

IF WE REPENT, GOD WILL FORGIVE US

—by St. John Chrysostom—

Are you a sinner? Do not despair. Come to church with repentance. Have you sinned? Say to God: “I have sinned.” You find it so difficult to confess your sin? But if you do not accuse yourself first, the devil will eventually accuse you. Therefore, before he has a chance to do so, strip him of his power; because, truly, his role is to accuse us. Erase your sin before he has a chance to blame you. For you have an accuser who will not remain silent.

Have you sinned? I ask nothing else from you except this: enter the church and say to God with repentance, “I have sinned.” Because it is written: “confess your sins first, so that you may be justified” (Isa. 43:26). Confess your sin so that you may erase it. This does not require any effort, or many words, or large sums of money, or any other such thing. It only takes three words: “I have sinned.”

Have you sinned? Come to Church and erase your sin. Every time you fall while walking you get up. Similarly, every time you sin, repent. Do not despair; do not become indifferent, so that you do not lose hope in the heavenly riches that are in store for us. Even if you sin late in life when you have grown old, repent and come to Church. The Church is a hospital not a court. It bestows forgiveness; it does not demand accountability for the sin. Say to God: “Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil before Thee” (Ps. 50:6), and He will forgive you. Show Him that you repent, and He will have mercy on you. If we do our part, God will do His part.

Since the almighty Lord is so loving and merciful, let us not remain indifferent for our salvation. Waiting for us are the Kingdom of Heaven, Paradise, and goods that no human eye has seen, that no human ear has heard, and which no human mind can conceive. Shouldn't we do whatever we can in order not to lose these things? Shouldn't we give something trivial in order to acquire these great and invaluable things? Therefore, let us repent, let our hands become accustomed to giving to others, let us humble ourselves, let us mourn and cry for our sins. All these things are small. But great and beyond our strength are the things that will be given to us by God; that is, Paradise, and the Kingdom of Heaven. May we all be worthy of entering it, through His grace.