

fervor the Stations of the Cross, when you meditate with devotion in front of an image of Jesus crucified or of His divine Heart.

Some words often suffice to express the most ardent love and the sincerest contrition. Some of these are, for example, the ejaculatory prayers: "My God and my all"; "My Jesus, mercy"; "My God, I love Thee above all things"; "My God, have pity upon me, a poor sinner"; "My Jesus, I love Thee."

#### **IV. WHAT EFFECTS DOES PERFECT CONTRITION PRODUCE?**

Some truly admirable effects! For the sinner, thanks to perfect contrition, he immediately receives forgiveness for each of his faults even before making his confession. Nevertheless, he must make a resolution to confess himself at an opportune time; of course, this resolution is included in perfect contrition. Every time he makes an act of perfect contrition, the pains of hell are immediately remitted, he recovers all his past merits, and he turns from being an enemy of God to being His son by adoption and co-heir to heaven.

For the just man, perfect contrition enlarges and strengthens the state of grace. It erases the venial sins he has detested, and increases in him the true and sound love of God. Here are the marvelous effects of divine mercy in the soul of the Christian owing to perfect contrition. Perhaps, they may appear unbelievable to you. Undoubtedly, you think, in danger of death, we should ask for contrition; but is it credible that at every moment perfect contrition produces such effects? Is this teaching concerning perfect contrition well founded?

I answer you that it is as solid as the rock upon which the Church is built and as certain as the very word of God.

At the Council of Trent, the Church, in explaining the chief truths disputed by the heretics, declares (Session xiv, Chap. 4) that perfect contrition, that which proceeds from the love of God, justifies man and reconciles him to God, even before the reception of the sacrament of penance. Now, the Council nowhere says that this is only in danger of death. Therefore, perfect contrition at all times produces this effect. Besides, in that the Church relies on the words of Jesus: "If anyone love Me" — and with perfect contrition we truly love Him — "my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode in him" (St. John 14, 23). God cannot live in a soul stained by sin. Perfect contrition or the contrition of charity accordingly wipes away sins.

Such has always been the teaching of the Church, the holy fathers, and her doctors: Baius has been condemned for having maintained the contrary. In fact, if, as we said just now, perfect contrition must have brought forth such admirable effects in the Old Testament, in the era of the law of fear, it will all the more produce these effects in the New Testament, where the law of love reigns.

But then, someone will say, if perfect contrition wipes away sin, what good is it to confess it afterwards? It is true that perfect contrition produces the same effects as confession, but it does not effect them independently of the sacrament of penance, since perfect contrition precisely supposes a firm purpose to confess the same sins that it has just pardoned. For, to confess all sins, at least the mortal ones, is a law of Jesus Christ and a law that cannot change.