

46. Against the background of what has been said so far, certain other words of Jesus, shocking and disturbing ones, become easier to understand. We might call them the words of "unforgiveness." They are reported for us by the Synoptics in connection with a particular sin which is called "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit."

This is how they are reported in their three versions:

Matthew: "Whoever says a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come."**180**

Mark: "All sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin."**181**

Luke: "Every one who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven."**182**

Why is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit unforgivable? How should this blasphemy be understood ? St. Thomas Aquinas replies that it is a question of a sin that is "unforgivable by its very nature, insofar as it excludes the elements through which the forgiveness of sin takes place."

According to such an exegesis, "blasphemy" does not properly consist in offending against the Holy Spirit in words; it consists rather in the refusal to accept the salvation which God offers to man through the Holy Spirit, working through the power of the Cross.

If man rejects the "convincing concerning sin" which comes from the Holy Spirit and which has the power to save, he also rejects the "coming" of the Counselor-that "coming" which was accomplished in the Paschal Mystery, in union with the redemptive power of Christ's Blood: the Blood which "purifies the conscience from dead works." We know that the result of such a purification is the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, whoever rejects the Spirit and the Blood remains in "dead works," in sin. And the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit consists precisely in the radical refusal to accept this forgiveness, of which he is the intimate giver and which presupposes the genuine conversion which he brings about in the conscience. If Jesus says that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the next, it is because this "non-forgiveness" is linked, as to its cause, to "non-repentance," in other words to the radical refusal to be converted.

Convincing Sin:

1848 As St. Paul affirms, “Where sin increased, grace

abounded all the more.”¹¹⁸ But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us “righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹¹⁹ Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin:

Conversion *requires convincing of sin*; it includes the interior judgment of conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man’s inmost being, becomes at the same time the start of a new grant of grace and love: “Receive the Holy Spirit.” Thus in this “convincing concerning sin” we discover *a double gift*: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Consoler.¹²⁰