

grace is saved, as surely as those who die without it are lost. The pamphlet, however, has no polemical intent, but is solely for those who, for ignorance of perfect contrition, stand to despair of forgiveness at the hour of death. It is our prayer that everyone who reads this booklet will procure a supply for himself and give copies to all his family and friends, that a translator for it may be found in every language, and that it may reach to the ends of the earth. Indeed, may its propagation become a veritable apostolate for every true Catholic. How many souls stand thereby to be saved, and what a rich reward for oneself in such an apostolate! “Charity covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4, 8). ◻

— The Most Reverend Robert F. McKenna, O.P.

INTRODUCTION

Upon seeing the little book *The Golden Key to Paradise*, you will, dear reader, experience, I surmise, the curiosity of seeing whether the content matches the title. Perhaps some mistrust will inspire you, and you will ask with misgiving if you are dealing with one of those so-called sensational and fool-proof pieces of mass-market literature.

Well, then, dear reader, no, it is a genuine and tangible key, and certainly, easy to handle: it is perfect contrition. It can open heaven for you, every day, at every moment, if you have had the misfortune to close it through mortal sin, and especially if, at the hour of death, you do not have by your side a priest, the dispenser of divine mercy. *Perfect contrition* will be the last key that, with the grace of God, will open heaven for you. However, to do so, you must have gained the habit of employing it effectively during your life. How many souls, thanks to perfect contrition, have been assured of heaven, who without it would have been irremediably lost! “If I were able to traverse the countryside preaching the divine word,” said the learned and pious Cardinal Franzelin, “my favorite sermon topic would be perfect contrition.” ◻

PERFECT CONTRITION

I. WHAT IS CONTRITION?

Contrition is *a pain of the soul and a hatred for sins committed*. It must be accompanied by a good purpose, that is to say, a firm resolution to correct oneself and to sin no more.

In order for contrition to be real, it is necessary that it be interior, that it come from the depths of the heart; it must not then be a simple formula uttered without reflection. It is not necessary to show it either by sighs or tears etc. All those displays may be an indicator, but they are not the essence of contrition. That resides in the soul and in the will determined to flee from sin and return to God.

Beyond that, contrition must be *universal*, that is to say, it must be understood of all sins committed — at least of all mortal sins. Finally, it must be *supernatural* and not purely *natural*, for that has no use. This is why contrition, like every other good thing, must come from God and from His grace. Only the grace of God can engender it in us. However, God always grants us the necessary