Sins against the Holy Spirit

The Bible warns of six sins one can commit against the Holy Spirit. Some of them can only be committed by nonbelievers, while others could be committed by believers.

**A believer can lie to the Holy Spirit.**

Lying to the Holy Spirit means to pretend to be something you are not—to go through the motions of living the Christian life without really meaning it in your heart of hearts. “These people draw near with their mouths and honor Me with their lips, but have removed their hearts far from Me” (Isaiah 29:13).

**A believer can grieve the Holy Spirit.**

Grieving the Holy Spirit means to make sad or sorrowful. When we allow bitterness to poison our lives or we slander others, we are grieving the Holy Spirit. “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice” (Ephesians 4:30–31).

**A believer can quench the Holy Spirit.**

Quenching suggests extinguishing a fire. Unbelief can certainly hinder the working and moving of God’s Holy Spirit (see Mark 6:4–5). This sin is also committed when the Holy Spirit leads you to do a certain thing (share your faith, pray more, take a step of faith) and you flatly refuse. “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

**A nonbeliever can resist the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit seeks to speak to the heart of the unbeliever and lead him to God. There are those who are convinced of the truth of the gospel, yet who refuse to yield their hearts to God. “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51). These words were spoken by the early Christian martyr Stephen to the unbelieving Sanhedrin shortly before his death.

**A nonbeliever can insult the Holy Spirit.**

It is the office of the Holy Spirit to present the saving work of Jesus Christ to the unsaved. A person insults the love of God by saying that he does not really need God’s gift of salvation, or by insisting that Christ’s death on the cross was unnecessary or unable to save him. To resist the Spirit’s appeal is to insult God and to cut off all hope of salvation. “Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:29).

**A nonbeliever can blaspheme the Holy Spirit.**

“Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” (Matthew 12:31–32).

This is the most serious offense against the Holy Spirit, for there is no forgiveness for the person who commits it. The work of the Spirit is to convict us of sin and bring us to Jesus Christ. To blaspheme Him is similar to insulting, in that we resist His work altogether. This should not be the concern of any Christian, for this is not a sin he can or will commit.

The Gospel says, in [Matthew 12](http://www.usccb.org/bible/matthew/12):32, “And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

This frightening exhortation refers to the sin of rejecting God’s grace; it is a rejection of God’s offer of salvation—complete rejection of the actions, incessant invitations, and warnings of the Holy Spirit.

The will of a person who could commit this sin is so hardened that he doesn’t want God’s mercy, and he rejects His goodness.

Sin against the Holy Spirit is thus “unforgivable” precisely because it is the sinner himself who keeps God from forgiving him. As God respects the freedom with which He created us, He also respects a sinner’s decision to firmly refuse to be forgiven.

Pope Saint Pius X taught in his [Catechism](https://www.ewtn.com/library/CATECHSM/PIUSXCAT.HTM) that there are six elements of this sin against the Holy Spirit:

1. Despairing of salvation. This is when a person loses hope of salvation, judging that his eternal life is already lost and that he is condemned, even before Judgment. It means judging divine mercy as being small. It means not believing in God’s justice and power.

2. Presumption of salvation is when a person cultivates in his soul an idea of his own perfection, which implies a feeling of pride. He believes his salvation has been guaranteed by what he has done.

3. Denying a truth recognized as such by the Magisterium of the Church. When a person doesn’t accept the truths (dogmas) of the faith, even after an exhaustive doctrinal explanation, it is the sin of heresy. He considers his personal understanding to be greater than that of the Church and the teaching of the Holy Spirit that assists the holy Magisterium.

4. Envying the grace that God gives to other people. Envy is a sentiment of discontent because someone else obtained something good, even if you yourself already possess it or could obtain it some day. It’s the act of not wanting what is good for your neighbor. With this sin, I make myself the judge of the world. I’m revolting against the Divine Will. I’m rebelling against the law of love for one’s neighbor.

5. Obstinacy in sin is the firm will to continue in error even after receiving the light and help of the Holy Spirit. This is when a person creates his own criteria for ethical judgment, or simply doesn’t adopt any ethics at all, and in this way separates himself from God’s will and rejects salvation.

6. Final impenitence is the result of an entire life of rejecting God. This is when a person persists in error until the very end. It’s the equivalent of consecrating oneself to Christ’s adversary. Even at the hour of death, such a person refuses to approach the Father with humility. He doesn’t open himself to the Holy Spirit’s invitation.