



Reflections

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Catholic Family Newsletter

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Blessing to All:

By: Richard Pickard

The expression "second chance" is not used very often in today's world. Some people may not know what this expression really means! As an example, the Boss says, "I could have fired him for what he did, but I had a talk with him and gave him a second chance." The Boss forgave the employee and gave him another chance to do better. Forgiveness is important. If you have an issue with forgiving people, then this article is directed at you.

Even St Peter seemed to have an issue with forgiveness..."Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times. (Matthew 18:21-22)

**God always
offers us a
second chance
in life.**

In life we all get a "second chance" to put things right with Jesus. Not only a "second chance", but an unending chance until we die. He will forgive us no matter what we did...we just need to wake up to the reality that He loves us so much, that He took our sins upon Himself. All the sins you ever did or will ever do, was taken up by Christ for "YOU."

His love is pure and no where on earth is such love found. But all of us can ask Jesus to help us in whatever turns us away from the Light of Christ.

Are you always mad at someone or something each day? Or, perhaps you are festering with unforgiveness at your spouse, brother, sister, father or mother? Do you want to take the weight of that unforgiveness off your shoulders?



Do you realize that when Jesus was carrying His cross on his shoulders, He was also carrying those things which **weigh you down. Your sins and the sin of unforgiveness was heavy on Him!** At His last breath, he completed the task of forgiving sins, but saying "Father, forgive them for they know not, what they do."

Many people carry unforgiveness in their hearts all their lives. Some people carry the burden of unforgiveness on themselves, for past errors and sins. What a terrible harm to your mind, soul and body.

The venom of unforgiveness is a poison that Satan uses to trap a soul into thinking they cannot be forgiven! Sometimes people hurt us so deeply, that we remember this hurt each day. The bitterness grows until the darkness overtakes our soul.



If you recognize yourself in these words, then here is a solution to rid yourself of this weight.

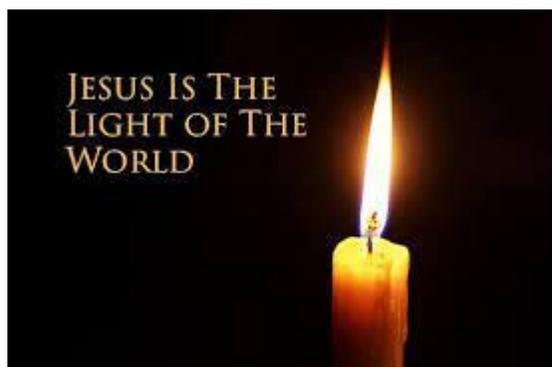
Say this prayer to Jesus and believe that He will hear you and make things better for you.

"Lord, there is deep hurt in my heart. I feel betrayed. I feel angry, bitter, and I can't seem to let go of the pain from my past. I am forever struggling with bitter unforgiveness. Heal me, Lord! Take away this pain from my heart, so I will be able to forgive. Remove this hurt, close up this wound and fill me with your peace which surpasses all understanding."

Put yourself in Jesus' love. He will help you. He already took your hurt onto Himself. Just ask!



If you are feeling a deep hurt in your soul, for the actions of others and can't move on, then you must ask Jesus to help you. He loves you and cherishes you. You are His brother or His sister. He is family. He was born to forgive sins and to show us how to live a life of truth and trust in His love for you. Don't hesitate any longer. Take the leap! Ask Him for help. Don't let Satan tell you that it is better to keep this hurt and unforgiveness. He is a liar and a destroyer of souls. He has no "light" in him and only lives in "darkness." You were born to be children of God and the "light."



Jesus is holding His hand out for you. Take it!

Can Salvation Be Lost?

By: Jimmy Akin, Catholic Answers

The New Testament is clear that salvation can be lost, but that through repentance in Christ it may be regained

Once a person has entered a state of justification, can this be lost? If so, how would this happen? Protestants have proposed a variety of answers to these questions.

Luther, based on the idea of justification by faith alone, held that it is possible for Christians to lose their salvation, but only through a loss of faith. In other words, only the sin of apostasy—the rejection of the Christian faith—would do this. Any other sins, even great ones like murder or adultery, would not. This view remains standard in Lutheranism today.

However, some Protestants advocate an idea known as eternal security. According to this view, if a person ever enters a state of salvation, he will remain in it for all eternity. It thus is not possible to lose salvation. This view was unheard of in Church history prior to the Reformation. Prior Christians universally acknowledged that salvation was granted through baptism, but it also was clear that some of the baptized later committed sins that the New Testament says will exclude one from the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, the idea of eternal security was a theological novelty when it was proposed in the 1500s.

Eternal security is understood in more than one way among Protestants. Calvinists frequently use the phrase “perseverance of the saints” to describe their understanding of the teaching. According to this view, God will cause authentic Christians to persevere in faith and good works until they die, and this is the reason they are eternally secure: God will not allow them to do those things that would cause them to be lost. If a person does lose faith or fall into grievous sin, it means one of two things: either the person was never an authentic Christian to begin with, or he will return to an authentically Christian life before he dies. In either case, someone who is truly a Christian “can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end,

Another view of eternal security is sometimes expressed with the phrase "once saved, always saved." This view is found among some non-Calvinist Protestants, and it holds that true Christians can and do fall away from the faith or fall permanently into grievous sin, yet they do not lose their salvation. A single moment of saving faith, at any point in one's life, is sufficient to permanently cancel all of one's sins, even those not yet committed. Therefore—at least in terms of salvation—it does not matter what one later does. This view is often associated with advocates of free grace theology.

Not all Protestants have views as extreme as these. Some are much closer to the traditional Christian view. Thus, members of the Methodist, Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal movements, as well as some others, acknowledge that it is possible for a believer to commit grievous sin and fall from grace. The precise conditions under which this would happen are not definitively worked out, and Protestants do not typically use the language of venial and mortal sin, but it is acknowledged that falling into particularly severe sin would cause a loss of salvation.

The Catholic Church recognizes, based on the clear teaching of the New Testament, that it is possible for Christians to lose their salvation. St. Paul explicitly warns Judaizing Christians, "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). He also tells his audience of Corinthian Christians, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived," and he goes on to list multiple sins, warning that those who commit them will not "inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

If it is possible to lose salvation, can we get it back? A minority of Protestants have held that it is not. Luther opined that if one commits apostasy, there is no way to regain salvation. But most Protestants who believe it is possible to lose salvation also acknowledge that it is possible to regain it.

This is the point of the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). In this parable, the father of the family represents God, and one of his sons leaves the family and embarks on a life of sin. Yet he repents and is welcomed back by the father, who declares that the son "was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (v. 32). It thus is possible for us to be children of the Father, to leave him for sin and become spiritually dead, and to return and be restored to spiritual life.

The Catholic Church thus acknowledges that it is possible to regain salvation after mortal sin, and that Christ instituted the sacrament of confession for this purpose (John 20:21–23; cf. Matt. 9:8). Therefore, "There is no offense, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive. There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin" (Catechism of the Catholic Church 982).

Other articles by Jimmy Akin can be found at: <https://www.catholic.com/profile/jimmy-akin> Hoover over link Ctrl & Left mouse click.

‘We had no idea’: The hidden life of the reputed stigmatist tortured by Stalin’s secret police.



Sister Wanda Boniszewska led an extraordinary life. The Polish nun was a reputed stigmatist tortured by Stalin's secret police. Her spiritual journal, published after her death in 2003, recorded her astounding mystical experiences. Her beatification cause opened earlier this month. But to one religious sister who lived with her in the last years of her life, Boniszewska didn't seem outwardly remarkable. Sr. Halina Skubisz belongs to the same congregation as Boniszewska: the Congregation of the Sisters of the Angels, a habit less religious community founded in 1889. She lived twice under the same roof as the mystic, first in 1988 and then for a few years from 1997.

"Sr. Wanda was a person who did not stand out from among our older sisters," Skubisz told CNA.

She described the frail and elderly Boniszewska as "rather withdrawn." As she was bed-ridden and suffering from progressive dementia by the late 1990s, the younger sisters had limited access to her.

"What I remember is that I felt the atmosphere of peace in her room, as if the world around me was slowing down," Skubisz recalled. "In her suffering, she was essentially calm, reconciled with the Lord's will. Sometimes the younger sisters told me that they would come to Sr. Wanda when they needed to calm down..."

The younger sisters had no inkling of the exceptional nature of Boniszewska's spiritual life. Her spirituality centered on offering her sufferings for the expiation of sins, especially those of priests.

At the age of 16, she had sought to enter the Congregation of the Sisters of the Angels in Vilnius, nowadays the capital of Lithuania. After her first profession, she said that she received a mission from Jesus to offer her sufferings for the expiation of the sins of "souls consecrated to Me." She made her full profession in 1933.

"The superiors knew her special graces and spiritual experiences and some of the older sisters also heard something about it, but we in the younger generation had no idea. Only after Wanda's death did the secret come to light," Skubisz said.

She explained that when Christ had entrusted Boniszewska with her mission, which required her to share in the experience of his Passion, she asked to remain hidden and unknown until she died.

Boniszewska had asked her superiors to keep her secret and it was only after her death that Fr. Jan Pryszmont, who was close to her, began to publish works about her life and mission. Her "Spiritual Journal," issued in 2016, recorded her mystical experiences between 1921 and 1980.

A turning point in Boniszewska's life came on April 11, 1950, the day she was arrested by the NKVD, a forerunner of the KGB.

Skubisz said that the Soviet secret police seized the nun in connection with the arrest of a Jesuit priest, Fr. Antoni Ząbek. Boniszewska was then living in a community in Pryciany, around 20 miles from Vilnius. The authorities identified Ząbek as a Vatican spy seeking to undermine the Soviet Union.

The priest served the sisters while hiding in a separate location in an underground shelter. When he was arrested, the police found documents in

the shelter relating to Sr. Wanda and the Congregation of the Sisters of the Angels. The NKVD arrested 20 of the sisters, including Boniszewska.

"From the beginning she was considered a charlatan, a false saint and an enemy of the system," Skubisz noted.

During interrogations, her captors beat her head against the wall, kicked her legs out from under her and forced her to stand all night answering questions.

The ill treatment took its toll: she was transferred to a hospital, but the questioning continued. When she felt better, she would be taken on a stretcher for further interrogation.

Finally, she was judged in absentia and sentenced to 10 years in a correctional camp as a Vatican spy and enemy of the system.

She was sent first to Chelyabinsk, in west-central Russia, then to Magnitogorsk, near the northern edge of the Russian steppe, and from there to the Urals. She spent much of her time in camp hospitals because of the injuries inflicted during interrogations and because of bleeding from her stigmata.

Skubisz said: "This aroused consternation among the doctors. Some refused treatment, others carried out experiments including electroshocks."

"The interrogations were brutal, with the beating of the head against the wall and kicks. Many times she was condemned to stay in a cell and locked up in the ward of the mentally ill."

When she went into ecstasies, Sr. Wanda would say the names of people she prayed for. They included Stalin, the NKVD official Viktor Abakumov and the notorious secret police chief Lavrentiy Beria.

"This became the reason for the great brutality of the interrogators, their anxiety and curiosity," Skubisz said.

She explained that Boniszewska inspired conversions among those who came into contact with her, including medical personnel and even her interrogators.

Boniszewska traced her stigmata back to the day of her First Communion, Sept. 29, 1919, when she began to feel pain in her hands and legs. In 1927, she felt pain around her head, while the discomfort in her limbs diminished. Her suffering would peak during Masses.

According to her testimony, external marks of the stigmata appeared in Advent 1934 on her hands and legs. There was also a diagonal wound on her side. She attempted to hide them, but a priest noticed them while giving her the sacrament of the anointing of the sick in January 1935. In April of the same year, a religious sister who was also a nurse saw the wounds. But despite the nurse's questions, Sr. Wanda remained silent.

"Before she was arrested in 1950, the external stigmata began to disappear, and appeared sporadically in prison, less often after she was released and returned to Poland," said Skubisz.

Commentators have drawn parallels between Boniszewska and St. Faustina Kowalska. Both were Polish religious sisters who experienced the upheavals of the 20th century and left written records of their intense spiritual experiences. But Skubisz believes that, despite these surface similarities, the two are quite different.

She said: "Each of them had their own mission and unique relationship with the Lord. True, both were chosen and there are other similarities, but I do not think there are similarities between their diaries."

Skubisz pointed out that Sr. Wanda did not keep a spiritual diary as such. She wrote her memoirs retrospectively in obedience to a request from her superiors. While priests who came into contact with her made detailed records, she asked them to allow her to remain hidden and not to share the information until after her death.

"I believe that the current experience we are going through as a Church is a cry for witnesses. Sister Wanda can be such a witness," she said.

"The Lord Jesus revealed her mission to her gradually: 'for unfaithful priests, sacrifice yourself; you are the chosen sacrifice for priests and religious orders; I desire suffering; prayer without suffering is dead; I allow winds to strengthen faith in you and priests; I am the infallible truth in the holy Church; Believe, ask, trust, write, remain close. I make greater demands on you, because love expands the heart. Through you, I must pour Love out upon priests.'"

Skubisz continued: "Today Satan strikes priests with particular force. We know that a priest is for us believers a gateway to the sacraments, to the Eucharist, and without them no one will be strong in the spiritual struggle."

"That is why the message received by Sr. Wanda about the special dignity and great love that Christ gives to priests is so timely. Jesus desires their closeness and holiness, He is ready to forgive them and to bestow graces to draw them to His Divine Heart."

She added: "Sr. Wanda had to suffer for the infidelity of priests and religious people, for the lukewarm and cold priests, for religious orders, including our Congregation, for the fading faith in His presence, for the sins of impurity. And as I described above, it was a very particular suffering. How timely this prayer and plea for strength are today."

Skubisz said that the dialogue between Boniszewska and Christ recorded in her journal underlined how much Jesus loved priests and religious.

"It is a great strengthening and call to faithfulness," she said. "It is also a new light on the greatness and dignity of the priestly state, which is now so weakened. But at the same time, her suffering, its immensity, the brutality of her interrogation, the misunderstanding she suffered, show that sin is not a bagatelle. Sin costs and it costs a lot. It cost her a lot of suffering, a lot of blood..."

"I really believe that this message is extremely important and brings a lot of hope at this time. It rekindles gratitude, admiration for the love of God, in spite of everything and without limits. It is also a call to reparation for our sins and for the sins of others, to ask for mercy."

Visionaries of Medjugorje Describe Heaven

All six of the Medjugorje visionaries have seen Heaven. They all have said that there are no words to describe the beauty of Heaven and if we knew what awaits us in Heaven, there are no difficulties or trials that we experience that won't be worth eternal life in Heaven. The following description is of Heaven, through the words of the Medjugorje visionaries:



In describing Heaven in an interview with Fr. Livio for Radio Maria, the visionary Vicka Ivankovic explained that when they arrived at Heaven, there was a great big wooden door.

She said that the door was closed, but when they arrived Our Lady opened it and they entered into Heaven. She said St. Peter was standing at the right of the door. Vicka said, "I immediately understood that it was him. With a key, rather small, with the beard, a little sturdy, with hair."



Fr. Bubalo asked Vicka to describe Heaven. She responded:

"...it can't be described. That is something beyond description. It is filled with some sort of beautiful light...people...flowers...angels...All is filled with some indescribable joy. Your heart stands still when you look at it."



"Heaven is a vast space, and it has a brilliant light which does not leave it. It is a life which we do not know here on earth. We saw people dressed in gray, pink, and yellow robes. They were walking, praying, and singing. Small angels were flying above them. The Blessed Mother showed us how happy these people are."

Question: How could you tell they were happy?

Vicka: "You can see it on their faces. But it is impossible to describe with words the great happiness I saw in Heaven...In Paradise, when the Blessed Mother passed, everybody responded to Her, and She to them. There was a recognition between them...They were standing there communicating with Her, like in a tunnel, only it wasn't exactly like a tunnel, but a tunnel is the closest comparison. People were praying, they were singing, they were looking...People in Heaven know the absolute fullness of a created being."

Question: "How long were you there?"

Vicka: "Maybe twenty minutes."

Question: "...Did the people talk to you?"

Vicka: "It was very unusual. They were speaking, but I could not understand them...The people were in small groups. I was with Jakov and the Blessed Mother. We spoke to each other, but there was no communication with anyone else. About the people there, the Blessed Mother only said to us, 'You see how people who are in Heaven are happy?'"

Mirjana Dragicevic didn't physically go to Heaven, but saw Heaven during an apparition. The following is her description of what she saw:

Mirjana: "I saw Heaven as if it were a movie. The first thing I noticed was the faces of the people there; they were radiating a type of inner light which showed how immensely happy they were.

Question: "Is Heaven an actual place?"

Mirjana: "Yes. The trees, the meadows, the sky are totally different from anything we know on the earth. And the light is much more brilliant. Heaven is beautiful beyond any possible comparison with anything I know of on the earth.

Question: "Did the people you saw have bodies?"

Mirjana: "Yes.

Question: "What ages were they?"

Mirjana: "They were different from what we are like now. Perhaps they were all around 30 years of age...They were walking in a beautiful park. They have everything. They need or want nothing. They are totally full...They were dressed in the types of clothing that Jesus wore."

Mirjana was asked why Our Lady showed her Heaven. Mirjana answered:

"She told me many people on earth today do not believe Heaven exists. She said God has chosen us six visionaries to be instruments of His love and mercy. I have personally seen Heaven. It exists! I've seen it! Those who stay faithful to God to the end will see Heaven as a reward for their faithfulness."

Ivanka Ivankovic shared the following:

Question: "Did you see Heaven, hell, and Purgatory, Ivanka?"

Ivanka: "I saw Purgatory and Heaven as a picture. I told the Blessed Mother I did not want to see hell.

Question: "What did Heaven look like?"

Ivanka: "It is a place that is very, very beautiful. Most beautiful...Everyone I saw was filled with a happiness I can't explain – and I can't forget.

Question: "Do you long for that happiness yourself?"

Ivanka: "I know some of that happiness when I am with the Blessed Mother, and when I pray.

Question: "Can you tell us more about Heaven?"

Ivanka: "God made us for Heaven. If you pray, you will know that."

Question: "Were you taken to Heaven or were you shown a vision of Heaven?"

Marija Pavlovic: "I had a vision of Heaven, but Jakov and Vicka were actually taken there.

Question: "When you saw the vision, were you in the rectory room? Or where?"

Marija: "It was in the house of Jakov...It was like you watch a movie on screen or looking out a window. I saw a vision. I wasn't actually there like the other visionaries...I have never seen such a picture before; no one can even begin to imagine how it looks...the people were around the flowers. They were all the same age. No one in Heaven is older than the age of Christ. People in Heaven were full of joy and all of them are giving thanks for the gifts given to them of God. Every day they realize how much love God has for them...There was a multitude of people."⁷

Ivan, when asked about Heaven, stated:

"Heaven is worth any cost! Jesus showed us that, with His death on the Cross. His death was not the end. He rose from the dead, glorified to put an end to death forever for God's children. People in Heaven are happy. They live in the fullness of God."⁸

Jakov Colo was the other visionary, along with Vicka, that was physically taken up to Heaven. He was only 11-years-old at the time. The following are from a series of interviews:

Question: "Will you tell us about Heaven.

Jakov: "When you get there, then you will see how it is.

Question: "You have said that the reason the Blessed Mother took you there was to show you what it would be like for those who remain faithful to God – would you tell us anymore?

Jakov: "If I thought about it too much – I would die of loneliness."9

Question: "Tell us your understanding of Heaven.

Jakov: "I have been there. It is difficult for me to talk about it.

Question: "Is it difficult to live on earth once you have been in Heaven?

Jakov: "That is an understatement.

Question: "Jakov, you said that if you thought about Heaven too much, you would die of loneliness. How do you handle the memories of Heaven, hell, and Purgatory?

Jakov: "The Blessed Mother asks us to be careful of the problem of the tyranny of memories.

Question: "What does that mean?

Jakov: "She asks us to trust God's love to make all things well. She asks us to surrender the past to Her maternal care and to remember only in the light of God's love.



An Interview with Ivan Dragicevic

By: Richard Pickard

On Nov. 8, 1997, in the Rectory of St. Mary Catholic Church in Victoria, Texas the following interview took place between Richard Pickard with Hearts For Peace, Houston, Texas, and Ivan Dragicevic of Medjugorje. The Catholic Church is still studying Medjugorje and no decision has been made as to the authenticity of the reported apparitions at this time. Approximately 30 million people have visited Medjugorje to date. Pilgrims are free to go to Medjugorje. However, the final judgement as to the truthfulness of the apparitions and messages rest with the Church alone.

Richard: Since 1981, it has been reported that the Blessed Mother has been appearing to you. Because of this, please tell us in your own words, what this means to you and what message do you have for us.

Ivan: Last night at Holy Family Catholic Church, I was speaking about what Our Lady wants. Our Lady for the last 16 years has been speaking to me of the importance of *having God in the first place* in your life. Through prayer we open ourselves to God's graces. She has repeated certain messages, central messages for the whole world. They are Peace, Conversion, Prayer, Penance, Fasting. These are the messages of the Gospel. We must always pray and through prayer we ask, what is God's will for us, for our family and for the world. So, it is a decision for God and with that decision through life to heaven.

Richard: You have a ministry to the young people. Please tell us what message you would like to give to them and parents.

Ivan: One of the things is *unity in the family*. The way the parents are towards their children and the outside factors on the children. The company the children keep, their surroundings, drugs, alcohol, the media, there are so many things that affect the young. To begin with, avoid these negative things. To raise a child is to begin when they are small. To start right then to guide them, pray with them. Because the children pick up what the parents are doing. If there is no unity in the family nor love shown, the children pick it up. If divisions are between parents, like one wants to guide them in one way and the other in another way, there is no unity. Or one allows more freedom and the other does not. Or one gives money easily to the child and the other does not. For all of this, parents need *love and prayer*. *When it*

comes to children we should never be tired to teach them, pray with them and be with them.

Richard: We hear so many times the word Peace. Be at Peace or live in Peace. Why is Peace with oneself and Peace in the Family so important?

Ivan: It is crucial. Very important. How can one build a healthy spirituality, a spiritually healthy family without peace? How can one pray with the heart as Our Lady says, if the person is not at peace within themselves? How can one see their own faults, if they do not have peace within themselves? That's why peace is so important.

Richard: Since all people are made by God and He loves all of us the same, what message do you have for Catholics and Non-Catholics?

Ivan: All the messages are for the entire world. There is not a specific Catholic or Protestant message. Our Blessed Mother is a mother and loves all of us. There is no barrier. For her it is not important if people are yellow, black, or white or religion. Our Lady and God look at us as their children. The messages are for everyone no matter.

Richard: Why is the Blessed Mother coming to us at this time?

Ivan: Our Lady said that her dear Son Jesus, is sending her to help us. She is being sent by the King of Peace and she is the Queen of Peace. Our Blessed Mother is coming to bring medicine to our pains. She wants to lift up, this sinful humanity. And she asks tirelessly for us to come to Peace, Conversion, Prayer, Penance, and Fasting. Our Lady has been calling us for the past 16 years. In one of her messages, she said *"My dear children, I am with you and I want to help you so peace can reign. But dear children I need you. Only with you can I bring this peace about. That's why dear children, decide for good and fight against the evil and against Satan."*

Richard: We have heard that if we consecrate our families to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, that they will save our loved ones. Do you have any comments about this?

Ivan: She desires that we consecrate ourselves and families to her heart. And definitely, if a person decides on that, then many souls will be saved.

Richard: Thank you Ivan for sharing with us.

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Bringing Light Into A World In Darkness



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**I am watching over you. Pray my children,
Pray, Pray, Pray, My Rosary For The Salvation of
Sinners**

