

## Sins Against the Holy Spirit

By Andrea Phillips

(And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come" (Matt. 12:32)

What is a sin against the Holy Spirit? Reverend V V Francis Spirago in his masterful book, *The Catechism Explained*, elucidates this terrible sin that, somehow, bypasses the all-merciful God: "The sin against the Holy Spirit is not a sin of frailty,... [but] of diabolical malice, and, therefore, it is deserving of more severe punishment."<sup>1</sup>

Father Spirago compares the loving action of the Holy Spirit to the beneficent light of the sun, which once let in, illuminates, warms and vivifies. He compares a soul that sins against the Holy Spirit to a room whose shutters have been purposely and obstinately shut against this light.

This sin is, mostly, the result of a wicked life, steeped in mortal sin, leading to spiritual blindness and a hardened will. Thus, the sin against the Holy Spirit is only unforgiveable because the sinner shoves the grace of repentance away from himself or herself.

True, like with an incurable illness, God can work a miracle. In the case of a hardened heart, He can give a special grace that helps the sinner to change his will. But such an intervention is not in accordance to His ordinary providence. A soul who has habitually squandered ordinary, sufficient grace cannot expect an extraordinary rescue.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, the power of intercessory prayer; such a prayer can obtain—and indeed has in many an instance obtained—such a miracle.

There are six sins against the Holy Spirit:

- Presumption of God's mercy: living a life of sin counting on the assumption that, in the end, God will forgive.
- Despair: through pride, believing that one's sins are greater than God's mercy.
- Impugning the known truth: knowingly denying the truth known and revealed as such, and calling truth "falsehood," or vice versa.
- Envy at another's spiritual good: resenting the spiritual good and advancement of another.
- Obstinacy in sin: refusal to give up sin, and calling sin "virtue."
- Final impenitence: refusal to give up sin, and to seek forgiveness to the end.

Notes:

1. Spirago-Clarke, *The Catechism Explained*, (Tan Books and Lockford, III, 1993), p. 460
2. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07409a.htm>