1. The problem of confessing the sins of others. The essential concept of repentance and reparation is that the person responsible for the sin needs to make amends for the damage that has been done. There is a sense in which it is improper for a third party to say, "I'm sorry for what that person did to you." Nevertheless, it is important to recognize and condemn evil wherever it exists so that it is clear where the Church stands.

   Galileo Affair.
   Witch hunts.
   Spanish Inquisition and Wars of Religion--torturing and killing heretics.
   Jesuit ownership of slaves in the U.S.
   Persecution of the Jews.
   Sins of priests & bishops (local and national scandals).

2. The problem of forgiving others' sins. It seems unfair for a third party to declare that the offender's sins are forgiven. In the natural order, only the victim has the right and the power to say, "I forgive you for the evil that you have done to me." In order to prevent the chaos that comes from blood feuds, society has intervened and taken over management of some personal conflicts through the criminal and civil courts.

3. Judge Jesus' Bankruptcy Court. God has declared that all of us are bankrupt; He has seized control of all human debts to each other: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; all are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God offered as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith" (Rom 3:23-25). "Where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more" (Rom 5:20). "All is grace" (a slogan in Christian spirituality).

   Under the terms of the New Covenant (contract, bargain, agreement, committed personal relationship), we may no longer take revenge on others for the real evil they have done to us. They are God's problem, not ours. "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I [God!] will repay, says the Lord' [Dt 32:35]. No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:19-21).

   God will ensure just judgment and just punishment for sin (doctrines of Hell and Purgatory). But He also guarantees that anyone who wants to repent of sin and accept the gift of Heaven may do so.

4. The sacramental system: Jesus uses human instruments "to complete his work on earth." Examples: musical instruments; pen and pencil; carpenter's tools; internet.

| Catholic Theory | ex opere operato: "from the work having been worked"
| Direct and personal relationship with God--no human intermediaries. |
| Protestant Theory | ex opere operantis: "from the person working the work"
| Trickle-down theory: Garbage in, garbage out (GIGO).
| Results measured by emotions--"feel-good Christianity." |

5. "Outward sign of an inward reality. A sign that causes what it signifies."

   A. Baptism: permanent cleansing from Original Sin (innocent sin!).
   C. Eucharist: intimate union with Jesus, whole and entire (transubstantiation).
   D. Reconciliation: cleansing from personal sin ("70 times 7 forgiveness"--Mt 18:21-22).
   E. Ordination (bishops, priests, deacons)--"Only men need apply"--Jesus continues His ministry on earth.
   F. Marriage: vows and consummation.
   G. Anointing of the Sick: prayer for healing and restoration.

6. The Judas Factor: Jesus has been betrayed in every age by those whom He has chosen to represent Him. The sins of priests are as old as Christianity itself. Lord, have mercy on us!