

DEAR DEACON

❖ Dear Deacon Jim,

I have a question regarding sins and forgiveness. Are all sins forgiven when we confess them at the sacrament of Reconciliation, even if they are big sins?

Also, if you happen to lose faith in God and then return to Him again later, will God still look at and judge you the same as people who continuously believed in God throughout their life?

❖ Response

In response to your first question concerning sins and forgiveness, the Catholic Church teaches that there is no sin, no matter how serious, that cannot be forgiven (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*). There is no sin greater than God's mercy will not forgive so long as we acknowledge it, repent, and seek forgiveness. God has given humans the gift of free will and does not force us to reconcile, but gives us the freedom to accept or reject divine mercy. God's mercy is more powerful than any human ability to do evil.

"Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin" (CCC No. 982).

Regarding the next question, it is certainly not a good thing to lose faith in God. In scripture, we see from Abraham to Peter, that there are at least several of God's people falling away and the Father welcoming them back when they turn to Him. A more recent example we may consider is that of Saint Mother Teresa. There are excerpts from correspondence suggests at least on two occasions St. Teresa was tempted or doubted and questioned God's "silence" and her "emptiness," and "loneliness." However, the rest of the correspondence suggests that such doubts did not last. Returning from these doubts, Teresa stands in good company among saints with similar struggles, and even with Jesus himself, who cried out from the cross: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).*

So, if one falls away from faith and returns, the Father will welcome that person back with open arms. He will judge that person in the same light as the one who remained faithful during their entire life.

Deacon Jim