

# Confessions

How can I be lost/If I've nowhere to go?  
Search the seas for gold/How come it got so cold?  
How can I be lost/In remembrance I relive?  
So how can I blame you/When it's me I can't forgive?

-Lars Ulrich/James Hetfield/Kirk Hammett/Vivian Wilson Fernandes,  
"Unforgiven 3"

I'm a monster. I know it. I've tried to rebel against it, but it's too strong. It doesn't matter what my monstrosity is; what matters is that I have it. I've struggled against it most of my life. I've had minor success, but it never lasts. Something always comes along to turn me back against my will, although sometimes I even give in freely. I've spent most of my life unable to partake in the Eucharist. Even losing the most blessed gift Jesus gave us for this life is not sufficient motivation to keep the monster at bay. According to my faith, which the Church has no problem reminding me of, I am at risk of eternal damnation because of my inability and refusal to give up monsterhood. Only a special mercy from God on my behalf can save me (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1861).

I could minimize the threat of my monsterhood, rationalize it to a meaningless factoid. I could claim I am dealing with special circumstances. I could argue that scripture is vague enough to allow what I am doing without risking damnation. I could claim that Church leaders are guilty of "[tying] up heavy burdens and ... not lift a finger to move them." (Matthew 23:4) I could claim that my monster is not as horrible as the other monsters. All of this, and more, is demonstratively true. When one ignores God, nothing is impossible to justify. Without God, I can prove to myself, and probably quite a few others, that I'm not a monster. But I don't ignore God, and so the monster remains.

It doesn't matter if my monstrosity is insignificant by secular standards; I'm still a monster. It doesn't matter if I have special circumstances; I'm still a monster. It doesn't matter if my specific case is not mentioned in scripture; what is there still calls me a monster. Whatever the clergy does or does not do doesn't matter; it is my actions that have made me a monster. It doesn't matter if I'm a small monster among big ones; I'm still a monster.

So this monster continues to go to church and watch others partake in communion. The liturgies and homilies occasionally, but regularly, remind me of the damnation this monster will suffer. If I speak of the possibility of a special mercy (which is rare enough), I am told that special mercies suggest a reason for one to be granted, and if one rejects God, then what reason can exist for the special mercy? Yet I continue to go to church. I spend nearly all my free time writing articles like this one, hoping someone somewhere can learn from my mistakes. I also spend a lot of time talking to other monsters who want to be human again. I mostly listen, and then offer whatever pitiful help my position allows. One thing I can say on my behalf is that I am well read. Many of the other monsters respect that. I have been asked why I bother, as "Many will say to me on the day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not ... drive out demons in your name?' ... Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'" (Matthew 7:22-23)

But my answer is the same as Peter's: "Where else will I go? I believe Jesus is the life. If I can't go to Him for help, any other place is in vain." I am not suicidal, but to say I have a death wish may not be far from the truth. I am weary of this life. I am tired of being a monster. Martyrdom is

especially appealing, as it leads to automatic salvation. The trials I have been through have convinced me that I have the temperament to make it through the humiliation and fear that comes with such a death. But little in my life suggests I will be given such an easy way to escape, which means I'm in it for the "long haul." I hope that Jesus can make me a man when everything else has failed. But if He can't heal me, then what doctor can? If He can't find a dying ember of humanity to rekindle, then no microscope will.

I will go before Jesus willingly. I will go with tremendous fear and trembling, as I know full well just how wretched I am. I will go with full knowledge that the Church says things don't look good for me. But I will go willingly, and if my will has any control over my being, then I will go under my own power. For I also know that, even if I am damned, then I will finally be able to abide by God's will unfailingly and cease to be a monster. I will no longer be in a hell of my own design, but that of another's. I will go without the insecurities that plague me today, as I will know with absolute certainty why I am there. I will no longer be an outsider; I will be where I belong. But if there is anyone who can save me from this fate, it is Jesus. No matter how irrational my hope to be saved from this fate is, I have hope nonetheless.

The miserable existence of this monster must end one way or the other, and I will not pray to extend its life by even a minute. Regardless of the cost, I will find out with absolute certainty where I belong, and I will at last perform God's will perfectly when I do.

You ask, how you can make up your mind to stand before your Lord and God; ... I am in myself nothing but a sinner, a man of unclean lips and earthly heart. I am not worthy to enter into His presence. I am not worthy of the least of all His mercies. ... I place myself under His pure and piercing eyes, which look me through and through, and discern every trace and every motion of evil within me. ... I know again that He is All-merciful, and that He so sincerely desires my salvation that He has died for me. Therefore, though I am in a great strait, I will rather fall into His hands, than into those of any creature. ... I had rather go to God alone. I have an instinct within me which leads me to rise and go to my Father, to name the Name of His well-beloved Son, and having named it, to place myself unreservedly in His hands, saying, "If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it! But there is forgiveness with Thee." ... If indeed we have habitually lived to the world, then truly it is natural we should attempt to fly from Him whom we have pierced. ... But if we have lived, however imperfectly, yet habitually, in His fear, if we trust that His Spirit is in us, then we need not be ashamed before Him. We shall then come before Him ... with profound abasement, with awe, with self-renunciation, still as relying upon the Spirit which He has given us, with our faculties about us, with a collected and determined mind, and with hope. He who cannot pray for Christ's coming, ought not in consistency to pray at all.

-Saint John Henry Newman, cardinal, "Shrinking from Christ's Coming"

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