need prayer to overcome serious sins, then pray to Jesus to help them with graces to overcome those sins. Don’t doubt. Pray, Pray, Pray. No once but every day for them.



A Padre Pio Story....About Serious Sin

I read a short account of Padre Pio who met a man who was full of mortal sins and whose arrogance was keeping this man in the state of mortal sin.

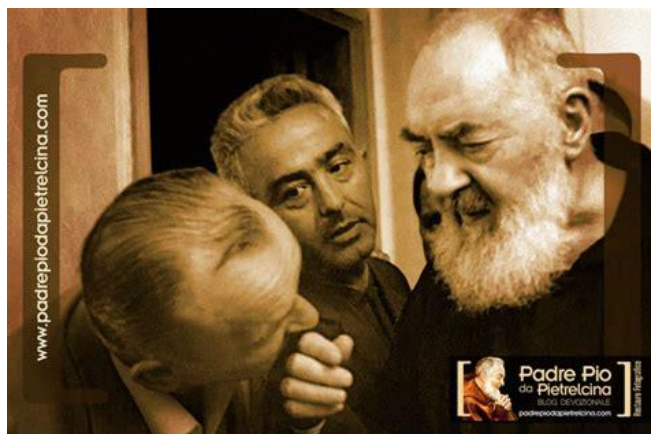
As the story goes...."One day Adolfo Affatato, a long-time spiritual son of Padre Pio, was asked to accompany a politician who wished to visit Padre Pio. They met at the train station in Foggia.

Over lunch, his new friend spoke in a manner that struck Adolfo as full of presumption. He came across as someone who felt he could do whatever he wanted. He went on to say that in his lifetime, he had made three vows, but had failed each time. Now that he heard of Padre Pio, he said he wished to meet the Capuchin saint and place himself under his direction.

When they arrived at the friary in San Giovanni Rotondo, Adolfo and the politician went upstairs to wait for Padre to come out of his cell. When he came out of his cell to go down to hear the men's confessions, Padre said, "Praised be Jesus Christ," to the friars as was his custom.

Turning to Adolfo, he said: "Who is this you have today?"

Adolfo responded, "Father, this gentleman would like your blessing."



Instead, Padre Pio said, “Nice stuff you brought me here. Tell him that he made a vow three times and three times he failed. This is the last chance God is giving him. He should go before the Blessed Sacrament and ask forgiveness for his sins.” Without greeting the politician, he went down the stairs to hear confessions.

Adolfo was struck. And yet it was another episode, one of many, in which he experienced firsthand the supernatural gifts of Padre Pio.

Though Adolfo usually experienced the endearing, paternal side of Padre Pio, here was his other side – the harsh friar who was stern toward those who sinned against God and neglected their duties as a Christian. Padre Pio suffered enormously before such manifestations of ingratitude.

No one except the politician himself and Padre Pio knew exactly what sins he was guilty of and what vows he had broken. Having the gift of reading souls, Padre Pio could see what others could not.



Adolfo sensed the icy emptiness that overcame the politician at that moment. **He watched as he broke down in tears, a crisis of redemption.**

Fr. Onorato later told Adolfo that he asked Padre Pio that evening if perhaps he had been too harsh with that politician.

Without hesitation, Padre Pio responded: “If you could scrutinize souls, you would have seen in that man’s heart not just seven deadly sins, but seventy.”

Pointing to a glass of water on his bedside table, he continued: "Do you see that glass full of water? If you don't empty it of its filth and fill it with God's love, there will never be peace."

Adolfo later heard that after that encounter, the politician began to radically change his life. Through Padre Pio, the power of God unlocked the doors of his heart, blocked by pride and possessions, and filled it with charity. The time had come. As Padre Pio said: "God knows how to wait."

Through Padre Pio, Adolfo understood that gratitude is an eternal virtue. The more we thank God for what He has done for us, the more we create the conditions for further blessings. God desires nothing more, and in turn, we become like angels ready to help those in need.

Brothers and Sisters. All of us sin. Each sin offends God, who is all pure and holy. But sin also hurts us and those we love. We may not see how sin hurts us, but one thing usually stands out, it is our sense of peace. When sin prevails the peace of God leaves us. Many people struggle each day with the emotional and spiritual loss of peace from committing serious sin. Change now by asking Jesus to come into your soul and help you avoid serious sin. Jesus will listen. All you have to do, is ask Him. Ask Him each day!

Arguments with friends or family become more frequent when we lose our sense of peace. Every little thing bothers us. We make mountains out of molehills. You can be forgiven. Peace will return to you. Try it! Every day pray for peace for yourself and in your family.

"If Only I Knew."

**Things to remember about sharing your love for others. Excerpts
from the min-book by Lance Wubbels,**

IF ONLY I KNEW....

I could never share another day with you, I would make the most of every second.

IF ONLY I KNEW....

This was the last time, the very last time, I would see you, I would take the time to treasure everything about you.

IF ONLY I KNEW....

That disagreements do not mean a lack of love; had I know, then I would have been hurt less often.

IF ONLY I KNEW...

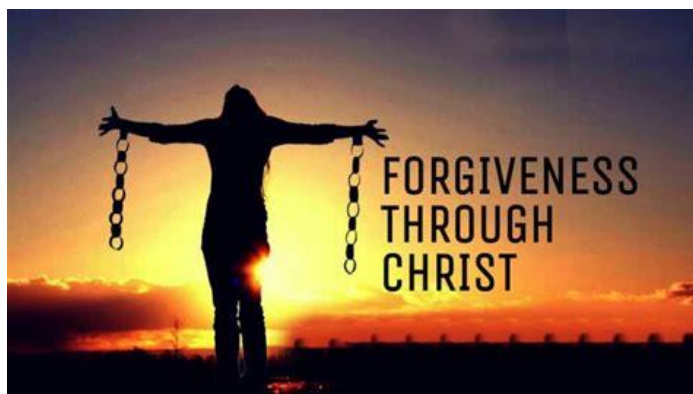
That my past is no excuse for who I am now. That truth could have set me free to change.

IF ONLY I KNEW...

That anyone can bring words of comfort, encouragement, and healing, who knows how many lives I might have touched?

IF I ONLY KNEW...

That the love of God, knowing God loves me, reaches into my fears and insecurities: I would have allowed His love to surround, engulf, and pierce into the depths of my soul.



Brothers and Sisters...The love of Jesus for us, was shown on the cross... He did this for US.... and His suffering was reaching out to you and me to tell us...I LOVE YOU SO MUCH THAT I AM DYING FOR YOU AND TO TAKE AWAY YOUR SINS SO YOU CAN BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.

All of us have "IF ONLY I KNEW" moments in our lives. Take time to love others, forgive others who hurt you, and to cherish each day with your family. Jesus wants you to know, that what He did was for love of YOU.

St. Mark the Apostle

The article below starts a four-part series on the Gospel writers. Each month another author of the Gospel will be highlighted. Most Catholics know who wrote the Gospels, but few know much about the authors, their travels, or their martyrdom.

St Mark the Apostle, the Founder of the Coptic Church



The Coptic Church or the Church of Alexandria is called "Sees of St. Mark"; one of the earliest four sees: Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome.

The Copts are proud of the apostolicity of their Church, whose founder is St. Mark; one of the seventy Apostles (Mk 10:10), and one of the four Evangelists. He is regarded by the Coptic hierarchy as the first of their unbroken 117 patriarchs, and also the first of a stream of Egyptian martyrs. This apostolicity was not only furnished on grounds of its foundation but rather by the persistence of the Church in observing the same faith received by the Apostle and his successors, the Holy Fathers.

St. Mark's Bibliography

St. Mark was an African native of Jewish parents who belonged to the Levites' tribe. His family lived in Cyrenaica until they were attacked by some barbarians, and lost their property. Consequently, they moved to Jerusalem with their child John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37). Apparently, he was given a good education and became conversant in both Greek and Latin in addition to Hebrew. His family was highly religious and in close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. His cousin was St. Barnabas and his father's cousin was St. Peter. His mother, Mary, played an important part in the early days of

the Church in Jerusalem. Her upper room became the first Christian church in the world where the Lord Jesus Christ Himself instituted the Holy Eucharist (Mk 14:12-26). Also, this is the same place where the Lord appeared to the disciples after His resurrection and His Holy Spirit came upon them.

Young Mark was always associated with the Lord, who choose him as one of the seventy. He is mentioned in the Holy Scriptures in a number of events related with the Lord. For example, he was present at the wedding of Cana of Galilee, and was the man who had been carrying the jar when the two disciples went to prepare a place for the celebration of the Passover (Mk 14:13-14; Lk 22:11).

St. Mark and The Lion

The voice of the lion is the symbol of St. Mark for two reasons:

He begins his Holy Gospel by describing John the Baptist as a lion roaring in the desert (Mk 1:3).

His famous story with lion, as related to us by Severus Ebn-El-Mokafa:

Once a lion and lioness appeared to John Mark and his father Arostalis while they were traveling in Jordan. The father was very scared and begged his son to escape, while he awaited his fate. John Mark assured his father that Jesus Christ would save them and began to pray. The two beasts fell dead and as a result of this miracle, the father believed in Christ.

Preaching with the Apostles

At first, St. Mark accompanied St. Peter on his missionary journeys inside Jerusalem and Judea. Then he accompanied St. Paul and St. Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Antioch, Cyprus and Asia Minor, but for some reason or another he left them and returned home (Acts 13:13). On their second trip, St. Paul refused to take him along because he left them on the previous mission; for this reason St. Barnabas was separated from St. Paul and went to Cyprus with his cousin St. Mark (Acts 15:36-41). There, he departed in the Lord and St. Mark buried him. Afterwards, St. Paul needed St. Mark with him and they both preached in Colosse (Col 4:10), Rome (Phil 24; 2 Tim 4:11) and perhaps in Venice.

In Africa

St. Mark's real labor lays in Africa. He left Rome to Pentapolis, where he was born. After planting the seeds of faith and performing many miracles he traveled to Egypt, through the Oasis, the desert of Libya, Upper Egypt and then entered Alexandria from its eastern gate in 61 A.D.

On his arrival, the strap of his sandal was loose. He went to a cobbler to mend it. When the cobbler - Anianos - took an awl to work on it, he accidentally pierced his hand and cried aloud "O One God". At this utterance, St. Mark rejoiced and after miraculously healing the man's wound, took courage and began to preach to the hungry ears of his convert. The spark was ignited and Anianos took the Apostle home with him. He and his family were baptized, and many others followed.

The spread of Christianity must have been quite remarkable because pagans were furious and sought St. Mark everywhere. Smelling the danger, the Apostle ordained a bishop (Anianos), three priests and seven deacons to look after the congregation if anything befell him. He left Alexandria to Berce, then to Rome, where he met St. Peter and St. Paul and remained there until their martyrdom in 64 A.D.

Upon returning to Alexandria in 65 AD, St. Mark found his people firm in faith and thus decided to visit Pentapolis. There, he spent two years preaching and performing miracles, ordaining bishops and priests, and winning more converts.

Finally, he returned to Alexandria and was overjoyed to find that Christians had multiplied so much that they were able to build a considerable church in the suburban district of Baucalis.

His Martyrdom

In the year 68 AD, Easter fell on the same day as the Serapis feast. The furious heathen mob had gathered in the Serapis temple at Alexandria and then descended on the Christians who were celebrating the Glorious Resurrection at Baucalis. St. Mark was seized, dragged with a rope through the main streets of the city. Crowds were shouting "The ox must be led to Baucalis," a precipitous place full of rock where they fed the oxen that were used in the sacrifice to idols.

At nightfall the saint was thrown into prison, where he was cheered by the vision of an angel, strengthening him saying, "Now your hour has come O Mark, the good minister, to receive your recompense. Be encouraged, for your name has been written in the book of life." When the angel disappeared, St. Mark thanked God for sending His angel to him. Suddenly, the Savior Himself appeared and said to him, "Peace be to you Mark, my disciple and evangelist!" St. Mark started to shout, "O My Lord Jesus" but the vision disappeared.

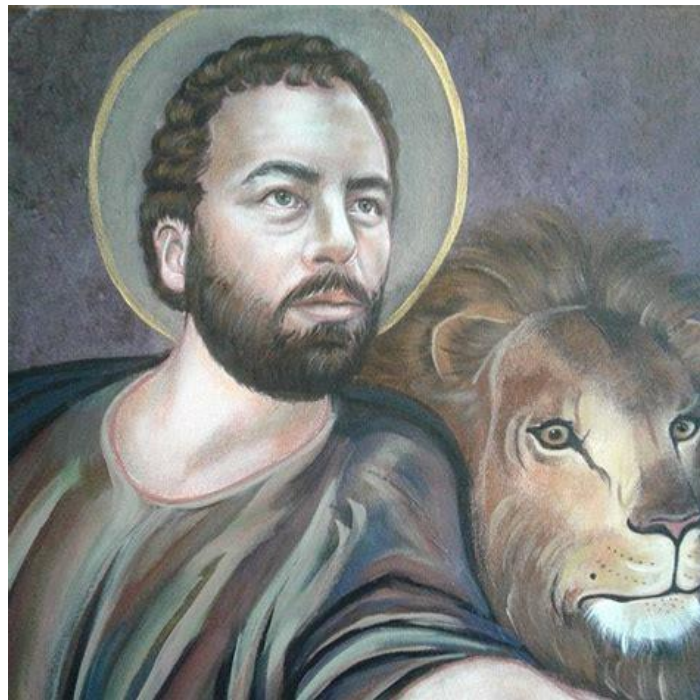
On the following morning probably during the triumphal procession of Serapis he was again dragged around the city till death. His bloody flesh was torn, and it was their intention to cremate his remains, but the wind blew and the rain fell in torrents and the populace disperse. Christians stole his body and secretly buried him in a grave that they had engraved on a rock under the altar of the church.

His Apostolic Acts

St. Mark was a broad-minded Apostle. His ministry was quite productive and covered a large field of activities. These include Preaching in Egypt, Pentapolis, Judea, Asia Minor, and Italy during which time he ordained bishops, priests, and deacons.

Establishing the "School of Alexandria" which defended Christianity against philosophical school of Alexandria and conceived a large number of great Fathers.

Writing the Divine Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist which was modified later by St. Cyril to the Divine Liturgy known today as the Divine Liturgy of St. Cyril.



Bible verses and thoughts for the day.

Acts 10:35-36

Then Peter proceeded to speak and said,* "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him.

10:43-44

Acts He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead.* To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name."

Brothers and Sisters, we have God's word that those who act uprightly towards their family, friends and those they meet, that God finds them acceptable. God sent His son Jesus Christ to us, to tell us the if you believe in Jesus, then your sins are forgiven.

Believe and be saved. Treat others as you would treat yourself. Think about these verses during the day and God will provide you with the Spirit of truth to help you on your earthly journey.



The International Catholic Family Newsletter

Is Published Monthly

Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.



The Rosary is the 'weapon' for these times. – St. Padre Pio

St. Paul Ministry

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