

Why Does He Eat With Sinners?

WHAT WE FOUND

- The order in Mark 2 is the argument: Jesus calls Levi, then eats in his house with many tax collectors and sinners, and only then does the complaint arrive. Repentance was not the price of admission to that table.
- The objectors did not ask Jesus. They asked his disciples. The objection to Christ usually arrives at the friend.
- The physician saying concedes the diagnosis and refuses the inference. Jesus agrees they are sick, and points out that sick people are who a doctor is for. Nearness is not endorsement.
- In Luke 15 the accusation "this man receives sinners and eats with them" becomes the heading over the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. His critics summarized the Gospel better than they knew.
- In Matthew's version Jesus answers the objection by assigning reading: Hosea 6:6, an oracle rebuking Ephraim and Judah for a covenant love like a morning cloud, which Jesus turns on the Pharisees.
- The standard never moved. The same Gospel has him at Levi's table and teaching hard things about the heart and about marriage. Correction is ordinarily heard far better inside a relationship of trust, though parents, pastors and prophets legitimately correct without it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Chrysostom on who the Church is for

Preaching on St. Matthew's Gospel, St. John Chrysostom teaches in substance that Christ's answer to the objectors turns the whole charge around: a physician found among the sick is not thereby under accusation; the sick are the reason he came at all.

That much is his. The application this study draws is our own: a person who stays away because they feel unworthy has misunderstood what kind of house it is.

St. John Chrysostom, summarized from his Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew. A faithful summary of his teaching, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | Pope Francis on medicine and prizes

Pope Francis wrote that the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak, and that the Church is not a tollhouse.

Read this alongside what the Church also teaches, because the paragraph is often quoted with the second half cut off. The Church's discipline that a person conscious of grave sin must receive sacramental absolution before communion is unchanged (CCC 1385; and see St. Paul at 1 Corinthians 11:27-29 for the biblical warning about unworthy reception, which is a distinct point). The application of this paragraph is genuinely debated among faithful Catholics. What is not debated is the pastoral posture: no one is refused welcome, pastoral care, or the call to conversion because their life is a mess, even though sacramental discipline remains in force.

Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium 47 (2013), read together with CCC 1385.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | The Second Vatican Council on a Church that holds sinners close

The Council taught that the Church, clasping sinners to her bosom, is at once holy and always in need of purification, and that she constantly follows the path of penance and renewal.

This is the sentence that keeps tonight honest in both directions. It does not say the Church tolerates sin. It says she holds sinners close, and that every one of her members has to reckon with his own need for purification.

Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium 8 (1964); see also CCC 827.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

Rung 3 of the ladder. From listening to hospitality. This week you share a meal, and you pay.

- Keep praying for the three by name, daily.
- Eat with one of the three this week. A real meal or a real coffee, sitting down, an hour if you can get it.
- Go with no agenda at all. No steering, no opening, no plan for how faith might come up. If it comes up, follow it and stay honest.
- Pay. Do not make anything of it.
- Afterward, ask yourself one question: was I with them, or was I working on them? Bring the answer, not the person, back next week.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:17

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read John 4:1-42 before we meet, all of it, in one sitting. It is long, and reading it in pieces will cost you the shape of the conversation.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 588.** Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as with themselves.
- **CCC 545.** Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom, and invites them to the conversion without which one cannot enter it.
- **CCC 1443.** Jesus receiving sinners at his table signifies both God's forgiveness and their reinstatement into the People of God.
- **CCC 1385.** Anyone conscious of grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion.
- **CCC 2447.** The spiritual works of mercy, including instructing, advising, consoling, and forgiving.
- **CCC 827.** The Church, holding sinners close, is at once holy and always in need of purification (see Lumen Gentium 8).