

Chapter 3:

We Ask for Forgiveness



Introduction

Everyone makes bad choices. When we do something bad, it hurts other people. It also hurts our friendship with God. And it even hurts us and makes us unhappy.

Jesus teaches us that when we do something wrong, we need to ask for forgiveness. He teaches that when someone hurts us, we need to forgive that person. This is the best way to make our friendships with God and other people strong again.

Scripture Story: Jesus Teaches Us How to Be Happy

Jesus was a very good teacher. He taught people how to be happy and good. Let's read one of his teachings:

Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires;

God will satisfy them fully!

Happy are those who are merciful to others;

God will be merciful to them!

Happy are the pure in heart;
they will see God!

Happy are those who work for peace;
God will call them his children!

(Matthew 5:6-9)

In this passage, what does Jesus teach us to do to be happy? He tells us to obey God's Laws. He tells us to be merciful. This means being kind to people who need help and forgiving people who hurt us. He tells us to be pure in heart, which means being good and avoiding sin. Jesus also tells us to work for peace!

Jesus not only taught these things but also lived them. When we follow his teachings and his example, we will be truly happy.

God's Forgiveness

God wants us to be happy. Sometimes, though, we make ourselves unhappy by doing something bad or wrong. Things that are wrong or bad are called sins. When we sin, we do something God does not want us to do. When we sin, we hurt other people and we hurt ourselves. But we can make things better by asking God to forgive us.

We ask for God's forgiveness in our prayers. We also ask for forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. God always forgives us if we ask him. When God forgives us, our sins are all washed away! It's like they never happened in God's eyes. God only asks that we forgive others and that we do our best not to sin again.

God's Treasure of the Eucharist

Asking for God's forgiveness is so important that we do it at every Mass. Do you remember that one of the main parts of the Mass is called the Introductory Rites? During the Introductory Rites, we pray for God's forgiveness. This is called the **Penitential Act**. During the Penitential Act, we do the following:

- say that we are sorry for our sins
- ask God to forgive us for the times we have hurt our friendship with him and others
- promise God in our hearts that we will try to do better

The Penitential Act helps us strengthen our friendship with God. It helps us prepare to listen to the Bible readings and to receive the Eucharist.

During the Penitential Act, the priest or deacon might say, "Lord, have mercy." Then all the people respond, "Lord, have mercy." Then the priest or deacon says, "Christ, have mercy." All the people respond, "Christ, have mercy." Finally, the priest or deacon says again, "Lord, have mercy." All the people respond, "Lord, have mercy" (*Roman Missal*, page 520). Asking for something three times says that what we are asking for is really important.

When we receive the Eucharist, God forgives our less serious, or venial, sins. These are the sins that weaken our relationship with God. Receiving the Eucharist also strengthens us to resist serious, or mortal, sins. These are sins that would separate us from God.

To receive Holy Communion, we must be in a state of grace; that is, our relationship with God and with the People of God, the Church, cannot be completely broken by mortal sin. If someone has committed a mortal sin, they must not receive Communion until they have confessed the sin in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and received absolution.

Things to Remember

- Jesus taught us that there are actions that lead to true happiness. These include being merciful, being pure in heart, and working for peace.
- God always forgives our sins when we ask him to do so with an honest heart.
- We want to be in a state of friendship with God when we receive the Eucharist.
- We ask for God's forgiveness at the beginning of Mass to prepare for the Eucharist.