

grace provided that we ask it of Him, provided that we possess good will and a sincere and supernatural repentance.

If our repentance is based on a motive of interest, or for a purely natural reason (i.e. temporal evils, shame, or illness), we shall have only natural contrition without merit. However, if it is based on some truth of the faith (i.e. hell, purgatory, heaven, God, etc.), then we will truly possess a supernatural contrition.

This supernatural contrition can be, in turn, perfect or imperfect — and here we come to our topic of perfect contrition.

WHAT, THEN, IS PERFECT CONTRITION?

In a few words, perfect contrition is contrition based on the motive of *love*, and imperfect contrition is that which is based on the *fear* of God.

Perfect contrition is that which flows from the *perfect love of God*. Now, our love of God is perfect if we love Him because He is infinitely perfect, infinitely beautiful, and infinitely good (love of benevolence) or because He has shown us His love in such an admirable way (love of gratitude). Our love of God is imperfect, if we love Him because we expect something from Him.

Accordingly, in imperfect love, we think above all about the favors received, and in perfect love, we think above all of the goodness of the One who bestows these favors. Imperfect love makes us preferably love the favor itself, whereas perfect love makes us love the Author of these favors, and that less for His *gifts* than for the *love* and the *goodness* that these gifts manifest.

From love, contrition flows. As a result, our contrition will be perfect, if we repent of our sins for the sake of the perfect love of God, whether from *benevolence* or from *gratitude*. It will be imperfect, if we repent of our faults owing to the *fear of God*, whether because sin has made us lose the reward that we have been promised, viz., heaven; or because we have earned the punishment imposed on the sinner, viz., hell or purgatory.

In *imperfect* contrition, we think particularly about ourselves and about the evils that sin brings to us, according to the light of faith. In *perfect* contrition, we especially think of God, His greatness, His beauty, His love, and His goodness; we consider sin an offense and that it has been the cause of the many sufferings endured to redeem us. We wish not only our own good, but that of God.

An example will help us grasp it better. When St. Peter had denied our Savior, “he went forth and wept bitterly.” Why did he weep? Was it for the shame that he was going to endure in front of the other apostles? In such a circumstance, it would have been a purely natural pain and without merit. Is it because his divine Master is perhaps going to strip him of his dignity as an apostle and Supreme Pastor, or drive him from His kingdom? In this case, the contrition would be good, but imperfect. No indeed! He repents, he weeps because he has offended his beloved Master, so good, so holy, and so worthy of love. He weeps because he has responded to that immense love with base ingratitude, and that is perfect contrition.

Now, don't you, too, dear reader, have the same motive as St. Peter to detest