

your sins, *for the sake of love, for the sake of perfect love, and for the sake of gratitude?*

Without any doubt, God's favors are more numerous than the hairs on your head and every one of them should make you repeat the words of St. John: "Let us love God, because He first loved us" (1 John, 4, 19). And how has He loved you?

"I have loved thee," says God Himself, "with an everlasting love, I have had pity on thee and I have drawn thee to me" (Jer. 31, 3). "With an everlasting love I have loved thee."

From all eternity, before there was even a trace of you upon the earth, He cast upon you this look of love that penetrates everything, He prepared for you a soul and a body, heaven and earth, with all the tenderness of a mother who prepares to welcome the child who is going to come into the world. It is God Who has given you life and health; it is He Who gives you the good things of nature every day.

This idea was sufficient for the pagans themselves to bring them to the knowledge and the perfect love of God. For a greater reason, it should bring you there — you a Christian who possesses the love and the supernatural goodness of God for you. Through the prophet He says, "I have had pity on you." You were condemned like all men as a result of original sin; God sent His only Son who became your Savior and redeemed you with His blood by dying on the cross.

It was of you that He lovingly thought in His agony in the Garden of Olives, when He shed His blood under the whips and the thorns, when He followed, carrying His cross, the long and painful path of Calvary; when, nailed upon the cross, He expired in the midst of ghastly torments, it was of you that He thought, with a tender love, as if you had been the only person in the world. What shall we make of that? "Let us love God, because He loved us first."

Moreover, God *drew* you to *Himself* by baptism, which is the first and chief grace of life, and by the *Church*, in whose bosom you were then incorporated. How many men have been able to attain the true faith only through the strength of effort and sufferings! But to you, God gave it to you from the cradle, out of pure love. He drew you to Himself, He draws you every day by means of the sacraments and by numberless graces, interior and exterior, with which He showers you. You are, as it were, submerged in an ocean, the ocean of goodness and divine love, and He wishes again to crown all these graces by placing you near Him and making you eternally happy. What will you give Him for such love? Isn't it true that you must make a return for these advances? Then let us love our God, since He loved us first.

Let us come to the point: How have you responded to the love of a God so lovable and so good? Without doubt, by your ingratitude and by your sins. But do you repent of this ingratitude? Ah, yes, without any doubt, and you burn with a desire to make amends for it by a limitless love. Well, then, if that is so, you have at this moment perfect contrition, that which is based on the love of God and which is called *contrition of love or of charity*.