



The Confession, Giuseppe Molteni (1838)

The Sacrament of Penance: Confession

Careful! Reflection on confession must occupy an important time in the life of the chapter. The following meditation is given by a seminarian or a religious. The chapter leader is strongly encouraged to complete this teaching:

- ▶ by a commented reading of the guide to confession ["How to Confess", in the Pilgrims' Booklet], in order to help those who do not have the experience of confession;
- ▶ by a commented reading of the examination of conscience in the pilgrims' booklet as well], in order to help his pilgrims prepare their confession.

It is very strongly recommended to invite the priest confessor to say a few words of encouragement at the microphone of the chapter, before placing himself at the back. The head of the chapter will be particularly vigilant to regularly remind the priest of the presence of the priest for confessions, or at least for an individual interview.

Dear pilgrim,

Why are you making the pilgrimage to Chartres? We are all here for different reasons. **But in reality, we are all here for one reason: because God has urged us to come.**

The Grace, dear friends, **grace works in our hearts**, and during these three days, God has only one goal: to convert us. Yes, how many conversions, in Chartres, radical decisions, changes of life, choice of vocation, strengthening of the faith!

So, my pilgrim friend, we must not miss our pilgrimage. **A good pilgrimage is 6 things: prayer; penance; formation; joy; a beautiful Eucharistic communion; and a good confession.** And it is this confession that we are going to talk about: **it is an indispensable stage of your pilgrimage.**

Not Resisting God's Mercy

It can be frightening, we want to run away from it, to delay the moment: we don't want to go to confession, or maybe we don't really know how to do it. **Do not resist, my pilgrim friend, the divine call**, which is manifested to you by the presence of the priest, there, behind or in front of your chapter, dressed in the violet stole: **these priests have come on purpose, from France and from the world, to reconcile your soul with God.** And if you do not know how to confess, if you do not dare, at least go **and speak to the priest**, ask his advice, he will guide you. "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock*"¹: let in the mercy of God, for this is confession, and you need it. **But there is one who is trying, at this moment perhaps, to persuade you that it is not true**, that you do not need to go to confession: and **that is the devil**, for he cannot bear that a soul should be reconciled to God.

The Meaning of Sin

To make a beautiful confession, we must first rediscover **the meaning of sin**, since the purpose of confession is to free us from sin. Pope Pius XII said that *the evil of this century is the loss of the sense of sin*. In the 1960s, people tried to make people feel less guilty, by saying that "sin" was simply a "wound", a "fragility", and by replacing the confessional with a session with a shrink. But sin **is above all an offense against God**: a revolt against God and his Law, which is nevertheless the way to true happiness. To sin is above all to cut oneself off from God by refusing to love Him and to recognize oneself as His child.

1. Rev 3:20.

In concrete terms, there are two main categories of sins:

1. **Mortal sin**, so called because it kills the life of grace in us, cutting us off from God and his presence in us. It happens when we turn to created things (or to ourselves) with such force that we turn away from God completely. It must be taken very seriously: if one voluntarily remains in mortal sin until one's death, Hell is assured! A mortal sin is first and foremost **a grave sin** (that is, the matter of which is important), committed **with full consent** (I wanted to do it) and **full knowledge** of its gravity (I knew it was wrong). If we have any doubts, let us not hesitate to ask the priest for advice on the seriousness of our sins.
2. **Venial sin**: it happens when we are excessively attached to this or that created thing, to this or that habit, without this separating us from God: it is an offense, however, a lack of love.

We will now look at the **5 essential steps** of a good confession: *examination of conscience; contrition; accusation; firm remarks; satisfaction or reparation.*

Examination of conscience

Do you think you have no sin? Listen to Saint John answer you: "*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*"² But sometimes our soul is too numb to feel the wounds it bears; too much in the darkness to see the darkness that is in her.

- That is why the first thing to do is to **pray to the Holy One. Spirit**, that it may enlighten you and help you to see into the folds of your soul.
- Then we do what is called an **examination of conscience**: that is to say, we question our life, since our last confession, by reviewing the mistakes we may have committed.

To help you with this, the pilgrims' booklet provides a very good help [\[give page\]](#). You can even write your sins on a piece of paper, so as not to forget them during confession (paper that you will of course tear up afterwards!)

Contrition or regret for one's faults

Contrition is the most important step: it is on it that the whole value of our confession depends. It consists in arousing in the depths of our hearts **a sorrow, a deep regret for having offended God**. This regret can have several reasons:

- On the one hand, sin has defiled us, it has damaged us, we are ashamed of it, or we fear for the salvation of our souls: **this is what is called imperfect contrition**, for these motives, if they are just, are not the noblest. But imperfect contrition is sufficient to go to confession fruitfully.
- On the other hand, sin has broken our friendship with God, we have offended Love, we have hurt God: **this is what is called perfect contrition**, much greater, because its motive is not us: **it is the love of God**. It is this that we must seek, meditating on the greatness of this friendship that God proposes to us!

Know, for example, that if, after a grave sin, one performs an act of perfect contrition with God's help, then we immediately regain the state of grace and friendship with God even before confession, **provided that one has a real and sincere desire to go to confession as soon as it is materially possible**.³ This shows the power and importance of perfect contrition!

The accusation of one's sins

This is certainly the most difficult part: to accuse the priest of one's sins hurts, it wounds our pride, and that is very good! For every sin has as its secret source pride, revolt against God: to humbly accuse one's sins is already to begin to make reparation for them, by performing this act of humility. The devil tries to prevent us from doing so, by arousing in us a feeling of shame, by pushing us to hide certain things, to minimize them: this is what is called "**the dumb demon**". But as the Holy Curé of Ars said, *if one can sometimes deceive the confessor, one does not deceive God, and the best way to make one's sins disappear is to confess them*.

One must therefore at least accuse **one's grave sins**, and confess them all, otherwise the confession is not valid and even constitutes a sacrilege: **one does not**

3. On the other hand, since we are never absolutely certain of the quality of our contrition, we will not go to communion until we have confessed this grave sin to a priest, and received absolution, and therefore the certainty of being forgiven by God.

God. The number or frequency of these should be given, at least approximately. Confession must be clear, but neither is it an unpacking of one's entire life: one must be succinct, confess one's **sins** and not those of one's neighbor or spouse, avoid telling what is not really necessary.

It is also very good to **confess one's venial sins** : first, because the repetition of venial sins is sometimes a slippery slope towards mortal sin; secondly, because confession gives a special grace to fight against our faults; finally, because it gives rise in us **to a delicacy** of soul, a keener sense of what is displeasing to God. a desire to grow spiritually.

The firm statement

The firm intention is **the decided intention not to fall back, with the grace of God, into the mistakes we have committed.**

Then immediately an objection presents itself to our minds: "*I know myself, I know that I am going to fall again, what is the use of confessing myself since I always confess the same sins, since I always fall back!*" Here is another blow from the devil to divert us from confession. Because it is important to distinguish:

" knowing that you're probably going to fall back " is not the same as "To want to fall back. We each have wounds in our souls, more fragile areas, where falls are more frequent. But the important thing in confession is **this act of will, this firm decision not to fall back**, and above all **to take concrete measures to avoid falling back**: not to have my phone with me in bed at night if it is an occasion of sin; not to go back in front of this bar if I know that I am fragile about alcohol, etc. Let us remember, as a holy priest said, that "*the Christian life does not consist in never falling, but in always getting up*"; to go to confession is to go **from one rise to the next**; every decision to no longer sin strengthens our soul, with the grace of God.

Absolution

After accusing our sins, the priest gives us some concrete advice, and invites us to recite **the act of contrition** [*it is in your booklet*] Then the priest gives us absolution: "*Ego te absolvo a peccatis tuis...*" I forgive you all your sins... It is not the priest, but God who acts, who runs to our soul like the father of the prodigal son, and takes us

in his arms: what joy in Heaven for a confession! We leave purified, strengthened. But it's not over!

Penance or satisfaction

In fact, the priest also gives us a penance to do, which is also called satisfaction. It is often a prayer, or an action to be performed, by which we begin to **make reparation for our sins**. Let us be clear: **our faults** are truly forgiven by confession, but there is still a **pain to bear**, because our sins have caused disorder in the world, a disorder that must be repaired. It is not a "punishment": on the contrary, it is a grace to be able to repair, with God's help, the wrong we have done: "*Where I have put hatred, let me put love*", said Saint Francis of Assisi. It is important to do this penance as soon as possible after confession.

Conclusion and encouragement

Pilgrim friend, I would like to end by sharing with you a concern: **Christians are going to confession less and less**. We flee from mercy. It's terrible! **The Church imposes on us the annual confession** ; But we must see this as a minimum, which is not enough to take care of our soul. **It is good to go to confession often, at least once a month**. This is the secret of spiritual progress. So at least, in Chartres, may this love of God be fully poured out on our souls! And for those who are used to going to confession regularly, take the opportunity of the pilgrimage to try a better confession than usual.

Do not be afraid: the priest to whom you are addressing knows that this is a difficult step: he himself is a sinner who often confesses. Moreover, he has already heard a great deal and nothing can surprise him; finally, as the representative of Christ, he is bound to the most absolute secrecy: the secret of confession cannot, under any circumstances, be revealed. Maybe you dread what he's going to say, what he's going to think of you? But he will only repeat with Jesus: "*Go and sin no more!*" He will give you some good advice; he will help you, he will explain to you what you do not understand, and above all he will rejoice with you: he is not a judge, but the instrument of God's mercy; and "*there is more joy in heaven for a sinner who is converted than for 99 righteous people who have no need of conversion* ."

So trust! The love of God triumphs over all. Let us always keep in mind that **the worst sin is to doubt God's mercy**. No, the blood of Jesus Christ did not flow in vain from the height of the Cross: it has an infinite power, before which no sin, no defilement can resist, for it is the power of the Love of God. As Jesus said to Pascal, "*I love you more ardently than you have loved your defilements.*"

Quotes B - *The Sacrament of Penance*

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just for us.
forgive, and to purify us from all iniquity.

1 Jn 1:9

There are some who say: I have done too much harm, God cannot forgive me. This is gross blasphemy. This is to set a limit to the mercy of God, and it has none: it is infinite. [...] We are in great need of the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to know our sins, because our heart is the seat of pride, which seeks only the means to make us know them less than they are. You see that we absolutely need the help of the Holy Spirit to know our sins as they are. [...] God's mercy is like an overflowing torrent. It draws hearts in its path.

Saint Curé of Ars

What a sweet memory for me... O my dear Mother! With what care had you prepared me, telling me that it was not to a man, but to God that I was going to tell my sins, I was really convinced of it so I made my confession with a great spirit of faith and I even asked you if you should not tell Mr. Ducelier that I loved him with all my heart since it was to God that I was going to speak in his person...

I received his blessing with great devotion because you had told me that at that moment the tears of the little Jesus would purify my soul.

When I left the confessional, I was so happy and so light that I had never felt so much joy in my soul. Since then, I went back to confession at all the big parties and it was really a party every time I went.

Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus speaking of her first confession