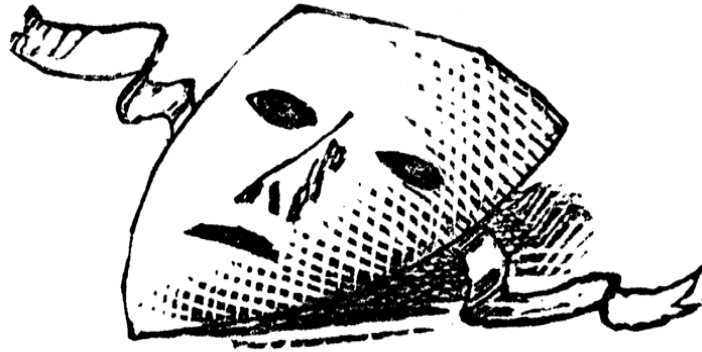


The Mask of Sin



God is loving, and he is very good. When he made the earth and the stars, the flowers and trees, he made everything to be like himself - he made it all very good. God showed a special kind of love when he made men and women. He made us all *in his image* - he made us to look like him.

Sometimes it is hard to know how to be good, how to look like God. Because we have this problem, God showed us the perfect image of himself - Jesus! When we look at Jesus, we learn how to live, and love, and be good.

When we were baptized, Jesus came to live in us. Jesus always helps us to grow in goodness and love - he helps us to look more and more like himself. Sometimes we don't show love when we should, and sometimes we do things which aren't loving at all. When we choose not to do good or when we choose to do bad, we hide the image of God - we hide the way that God made us to look.

We call our bad choices *sin*. Most of the time, we sin because we think that we can get something good by sinning. Instead of telling Mom and Dad the truth, we might lie about finishing our homework so we can play outside or watch TV. It may seem good to finish early and forget about our homework, but our lie - our sin - may hurt our parents or our teacher. Sin hurts us, too, because it keeps us from being like Jesus - it keeps us from looking like God.

Choosing to sin is like hiding behind a mask. When we sin, we put a mask over ourselves, over the image of God. When we sin, we pretend to be something which God did not make us to be. But God is always waiting to help us. He is always waiting to take away the hurt of sin. He wants to pull off the mask of sin so that he can see our beautiful faces again.

God does all this in the sacrament of *Reconciliation*. When we go to the priest in confession, we tell him about the times we have sinned. Jesus works through the priest to heal us, to take away the hurt of sin. At the end of our confession, the priest will give us *absolution*. Absolution takes off the mask of sin so that we can look like ourselves and Jesus again. After confession, the priest will give us a *penance* to do. Penance is our chance to tell God that we're sorry for our sins, and it helps us to grow in looking like him. We express our penance by praying, fasting, and helping those in need.

God always loves us, and he always wants us close to him. By sinning, we can push away from God, but he always waits for us in the sacrament of Reconciliation to come back to him again.

