



SILENT HOMILIES

The Word We Still Need

*Sin, conscience, and what the Church
actually means*



Silent Homilies

Little Treasures



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*Sin, conscience, and what the Church
actually means*

*A small book of forgotten facts,
short stories, and quiet hope.*

Before You Begin

We still talk about right and wrong all the time. We call things harmful, dishonest, unfair or unacceptable. What we use less often is the older word sin.

In Catholic teaching that word means something more specific than a thing I dislike. It says the choice has to do with God. It says I am responsible. It also says the wrong can be named and forgiven.

Some Catholics use the word for almost everything. Others use it for almost nothing. This book is for both. It is not a list of sins. It is not written to frighten anyone. It tries to explain what the Church actually means, and why she still uses a word many people would rather replace.

The Church does not keep the word because she enjoys accusation. She keeps it because she believes sin can be forgiven. Christ came for sinners. That is why the book can be honest from the first page.

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A Last Word

Chapter 1

The Word We Still Need

Sin, in Catholic teaching, is an offence against God by thought, word, deed or omission. It is a failure in love of God and love of neighbour. Scripture uses several pictures for it. Missing a target. Crossing a boundary. Refusing to listen. Preferring a lesser good to God.

The Catechism says that sin is an offence against reason, truth and right conscience. It wounds our friendship with God. It also wounds human nature and the life we share with other people.

That last part is easy to forget. We often treat sin as a private matter between a soul and heaven. Catholic teaching is less lonely than that. A lie does not only offend God. It damages trust. Cruelty does not only stain a conscience. It leaves someone else carrying the hurt.

Modern life has not stopped caring about right and wrong. It has changed some of the words. We still know that some things should not be done. We have other names for them: toxic, inappropriate, unhealthy, a mistake. Those words can be useful. A workplace may need them. A family may need them. They do not always say the same thing as sin.

“That was inappropriate” names an offence against manners or policy. “That was a mistake” can mean I did not mean to do it, or it can mean I would rather not admit that I chose it. “That was unhealthy” talks about damage. It does not always talk about responsibility before God.

What often disappears, when the word sin disappears, is the sense that I am answerable — not only to a group, a law, or my own feelings, but to God, who knows the act and also knows the person. The

Christian word adds things the other words do not always carry: God, freedom, conversion, and forgiveness.

The Church keeps the word because she believes the truth can be brought to Christ. A problem can be managed. A mistake can be shrugged off. Sin can be confessed and forgiven.

A Small Reflection

We have many words for what we dislike in other people, and fewer honest words for what we choose ourselves. It is easy to call someone else toxic. It is harder to ask whether I crossed a line I already knew was there.

Notice which word I reach for when the story is about me. I made a mistake. I was under pressure. Things got messy. Those sentences can be true. They can also keep God and responsibility out of the room. The Church does not use the word sin to make us smaller. She uses it so that what is wrong can be brought to Christ and forgiven.

A short prayer

Lord, teach me to call things by their right names, without cruelty and without disguise. Amen.

Chapter 2

When Wrong Becomes Mine

Catholic teaching makes a distinction that many people have never heard clearly. There is the act itself: what was done, and whether that kind of act is seriously wrong. And there is the person who did it: what they knew, and how freely they chose.

Those are different questions. How wrong was the act? How responsible was this person? The Church can answer the first without claiming to know everything about the second.

For a sin to be mortal, three conditions must be present together. Grave matter. Full knowledge. Deliberate consent.

Grave matter means the act itself belongs to the serious kind: the kind that can break our friendship with God if it is chosen freely and knowingly. Full knowledge means the person knows, in a real way, that this is seriously wrong. Deliberate consent means they choose it with a will that is not so frightened, confused or forced that the choice is no longer really theirs.

If any one of those three is missing, the Church does not call the sin mortal, even if the act remains a serious wrong. A child who repeats a blasphemy without understanding it is not in the same position as an adult who chooses it. A person acting under sudden panic is not in the same position as a person who plans.

Ignorance, fear, habit, pressure and some forms of illness can lessen responsibility. Sometimes they can remove it. That does not mean they always do. Pretending not to know, so that I can do what I want, does not make a person less responsible.

The three conditions are not a loophole. They describe what it means to turn away from God with one's eyes open. They are not meant to become a private test that a worried person repeats all week.

We can say that an action is gravely wrong without claiming to know the final state of another person's soul. The Church judges acts. She does not appoint us as judges of the hidden heart. Talk about who is "in mortal sin" is usually more than we can know.

A Small Reflection

I usually know the circumstances that explain my own behaviour. I was tired. I was provoked. I did not see another way. I rarely know those things about the person I am watching. So I give myself a story and I give them a verdict.

The Church's three conditions refuse two errors at once. They refuse the idea that nothing is really wrong. They also refuse the idea that we can see the whole of another person's guilt. Before I decide what someone else must have known, it is worth asking how often I use that same knowledge when the choice was mine.

A short prayer

Lord, keep me honest about what I chose, and humble about what I cannot know in someone else. Amen.

Chapter 3

Tempted Is Not the Same as Guilty

Many Catholics need this chapter more than they need a longer list of sins.

Temptation is not sin. A thought can appear in the mind without being invited. An emotion can arise in the body without being chosen. An attraction can exist without consent. Anger can rise before I have decided what to do with it. The thought that arrives is one thing. The thought I keep, welcome and follow is another.

Catholic teaching has always known this, because it takes freedom seriously. Concupiscence is the old word for the disorder that remains in us after baptism. It is not itself a personal sin. It is a wound. It can make the wrong thing look reasonable. It does not yet mean we have agreed.

Consent is where responsibility begins. Sometimes it is sudden and clear. I knew what I was doing and I did it. Sometimes it happens more slowly. I did not decide everything at once. I simply did not turn away. I stayed with the thought. I arranged the circumstances around it.

A person who worries a great deal can spend years asking whether a thought already counted as sin. That kind of measuring often makes the fear worse. The useful question is not whether a bad idea visited me. Ideas visit everyone. The useful question is whether I deliberately welcomed it, kept it, or acted on it.

A person who does not worry enough can make the opposite mistake. They can treat a long entertainment of the thought as if it were only an accident.

A healthy conscience can tell the difference between being surprised by a thought and choosing it. An anxious conscience often cannot. The sacrament of Confession is meant to bring peace. It is not meant to become new material for panic.

If a doubt of this kind keeps returning, do not sit alone and replay it. Follow the guidance of one regular confessor, and do not keep reopening a question he has already answered.

A Small Reflection

A thought arriving is not the same as choosing it. That sentence is especially important if you are already afraid.

Do not start measuring every moment of the thought. That is not honesty. That is the fear taking over. If you turned away, you turned away. If the same doubt keeps coming back, take it to one priest and then leave the question where he left it.

A short prayer

Lord, teach me the difference between a thought that appears and a thought I choose. Give peace to those who cannot stop accusing themselves. Amen.

Chapter 4

Mortal and Venial

Mortal does not mean “very bad” in the way a newspaper uses the word. It means deadly. Charity — the love of God poured into the heart — is the life of the soul. Mortal sin destroys that charity when a person freely and knowingly chooses something seriously wrong. God’s love for the person does not disappear. What is lost is the life of grace in the soul, until the person turns back.

If mortal sin is not repented, it can end in the loss of God forever. That is what the Church means by hell: not a scarecrow, but the real possibility that freedom can refuse love to the end. The Church describes this as a definitive self-exclusion from communion with God. She does not invite us to stare at it. She invites us to repent.

Venial sin does not destroy charity. The relationship with God is wounded, not broken. Sanctifying grace is not lost. Eternal life is not forfeited by a sharp word or a lazy prayer. St John already distinguishes sin that is deadly from sin that is not.

Why does the Church need both categories? Because not every failure is the same kind of failure. If every sin were mortal, ordinary Christian life would become terror. If every sin were treated as the same, we would lose the sense that some choices strike at the centre of love, and some wound love without killing it.

Venial sin still matters. It weakens love. It trains the appetite. It makes the next refusal easier. It does not kill the life of grace. A person who treats venial sin as if God had agreed to ignore it is missing the point. A person who treats every fault as mortal is missing it in the other direction.

Several venial sins do not automatically become one mortal sin simply because there are many of them. Habit can make a later choice more free, or less free. That is a question for honest confession, not for counting at home.

Grave matter is named, in the first place, by the commandments as Christ listed them: do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honour father and mother. Other serious violations of God's law belong there too.

A person who is unsure whether a particular act was mortal should not invent certainty in either direction. They should bring it to confession plainly, and trust the sacrament more than their own changing feelings.

A Small Reflection

We are often more interested in whether something technically counted than in what the choice is doing to us. Mortal and venial describe whether love in us has been destroyed or only wounded.

If you are genuinely unsure, do not sit in the house arguing with yourself for another week. Tell a priest the truth about the matter and about how freely you chose it. Then receive the sacrament.

A short prayer

Lord Jesus, You came to restore the love I damage. Make me honest enough to use the right word. Amen.

Chapter 5

The Small Yes That Makes the Next Yes Easier

A first lie can be hard. The twentieth can feel almost normal. That is not an accident. Repeated choices train us.

Catholic teaching has always known that sin is not only a single act. It can become a habit. Vice is the old word for a stable inclination toward a particular kind of wrong. Virtue is the opposite: a stable inclination toward the good. Neither appears overnight.

This does not mean that every repeated venial fault suddenly becomes mortal. It means that what I practise, I become used to practising. The first time I speak cruelly, I may feel the wrong of it. The tenth time, I may barely notice. The conscience has not always gone silent because I have found peace. Sometimes it has gone quiet because I have stopped paying attention.

Ordinary examples are enough. Gossip that used to trouble me. A small theft I now explain as “everyone does it.” Resentment I rehearse until it feels like justice. Pornography that began as a look and became a habit. Neglect of prayer that first felt like a busy week and then became the ordinary week.

The Church is interested in conversion, not only in isolated incidents. Conversion asks not only “What did I do?” but “What am I becoming used to doing?”

A habit can also lessen freedom. A person trapped in a long addiction is not in the same position as a person choosing the thing for the first time. That does not make the act good. It does change how we speak about guilt, and how much help the person may need.

A Small Reflection

A small repeated choice can shape a person. The interesting question is not only what I did once, but what I am getting used to doing.

Look at the thing that now feels ordinary. Was it ordinary five years ago? If not, something has been trained. That is not a reason to panic. It is a reason to tell the truth before the next yes becomes even easier.

A short prayer

Lord, show me the small permissions I have stopped noticing. Give me the courage to refuse the next one. Amen.

Chapter 6

The Seven That Have Children

The Church speaks of seven capital sins. Capital here does not mean “the worst seven sins on a list.” It means head, source, root. Other sins grow from them.

The list is old. A desert monk called Evagrius, in the fourth century, named the thoughts that kept attacking people who were trying to pray. John Cassian brought that teaching west. Pope Gregory the Great shaped the seven names most Catholics still hear: pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, sloth.

They are not automatically mortal. A flash of envy is not the same as a planned campaign to damage someone. The list is a way of noticing what lies underneath repeated behaviour.

Pride is not ordinary self-respect. It is the refusal to accept that I am a creature. Greed is not only money. It is the habit of grasping. Envy is sadness at another person’s good. Anger can be a just passion. Wrath is anger that has decided to harm. Lust is not the same as the fact of desire. It is desire used as if another person were only a means. Gluttony is not only food. It is appetite without measure. Sloth, in the older language, is more than staying in bed. The older word is *acedia*: a sadness or weariness toward the good God is asking of me.

That last one needs care. Clinical depression, exhaustion and illness are not the same as sloth. A person who cannot get up because they are ill is not committing a capital sin. A person who can act, and who steadily refuses the good because it feels empty or inconvenient, may be nearer the old meaning.

The list is useful because we often see our own faults under kinder names. Pride can call itself high standards. Wrath can call itself honesty. Envy can call itself fairness. The names help us look again.

A Small Reflection

The seven capital sins can help us notice what lies underneath repeated behaviour.

We are often most comfortable condemning the sins we do not personally find attractive. The more useful question is quieter. Which of these keeps producing the same fruit in me? Name that one, and take it to God.

A short prayer

*Lord, show me what keeps sending the same sin back. Heal that first.
Amen.*

Chapter 7

What I Have Failed to Do

Sin is not only doing what is wrong. It can also be failing to do a good thing that truly belonged to me.

The old name is a sin of omission. The Confiteor still says it: in what I have done and in what I have failed to do.

This needs a limit, or it will crush people. We are not responsible for every unmet need in the world. We are limited. We cannot visit every sick person, answer every message, or solve every injustice we hear about. Not every unanswered phone call is a sin. Not every visit we missed is a sin. Sometimes we forget. Sometimes we are ill. Sometimes another duty took priority.

The real question is narrower. Was there a duty, a responsibility, or a serious opportunity that genuinely belonged to me? A parent who will not care for a child. A nurse who will not give the care that is theirs to give. A witness who stays silent when speech is required. A Catholic who will not help a person they could actually help, and whom no one else is likely to help.

Jesus' story of the man left on the road is about that kind of failure. The priest and the Levite do not attack the wounded man. They pass by. The wrong is the passing by.

Omission can be harder to see than a dramatic act, because nothing happened. No scene. No raised voice. Only an absence. That is why it is worth asking, once, and calmly: what did I owe, and not give?

A Small Reflection

Some wrongs leave no dramatic scene, because the wrong was precisely that nothing happened.

Keep the question inside real duties. You are not guilty of every need you did not meet. You may be responsible for the one that was yours. That smaller question is honest enough.

A short prayer

Lord, show me the good I failed to do when it was mine to do. Give me courage the next time, and rest from false guilt. Amen.

Chapter 8

When Someone Else's Sin Becomes Mine

We can share responsibility for another person's sin. The Catechism names several ways: by participating, by ordering or encouraging, by approving, by helping, by protecting the wrong, or by not opposing it when we have a duty to do so.

This is not the same as ordinary disagreement. It is not the same as living in a world where other people do wrong. Cooperation has to be real. Laughing at cruelty can be a small form of it. Forwarding humiliating material can be another. Covering for workplace dishonesty can be another. Family silence, when someone is being harmed and speech was required of me, can be another.

Catholic theology also uses the word scandal in a precise way. In ordinary speech, scandal often means public embarrassment. In moral theology it means leading another person toward sin. A bad example can do that. So can a joke that makes a wrong look normal.

Do not turn this chapter into a reason to police every conversation. Most of us are not running other people's lives. The useful question is local. Did I make the wrong easier? Did I give it cover? Did I enjoy it from a safe distance?

"I did not start it" is not always the same as "I had nothing to do with it."

A Small Reflection

“I did not start it” is not always the same as “I had nothing to do with it.”

Sharing, laughing, approving, covering up, or staying silent when I truly had a duty to speak can make another person’s wrong partly mine. The question is not whether I invented the act. The question is whether I helped it along.

A short prayer

*Lord, show me the wrongs I have not committed but have helped along.
Give me courage where silence has become my habit. Amen.*

Chapter 9

Conscience Is Not a Feeling

“Follow your conscience” is Catholic teaching. It does not mean “do whatever feels right.”

Conscience, in the Catechism, is a judgment of reason. It is the act by which a person recognises whether a particular choice is good or evil. It is not a mood. It is not a preference. A person can feel peaceful while doing something wrong. A person can feel wretched while doing something they were obliged to do. Feeling is not proof.

Someone says their conscience is clear. That sentence raises another question. Have they formed their conscience, or have they simply become comfortable with the choice? We can become comfortable with almost anything if we repeat it often enough. At the same time, an anxious person may feel guilty about something they did not freely choose. Feeling peaceful is not proof of innocence. Feeling guilty is not proof of guilt. That is why conscience needs truth, not only feelings.

Conscience must be formed. We form it by the Word of God, the teaching of the Church, prayer, reason, honest examination, good counsel, and the habit of not lying to ourselves. An unformed conscience is still a conscience. It can still bind a person in the moment of choice. It can also be wrong.

Obedying a mistaken conscience does not turn a wrong act into a good act. It may mean the person is less guilty, depending on why the conscience was mistaken. If I never asked, because I did not want to know, the excuse is weaker. If I truly could not have known, the Church speaks more gently.

Scruples are the opposite distortion. The conscience becomes frightened and overcrowded. Doubtful thoughts are treated as crimes. Feeling guilty is not proof of guilt. Chapter 13 returns to this at more length.

A conscience can grow quiet for two reasons. One is peace. The other is that we have stopped asking it questions it might answer.

A Small Reflection

I say I am following my conscience. Have I ever formed it, or have I only consulted it when I already knew what I wanted to hear?

Peace after a choice is not always a sign that I was right. A feeling of guilt is not always an accusation from God either. An anxious person can feel guilty about a thought they did not choose. A comfortable person can feel nothing about a habit they have practised for years. The work is telling those voices apart, with Scripture, the Church, and honest advice.

A short prayer

Lord, form my conscience in the truth. Quiet the false accusations, and do not let me call comfort a sign that I was right. Amen.

Chapter 10

When Sin Becomes a System

Personal sin comes first. Structures of sin come after, as their expression and their effect. John Paul II used that phrase when he wrote about social evil. He did not mean that systems sin the way persons do. A company, a government or a parish culture cannot go to confession. Persons can. What they leave behind can still make the next sin easier for the next person.

A structure of sin is a pattern that rewards what should be refused, or punishes what should be done. It can be a workplace where the person who tells the truth becomes the problem. It can be an institution that protects its name more carefully than it protects the vulnerable. It can be a family in which some things are never mentioned. It can be a school, a charity, or a church community that has slowly developed rules nobody wrote down.

Repeated phrases such as “that is just how things work here” can help keep a harmful pattern in place.

This teaching is not owned by one political side. Catholic social teaching can look at a factory, a family, a government, or a parish. The point is the same. People create and maintain harmful patterns. Personal conversion can therefore have social consequences. If enough people refuse the pattern, the pattern weakens.

Do not use the phrase as a way of making nobody responsible. Structures do not confess. People do.

A Small Reflection

A harmful pattern may survive because everyone privately dislikes it and publicly continues it.

Ask a quieter question than “Who designed this system?” Ask: what small part of it do I keep in place by my silence, my laugh, or my habit of looking away? That is a question a person can actually answer.

A short prayer

Lord, show me the patterns I help to keep in place. Give me one honest refusal. Amen.

Chapter 11

Why Say It Out Loud?

Christ gave the Church authority to forgive sins. Confession is not only a conversation. The priest is not simply a listener. Sacramental absolution is Christ's forgiveness spoken in the Church.

Why say the sin out loud? Because when I tell the story only to myself, I can keep changing it. I can add a sentence that makes me look less free than I was. Saying it to another person, in the sacrament, forces a plainer sentence: this is what I did.

Circumstances matter. Fatigue, fear, pressure and habit can affect responsibility. An explanation can be part of the truth. It can also be a defence that arrives too quickly. The little word "but" often appears just after I admit something. Sometimes it is needed. Sometimes it is the old story starting again. The purpose is honesty, not a ban on explanations.

Shame and contrition are not the same thing. A person may feel healthy shame about wrongdoing. Contrition is sorrow for sin and the desire to turn back to God. Confession is ordered toward contrition and toward the words the anxious and the careless both need: I absolve you from your sins.

The history of the sacrament is long. In the early centuries public penance was more common for certain grave sins. Later, especially through the practice of monks in Ireland and Britain, private confession became the ordinary form. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council required the faithful to confess at least once a year. That history is interesting. It is not the centre. The centre is honesty and absolution.

If you have not been for years, you do not need a perfect speech. You need the truth, as simply as you can say it.

A Small Reflection

When I tell the story only to myself, I can keep changing it. Confession asks for a plainer sentence.

The word “but” often appears just after I admit something. Sometimes the explanation is needed. Sometimes it is only a way of staying in control. Try saying the act once without the defence. Then let the sacrament do what you cannot do for yourself.

A short prayer

Lord, take from me the need to explain myself before I have told the truth. Give me a contrition that wants healing. Amen.

Chapter 12

Why the Church Dares to Name Sin

If there were no forgiveness, a clear doctrine of sin would be only a weight. The Church talks about sin because she talks about a God who forgives it. In the Catechism, the section on sin begins by speaking of God's mercy toward sinners. That order matters.

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick, Jesus said. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners. A book about sin that never arrives at that sentence has missed the reason the Church can afford to be honest.

Mercy does not mean pretending that sin does not matter. Forgiveness is good news only if something real is being forgiven. A God who never needed to pardon us would also be a God who never took our freedom seriously. Christianity says the choice mattered. It also says the choice is not the end of the story.

Hell remains in the teaching because love cannot be forced. The Church does not invite us to stare at it. She invites us to repentance, confession, repair where repair is possible, and a beginning that is not a performance. We do not need to rename sin as a mistake in order to make God love us. We do not need to pretend the wound is small. We can name it and bring it.

The last movement of a book about sin should not be "try harder." It should be toward Christ. He knows the difference between temptation and consent. He does not need us to arrive already repaired.

A Small Reflection

We can afford to be honest about sin because Christ is merciful.

What would change if I believed that I am allowed to tell the truth about myself because I will not be abandoned when I do? That is not an invitation to invent guilt. We cannot confess honestly while still pretending we did something different.

A short prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You came for sinners. Give me the courage to tell the truth, and the faith to receive the mercy that truth makes possible.

Amen.

Chapter 13

When the Conscience Cannot Rest

Some people do not treat sin lightly. They treat it as if almost everything might be a mortal sin. A thought arrives, and they ask for hours whether they consented. They leave confession and begin the case again. They go back to the same sins they have already named, because they are not sure they named them well enough. Peace lasts a few minutes. Then the questioning starts.

The Church has a name for this. *Scruples*. It is not holiness. It is a wound in the way the conscience works. A person in this state is often trying very hard to do what is right. The problem is that fear has taken over the judgment. A healthy conscience can tell the difference between a real sin and a fear. A scrupulous conscience often cannot. It treats doubt as proof. It treats a passing thought as a choice. It treats the sacrament as if it had not worked.

Catholic spiritual tradition, including Saint Alphonsus Liguori, has often given the same kind of counsel. Choose one regular confessor. Tell him the truth. Then follow his direction, even when your feelings disagree. Do not keep searching for a priest who will feed the fear. Do not keep confessing sins that have already been honestly confessed and absolved. If a person knowingly hid a mortal sin in confession, that is a different situation and should be said plainly once. Ordinary doubt after an honest confession is not a reason to start again.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola taught that in time of darkness and fear we should not change the decisions we made when we were at peace. That rule belongs to his teaching on discernment. It is not a medical diagnosis. It is still useful here. The anxious mind wants another review. The review is often the fear speaking.

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux knew this from the inside. As a girl she suffered from scruples about confession. What helped her was not more analysis. It was trust. She learned to take God at his word, and to stop treating her feelings as the last court of appeal.

A scrupulous person often thinks they are being careful for God's sake. In practice they are often being careful for the sake of their fear. God is not waiting to catch them out. The Gospel is not a trap.

What often helps is simple, and it is hard because it feels unsafe. Have one confessor, not five. Name sins plainly, then stop. Do not confess a doubt as if it were a certainty. Temptation is not sin. A thought is not consent. Shorten the examination of conscience. If the same question returns after it has been answered, do not answer it again.

Priests who work with scrupulous people often give a further pastoral direction: do not stay away from Holy Communion because of a fear. Stay away only if you are certain of unconfessed mortal sin. That is not a rule this book can apply to every reader. It is the kind of direction a regular confessor may give to a particular person. Follow that priest. Do not let a booklet replace him.

Sometimes the difficulty is also medical. Anxiety and some forms of obsessive thinking can attach themselves to religion. Not every scrupulous person has an illness. Some do. A good priest is not jealous of a good doctor. The two can work together.

Family and friends can help by being calm. Do not argue every case. Do not laugh. Do not say it is nothing, as if the person were inventing pain. Say, more simply: you have confessed this. Trust the absolution. Leave it with God.

The aim is not a dull conscience. The aim is a true one. A true conscience can name real sin. It can also stop accusing when God has forgiven.

A Small Reflection

A scrupulous person often thinks the problem is that they have not been exact enough. Usually the opposite is true. They have been exacting without rest.

What often helps is not more self-examination, but learning to trust the guidance already given. A thought is not yet a sin. Confession works. God is not waiting to catch us on a technicality. If I cannot give myself peace, I can still follow a wise confessor, and then refuse the next replay of the same question.

A short prayer

Lord, quiet the false accusations. Teach me to trust your mercy more than my fear, and to leave at the altar what you have already forgiven. Amen.

A Last Word

On the cover of this book there is a wooden confessional and a kneeler. A person who uses them does not need to exaggerate what they have done. They do not need to minimise it either. They tell the truth. Then they hear something they cannot usefully say to themselves: I absolve you.

The Church has not kept the word sin because she enjoys accusation. She has kept it because what is wrong can meet Christ and be forgiven.

We do not need to call every discomfort a sin. We do not need to call every sin a mere mistake. A thought is not yet a choice. A feeling of guilt is not always a verdict. If this book has done its work, the reader will not feel merely accused. They will feel able to tell the truth, and then to leave it with Christ.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Our Lady, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us.

Saint John Vianney, pray for us.



Silent Homilies
Little Treasures

A word of thanks

If these pages have helped you see the word sin more clearly, and mercy with it, a small gift on the Silent Homilies website would be received with real gratitude. It is never asked as a condition of reading — only as a kindness, if you wish and if you can.

Printing tip

This booklet is designed in A5 format. For best results print double-sided on A5 paper (or print two pages per A4 sheet and cut). Recommended paper: 80–100 gsm for a pleasant reading feel.

Written to be read in one or two sittings.