

Monday in the Third Week: Interior and Universal Contrition

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will resume, tomorrow, our meditations on the Sacrament of Penance, interrupted by the gospels so full of interest on which we have been meditating; and we shall see that we must bring to our confessions: first, a really interior contrition; second, a really universal contrition. We will then make the resolution: first, to make, every evening, after our examination of conscience, an act of interior and universal contrition; second, every day or during the night when a fault escapes us to make an act of interior contrition. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Psalmist: "*A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled hear, O God, Thou wilt not despise*" (Ps. L:19).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us adore Our Lord in the Garden of Olives, seeing from thence, clearly and distinctly, the sins of all ages, of which He had assumed the expiation. The sight throws Him into mortal anguish; He weeps over the offence committed against God and the ruin of man, not only with tears in His eyes, but with the blood of His body; He weeps in all His members, St Bernard says, and inundates the ground with tears of blood (Luke XXII:44). Let us have compassion on the afflicted Saviour; let us weep with Him, for it is over our sins that He weeps (Serm. III, *in Nativ. Dom.* 4).

WE MUST BRING A REALLY INTERIOR CONTRITION TO OUR CONFESSIONS

Jesus Christ, that perfect model of contrition, in the Garden of Olives clearly teaches it to us; His heart feels so acutely sorrow for sin, that He is sorrowful even unto death. Besides, reason itself teaches us the necessity of this interior contrition. Since it is the heart which has offended God, it is the heart which ought to make reparation for the offence and to be bruised with grief at having displeased a God so good and so worthy of being loved. God only pardons insofar as the heart repents to such an extent as to make it wish that not for the whole world had it committed the faults which it deplors. "*Rend your hearts*" (Joel II:13), says God to sinners, "*make to yourselves a new heart*" (Ezek. XVIII:31). God beholds, not the eyes which shed tears, nor the lips which pronounce formulas, but the heart which has a sincere horror for sin committed (I Sam. XVI:7). In vain, then, may the mouth articulate acts of contrition; in vain may the mind and the imagination form within us an idea of sin to the extent of making us persuaded that we are contrite; in vain shall we utter sighs and groans, and shed tears, and make long prayers, and protestations of renunciation of sin; all will be of no use if, at the bottom of our hearts, we do not sincerely regret having offended God, if we have not a real detestation, a pronounced hatred of sin, with a sincere sorrow for having committed it. Let us here examine ourselves in presence of the Lord; do we bring to our sins a really broken heart at having offended God, saying to Him with St Bernard: "*How can I dare raise my eyes to Thee, I who am so wicked a son of so good a Father*" (Serm. XVI, *in Cant.*). Instead of sincerely deploring our faults, have we not refused to acknowledge them and sought to disguise them in our own eyes and the eyes of our confessor, by covering them over with excuses, in order not to have to blush for them, justifying our evil tempers and our impatiences by the

wrongs others have committed against us, our backbitings and our criticisms by the unreasonable conduct of our neighbour?

WE MUST BRING TO OUR CONFESSIONS A REALLY UNIVERSAL CONTRITION

That is evident when mortal sins are in question; if there be a single one which we do not detest sincerely and from the bottom of our soul, our contrition is worth nothing, our confession is sacrilege. God does not love a heart which loves sin, which essentially displeases Him; and it is making a mockery of God to say to Him, *I love Thee*, when we have an affection for that which He supremely detests. If venial sins be in question, the contrition is not null because it may not be universal, because as venial sin only weakens God's friendship for us without destroying it, we can repent of some without repenting of others; nevertheless there results from it several serious injuries to the soul; first, sins for which we preserve affection are not remitted, and remain in the soul like a hideous spot, which disfigures it, which cools the friendship of God for it and diminishes His graces; second, the absolution not being applied to these sins, does not confer the grace of correcting them, and does not produce in the soul that fullness of justification which a heart entirely devoted to God would have obtained. Let us here examine ourselves and see whether there are not within us certain favourite sins which we do not sincerely wish to renounce, certain attachments which we will not break off, certain faults to which we have a greater tendency, which give us more pleasure, and for which we have not frank contrition.

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.