

After the worries of the day, in the quiet of the night your conscience awakens; it condemns you forcefully, and you are in agony. What are you to do? Well, then, God puts in your hands the golden key, which will open for you the gates of heaven. Repent of your sins intensely, for the love of the good and bountiful God.

On the contrary, how much is to be pitied the Christian who ignores the practice of perfect contrition. He goes to bed and rises in the state of mortal sin. He lives in this manner two, three, four or more months, from year to year, perhaps. The dark night in which he is shrouded is not for one moment interrupted after confession. A sad state, to live almost always in mortal sin, as an enemy of God, without any merit for heaven and in danger of eternal damnation!

Another benefit: if before receiving a sacrament, say Confirmation or Matrimony, for instance, you recall an unpardoned sin, perfect contrition allows you to receive this sacrament worthily. Only for Communion is confession required.

Even for a Christian in a state of grace, the frequent practice of perfect contrition is very useful. First, we are never certain of being in a state of grace. Now, every act of perfect contrition increases this certainty. It often occurs to us to wonder whether we have given in to temptation. Such doubts delay and discourage the soul on the path of virtue. What are we then to do? Scrutinize our-selves if we have or have not consented to temptation? This would be fruitless. Make an act of perfect contrition and be at ease.

Even supposing that we possessed certainty of being in a state of grace, perfect contrition will still be very useful to us. Each act of perfect contrition increases grace and an ounce of grace is worth more than all the treasures in the world. Each act of perfect contrition erases the venial sins that disfigure the soul; thus the soul grows more and more beautiful. Each act of perfect contrition remits temporal punishment due to sin. Let us remember the words of the Savior regarding Mary Magdalene: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (St. Luke 7, 47). And if this forgiveness of temporal punishment makes us appreciate and value indulgences, good works, almsgiving, charity toward God, which is the queen of the virtues, it stands in the first rank of these good works.

Lastly, with each act of perfect contrition and of love, our soul strengthens itself in good, and thus it has firm confidence of obtaining the paramount grace of final perseverance. The practice of perfect contrition is, therefore, very important during our life, but most especially at the hour of our death and above all if we are in danger of sudden death.

One day, a large fire broke out in a heavily populated city, and many were found dead. Among the many persons who cried out in the courtyard of a house, a twelve-year-old child, on his knees, begged for the grace of contrition; then he entreated his companions to pray with him. Entirely hapless, perhaps they owed him their salvation.

Now, similar dangers threaten us at every moment and at the time when we least think about them. You can be the victim of some accident, fall out of a tree, be run over by a train or a bus; you can be taken unawares at night by a fire in