

## LESSON EIGHTEENTH.

## ON CONTRITION.

195 Q. What is contrition or sorrow for sin?

A. Contrition or sorrow for sin is a hatred of sin and a true grief of the soul for having offended God, with a firm purpose of sinning no more.

“Offended”—that is, done something to displease Him.

\* 196 Q. What kind of sorrow should we have for our sins?

A. The sorrow we should have for our sins should be interior, supernatural, universal, and sovereign.

\* 197 Q. What do you mean by saying that our sorrow should be interior?

A. When I say that our sorrow should be interior, I mean that it should come from the heart, and not merely from the lips.

“Interior”—that is, we must really have the sorrow in our hearts. A boy, for example, might cry in the confessional and pretend to the priest to be very sorry, and the priest might be deceived and absolve him; but God, who sees into our hearts, would know that he was not really sorry, but only pretending, that his sorrow was not interior, but exterior; and God therefore would withhold His forgiveness and would not blot out the sins, and the boy would have a new sin of sacrilege upon his soul; because it is a sacrilege to allow the priest to give you absolution if you know you have not the right disposition, and you are not trying to do all that is required for a good confession. So you understand you might deceive the

priest and receive absolution, but God would not allow the absolution to take effect, and the sins would remain; for if the priest knew your dispositions as God did, or as you know them, he would not give you absolution till your dispositions changed.

\* 198 Q. What do you mean by saying that our sorrow should be supernatural?

A. When I say that our sorrow should be supernatural, I mean that it should be prompted by the grace of God, and excited by motives which spring from faith, and not by merely natural motives.

“Supernatural”—that is, we must be sorry for the sin on account of some reason that God has made known to us. For example, either because our sin is displeasing to God, or because we have lost heaven by it, or because we fear to be punished for it in hell or purgatory. But if we are sorry for our sin only on account of some natural motive, then our sorrow is not of the right kind. If a man was sorry for stealing only because he was caught and had to go to prison for it, his sorrow would only be natural. Or if a boy was sorry for telling lies only because he got a whipping for it, his sorrow would only be natural. Or if a man was sorry for being intoxicated because he lost his situation and injured his health, he would not have the necessary kind of sorrow. These persons must be sorry for stealing, lying, or being intoxicated because all these are sins against God—things forbidden by Him and worthy of His punishment. If we are sorry for having offended God, simply on account of His own goodness, and without any thought of what evils might befall us through sin or what benefits we might derive from serving God, our contrition is said to be *perfect*. If we are sorry for the sins because by them we are in great danger of being punished by God, or because we have lost heaven by them, and without any regard for God’s own goodness, then our contrition is said to be *imperfect*. Imperfect contrition is called attrition.



\* 199 Q. What do you mean by saying that our sorrow should be universal?

A. When I say that our sorrow should be universal, I mean that we should be sorry for all our mortal sins without exception.

“Universal.” If a person committed ten mortal sins, and was sorry for nine, but not for the tenth, then none of the sins would be forgiven. If you committed a thousand mortal sins, and were sorry for all but one, none would be forgiven. Why? Because you can never have God’s grace and mortal sin in the soul at the same time. Now this mortal sin will be on your soul till you are sorry for it, and while it is on your soul God’s grace will not come to you. Again, you cannot be half sorry for having offended God; either you must be entirely sorry, or not sorry at all. Therefore you cannot be sorry for only part of your sins.

\* 200 Q. What do you mean when you say that our sorrow should be sovereign?

A. When I say that our sorrow should be sovereign I mean that we should grieve more for having offended God than for any other evil that can befall us.

201 Q. Why should we be sorry for our sins?

A. We should be sorry for our sins, because sin is the greatest of evils and an offence against God our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and because it shuts us out of heaven and condemns us to the eternal pains of hell.

We consider an evil great in proportion to the length of time we have to bear it. To be blind is certainly a misfortune; but it is a greater misfortune to be blind for our whole life than for one day. Sin, therefore, is the greatest of all evils; because the misfortune it brings upon us lasts not merely for a great many years, but for all eternity. Even slight sufferings would be terrible if they lasted forever, but the sufferings for mortal sin are worse than we can describe or imagine, and they are forever. The greatest evils in this

world will not last forever, and are small when compared with sin. Sin makes us ungrateful to God, Who gives us our existence.

“Our Preserver,” because if God ceased to watch over us and provide for us, even for a short time, we would cease to exist.

“Our Redeemer,” Who suffered so much for us.

202 Q. How many kinds of contrition are there?

A. There are two kinds of contrition: perfect contrition and imperfect contrition.

\* 203 Q. What is perfect contrition?

A. Perfect contrition is that which fills us with sorrow and hatred for sin, because it offends God, Who is infinitely good in Himself and worthy of all love.

It is a very hard thing to have perfect contrition, but we should always try to have it, so that our contrition may be as perfect as possible. This perfect contrition is the kind of contrition we must have if our sins are to be forgiven while we are in danger of death and cannot go to confession. Imperfect contrition with the priest's absolution will blot out our sins.

\* 204 Q. What is imperfect contrition?

A. Imperfect contrition is that by which we hate what offends God because by it we lose heaven and deserve hell; or because sin is so hateful in itself.

\* 205 Q. Is imperfect contrition sufficient for a worthy confession?

A. Imperfect contrition is sufficient for a worthy confession, but we should endeavor to have perfect contrition.

206 Q. What do you mean by a firm purpose of sinning no more?

A. By a firm purpose of sinning no more I mean a

fixed resolve not only to avoid all mortal sin, but also its near occasions.

“Fixed.” Not for a certain time, but for all the future.

207 Q. What do you mean by the near occasions of sin?

A. By the near occasions of sin I mean all the persons, places, and things that may easily lead us into sin.

“Occasions.” There are many kinds of occasions of sin. *First*, we have voluntary and necessary occasions, or those we can avoid and those we cannot avoid. For example : if a companion uses immodest conversation we can avoid that occasion, because we can keep away from him; but if the one who sins is a member of our own family, always living with us, we cannot so easily avoid that occasion. *Second*, near and remote occasions. An occasion is said to be “near” when we always fall into sin by it. For instance, if a man gets intoxicated every time he visits a certain place, then that place is a “near occasion” of sin for him; but if he gets intoxicated only once out of every fifty times or so that he goes there, then it is said to be a “remote occasion.” Now, it is not enough to avoid the sins : we must also avoid the occasions. If we have a firm purpose of amendment, if we desire to do better, we must be resolved to avoid everything that will lead us to sin. It is not enough to say, I will go to that place or with that person, but I will never again commit the same sins. No matter what you think now, if you go into the occasion you will fall again; because Our Lord, Who cannot speak falsely, says : “He who loves the danger will perish in it.” Now the occasion of sin is always “the danger,” and if you go into it Our Lord’s words will come true, and you will fall miserably. Take away the cause, take away the occasion, and then the sin will cease of itself. Let us suppose the plaster in your house fell down, and you found that it fell because there was a leak in the water-pipe above, and the water coming through wet the plaster and made it fall. What is

the first thing your father would do in that case? Why, get a plumber and stop up the leak in the pipe before putting up the plaster again. Would it not be foolish to engage a plasterer to repair the ceiling while the pipe was still leaking? Every one would say that man must be out of his mind: the plaster will fall down as often as he puts it up, and it matters not either how well he puts it up. If he wants it to stay up, he must first mend the pipe—take away the cause of its falling. Now the occasion of sin is like the leak in the pipe—it will cause you to fall every time. Stop up the leak, take away the occasion, and then you will not fall into sin—at least not so frequently.

“**The persons**” are generally bad companions, and though they may not be bad when alone, they are bad when with us, and thus we become also bad companions for them, and occasions of sin.

“**The places.**” Liquor-saloons, low theatres, dance-halls, and all places where we may see or hear anything against faith or morals.

“**Things.**” Bad books, pictures, and the like.