

But in contrition of charity itself, there is a degree, more elevated yet, that consists in purely loving God, because He is infinitely glorious, infinitely perfect, and worthy of being loved, the abstraction of His mercy for us. Let us make a comparison. There are, in the firmament, a number of stars so distant from us that we cannot perceive them, and yet they are all as large and as bright as the sun that so freely imparts to us warmth and life. Likewise, suppose that man had never been in possession of this eternal star that is God's love. Suppose that God had created neither the world nor any creature: He would be no less great, no less beautiful, no less glorious, no less worthy of being loved, for He is Himself and in regard to Himself the greatest good, the most perfect, and the most lovable.

Such is the sense of the formula: I am heartily sorry... because You are infinitely lovable and You deplore sin. Reflect a moment and consider God's love; especially contemplate the Savior's bitter sufferings. In this light, you will easily understand, and it will pierce your heart through. Here, then, are the practical means to achieve perfect contrition.

II. HOW DO YOU OBTAIN PERFECT CONTRITION?

You must recall first of all that perfect contrition is a grace, and a great grace, from the mercy of God. You must ask it of Him earnestly. Ask it of Him, not only at the moment when you wish to make an act of contrition, but frequently. It should be the object of our most ardent desires. Therefore, repeat often, "My God, grant me perfect contrition for all my sins." Our Lord will grant your prayer, if He sees in you a sincere desire to please Him.

That said, here is how you will easily be able to make a perfect act of contrition. Cast yourself at the foot of a crucifix, either at church or in your room, where you imagine yourself in the presence of Jesus crucified, and, in the sight of His wounds, meditate with devotion for a few moments and say to yourself: "Who, then, is nailed on this cross? It is Jesus, my God and my Savior. What does He suffer? His mangled body covered with wounds shows the most terrible torments. His soul is soaked with pains and insults. Why does He suffer? For men's sins and also for my own. In the midst of His bitterness, He remembers me, He suffers for me, He wishes to expiate my sins." Stop there, while the ever-warm blood of your sweet Savior falls drop by drop upon your soul. Ask yourself how you responded to your lovable Savior's tokens of tenderness. Recall your sins and, forgetting for a moment heaven and hell, repent especially because they are your sins that have reduced your Savior to such a state. Promise Him no longer to nail Him to the cross with new sin, and lastly, recite, slowly and with fervor, an act of contrition.

The act of contrition may be expressed in many ways, according to the feelings of each penitent. Below is one of the most well known:

"My Lord and my God, I repent from the depth of my heart of all the sins of my life because by them I have earned the punishments of Thy justice, in this life and for eternity; because I have answered Thy favors with my ingratitude; but especially because by them I have offended Thee, Who art infinitely good