

PREFACE

This little book is as valuable as lengthy treatises, as much for the sovereign importance of the subject that it discusses (a subject, sadly, very little known by most Christians) as for the abundance of doctrines and the interest of its practical applications. "The Great Means of Salvation," such is the title that St. Alphonsus de' Liguori gave to a tract on prayer published with many other works from his pen. And so great was his confidence in the efficacy and the power of prayer to assure the salvation of souls, that he would have wished, said he, to see his little book in the hands of everyone. About the exercise of the love of God and of perfect contrition, we can say, with just as much truth, that they are "the great means of salvation," because between an act of charity or perfect contrition and the acquisition of eternal life, the connection is more intimate and even closer than between prayer and salvation.

Consequently, I would like to see this little work, like St. Alphonsus' own, in the hands of everyone, convinced as I am that the careful reading of it and putting into practice its teachings would open the gates of heaven to a multitude of souls in danger of eternal damnation without it, and it would increase, in a marvelous way, the grace of God in those who have been faithful since their baptism.

Every Christian ought to be soundly instructed about the capital importance of the act of perfect contrition and of charity on account of the inestimable services that such knowledge can render us at the hour of our death and allow us to render at the deathbed of a dying person, to whom Providence might lead us. No one, even in good health, should forget this truth. But it is desirable overall that everyone cherish it deeply engraved in his heart for the hours of infirmity and the perils of death. May it please God that this pamphlet be distributed as far and wide as possible. There is no doubt that its reading will be accompanied by abundant blessings. □

— Father Augustine Lehmkuhl, S. J.

FOREWORD

This succinct little work was providentially found in a decrepit seventy-five-year-old copy published in French. It is unquestionably the most important matter a Catholic, or anyone for that matter, could ever read — the key to heaven indeed. Knowledge of perfect contrition is more important today than ever before, the sacrament of penance having been all but obliterated by enemies within the Church and true confessors ever fewer and farther between.

See, on reading this pamphlet, how perfect contrition is even — for those not baptized — nothing less than baptism of desire (*in voto*). In the words of the prophet, one cannot but exclaim that "the Lord your God... is gracious and merciful, patient... and ready to repent of evil" (Joel 2, 13). Where perfect contrition is, there is charity, and where charity is, there is sanctifying grace. This grace, as the Angelic Doctor St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, is not limited to the sacraments, the visible signs and causes of grace. And whoever dies in the state of