

## Thursday in the Fourth Week: Satisfaction

### *Summary of the Morrow's Meditation*

We will meditate tomorrow upon the third part of the Sacrament of Penance, which is satisfaction, and we shall see: first, its importance; second, its extent; third, the manner in which to acquit ourselves of it. We will then make the resolution: first, to perform our penance always as soon as possible after confession, accompanying it with a great desire to become better; second, cheerfully to suffer all the crosses which Providence sends us, and to add to it some voluntary mortifications,—for example, in our meals, our curiosity or the desire of our eyes, our personal comforts, etc. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words of the Council of Trent: “*The whole of the Christian life ought to be a perpetual penance.*”

### *Meditation for the Morning*

Let us adore Jesus Christ satisfying for our sins, and with this object in view, embracing a life of suffering. He is born in extreme poverty, He lives a life of continual labour, and He dies in the most cruel torments. O admirable model of penance! beautiful example for those who, animated by zeal for the justice of God against themselves, desire fully to satisfy Him for their sins!

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF SATISFACTION, EVEN AFTER THE SIN IS PARDONED

Every sin deserves a penalty, every injury a reparation. Our sin deserved eternal punishment; by the Sacrament of Penance God changes it into a temporal penalty. Thou dost pardon, Lord, the sinner who confesses his sin, says St Augustine, but on condition that he will punish himself for it. And what can be more just? Is it right that the Innocent, that the Man-God should suffer the most cruel of deaths for sin, and that the guilty should receive the price of His death without taking part in the expiation? St Paul did not think so when he said, “*Fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ*” (Coloss. 1:24). “*If we suffer with Him we may be also glorified with Him*” (Rom. VIII:17). The Church is of the same opinion when she calls penance a laborious baptism, which justifies the soul only on the condition that many tears are shed and much penance endured (Cone. Trid. Sess. XIV c. XI). Thus God pardons in His goodness, but in His justice He requires a satisfaction. Satisfaction performed by man is incapable, through its own merit, of satisfying His justice, but in His goodness He authorises man to take advantage of the satisfactory works of the Saviour, by uniting them with His, and thereby appropriating to Himself their infinite value. In this manner justice and goodness are fully satisfied. Let us admire and bless this marvellous arrangement of divine wisdom.

#### THE EXTENT OF THE SATISFACTION DUE TO PARDONED SIN

If the penance imposed by the confessor is, generally speaking, very slight, it is only from a fear of discouraging the penitent by requiring more; but in reality a very different satisfaction is due. We owe to God, says Tertullian, a penance which shall be a compensation, and, as it were, an abridgement of everlasting fires.

And the Council of Trent adds that the whole of the Christian life ought to be a perpetual penance. If God pardoned Adam and David, it was only on condition that they should be punished with dreadful penalties: the one in himself and in all his posterity; the other in his person and in his people. The saints, after having received pardon, did not on that account the less devote themselves during their whole life to austere penance; lastly, the just in purgatory, although God pardons them, are not the less obliged to suffer torments compared with which all the sufferings of life are slight. O justice of God, how severe thou art, and what enemies we are of ourselves in performing so little penance in this world!

#### THE MANNER OF SATISFYING GOD FOR OUR SINS.

First, we must scrupulously perform the penance imposed by the confessor. Particular graces are attached to it, inasmuch as it is an integral part of the sacrament; and, on the other side, to omit it would be to mutilate the sacrament and thereby wound Jesus Christ. To retard it would be to diminish the merit of it, which would enable us to lead a better life; it would be to diminish the merit in question by the venial sins which we should commit in the interval; it would even be to lose it entirely if, during the interval, we were to fall into mortal sin. Lastly, it would be to fail as regards the object of the penance, since it is often given us as a preservation against a relapse, or a remedy for our sin, or as a means of sanctifying certain feast days. Second, we must receive this penance with respect and submission, as being imposed upon us by Jesus Christ in the person of His minister; looking upon it as being infinitely below what our sins deserve, and accomplishing it devoutly with a great desire to lead a better life, and with sorrow for the past. Third, to this sacramental penance we must unite the endurance of all the difficulties of our position or state of life, all the infirmities of our bodies, the trying temperature of the seasons, the various disagreeable circumstances of life, the defects of our neighbour, accepting all these crosses in a spirit of penance, and often saying to ourselves: What is this in comparison with hell, where I have deserved to burn forever and ever? Fourth, we must, in the same spirit of penance, refuse to listen to the demands made upon us by our effeminacy and sensuality; we must renounce dangerous amusements, and such as are useless or too much prolonged, the satisfaction of curiosity, of self-will, of self-love, of our temperament; we must find our pleasure in doing our duty and deprive ourselves of the rest, saying with that holy penitent who was asked to join in parties of pleasure, of the table, and of the play: *“I leave all that to righteous souls; as for me who have sinned and am in danger of sinning again, my portion is to sigh and to perform penance”* (St. Pacian, ap. Baron.). Do we put in practice these various ways of satisfying the divine justice?

*Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.*