

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-2:2

WHAT WE FOUND

The first fold is open: **God is light**, "and in him is no darkness at all" (1:5). We found the passage built as three false claims ("if we say..." 1:6, 8, 10) answered by three remedies (1:7, 9; 2:1-2). God never asks us to arrive sinless; he asks us to arrive truthful. Proverbs said it first: the one who conceals will not prosper; the one who confesses and forsakes obtains mercy (Proverbs 28:13).

"Confess" in 1:9 is *homologeō*: to say the same thing, to agree with God about our sin instead of renaming or hiding it. And the same apostle recorded where that spoken confession was given a home: the risen Jesus breathed on the apostles and gave them authority to forgive and retain sins (John 20:21-23). Confession to God and confession in his Church are not rivals; the sacrament is where 1:9 becomes audible.

When we do fall, we have an *advocate* with the Father, and he is himself the expiation (*hilasmos*), the atoning sacrifice of the Day of Atonement become a person (Paul makes the related image explicit when he calls Christ the *hilastērion*, the mercy seat, in Romans 3:25), "not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (2:2). Run toward the light, never away from it.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine *Ten Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Homily 1*

Augustine presses John's paradox: the one who admits he is a sinner is the one who has the truth in him, for the first thing God's light shows a man is himself. Begin with confession, he preaches, for the confession of sins is where walking in the light begins, and the one who excuses himself shuts the door on the physician.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose *On Penance, Book I*

Against rigorists who claimed the Church could not absolve grave sin after baptism, Ambrose insists that the Lord left his Church both water and tears: the water of baptism and the tears of penance. The power to forgive is God's alone, but he willed to exercise it through the ministry he established, and a mercy the Church may not dispense is a mercy denied to the weakest.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage *On the Lapsed*

Writing to Christians who had failed under persecution, Cyprian urges them to confess while confession can still be heard and satisfaction still be made. He praises those who confess even the hidden sins of thought to God's priests, unburdening the conscience honestly and finding in that honesty the remedy, small though the

wound may seem.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

1.

Go to confession this week, or put a specific date and time on your calendar right now. Bring the one thing you have concealed longest.

2.

Each night before bed, pray a two-minute examination of conscience and end it by praying 1 John 1:9 out loud.

3.

Read Psalm 32 once this week and mark every line about silence versus acknowledgment. Notice what David says happened to him physically while he kept quiet.

MEMORY VERSE

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9, RSV2CE)

BEFORE NEXT SESSION

Read **1 John 2:3-17**. Keep your second blank sealed. As you read, circle every occurrence of the words *know* and *love*.

Catechism Connection: CCC 1847; 1422-1424; 1440-1445