

# While an 'Edit Undo' button for life seems great, I would rather learn from my mistakes



I recently had a conversation with my sister about the benefits of the “Edit Undo” capabilities in the Microsoft Suite. She uses Microsoft Excel for work quite a bit – a program that I must admit has baffled me for half of my life – and has come to greatly value how Control + Z (or Command + Z for you Mac lovers) can save you from making a massive error in a complicated mathematical sequence. In Microsoft Word, I appreciate how it can retract the latest attack on my keyboard by my 2-year-old. We’ve come a long way since the days of typewriter correction ink or Wite-Out.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could apply the same capabilities to other aspects of our daily lives? Take a wrong turn? Edit Undo. Say something boneheaded to your spouse? Edit Undo. Snap at your kids? Edit Undo. Spill your drink that gets all over the tablecloth, your food and your dinner companion’s lap? Edit Undo Undo Undo. Magnificent.

As lovely as it sounds, though, I suppose that an “Edit Undo” life would turn into a life dangerously devoid of consequences. There would still be plenty of mistakes and plenty of sin; we just wouldn’t have to deal with them. And with no consequences, there would be no learning, no maturity, no development of character – no striving to sanctity. Why work hard to try to avoid making mistakes if those mistakes don’t matter?

In the spiritual life, the consequences of our mistakes should lead us to greater humility, and growth in humility is one of

the cornerstones of virtuous living – what St. Augustine called the “foundation of all the other virtues.” As St. Louis de Montfort wrote: “Frequently, even very frequently, God allows his greatest servants, those far advanced in holiness, to fall into the most humiliating faults so as to humble them in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.” The same is true for each of us no matter where we are on our spiritual journey. There is always opportunity for growth – we just have to desire it. And we have to work at it daily. This is conversion.

So, yes, mistakes happen, and our task is to make sure we learn from them. But, too frequently, I find myself making the same mistakes over and over again, then looking to apply a quick and easy “Edit Undo” to go back in time and pretend they never happened. When that happens, I know it’s time for a change. I know it’s time for more prayer, more attentiveness, more consideration of those around me and less consideration of myself. I know it’s time to love more intentionally. It’s time for more humility. For God did not call us to live lives of mistakes; he called us to perfection. “Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect,” Jesus exhorts us (Mt 5:48).

Despite our best efforts, though, we can and do still make mistakes. We are sinners, after all – descendants of our first parents who made a pretty big mistake themselves. But, thanks be to God, his own love for us is perfect and never-ending, and he awaits our return to him with open arms. As Jesus told St. Faustina, “There is no misery that could be a match for my mercy.”

The bottom line? While “Edit Undo” is indispensable in word processing and saves me from a toddler’s enthusiasm, trying to apply it to real life doesn’t do us much good on our journey to heaven. So I’ll keep trying to learn from my mistakes, I’ll keep working to grow in humility – and then I’ll copy and paste.

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