

and infinitely worthy of being loved. I firmly resolve to amend my ways and to sin no more. Grant me the grace to be faithful to my purpose. So be it.”

In this prayer, we express three motives of contrition: the first is imperfect contrition and the next two are perfect contrition. Nothing prevents us, in effect, from linking these two kinds of contrition; the first leads us so much the more easily to the second.

1. “Because by them I have earned the punishments of Thy justice...” This pertains to imperfect contrition.

2. “Because I have answered Thy favors with my ingratitude...” This is a motive that approaches perfect contrition and is joined with it, for if I have the sincere regret of having answered God’s love by my ingratitude and my sins, I would necessarily wish to make amends for this ingratitude by my love. Now, he who, by a motive of love, regrets having offended his benefactor, truly possesses perfect contrition, or contrition of charity.

3. “But especially because by them I have offended Thee...” Reread the above prayer and you will understand the meaning of these words. There you will see, clearly expressed, love and perfect contrition. To obtain it more easily, add the following words to your act of contrition, either orally or from your heart: “But especially because, by my sins I have offended Thee, Who art infinitely good and infinitely worthy of being loved, Who art my Savior, and Who died upon the cross for my sins.”

Afterwards comes your resolve: “I firmly resolve to amend my ways and to sin no more...”

But you will say, this is easy for someone else, but for me it is something too lofty and almost impossible. Do you think this is true? Don’t you believe it!

III. IS IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE A PERFECT ACT OF CONTRITION?

Without a doubt, the act of perfect contrition is more difficult than the act of imperfect contrition required for confession. However, there is no one who, with God’s grace, cannot obtain perfect contrition, provided he desires it sincerely. Contrition is in the will and not in the sentiment, though even without tears its intensity should have some proportion to the sin or sins we have committed.

Moreover, and this is a very proper consideration to give us encouragement, before the time of our Lord, in the ancient law perfect contrition was, for 4,000 years, the only means of obtaining forgiveness of sins. Again, in our times, there exists no other form of forgiveness for thousands of pagans and heretics. Now, it is true that God does not wish the death of the sinner; He cannot wish to impose a perfect contrition impossible to attain. Contrition must, on the contrary, be within the range of all men. Well, then, if so many unfortunates who live and die can obtain this perfect contrition far from (though through no fault of their own) the stream of grace and the Catholic Church, is perfect contrition so difficult for you who have the good fortune of being Christian and Catholic, who are the object of much greater graces and who are better taught than these poor infidels?

I will go further. Often, without your suspecting it, you have perfect contrition. For instance, when you devoutly hear holy Mass, when you make with