

## Mortal sin

- **Mortal sin**, according to the beliefs of Catholicism, and some Protestant denominations, is a sin that, unless confessed and absolved (or at least sacramental confession is willed if not available), condemns a person's soul to Hell after death.
- These sins are considered "mortal" because they constitute a rupture in a person's link to God's saving grace: the person's soul becomes "dead", not merely weakened.
- The phrase is used in 1 John 5.16 -17: "If you see your brother or sister committing what is not a mortal sin, you will ask, and God will give life to such a one - to those whose sin is not mortal. There is sin that is mortal; I do not say you should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that is not mortal." (NRSV)

### Catholicism

- In Catholic moral theology, a mortal sin, as distinct from a venial sin, must meet all of the following conditions:
- Its subject must be a grave (or serious) matter.
- It must be committed with full knowledge, both of the sin and of the gravity of the offense (though nobody is deemed to be ignorant of the moral law, embedded into the consciences of every human being).
- It must be committed with deliberate and complete consent, enough for it to have been a personal decision to commit the sin.

- The Catechism defines grave matter as "violations of what Jesus told to the man who asked him what the most important commandments were, namely, "do not kill", "do not steal", "do not commit adultery", "do not bear false witness", "do not defraud" and "honor your father and your mother".<sup>[1]</sup>
- All of these, however, are subject both to the conditions above and to mitigating circumstances (like mental illness, emotional or behavioral disturbance, insanity, retardation, young age, affective immaturity, or developmental disorders) of the individual situation.
- The Church itself does not provide a precise list of sins, subdivided into the mortal and venial categories. After a thorough examination of conscience the person should be able to work out the seriousness of the sins which they have committed.
- These sins must be specifically confessed and named, giving details about the context of each sin: what sin, why, against what or whom, the number and type of occurrences, and any other factors which may exacerbate or lessen one's responsibility and culpability.
- It also should be said that serious sins like missing Sunday Mass are not as serious as, for instance, first degree murder.
- Catholic belief holds that mortal sins can vary somewhat in their seriousness, and thus canon law only criminalizes some of the more serious mortal sins.
- Some mortal sins incur excommunication by the Church - for example – abortion.

- Mortal sins are not to be confused with the deadly sins. The latter are not sins but rather categories of sin or vice, corresponding to weaknesses in human nature.
- There are seven deadly categories of sin: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. Mortal sins may also be called "grave", "eternal", "grievous" or "serious" sins.
- The Roman Catholic teaching on mortal sin was called into question by some within the Church in the late 20th century after the Second Vatican Council.
- In response to these doubts, Pope St John Paul II reaffirmed the basic teaching in his encyclical Veritatis Splendor. It is maintained in the current Catechism of the Catholic Church, which says in section 1035, **"Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell."**