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## *Confession: Easy Terms for Salvation*

Many non-Catholics cannot see any necessity for Confession. A question often on their lips is, “Why confess to a man?” Confession, they think, slights the divine mercy and makes God appear hard to satisfy and slow to forgive.

Actually, however, confession proves the exact opposite. Confession is not necessary to appease God’s anger and win His pardon. An act of perfect contrition gains instantaneous pardon and immediate restoration to grace. The truly contrite receive pardon as readily and as quickly as did the Good Thief.

Confession expresses a human need, not a divine need, and is necessary to satisfy man, not to satisfy God. Parents often insist on an apology from an erring child even when they have long since forgiven the child in their hearts. They insist, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the child whose ultimate good they unselfishly consider. In the same way, God insists on an apology from men, for their sakes, not for His.

The idea of many non-Catholics that the Savior intends us to confess directly to God in secret is not absurd, but it overlooks too much. After all, the Apostles in the upper room on the first Easter Sunday could have confessed (and presumably did confess) to God their miserable cowardice and infidelity. But they were glad of the reassurance of pardon from the lips of Christ.

Those who have tried confession to God in secret admit that it is like “talking to nothing” or like “arguing with yourself on your knees”. It might be different with a Saint, but saints, here, are few and most of us aren’t saints, yet. “Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.” There is reassurance in hearing the words of pardon from the lips of the priest, speaking in the name and with the delegated power of Christ. “I absolve thee from thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

There is no absolute need for Confession to satisfy the Justice of God. Christ could have left members of His Church to their own devices and the torturing uncertainties of direct confession to God, but He was too kind. He saw that auricular confession would be necessary for conclusive proof of pardon and maximum relief and peace of mind.



Besides being indispensable medicine for the regaining of spiritual health, confession is also necessary to intensify the realization of the malice of sin. If men “got away with sin too easily”, they might make light of it. God insists on a formal penal apology for serious sin to prevent any confusing of His mercy with unconcern.

Confession to a fellow man can never be easy, and may be extremely difficult, when there is a shameful tale to tell. From the nature of the cure, confession is a burden. But it is unthinkable that our Savior would add unnecessarily to the natural difficulties of confession. He was indignant with the Pharisees because they “bound heavy and insupportable burdens and laid them on men’s shoulders.” It would be implicit blasphemy to presume that He had followed their vicious example. A law which is too severe for ordinary mortals is no law at all. Instead of being “an ordinance of reason for the common good,” which is the definition and purpose of law, an excessively severe law would be a stumbling block and a common detriment. Civil authorities set up courts of justice, where strict justice is meted out. Instead Christ set up a court of mercy, and its name is Confession.

The difference between the two courts is illustrated by a story told by Fr. Henry Day, S.J., whose father is a judge. One day a penitent was seen coming away from Fr. Day’s confessional, obviously very jubilant. Her friend noticed it and remarked on it. “Why shouldn’t I be?” was the decided retort. “He had given me only 3 Our Fathers and 3 Hail Marys and His father gave me 3 months.”

All Theologians teach that no one is obliged to put himself to serious inconvenience when he goes to confession. Those who act on any other principle are guilty of obstinate pride in constructing their own practical theology in opposition to the teaching of Christ. Many Catholics go infrequently to confession because of a false notion of its requirements. They imagine that they must make a super effort every time, and naturally they cannot make such an effort often, because it takes too much out of them. Even some of those who go frequently to confession find it a strain, and are relieved when they have gotten it over with. To act like this is to play into the hands of unbelievers. At the Reformation, confession was called a “butchery of consciences,” and Catholics were accused of leaving nothing to the mercy of God. It is surprisingly easy to fulfill the task set in confession, because amazingly little is absolutely demanded. God’s terms are easiest possible. It is child’s play for a sincere person to secure the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance.

The 3 indispensable acts of the penitent are: confession; contrition (which includes a firm purpose of amendment); and satisfaction. The essential requirements for the validity of the acts are amazingly light; the rigorist would probably say scandalously light.

For the sake of clarity, consider the various kinds of confession, which could have been imposed. 1). A general accusation of sin, such as “I have sinned.” This is called by theologians generic confession. 2). An indication of the theological species of sin. “I have sinned mortally or venially.” 3). The accusation according

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to the number and kind of all sins, whether they are mortal or venial.” 4). The accusation of all mortal sins according to number and kind.”

Generic confession, “I have sinned,” is obviously demanded from the nature of the case. Unless confession of some kind were prescribed, there would have been no point for instituting the Sacrament.

Confession of only the theological species of sin, “ I have sinned mortally and venially,” would by its vagueness, destroy to a great extent, the efficacy of the sacrament. A vague confession would not induce adequate relief of mind, and would deprive the sacrament of much of its satisfying and therapeutic value. A law to confess all sins, mortal and venial, would be extremely onerous and worrying, and our kind Savior did not impose it.

We are obliged to confess all mortal sins. Now, even a very ordinary Catholic would not need to look for mortal sins. The thought of the sin would have been torturing him ever since it was committed, and the difficulty would be to forget rather than to remember. As soon as he knelt down to prepare his confession, his sin would be nagging at him, and would, so to speak, give him a knockout blow right between the eyes. No need to find out the sin; it will find him out and, like an unwelcome guest or a bore, will introduce itself. A sincere person can, therefore, find necessary matter for confession in a split second.

When the theologians say that our sorrow must be universal, they mean that it must include all mortal sins. Similarly, when they speak of the necessity of safeguarding the integrity of confession, they mean that, in ordinary circumstances, we must never deliberately omit to confess mortal sins.

The obligation of confession has been made easy and worry-proof as is consistent with the purpose of the sacrament. The same is true with the second act of the penitent, contrition.

Contrition is sorrow for sin because of offending God’s infinite goodness. Attrition is sorrow for sin for some less noble and more selfish supernatural motive, for example, for having lost heaven and deserving hell.

In the sacrament of Penance, attrition is enough to obtain the pardon of the most heinous sins. The implications of this doctrine are a startling manifestation of divine mercy, meriting prolonged, grateful meditation. The teaching means that of those who take the trouble to go to confession, God is willing to forgive the sins, even mortal sins, just because they have turned to Him with a feeble incipient love, even when largely selfish and occasioned principally by a prudent regard for the security of their own skins. Even though they are much more concerned about themselves than Him, He forgives them because they are back once more on the road that leads to Him. Only God would forgive on such terms. One wonders how He can, how such easy forgiveness is consistent with His dignity. Who said that nothing is left to the mercy of God?

Outside of the Sacrament of Penance, attrition is not enough to restore the mortal sinner to grace; inside the sacrament it is enough, and this is a very powerful reason for confessing to a man that happens to be a priest. Forgiveness is very much more certain in the sacrament of penance than it could possibly be

*Each time we say, “Jesus”, we give God infinite joy and glory, for we offer Him all the infinite merits of the Passion & Death of Jesus Christ.”*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



anywhere else; in fact, when the requirements are satisfied, forgiveness is morally certain. Penance may be called the sacrament of easy forgiveness.

Another startling aspect of the sufficiency of attrition is that all that is absolutely required for the validity of the sacrament is attrition for mortal sins.

If there is no sorrow for venial sins, the sacrament is not invalidated provided there is attrition for mortal sins, even passed and confessed mortal sins. Needless to say, such imperfect dispositions diminish the grace received from the sacrament, but they do not nullify it. Mere humans could never be so merciful. The implications and significance of this ready forgiveness should inspire the most absolute confidence in the divine mercy.

With regard to satisfaction, the essential requirements of the sacrament are that at the time the penance is given, there is willingness to accept it. If the penitent changed his mind afterwards and refused to say the penance, he would, needless to say, commit a sin; but even then the sacrament would not be undone. If the penance were a grave one imposed for mortal sin, refusal to perform it would constitute a mortal sin. If the penance were a light one, refusal to perform it would amount to a venial sin.

If deliberate refusal to say a penance does not invalidate the sacrament, it is perfectly clear that indeliberate omission of a penance through forgetfulness does not invalidate the sacrament. If the omission is due to bad or failing memory, there is no sin at all; only a regrettable loss of grace and sacramental satisfaction.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has obviously done His best to make confession as fear-proof as possible. It is possible to commit a good many venial sins in the actual act of confession and yet not nullify the sacrament. Our Lord demands the very minimum. It is not for a moment suggested that one should be content with the minimum; all the same, it is a great advantage to know the minimum requirements for confession.

Why is confession so easy? “Because by His bruises we are healed. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” The blows that were aimed at sinners fell on His bruised and battered body. That is why penitents get off so lightly. “He took the handwriting that was against us and nailed it to the Cross in His own body.” He made the supreme sacrifice and perfect satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world.

Moreover, in His agony in the garden, He made a perfect confession and a perfect act of contrition for all the sins of the world. His confession was absolutely accurate; His contrition, His sadness, was of infinite intensity. The penitents’ task is to supplement His perfect confession and perfect contrition as best as he can.

(Taken from *The Church and Its People* articles compiled from *Catholic Digest*; published by *Catechetical Guild Educational Society*, St. Paul, Minn.; *Nihil Obstat & Imprimatur* given October 5, 1952)

*Each time we say, “Jesus,” let us clearly wish to offer God all the Masses being said all over the world for all our intentions. We thus share in these thousands of Masses. (Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



## *Sermon from Fr. Martin Stepanich O.F.M. “The Power of a Name”*

*Each time we say, “Jesus,” we gain 300 days indulgence, which we may apply to the souls in Purgatory, thus relieving and liberating very many of these holy souls from their awful pains”*  
(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)

You probably remember how Shakespeare once made the remark that a rose would smell just as sweet, no matter what name you gave it; and, of course, it would look just as beautiful. What he had in mind was true, but it is not true that a name doesn't mean anything. To us human beings, a name means very much, it suggests certain definite ideas, brings definite pictures before our imagination, even stirs up certain feelings within us, feelings of pleasure, happiness, peace or displeasure, hatred, fear, that's what a name can do to us, depending on what it is.

And a great name has a special effect upon us. We buy things because of a famous name, maybe because it is a symbol of quality or dependability or economy for us. We go to the movies, sport spectacles, musical performances, and the like, because great name stars are performing. We do things just because famous persons are doing the same thing. It seems that all this makes us feel important, even though it really does not make us any more important than we may be.

These are examples of what a name can mean to us. But there is a special Name, which exerts a very special influence on mankind. There is no other name like it and no other name stirs up in us the same kind of thoughts, and the same kind of feelings, as does the sacred Name of Jesus Christ. St. Paul made it plain, in his letter to the people of Philippi (2.10-11), just where the Name of Jesus stands in comparison with other names. “...God has exalted Him,” writes the Apostle, “and has given Him the Name above all names, so that at the Name of Jesus everyone in Heaven, on earth, and beneath the earth should bend the knee and should publicly acknowledge to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (Introit, Feast of the Holy Name)

And you heard in today's epistle what St. Peter said to the Jewish authorities when he was brought to court, “There is no other name given to men by which we are to be saved.”(Acts 4:12). There is, therefore, no other name, no matter how famous or how rich or how powerful, that can save us at the Judgment Seat of God, except the Holy Name of Jesus. If the Divine Judge sees that we have lived according to the teachings and the spirit of Jesus, He will open up to us the gates of Heaven.

The Holy Name of Jesus wields great power over the forces of hell. To give you one example, Our Savior said to the Apostles on the day of His Ascension, that those who believe in Him will cast out devils in His Name (Cf. Mk. 16:17). But don't think that this doesn't include you. You have complete power over the devil in time of temptation, if only you call upon the



Name of Jesus. If you do not realize what power is at your disposal, we feel sorry for you and we dare to say that you do not do very well in time of temptation.

We willingly put up with the contempt and insults and hatred which people show towards us just because we are Roman Catholics and, therefore, because we belong to the True Church of Jesus Christ. What a fortunate thing it would be for us, if we could have the same attitude, which the Apostles had, when they were persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ. St. Luke records it in his Acts of the Apostles (5:41) that they rejoiced that they had been counted worthy to suffer disgrace for the Name of Jesus.

We like to do good to others out of love for Jesus Christ who taught us the value of charity. Even the smallest act of kindness is of value in the eyes of God if done for the sake of Christ. That is why Jesus said one day at Capharnaum in Galilee that “anyone that gives you a cup of water because of the fact that you belong to Christ, will not, I assure you, go without his reward.” (Mk.9:41).

The Savior has also taught us to pray in His Name. It was after the Last Supper, while Jesus was delivering His farewell address to His beloved Apostles that He promised, “If you ask the Father anything in My Name, He will give it to you...Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.” (Jn. 16:23-24).

In the end, how happy we shall be if we can die with the Holy Name of Jesus on our lips. We have personally been present at the deathbed of a person who repeatedly pronounced the Holy Name of Jesus before he died, even though his voice was already very weak and he could hardly be heard. We hope that some of you have had the same pleasant, consoling experience.

To make sure that the Holy Name of Jesus will be on our lips at the hour of our death, we must make sure that the Name of Jesus is written in our hearts now and always and that we allow our Savior Jesus Christ to have complete possession of our hearts and souls throughout our lives.

(Given in Lockport. Ill. on January 3, 1954, The Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus.)

## ***Catechism: The Sacrament of Penance, Pt. I.***

We have been studying how God became Man to redeem the human race from sin and hell. He came to conquer sin and He conquered it finally on the Cross. But the merits of Christ’s death must be applied to our souls; hence the Sacraments. They are the official channels of grace from Him to us. Through Baptism His conquest of original sin becomes, so to speak, our conquest. But Baptism would be of little use if there were not some similar means by which actual sin would be forgiven.

*Each time we say, “Jesus,” it is an act of perfect love, for we offer to God the infinite love of Jesus.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



God with His infinite knowledge knows that a large number of men, perhaps even the majority, offend Him, even seriously at least once in a lifetime. For all of them Baptism would be unavailing for salvation unless He instituted also another Sacrament for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism. We say another Sacrament because the Sacraments are the normal channels of grace to the soul. Moreover, grace is itself so vitally important and the loss of it so immeasurably serious, that it would seem to be very much in accordance with God's infinite goodness to give us some sign of forgiveness perceptible to the senses.

## ***“Catholic Doctrine”***

The Church has, in fact, defined that such a Sacrament does exist, and it is called the Sacrament of Penance, or more popularly, Confession. Here are the clear words of the Council of Trent: “As a means of regaining grace and justice, penance was at all times necessary for those who had defiled their souls with any mortal sin...Before the coming of Christ, penance was not a Sacrament, nor is it since His coming a Sacrament for those who are not Baptized. But the Lord then principally instituted the Sacrament of Penance, when, after His resurrection from the dead, He breathed upon His Disciples saying: “Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, when you hold them bound, they are held bound.” (John 20:22-23).

All the Church Fathers have understood that the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the Apostles and their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after Baptism. Moreover, Christ left priests, His own vicars, as judges, unto whom all the mortal sins into which the faithful may have fallen should be revealed in order that, in accordance with the power of the keys, they may pronounce the sentence of forgiveness or retention of sins.

*The Holy Name of Jesus saves us from innumerable evils & delivers us especially from the power of the devil, who is constantly seeking to do us harm.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*

## ***“Christ passed on the Power to Forgive Sin: The Evidence of Scripture”***

There is, of course, no question that Christ had the power to forgive sins because He was God. He exercised that power continually during His life on earth. Moreover, He passed it on to His Apostles. First to Peter, then to all the Apostles, He said: “I promise you, all that you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and all that you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matt.16:19 & 18:18). Consideration of this text reveals that the spiritual power promised by Christ is unlimited, save by what is known to be God's law, that it is judicial and that it will be ratified in heaven. It is judicial because it embraces binding and loosing.



Yet the Council of Trent refers us to an event that took place after Our Lord's Resurrection for the principal words of institution of the Sacrament of Penance. "And now it was evening on the same day, the first day of the week; for fear of the Jews, the disciples had locked the doors of the room in which they had assembled; and Jesus came, and stood in their midst; Peace be unto you, He said. And with that, He showed them His hands and His side. Thus the disciples saw the Lord, and were glad. Once more Jesus said to them; Peace be upon you; I came upon an errand from My Father, and now I am sending you out in My turn. With that, He breathed on them, and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit; when you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven, and when you hold them bound, they are held bound." (John 20:19-23).

What a solemn scene is described in those words! Remember, it is after the Resurrection. Jesus Christ visited the upper room on a special mission. This is indicated by the fact that He breathed on His Apostles. Why is that recorded by St. John? Surely, all the circumstances suggest that an event of unique importance was taking place. Christ was giving His Holy Spirit to the Twelve and their successors; He was telling them that their mission was similar to that He had received from His Father. Therefore, when He told them to forgive sins, they received the power He possessed. The words themselves are incapable of any other interpretation.

To say that this incident merely gives the Apostles the power to preach the Gospel of repentance or to declare that God has forgiven sins or to take away only the penalty due to sins is to do violence to text and context. The special mission of the Apostles is actually to forgive sins, and they are to exercise that power in a judicial way. Just as the general power of binding and loosing is promised in judicial language, so is this more particular power conferred. The obvious meaning of the words is that forgiveness is not to be granted or withheld indiscriminately but as the sinner deserves. The power is unrestricted, applying to all sins. And what the Apostle decides is God's decision.

The power here conferred was obviously not to cease with the death of the Apostles. It was being given to them in their official capacity as priests of the Church to be handed down to their successors in office. Whatever powers are needed for the Church's work, even though the words conferring them were necessarily spoken to the Apostles alone, are also given to their successors, and His Mystical Body, the Church, is to continue forever in Christ's work, and a chief part of that work was undoubtedly the forgiveness of sins. Without power to do this in God's name the Church could scarcely be said to be the continuation of Christ's life among men. A glance at the tradition of the Church in the matter ought to convince any fair-minded inquirer that such has been the continuous belief and practice of the Church throughout the centuries.

*The Holy Name of Jesus gradually fills our hearts & our souls with a peace & a joy we never had before.*

*(Taken from "The Wonders of the Holy Name" by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*

## *“The Evidence of Tradition”*



Starting with the fifth century, we find the Bishop, St. Augustine, warning the faithful: “Let us not listen to those who deny that the Church of God has power to forgive all sins.” St. Ambrose makes the same point in several places. For example: “Christ granted this (power to forgive sins) to the Apostles and from the Apostles it has been transmitted to the office of priests.”

In the fourth century, St. Pacian, Bishop of Barcelona, wrote: “This (forgiving sins), you say, only God can do. Quite true; but what God does through His priests is the doing of His own power.”

In the east, St. Athanasius, who died in 375 A.D., is particularly clear: “As the man whom the priest baptizes is enlightened by the grace of the Holy Ghost, so does he who in penance confesses his sins, receive through the priest forgiveness in virtue of the graces of Jesus Christ.”

Note that the Church Fathers in both the east and the west appeal all the time to the words of Christ, which they interpret in exactly the same way as the Council of Trent interpreted them 1100 yrs. later.

From the third century comes the voice of another Bishop, St. Cyprian: “Let each confess his sin while he is still in this world, while his confession can be received, while satisfaction and the forgiveness granted by the priests is acceptable to God.”

During the second century a controversy arose between the Church and the Montanists heretics, who maintained that some sins could be forgiven while others could not. The very existence of such a controversy is testimony to the general belief that the Church had the power to forgive sins. Against false ideals, Pope Callistus (218-222) published a famous edict in which he declared: “I forgive the sins both of adultery and of fornication to those who have done penance.” Tertullian then left the Church as a protest against the doctrine that the Church could forgive all sins. Therefore, that was the orthodox teaching of the Church received at the end of the second century. In fact, he refers to a more ancient work, the Pastor, written by one Heranas as early as 140 A.D. saying that it is wrong because it favors the pardoning of even adultery.

Denis of Corinth, who died about 170 A.D., taught that Christ left the power to forgive sins to the Church and that it was all embracing. Our authority for this fact is Eusebius in his history.

Going back still further, we come to that work we have already found so useful the Didache. It has two references to Confession, the second of which exhorts: “On the Lord’s day come together and break bread...having confessed your transgressions that your sacrifice may be pure.” St. Clement, who died in 99 A.D., in his famous letter to Corinth, begs the “seditious” to submit themselves to the presbyters and receive correction so as to repent.”

*The Holy Name of Jesus gives us such strength that our sufferings become lighter & easier to bear.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



The first essential of a Sacrament is institution by Christ. In regard to the forgiveness of sins, it is certainly present. The constant practice of the Church shows that the other essentials are there, too. The outward sign, consisting of actions and words, produces an inward grace.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the proximate matter of the Sacrament of Penance is the act of the penitent—contrition, confession, and satisfaction, but, because these differ from the matter of, say, Baptism, in which some material thing is employed externally, later theologians prefer, with the Council of Trent, to speak of them as quasi-matter. The form of the Sacrament is defined by Trent, as the actual words of absolution pronounced by the priest: “ I absolve thee from thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

*The Holy Name of Jesus is the shortest, the easiest, and the most powerful of prayers. Everyone can say it, even in the midst of his daily work. God cannot refuse to hear it.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*

## ***“Effects of the Sacrament”***

The teaching of the Church in regard to the effects of this Sacrament may be summed up under two headings:

- A. If the penitent confesses mortal sins not previously forgiven:
  - a) The sins with their eternal punishment are remitted and the remaining debt of temporal punishment is partially remitted:
  - b) His merits, which were cancelled by his mortal sins, revive, their previous efficacy:
  - c) A special grace is given for avoiding sin in the future.
- B. If the penitent has to confess only venial sins or mortal sins previously forgiven:
  - a). The venial sins are forgiven:
  - b). Sanctifying grace is increased:
  - c). Grace is given to avoid sin in the future:
  - d). The debt of temporal punishment is decreased.

## ***“Jurisdiction or Faculties”***

Because Our Lord conferred the power to remit sins only on the Apostles and not on all the faithful, it is and always has been the teaching of the Church that Bishops and priests alone can exercise this power. In order to use it they need not only the power of orders but also the power of jurisdiction. They receive the former at ordination; the proper ecclesiastical authority confers the latter. Catholics usually speak of the power of jurisdiction by saying that a priest has “faculties” to hear confession. Every priest can, however, absolve anyone under emergency circumstances because under such circumstances, the Church gives all of her priests jurisdiction, through the power of the keys, for the salvation of souls.

## ***“Contrition and Purpose of Amendment”***



*Our Sweet Lord is present in countless consecrated hosts throughout the world. During many hours of the busy day & during the long nights, He is forgotten & left alone.*

*We can do much to console & comfort Him by saying, “My Jesus, I love & adore Thee in all the consecrated hosts of the world, & I thank Thee with all my heart for remaining on all the altars of the world for love of us.” Then say 20, 50, or more times the Holy Name of Jesus With this intention.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*

The part of the penitent in this Sacrament is summed up under the three-fold heading: Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.

Contrition is defined as the heartfelt sorrow for sins we have committed with hatred for them and a firm purpose of amendment. And a firm purpose of amendment is a resolution not to commit sin again and to avoid as far as possible the proximate occasions of sin. It is obvious that there can be no true contrition without a firm purpose of amendment. In fact the latter is the best test of the worth of one’s contrition. Note that it is a resolution, that is a determination, and not a mere wish or desire. In making it we rely on God’s grace other than our own strength. It must apply not only to the sins themselves but must include also the determination to avoid any person, place, or thing which, from experience, we know will lead us to sin, and also the determination to make use of any means necessary to help us to overcome the sin in the future. Contrition for sin should be: a) Inward—not only on the lips but coming from the heart. b). Supernatural—from more than merely natural motives. Prompted by the Truths of our Faith. c). Profound—so that sin is hated above other evil. d). Universal—including all mortal sins committed since Baptism and not already forgiven by the Sacrament.

If a penitent has no mortal sins, but only venial sins to confess, he must make an act of sorrow for some or at least one of them, and that is sufficient.

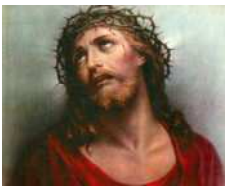
## ***“Perfect and Imperfect Contrition”***

There are two kinds of contrition: perfect and imperfect.

Perfect contrition is a sorrow and hatred for sin, springing from charity, inasmuch as sin is an offense against God, who is supremely good and worthy to be loved above all things. It washes away sin immediately, even apart from the Sacrament of Penance, but it obviously implies the desire to receive the Sacrament as soon as possible. All Christians should, therefore, form the habit of constantly making an act of perfect contrition, since they may easily be the means of a soul’s salvation. In this way the good one may have done will not be rendered void for eternity, nor need one be afraid of sudden death.

Imperfect contrition is that supernatural sorrow and hatred for sin which is aroused either by reflection on the baseness of sin or by the fear of hell and its torments. It is sufficient for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance, but we should, of course, always strive for perfect contrition.

Contrition is not a “feeling”. It is an act of intellect and will, not of the senses. Consequently no one ought to be perturbed by not being able to feel sorry when going to confession. Feelings are most misleading in this matter.



Without sorrow for sin there is no forgiveness. In fact, a person who goes to confession knowing he has no real sorrow for his sins, not only does not obtain forgiveness but he also commits a grave sin of sacrilege.

## ***“Confession imposed by Christ”***

Confession is to accuse oneself of one’s sins to a priest lawfully approved in order to obtain sacramental absolution.

When we were thinking about the words by which Our Lord conferred the power to forgive sins on His Church, we saw that the power was two fold—to forgive sins or to retain them. The exercise of such judicial power would be quite impossible unless the sinner made known his sins to the person with the power to forgive them. Equally, it would have been absolutely useless for Christ to confer such power upon the Apostles and their successors if people could still have their sins forgiven by telling them in their hearts to God.

The words of Christ show that the power given to His priests is all embracing. How can they make a judgment, as they are closely told to do, without having the evidence? Who can give the evidence but the sinner? Hence, the inspired words of Scripture imply the necessity of confession.

## ***“Confession in Christian Tradition”***

If Christ did not impose the obligation of confession, who did? All the Eastern Churches retain confession as a divine institution, even those which split off from Rome in the fifth century. They certainly never adapted it from the Western Church and the Western Church certainly never adapted it from the Eastern Churches. Therefore, the belief must have been firmly rooted in Christianity in the fifth century. Now if it was introduced during the first five centuries there ought certainly to be some evidence of what would be a striking innovation. Also, in view of the conservative nature of the early Church, there would surely be some protest against such a hard practice imposed on the whole Church. But there is no evidence of either sort. On the contrary, the only evidence we have is that the whole Church throughout the first five centuries accepted the practice of confession as a divine institution.

Here is a very clear quotation from Pope St. Leo the Great, who died in 461A.D. “God in His abundant mercy has provided two main remedies for the sins of men: that they may gain eternal life by the grace of Baptism, and also by the remedy of Penance. Those who have violated the vows of their Baptism may obtain the remission of their sins by condemning themselves; the divine goodness has so decreed that the pardon of God can only be obtained by sinners through the power Jesus Christ Himself has conferred upon the rulers of the Church, the power of imposing canonical penance upon sinners who confess their sins, and of allowing them to receive the

*We may do most perfect penance for our sins by offering the Passion & Blood of Jesus many times each day for this intention.*

*The Precious Blood purifies our souls & raises us to a higher degree of holiness. It is all so easy! We have only to repeat lovingly, joyfully, reverently, “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus.”*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



Sacraments of Christ, after they have purified their souls by a salutary satisfaction...Every Christian, therefore, must examine his conscience, and cease putting the hour of his conversion off from day to day; he ought to expect to satisfy God's justice on his death bed. It is dangerous for a weak and ignorant man to put off his conversion to the last uncertain day of his life, when he may be unable to confess and obtain priestly absolution: he ought, when he can, to merit pardon by a full satisfaction for his sins."

St. Pacian, who died in 390 A.D., urged the sinner to confess in spite of his shame: "I appeal to you, my brethren, you who are not ashamed to sin and yet are ashamed to confess...I beseech you, cease to hide your wounded conscience. Sick people who are prudent do not fear the physician, though he cut and burn even the secret parts of the body."

St. John Chrysostom, who died in 347A.D., is particularly eloquent: "Be not ashamed to approach (the priest) because you have sinned; nay rather, approach him for that very reason. No one says: because I have an ulcer, I will not go near the doctor or take medicine; on the contrary, it is just this that makes it needful to call in physicians and apply remedies. We(priests) know well how to pardon because we ourselves are liable to sin. This is why God did not give us angels to be our spiritual doctors, nor send down Gabriel to rule the flock, but from the fold itself, He chooses the shepherds, from among the sheep He appoints a leader, in order that he may be inclined to pardon his followers and, keeping in mind his own frailty, may not set himself in hardness against the members of the flock."

Nearly a century earlier St. Cyprian tells how "to those who implore the mercy of God peace can be granted through His priests...And because in hell there is no confession...they who repent with their whole heart and ask for it, should be received into the Church and therein saved unto the Lord."

About the same time, Origen plainly speaks of a secret confession: "When you have eaten some indigestible food, and your stomach is filled with an excessive quantity of humor you will suffer until you have gotten rid of it. So in like manner sinners, who hide and retain their sins within their breasts, become sick there from, almost to death. If, however, they accuse themselves, confess their sins, and vomit forth their iniquity, they will certainly drive from their souls the principle of evil. Consider carefully whom you choose to listen to your sins. Know well the character of the physician to whom you intend to relate the nature of your sickness...If he gives you advice, follow it; if he judges that your sickness is of such a nature that it should be revealed publicly in church for the edification of the brethren and your own more effective cure, do not hesitate to do what he tells you."

St. Irenaeus contrasts private and public confession and St. Clement, contemporary of St. John the Apostle, wrote to the Corinthians: "It is better for a man to confess his sins than to harden his heart."

This outline of the teaching of the earliest Christian writers shows: 1) that the manifestation of sin was considered necessary for regaining God's friendship. 2) That was done by confession, not to a layman, but to a priest.

*If we are sad or cast down, if we are worried with fears & doubts, this Divine Name will give us a delightful peace. If we are weak & wavering, it will give us a new strength & energy. Did not Jesus, when on Earth, go about consoling & comforting all those who were unhappy? He is still doing it every day for those who ask Him.*

*(Taken from "The Wonders of the Holy Name" by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



- 3) That priests exercise the power of absolving as the representative of Christ.
- 4) That the sinner must overcome his shame and repugnance to confession if he is to be saved.

This teaching, it is noted, goes back to the first century. Rightly, then, does St. Leo the Great appeal to the rule of the Apostles, which made confession in secret to a priest sufficient without a public declaration being necessary.

Confession has, in fact, been such an outstanding characteristic of the Church since Apostolic times that the presence or absence of it might well be used as one of the criteria by which the authenticity or otherwise of any Christian body might be established. At the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup>. Century these remarkable words were written by Lactantius: “That is the true Church in which there is confession and penance, which applies a wholesome remedy to the sins and wounds where –unto the weakness of the flesh is subject.”

(Taken from *This is the Faith* by Francis J. Ripley; published by *Catechetical Guild Educational Society* St. Paul, Minn. *Nihil Obstat & Imprimatur* given January 25, 1951)

## ***The Following of Christ; Bk. III, Ch. IV. “Walk Before God in Truth & Humility”***

Son, walk before Me in truth; and always seek Me in the simplicity of your heart. He that walks before Me in truth shall be secured from evil incursions, and the Truth shall deliver him from seducers, and from the detractions of the wicked.

If the truth shall have made you free, you shall be indeed free, and shall make no account of the vain words of men.

Lord, it is true, as You have said: so, I beseech You, let it be done unto me. Let Your Truth teach me, let it guard me, and preserve me unto a saving end. Let it deliver me from all evil affections and inordinate love, and I shall walk with You in great freedom of heart.

I will teach you, says the Truth, those things that are right and pleasing in My sight. Think on your sins with great displeasure and sorrow; and never esteem yourself to be anything on account of your good works.

Because, in truth, you are a sinner, subject to, and entangled with many passions. Of yourself you always tend to nothing, speedily do you fail, speedily are you overcome, speedily disturbed, speedily dissolved. You have not done anything in which you can glory, but many things for which you ought to abase yourself; for you are much weaker than you can comprehend.

Let nothing, then, seem much to you of all that you do. Let nothing appear great, nothing valuable or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable, but that which is eternal. Let the eternal Truth please you above all things, and your own exceeding great vileness ever be displeasing to you.

*If we are suffering from weak health, if we are in pain, if some disease is taking hold of our poor bodies, He can cure us. Did He not cure the sick, the lame, the blind, the lepers? Does He not say to us, “Come to ME, all you who labor, & are heavily burdened, & I will refresh you,” Many could have good health if they only asked Jesus for it. By all means consult doctors, use remedies, but ABOVE ALL call on Jesus!*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*



Fear nothing so much, blame and flee nothing so much, as your vices and sins, which ought to displease you more than the loss of anything whatsoever. Some persons walk not sincerely before Me; but, led by a certain curiosity and arrogance, desire to know My secrets, and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation in the process. These often, when I resist them, fall into great temptations and sins through pride and curiosity.

Fear the judgments of God, dread the anger of the Almighty; yet presume not to examine the works of the Most High, but search diligently your own iniquities, in how great things you have offended, and how much good you have neglected.

Some only carry their devotions in their books, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures. Some have Me in their mouths, but there is little of Me in their hearts. Others there are who, enlightened in their understanding, and purified in their affection, always pant after the things that are eternal; are unwilling to hear of earthly things, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and such as these perceive what the Spirit of Truth is speaking in them; for it teaches them to despise the things of earth, and to love the heavenly things; to disregard the world, and day and night to aspire after heaven.

### ***“Practical Reflections”***

Nothing can more effectually teach you what you are, than the consideration of your many miseries. As you become convinced of your evil inclinations, so will you not elevate yourself by thoughts of vanity or self-complacency. Happy then the soul that knows itself, that knows and bewails its own miseries, weakness, and evil inclinations. It is this, which subjects it to God, and obliges it to have frequent recourse to Him, and to humble itself under His all-powerful hand. The continual danger it apprehends of yielding to temptation keeps it in a state of perpetual dependence upon Him, and of sincere and constant deprivation for His sake. Be determined, then, willingly to receive from the hand of God whatever trials He is pleased to send you, to enter into His designs, and to submit to His good pleasure.

### ***Prayer***

As I am sensible, O God, that nothing is more pleasing to Thee than the disposition of a soul which depends upon Thee in all things, and which applies itself to know and to do Thy will, so the grace which I now ask of Thee is that I may be docile to Thine inspirations, and faithful in following them. I well know that Thou require of me a sincere and constant adherence to Thy service, an exact fidelity to my duties, and an absolute conformity to Thy blessed will. I know that Thou requirest me to direct all my actions by an interior spirit, and a real desire of pleasing Thee. This, above all things, I ask of Thee, my God, to be employed only on Thee and for Thee, to esteem

*We thank our friends for any little favor they do for us, but we forget or neglect to thank God for His immense love for us, for becoming man for us, for dying for us, for all the Masses we can attend & the Holy*

*Communion we can receive-& do not receive. What ingratitude!*

*By repeating often the Holy Name of Jesus, we correct this grave fault & thank God & give Him great joy & glory.*

*Dear Friends, do you wish to give joy to God? Then thank, thank God. He is waiting for your thanks.*

*(Taken from “The Wonders of the Holy Name” by Fr. Paul Sullivan, O.P.)*

nothing but what is eternal, and to reckon as nothing all that passes away with time. When, O God, shall an interior life, a life of death to all things, a life hidden with Jesus Christ in Thee, become my portion, as it is now my desire? Unite my soul intimately to Thyself, captivate and confirm my heart in Thy love, both for time and eternity. Amen.

### *The Explanation of Our Mission and of Our Logo.*

*Since we have named this newsletter the “Mystical Rose”, it would seem only prudent that we explain why we call it , “Mystical Rose”, and why we have designed this Logo at the top of the first page.*

*The title, “Mystical Rose”, is taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*

*The Logo of the crown of thorns, with the roses attached, symbolizes Our Lady’s suffering during Our Lord’s Passion and Death. It also symbolizes Her suffering for us, her spiritual children. The seven roses affixed to the crown of thorns represents the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady.*

*We dedicate this work to Our Blessed Mother and we ask Her to help and guide us, so that we may be able to serve God’s people by printing material that will be spiritually edifying: bringing those who read it to a better knowledge of their faith; a better understanding of what God requires of them in order to achieve salvation; and a more sincere desire to serve the Living God to the best of their ability.*

*Information about Catholicism is so very necessary in order to live a good life. The world in which we live today is in dire need of that information, in order to save mankind from its own self-imposed ignorance. We hope, by the grace of God, that our newsletter will help to inform.*

*Fr. James Kosek  
439 Thoria Ct.  
Batavia, Ill. 60510  
[jkosek3@Juno.com](mailto:jkosek3@Juno.com)*