



A Deep and Contemporary Look at the Tenth Article of the Creed

“I believe in the forgiveness of sins.”

Few phrases in the Creed are so brief and, at the same time, so revolutionary. In just a few words, Christianity proclaims something that no human philosophy had ever been able to offer fully: man can truly be forgiven.

This is not merely about “feeling better,” forgetting past mistakes, or learning to live with one’s wounds. The Creed affirms something far greater: God has the power to erase sin, and He has chosen to entrust that power to His Church.

We live in a strange age regarding sin. On one hand, many deny its existence. Everything seems reduced to psychological errors, social conditioning, or personal decisions without eternal consequences. Yet on the other hand, there has never been so much guilt, anxiety, inner emptiness, and longing for redemption. Modern man tries to free himself from moral weight, yet still feels accused within.

The reason is simple: the human heart knows it was created for truth and goodness. And when it turns away from God, something within it breaks.

That is why the tenth article of the Creed is not an ancient formula without relevance today. It is one of the most hopeful messages in existence. Christianity proclaims that no sin has the final word when man approaches the mercy of God with sincere repentance.

What Does the Tenth Article of the Creed Teach Us?

The traditional catechism teaches:

“The tenth article of the Creed teaches us that Jesus Christ has left to His Church the power to forgive sins.”



Here we find a central truth of the Catholic faith: Christ did not want forgiveness to remain an abstract idea or a purely interior experience. He wanted it to be visible, concrete, sacramental, and accessible.

Christian forgiveness does not depend on emotional states. Nor on simple self-suggestion. It depends on the real action of the risen Christ acting through His Church.

When Our Lord appeared to the Apostles after the Resurrection, He spoke astonishing words:

“Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained” (Jn 20:22-23).

That moment is fundamental. The risen Christ gives the Church a divine authority: to reconcile sinners with God.

It is not a medieval invention. It is not a structure of power created by men. It is the explicit will of Jesus Christ.

The Drama of Sin: A Forgotten Word

To understand forgiveness, we must first understand what sin is.

And here we encounter one of the great spiritual problems of our age: we have lost the sense of sin.

Many no longer distinguish between good and evil objectively. Everything appears relative. What matters is “feeling authentic,” “following your heart,” or “living your own truth.”

Yet when the sense of sin disappears, the sense of grace also disappears.

Because the Gospel only makes sense if there is something from which we need to be saved.

Sin is not merely breaking a religious rule. It is rejecting the love of God. It is placing one’s own will above the Creator’s. It is a deep wound in the soul.



Saint Augustine defined sin as the disordered love of self carried to the contempt of God.

And this reality produces concrete consequences:

- it darkens the intellect;
- weakens the will;
- enslaves man;
- breaks relationships;
- destroys inner peace;
- cools spiritual life;
- and, if mortal and unrepented, separates eternally from God.

That is why the forgiveness of sins is not an “extra” in Christianity. It is the very center of Redemption.

Christ came precisely to save sinners.

Christ: The Lamb Who Takes Away the Sin of the World

The entire history of salvation points toward this mystery.

In the Old Testament we find sacrifices, purifications, and penitential rites preparing the coming of the true Redeemer.

When Saint John the Baptist sees Jesus, he cries out:

“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29).

Christ’s mission is to remove sin.

Not simply to ignore it.



Not to relativize it.

Not to justify it.

But to destroy it through the sacrifice of the Cross.

On Calvary the great act of reconciliation between God and humanity takes place. Jesus Christ bears upon Himself the weight of human sin and opens once more the gates of grace.

The Cross reveals two things simultaneously:

- the terrible gravity of sin;
- and the infinite immensity of divine mercy.

No man can seriously gaze upon the Crucified and continue believing that sin “is not such a big deal.”

But neither can he despair, because the same Crucified One prays:

| *“Father, forgive them.”*

Can the Church Forgive Every Kind of Sin?

The catechism answers:

| *“Yes, indeed; the Church can forgive all sins, no matter how many or how grave they may be, because Jesus Christ has given her full power to bind and to loose.”*

This affirmation is immensely consoling.

There is no sin greater than the mercy of God.



The history of the Church is filled with saints who were once great sinners:

- Saint Peter denied Christ three times;
- Saint Paul persecuted Christians;
- Saint Augustine lived a disordered life;
- Saint Mary Magdalene was freed from grave sins;
- Saint Camillus de Lellis had a turbulent youth;
- Saint Ignatius of Loyola lived obsessed with worldly vanity.

And yet all were transformed by grace.

Divine mercy has no limits for the one who sincerely repents.

This is especially important today because we live in an age marked by spiritual despair. Many people believe they no longer have any solution. They think:

- “God cannot forgive me.”
- “I have gone too far.”
- “My life is ruined.”
- “I always fall again.”
- “I am not worthy to return.”

But it is precisely for those hearts that Christ came.

The devil tries to convince man of two opposite errors:

1. that sin does not matter;
2. or that sin can no longer be forgiven.

Both are lies.

The Power to “Bind and Loose”

Jesus gave the Apostles the authority to “bind and loose,” a juridical expression used in the Jewish world to indicate real authority.

To Saint Peter He says:



“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 16:19).

The keys symbolize authority.

That is why sacramental forgiveness is not merely spiritual advice or a communal prayer. It is both a judicial and medicinal act.

The priest acts *in persona Christi*, that is, in the person of Christ.

When the penitent hears:

“I absolve you from your sins...”

it is Christ Himself who forgives.

This point is profoundly Catholic and profoundly beautiful.

God knows that man needs visible signs. He needs to hear. He needs certainty. He needs to experience reconciliation concretely.

That is why Christ instituted the sacraments.

Who Exercises This Authority in the Church?

The catechism teaches:

“Those in the Church who exercise the power to forgive sins are, first of all, the Pope, who alone possesses the fullness of this power; then the Bishops and, under dependence upon the Bishops, the priests.”



Here appears the hierarchical structure willed by Christ.

The power to absolve does not originate in the priest as an individual. It is not something personal. It comes from Christ and is transmitted sacramentally through Holy Orders.

This protects the Church from arbitrariness.

The priest does not “invent” forgiveness.

He is an instrument of a divine authority greater than himself.

That is why the priest must be:

- faithful to doctrine;
- prudent;
- merciful;
- discreet;
- firm against sin;
- and filled with charity toward the penitent.

Catholic tradition has always regarded the confessional as one of the holiest places on earth.

There true spiritual battles are fought.

There sins die.

There souls rise again.

There conversions begin.

Baptism and Penance

The catechism continues:

“The Church forgives sins through the merits of Jesus Christ,



conferring the sacraments instituted by Him for this purpose, especially Baptism and Penance.”

Baptism: The First Great Forgiveness

Baptism removes:

- original sin;
- all personal sins;
- and all punishment due to sin.

That is why the first Christians called Baptism “illumination” and “new birth.”

Man emerges spiritually renewed.

But after Baptism, human frailty remains. The Christian can fall again.

And there appears the immense gift of Confession.

Penance: The Father’s Embrace

The sacrament of Penance is one of the greatest treasures of the Catholic Church.

In it something extraordinary happens:

- the sinner acknowledges his guilt;
- repents;
- confesses his sins;
- receives absolution;
- and returns to friendship with God.

The parable of the prodigal son perfectly summarizes this mystery.

The son departs.



Squanders his inheritance.

Falls into misery.

But when he returns repentant, the father runs to embrace him.

That father is God.

Confession is not a tribunal of humiliation, but a tribunal of mercy.

Yes, it requires humility.

Yes, it requires true repentance.

Yes, it requires a firm purpose of amendment.

But precisely there authentic freedom begins.

The Current Crisis of Confession

One of the gravest spiritual dramas of our time is the abandonment of the sacrament of Penance.

Many Catholics go years without confessing.

Some out of ignorance.

Others out of shame.

Others because they have lost the sense of sin.

And others because they believe it is enough simply to “speak directly to God.”

Certainly, we must pray directly to God every day. But Christ also willed a concrete sacramental means for full reconciliation.

Frequent confession was a constant practice among the saints.



Why?

Because they understood something modern society has forgotten: sin weakens the soul even when it appears small.

Today there is a tendency to reduce Christianity to generic values of kindness or solidarity. But the Gospel speaks of real conversion.

It is not enough merely to “be a good person.”

The Christian is called to fight against sin and seek holiness.

The Fear of Going to Confession

Many people feel fear before going to confession.

It is a deeply human fear.

Sometimes because of shame.

Sometimes because many years have passed.

Sometimes because they do not know how to do it.

But almost everyone who returns to confession after a long time experiences the same thing: immense peace.

The devil makes a great deal of noise before confession and great silence afterward.

Sacramental grace produces a true interior liberation.

That is why so many saints recommended frequent confession.

Saint Pio of Pietrelcina spent countless hours hearing confessions.

Saint John Mary Vianney transformed Ars from the confessional.



Saint Leopold Mandic dedicated his life to reconciling souls.

All understood that the forgiveness of sins is a divine work capable of renewing the world.

Mercy Does Not Mean Relativism

Here it is important to clarify something very significant.

Speaking about mercy does not mean denying the existence of sin.

True mercy does not justify evil: it heals it.

Christ forgave the adulterous woman, but He also told her:

| *“Go, and sin no more.”*

Today there is a risk of turning mercy into permissiveness.

But authentic love always calls to conversion.

The Church cannot change the moral truth revealed by God. She can accompany the sinner, help him, sustain him, and forgive him, but she can never call evil good.

Precisely because the Church loves man, she proclaims the truth.

Forgiveness Transforms Society

The tenth article of the Creed does not have only individual spiritual consequences. It also has enormous social consequences.

A society incapable of forgiveness eventually destroys itself.



We live in times marked by:

- cancel culture;
- permanent resentment;
- public exposure of mistakes;
- lack of reconciliation;
- and the inability to begin again.

Christianity introduces something revolutionary: the possibility of redemption.

No one is forever reduced to his worst sin if he sincerely repents.

That does not eliminate the human consequences of actions, but it does open the door to moral and spiritual restoration.

Without forgiveness, the world becomes uninhabitable.

Forgiveness Also Requires Forgiving

There is another essential aspect: whoever receives God's forgiveness is called to forgive others.

The Our Father states it clearly:

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us..."

The Christian cannot live rooted in hatred.

This does not mean denying justice or pretending evil never happened. Nor does it mean allowing abuse or destructive relationships.

But it does mean renouncing resentment as a permanent way of life.



The heart that experiences divine mercy slowly begins to learn mercy toward others.

The Confessional: A Place of Hope in the 21st Century

In a hyperconnected, accelerated, and deeply wounded culture, the confessional remains one of the most countercultural places in the world.

There social success does not matter.

Digital image does not matter.

Appearance does not matter.

Only the truth of the soul before God matters.

And precisely for that reason it remains so powerful.

In a world where many shout and few listen, the confessional continues to be a place of silence, truth, and mercy.

“I Believe in the Forgiveness of Sins”

Every time we pray the Creed, we proclaim this truth.

Not as an abstract idea.

But as a living reality.

We believe that:

- Christ conquered sin;



- the Church received authority to forgive;
- no repentant sinner is lost;
- and the mercy of God continues to act today.

The tenth article of the Creed is, in the end, a declaration of hope.

Because while forgiveness remains possible, holiness remains possible.

While mercy exists, no one is definitively defeated.

And while Christ continues waiting in the sacrament of Penance, the world will never be completely lost.