



A Forgotten Teaching of the Catechism That Will Change Your Confession (and Your Way of Living)

We live in an age in which sin is almost always understood as something **individual**, intimate, “between God and me.” But the **Catholic Tradition**—far more realistic and profound—reminds us of something uncomfortable, timely, and deeply evangelical: **□ we sin not only by what we do, but also by what we allow, promote, or keep silent about.**

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church**, in no. **1868**, gathers an ancient, demanding, and today almost forgotten teaching: **the nine ways of participating in another's sin**. Understanding them does not only transform our moral conscience; it **radically changes the way we go to confession, the way we work, educate, vote, consume... and love.**

This article seeks to be a **guide**, a **mirror**, and a **call to conversion**, from a **solid theological, pastoral, and deeply current perspective**.

1. What Does the Catechism Actually Say? (CCC 1868)

The Catechism states clearly:

“Sin is a personal act. Moreover, we have a responsibility for the sins committed by others when we cooperate in them...” (CCC 1868)

And it lists **nine concrete forms** of this cooperation:

1. Participating directly and voluntarily
2. Ordering, advising, praising, or approving
3. Not disclosing or not preventing them when one has the obligation
4. Protecting those who do evil
5. Contributing to the creation of structures of sin

(traditional moral theology develops these into **nine classic modes**, which we will examine



one by one).

Here is a key affirmation:

- **silence can be sinful**
- **moral neutrality does not exist**
- **omission also stains the conscience**

2. Biblical Roots: Sin Is Never Only “My Own Business”

Sacred Scripture is clear: **evil spreads when it is tolerated.**

“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil!”

(Isaiah 5:20)

“Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them”

(Ephesians 5:11)

“Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin”

(James 4:17)

The Bible does not conceive morality in an individualistic way. **We are responsible for one another**, especially when our position, influence, or silence legitimizes evil.



3. The Nine Ways of Participating in Another's Sin (Explained One by One)

1□ Commanding Sin

When one orders another to do something objectively evil.

□ Contemporary example:

- Employers who demand lying, falsifying data, or workplace abuse.
- Authorities who impose unjust laws.

□ Theological key:

The one who commands **assumes the principal guilt**, even if he does not carry out the act.

2□ Advising Sin

Suggesting, pushing, or justifying an evil action.

□ Example:

- “Do it, nobody will find out.”
- “That’s not really a sin anymore today.”

△ Pastoral warning:

Many grave sins begin with an **apparently harmless piece of advice**.

3□ Consenting to Sin

Approving interiorly or exteriorly of an evil action.

□ Example:

- Laughing at a blasphemy.
- Applauding immoral behavior “just to avoid awkwardness.”



□ This directly includes the **culture of likes**, applause, and complicit silence.

4□ Provoking Sin

Creating the conditions that lead another to sin.

□ Example:

- Leading someone into temptation knowing their weakness.
- Promoting content that pushes others toward vice.

□ Classical moral teaching:

Even if you do not perform the act, **you are a moral cause of it.**

5□ Praising Sin

Publicly exalting what is objectively evil.

□ Example:

- Glorifying infidelity, violence, abortion, or corruption.
- Rewarding unjust behavior.

□ *"They not only do them but approve those who practice them"* (Romans 1:32)

6□ Concealing Sin

Hiding evil when there is a duty to report or correct it.

□ Example:

- Silencing abuse.
- Covering up injustices "for the good of the institution."



⚠ Attention:

Not all discretion is sinful, **but culpable concealment is.**

7□ Remaining Silent When One Must Correct

Culpable silence.

□ Example:

- Failing to warn a brother who is going astray.
- Not correcting a child, employee, or faithful person under your responsibility.

□ “*If you do not speak to warn the wicked, I will require his blood at your hand*” (Ezekiel 33:8)

8□ Defending the One Who Sins

Justifying, protecting, or victimizing the guilty without seeking conversion.

□ Example:

- “That’s just how he is; you have to understand.”
- “Don’t exaggerate—everyone does it.”

□ Pastorally:

Mercy **never justifies sin**; it seeks the truth that sets free.

9□ Participating Directly

Actively cooperating in the evil act.

□ Example:

- Material collaboration.
- Providing means or resources.



□ Here guilt is evident, but **not always the most common.**

4. A Forgotten Teaching... Yet Urgently Needed Today

Why is this doctrine hardly ever preached?

- Because it is uncomfortable.
- Because it demands moral courage.
- Because it unmasks relativism.
- Because it forces us to examine **our social, professional, and digital lives.**

Today we participate in another's sin:

- through **likes**
- through **silence**
- through **consumption choices**
- through **votes**
- through **business decisions**
- through **the content we share**

□ The Catechism is more relevant than ever.

5. Practical Guide for Examination of Conscience and Confession

Key questions (theological and pastoral):

- Have I remained silent out of comfort when I should have spoken?
- Have I approved or spread ideas contrary to faith and morals?
- Have I given bad advice to avoid discomfort?
- Have I protected injustices out of fear or self-interest?
- Have I indirectly cooperated with evil in my work or environment?

□ **Important:**



These sins **must also be confessed**, specifying:

- the type of cooperation
- the gravity
- the frequency
- the degree of responsibility

6. A Path of Conversion: From Accomplices to Witnesses

The good news is this:

the same mechanism works for good

Just as evil spreads through cooperation, **holiness does as well**:

- correcting with charity
- speaking the truth
- remaining silent when appropriate, but **never out of cowardice**
- refusing to applaud evil
- consciously choosing the good

| “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13)

Salt makes no noise, but **it prevents everything from rotting**.

7. Conclusion: A Doctrine That Changes Life

The nine ways of participating in another's sin are not a list meant to foster scrupulosity, but **a school of Christian responsibility**.

They remind us that:

- we are not islands
- we are not neutral



- we are not mere spectators

Every Christian is called to live with a conscience that is **awake, well-formed, and courageous.**

Because sometimes **the gravest sin is not what we do,**
but what we allow others to do in our name.