

Fr. Perozich comments —

At St. Mary Escondido in 2006 we priests began offering confession for 15 minutes before the daily Masses as well as for an hour before the Saturday evening Masses.

So many souls came that it became 45 minutes before daily Mass and 90 minutes on Saturday with 3 priests once the hospital chaplain took up residence.

Still people were turned away because of the Mass schedule.

I used to tell my parishioners, please come early because I cannot turn away those who come from other parishes, but so that you can confess, get there early to be in the front of the line.

On the journey to heaven, the Christian does not walk alone, rather hand in hand with Jesus and all that the Lord has to offer us in his providence and protection: word, sacrament, charity.

Hold fast to Jesus in all the ways He offers Himself to you.

Without a Safety Net: Free Climbing and Mortal Sin

A lesson from Alex Honnold and the spiritual life.



•
•
Mark Haas

Recently, world-renowned climber Alex Honnold made headlines again by free-climbing Taipei 101, one of the tallest skyscrapers in the world. For most people, even looking up at such a structure causes vertigo. For Honnold, it became another stage for a breathtaking display of courage, discipline, and skill.

But his achievement also offers a powerful spiritual lesson for our time.

In free solo climbing, the climber ascends massive structures or rock faces without ropes, harnesses, or protective equipment. There is no safety net. No backup plan. One slip, one moment of fatigue, one miscalculation

—and death is horrifically instant. Every movement must be perfect. Every grip must hold. The free climber lives, quite literally, seconds away from catastrophe at all times.

Honnold himself has acknowledged this reality. He knows that his life hangs on his fingertips. He accepts the risk. He trains relentlessly. He remains intensely focused because he knows what is at stake.

Spiritually speaking, many Catholics today are living in a similar way—except without realizing it.

The Danger of Presumption

Some Catholics knowingly live in a state of mortal sin while telling themselves, “I’ll go to confession on Saturday” or “I’ll deal with this later.” They continue in serious sin, assuming that they will always have time to repent. This attitude is known in the Church as the sin of presumption.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “There are two kinds of presumption. Either man presumes upon his own capacities...or he presumes upon God’s almighty power or His mercy” (CCC 2092).

Presumption says, “God will forgive me later”; “I’ll stop someday”; “I’m fine for now.”

It is spiritual free soloing. It is choosing to climb the mountain of life without ropes, without protection, without grace—presuming nothing will go wrong.

But something can always go wrong.

We Do Not Know the Hour

Our Lord warned us repeatedly about this danger. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says: “Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on what day your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42). And again: “You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:44).

We do not know the day or the hour when our life will end. No one is guaranteed tomorrow. Accidents happen. Illness strikes

suddenly. Hearts stop without warning. Every funeral is a reminder: life is fragile. To knowingly remain in mortal sin is to live every day spiritually exposed—one heartbeat away from eternity.

Jesus never minimized this danger. In fact, He spoke about Hell more than anyone else in Scripture—not to frighten us unnecessarily but to save us.

He warned: “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43). And again: “Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).

These are not symbolic threats. They are sober warnings from Divine Love. God desires that no one be lost. But He also respects human freedom. We choose whether to climb with grace—or without it.

Climbing with Ropes

The spiritual life was never meant to be lived without protection. God has given us “ropes” and “anchors”: the Sacrament of Confession; the Holy Eucharist; daily prayer; Scripture; devotion to Our Lady; frequent examination of conscience.

These are not burdens. They are lifelines.

St. Augustine once wrote: “God who created you without you, will not save you without you.”

Grace is freely given, but we must cooperate with it. To live in the state of grace is to climb with safety. It is to acknowledge our weakness and rely on God’s strength.

Alex Honnold climbs knowing he could die at any moment. He prepares accordingly. How much more should we, who are climbing toward eternity?

St. Alphonsus Liguori warned: “Many live as if they were never to die, and die as if they had never lived.”

We are not called to live in fear but in vigilance, humility, and trust. If we are in mortal sin, now is the time to return. Not tomorrow. Not “someday.” Now. God’s mercy is endless. But time is not.

Choose the Rope

The Christian life is not about reckless bravado. It is about faithful perseverance. We are climbing a mountain far higher than Taipei 101. We are climbing toward Heaven. Let us not climb without ropes. **Let us not presume. Let us live each day in grace, repentance, and love—ready to meet our Lord whenever He calls. Because unlike the free climber, our goal is not just to survive.**

Our goal is to reach the summit forever.

Author



•Mark Haas

Mark Haas is a Catholic composer and speaker. He serves as the Director of Music at Ave Maria Parish in Ave Maria, FL. Mark lives in Ave Maria with his wife and their seven original compositions. Visit his website at www.markhaasmusic.com.