

STUDENT HANDOUT SUMMARY

Newman on Lent - Sunday 4: Sin, Judgment, and True Repentance

“God Is Merciful and Just”

Primary Text: *Newman on Lent: Meditations and Sermons*

By St. John Henry Cardinal Newman

1. Core Theme of the Lesson

St. John Henry Newman teaches that the Gospel reveals two inseparable truths about God:

God is merciful and God is just.

Modern religion often emphasizes mercy but avoids speaking about sin and judgment. Newman warns that when the seriousness of sin is forgotten, repentance disappears.

Lent calls us to face reality honestly:

- Sin separates us from God
- Judgment is real
- Repentance is necessary for salvation

God’s mercy invites us to conversion before judgment arrives.

Key Scripture Reflection:

“If Thou, O Lord, shalt mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand? But with Thee there is merciful forgiveness.” (Psalm 130:3–4)

2. The Seriousness of Sin

Sin is not merely:

- a mistake
- a weakness
- a psychological problem

Sin is a deliberate turning away from God.

The Cross reveals the seriousness of sin. If sin were insignificant, Christ would not have needed to suffer and die.

When the sense of sin disappears, repentance disappears as well.

Lent calls us to rediscover the truth about sin so that we may turn back to God sincerely.

3. Presumption vs. Repentance

Newman warns against the sin of presumption, which occurs when a person assumes God will forgive them without true repentance.

Examples of presumption:

- “God will forgive me anyway.”
- “Everyone does this.”
- “It’s not that serious.”
- “I will change later.”

God’s mercy is real, but it is meant to lead us to repentance.

Mercy is not permission to continue in sin.

Mercy is an invitation to conversion.

4. The Fear of God as a Gift

The fear of God is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

It does not mean terror, but reverence and awareness of God's holiness.

The fear of God helps the soul:

- avoid sin
- remain humble
- take moral responsibility seriously

Without the fear of God, the soul becomes careless about sin.

With it, the soul grows in holiness and sincerity.

5. Contrition vs. Regret

Not all sorrow for sin is true repentance.

Regret

Focuses on consequences such as embarrassment, punishment, or loss.

Contrition

Focuses on the offense against God.

True contrition includes:

- sorrow for offending God
- hatred of sin

- a desire to change one's life

Contrition leads the soul to confession and amendment of life.

6. Confession and Amendment of Life

True repentance requires concrete action.

The Sacrament of Confession allows us to:

- acknowledge our sins honestly
- receive God's forgiveness
- receive grace to begin again

But repentance also requires amendment of life a sincere effort to avoid sin in the future.

The goal of repentance is not only forgiveness, but transformation.

7. Key Spiritual Takeaways

- Sin is a serious offense against God.
- God's mercy does not eliminate His justice.
- Presumption weakens repentance.
- The fear of God protects the soul from complacency.
- True contrition focuses on offending God, not merely consequences.
- Confession and amendment of life are essential to true repentance.

8. Personal Reflection Questions

- Do I fear sin itself or only its consequences?
- Have I ever presumed upon God's mercy?
- Have I confused God's patience with approval?
- Do I experience true contrition for my sins?
- When was my last sincere confession?

9. Weekly Lenten Resolution

Primary Resolution

Make a careful and honest Confession during Lent.

Confession Date:

Secondary Resolution

Perform one hidden act of penance this week.

Examples:

- fasting quietly
- offering a sacrifice without recognition
- performing an anonymous act of charity
- accepting a difficulty without complaint

My Hidden Act of Penance:

10. Spiritual Reminder

St. John Henry Newman reminds us that God's mercy and justice work together.

God's mercy calls us to repentance before the day of judgment arrives.

Lent is a time to respond sincerely to that mercy.

God is merciful.

God is just.

Therefore repentance must be real.

“Now is the acceptable time; now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2)