



## Confession - Its Fruitful Practice

“And many of them that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds. And many of them who had followed curious arts, brought together their books, and burnt them before all; and counting the price of them, they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver.” —*Acts 19:18-19*

“Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven.” —*Matthew 18:18*

“He said therefore to them again: Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this, he breathed on them; and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.” —*John 20:21-23*

### CONTENTS

1. The Blessings of Confession .	1
2. The Five Things Necessary for a Good Confession .	4
Examination of Conscience	4
False Consciences and Their Remedies	
The Lax Conscience	
The Scrupulous Conscience	
The Doubtful Conscience	
How to Make a Good Examination of Conscience	
Contrition .	12
The Qualities of Contrition	
Interior Contrition Supernatural Contrition Perfect and Imperfect Contrition Universal Contrition	
Sovereign Contrition	
Relapses into Former Sins.	
Purpose of Amendment . .	25
Occasions of Sin - Purpose of Amendment	
Must Be Specific.	
Confession and Absolution	29
The Confession of Sins	
Qualities of a Good Confession	
Confession of Venial Sins	
Sacrilegious Confessions	
General Confession	
Frequent Confession	
The Absolution of the Priest.	
Satisfaction .	46
The Sacramental Penance - Voluntary Penances - Indulgences.	
3. How to Make a Good Confession .	52
The Examination of Conscience	52
Beginning Prayer Points for the Examination of Conscience	
The Ten Commandments of God - The Six Precepts of the Church - The Seven Capital Sins	
Duties of Particular States of Life	
Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy.	

Considerations to Excite Contrition . 67  
The Enormity of Sin God's Benefits to Me The Love of Jesus Christ.  
Prayers Before Confession . 69  
Act of Contrition and Purpose of Amendment—Prayer before a Crucifix—  
Prayer of St. Gertrude—A Short and Efficacious Act of Contrition.  
An Easy Method of Going to Confession 73  
Prayers After Confession . . 76  
Psalm 102—Prayer of Thanksgiving—  
Prayer before Performing the Sacramental Penance.

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Blessings of Confession**

“Blessed are they that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.” (*Apoc. 22:14*).

Catholics truly may be called “blessed” in the means they have of washing the sin-stained robes of their souls in the Precious Blood of the Lamb of God in the Sacrament of Penance! There is no question that Confession—especially frequent Confession—is an inestimable blessing to mankind. Man can hope for no greater blessing on this earth than true peace of soul. The Sacrament of Penance is a perennial fountain of peace. It is a source of untold consolation to human hearts. This Sacrament gives any and every member of the Catholic Church who has transgressed the holy laws of God an easy and simple means to obtain full pardon and to be restored to His friendship. This is its first and principal effect. Its second effect is to wipe out the punishment due to sin: eternal punishment entirely, and temporal punishment in whole or in part, according to the penitent's dispositions.

It closes the gates of Hell, which open to swallow up in the infernal abyss souls who deliberately turn away from God by mortal sin and who sunder the ties binding them to Him by preferring their own wills to His. A good Confession opens anew the portals of Heaven, which are barred to souls so long as they remain in the state of mortal sin. It clothes souls with the beautiful nuptial garment of Sanctifying Grace, or renders that garment still more beautiful if the soul already possesses it.

It restores past merits, which are lost by even a single mortal sin. It renders the soul capable again of performing acts meritorious of an eternal reward, which is impossible while it is in the state of mortal sin. It confers sacramental graces, that is, powerful supernatural helps to avoid sin in the future, and to persevere in the service of God. It gives a claim to the special graces the soul needs in order to lead a God-pleasing life.

Finally, it checks sinful passions and inclinations to evil. To partake in fullest measure of these blessings of the Sacrament of Penance, it is necessary for the penitent to know how to make a good Confession. The present booklet is an attempt to help souls in this allimportant matter by explaining the five requisites of a good Confession, plus various points which are of vital importance for the fruitful reception of this Sacrament.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Five Things Necessary for a Good Confession**

As every well-instructed Catholic knows, the five things necessary for a good Confession are: 1) An Examination of Conscience, 2) Contrition (or sorrow) for sin, 3) A Firm Purpose of Amendment, 4) The Confession of one's sins to a priest, 5) Acceptance of one's penance (making satisfaction for sin).

## **I. EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

“Go, show yourselves to the priests.” (Luke 17:14). This was the command given by Our Lord to the ten lepers He had healed. This is also the command God gives to souls who have contracted the far more loathsome disease of spiritual leprosy - namely, sin. The priest has been appointed by Our Lord as a spiritual physician to heal the diseases of the soul. But to do so, the priest, like any other physician, must know the nature of the disease. In other words, he must know the sins that have been committed. The penitent, therefore, must make known to him the exact state of his soul. To gain this self-knowledge, it is undoubtedly necessary for the penitent to search seriously into his life since the time of his last Confession, reflecting upon his thoughts, words, deeds and omissions. This inward scrutiny of oneself is called the Examination of Conscience. It should be performed with earnestness and care, mindful of the warning of St. Paul: “But if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” (1 Cor. 11:31).

### **A. FALSE CONSCIENCES AND THEIR REMEDIES**

A diligent examination of conscience should bring clearly to the penitent’s mind his sins of thought, word, deed, desire and omission, according to their kind, their number and their relevant circumstances. In this examination, two faults are to be avoided: 1) Laxity (or remissness) and 2) Scrupulosity.

#### **1. The Lax Conscience**

A lax conscience is a false conscience. It is erroneous because it is easy-going and too broad-minded. It passes over grievous sins as of small consequence. Christ reproached the “blind” Pharisees for this fault, saying that they were “Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel.” (Matt. 23:24). The lax conscience needs the fear of God, which Scripture tells us “is the beginning of wisdom.” (Ps. 110:10). The soul gives no thought to God’s omnipotence and retributive justice. It presumptuously and willfully deceives itself. Finally, it comes to regard grave matters as of slight importance. In this way, it places itself in very grave danger of being eternally lost.

As everyone should and must live according to a correct conscience, it is imperative to do away with all wrong attitudes, in order that this God-given mentor may be a safe guide in one’s spiritual life. A person who has a lax conscience must endeavor to remedy it by meditating frequently on the enormity of sin and the shortness of life, on the Passion of Our Lord, and on the horrible and unending punishments of Hell. He should pray to the Holy Spirit for the gift of true discernment regarding sin, for a holy and proper fear of God, for a true horror of sin, for sincere sorrow for his sins and for an abiding compunction of heart.

#### **2. The Scrupulous Conscience**

The scrupulous conscience is narrow-minded and timid. It is always in a state of confusion and perturbation. It is obscured, as it were, by a fog and is unable to discern between right and wrong, between sin and temptation. It persists in seeing grave moral evil where none exists. Sometimes scrupulosity

is permitted as a visitation or trial from God, who in His inscrutable counsels allows it for the soul’s good and for His own greater glory. But God is the God of peace and love and does not will that souls should be disturbed for a long time by such a trial. Hence, when scrupulosity comes from God, it usually ceases after a time— if the soul is humble and obedient.

Scruples may also be a temptation from the devil. In most cases, however, they proceed from purely natural causes. Certain conditions of mind and body—nervousness, impaired health, melancholy—may produce scruples. This disease of the conscience may reach a degree where the soul is no longer able to pass a calm and reasonable judgment on certain moral matters, or even on any question of right or wrong. A scrupulous person does not have the light to see things in their true aspect. Often he lacks humility and submissiveness to his spiritual guide and tends to self-

sufficiency and selfwill. If so, he faces the danger of falling into the first error, laxity, and eventually his continued state of anxiety may affect his mind.

A scrupulous person needs to cultivate a loving, childlike confidence in God and must obey his confessor unquestioningly. Spiritual guides agree that unconditional obedience to the confessor is the most necessary element in defeating scrupulosity, and it is oftentimes the only means of deliverance. Meditation on God's attributes of Goodness, Mercy and Love will help the soul afflicted with scruples to attain confidence and trust in God. Such a person should avoid idleness and all external circumstances which are apt to produce or increase his scruples. Instead of minutely examining again and again every small failing—which he tends to exaggerate—the scrupulous soul must regard its scruples as a little child reposing in the arms of its loving father would regard a dog barking fiercely on the ground below, for just as the dog cannot harm the child in the least so long as it remains in its father's arms, so neither can scruples harm the soul so long as it honestly seeks to please God and relies on His love. By acts of love and trust in God, and by complete obedience to the confessor—which must be emphasized again—the soul usually can attain in time the peace of a true conscience.

### **3. The Doubtful Conscience**

Oftentimes persons find themselves in a state of uncertainty as to whether or not an act they intend to perform is a sin. It is a moral principle that one is not permitted to act when in a state of real doubt. St. Paul says, "For all that is not of faith is sin." (Rom. 14:23). If one is uncertain whether a particular act is sinful or not, it is sinful to perform such an act. The reason is that such a person thereby shows that he is just as ready to do wrong as to do right. Some degree of moral certainty—that is to say, such as would be considered sufficient by an ordinarily prudent person—is necessary.

As an example, let us take a doubt which might arise regarding the fast and abstinence on the vigil of a feast. (\*This example is based on pre-1960 Church laws of fast and abstinence. —Publisher, 2000) The person knows that the vigils of certain great feasts are days of fast and abstinence from meat, but the question arises in his mind whether or not the day before the Feast of the Ascension is such a day. If he ate meat on that day, assuming that the day was not a day of fast and abstinence, but he had taken no pains to find out for certain, he would sin thereby, even though fast and abstinence were not actually prescribed by the Church. His duty is to make sure, if he can, whether or not it is a day of fast and abstinence, and to act accordingly. This he could ordinarily do by inquiry or by referring to a Catholic calendar, though circumstances might arise where it would be impossible at the time to resolve the doubt. In this latter case, he should refrain from eating meat.

## **B. HOW TO MAKE A GOOD EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

One who goes to Confession frequently need not spend too much time in examining his conscience, wearying his mind to no purpose and giving scrupulosity a chance to gain a foothold. The examination should be calm, but earnest. The first step is earnest prayer to the Holy Spirit to ask for light and grace to know and detest one's sins. The examination should bring to mind the time of the last good Confession and whether or not the penance was performed. It should cover one's sins of thought, word, deed, desire and omission:

- 1) Against the Commandments of God,
- 2) Against the Precepts, or Laws, of the Church,
- 3) With regard to the Seven Capital Sins,
- 4) Regarding neglect of the duties of one's state of life, and
- 5) Concerning the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy omitted.

Those who examine their conscience every night and go frequently to Confession will readily remember any mortal sins that may have been committed. But for such as go to Confession rarely and are addicted to sinful habits, or have made a number of unworthy Confessions, more than a

passing glance at their consciences is needed. Such persons ought to begin their self-examination a few days before going to Confession, remembering that this Confession may perhaps decide the fate of their soul for eternity. It would be very useful for them to follow a form of examination such as is given in this booklet on pages 52 to 67.

## **II. CONTRITION**

A sincere examination of conscience brings a person face to face with the many maladies and deplorable weaknesses of his soul. He has found out the number, kind and gravity of his sins, and this must fill him with confusion and make him exclaim with the publican: “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). Hence, he will pass from self-examination to contrition. Contrition is the key to God’s mercy and pardon. It is the most essential condition for a worthy reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Sin is a great evil. Even though at times it may affect the body, its chief effect is on the soul, for it separates the soul from God, either entirely (in the case of mortal sin), or partially (in the case of venial sin), by loosening the ties of our friendship with God.

To get back into God’s favor by Confession, the sinner must sincerely repent of his wrongdoing. He must be truly sorry from a supernatural motive and detest his sins with his whole heart, firmly resolving not to commit them again. Without this sorrow or contrition, there can be no pardon for sin. The priest has no power to absolve a sinner who does not have true contrition. If he attempted to do so, the absolution would be worthless. God Himself will not, and cannot, forgive anyone who is not sorry for his sins and fully determined not to offend Him again.

Contrition is defined by the Council of Trent as a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of the sins committed, with the firm determination not to sin again. (Sess. XIV, Cap. 4). Note that contrition is a sorrow of the soul—not of the body. It does not consist in words, or in tears, or in an emotion, or in striking one’s breast, or in mere outward signs.

### **A. THE QUALITIES OF CONTRITION**

True Contrition has four qualities. It must be 1) Interior, 2) Supernatural, 3) Universal and 4) Sovereign.

#### **1. Interior Contrition**

Contrition is interior when it comes from the heart. Hence it is often called a “heartfelt” sorrow. It is not necessary to make violent efforts to excite this heartfelt sorrow, for such efforts often produce anxiety and result only in external show. Nor does being heartily sorry for sins mean that one should be troubled about them. Repentance and contrition are an effect of love of God; anxiety is an effect of self-love. True contrition is calm and humble. Sometimes it is a sensible sorrow, that is, a sorrow that makes itself felt; but this is not at all essential. Contrition is essentially an act of the will. A person has sufficient contrition when his sins displease him to such a degree that he is resolved not to commit them again, should the occasion present itself anew. St. Francis de Sales says that the ability to wish is a great power with God, and one has contrition by the simple fact that one wishes to have it.

Therefore, if the will is displeased above all things at having committed sin, and if one can say with the Psalmist: “I have hated and abhorred iniquity” (Ps. 118:163), the contrition is good and sufficient.

#### **2. Supernatural Contrition**

True contrition is supernatural. It is an actual grace of the Holy Spirit, and it is aroused by supernatural motives. The principal supernatural motives are:

- 1) The infinite goodness of God.
- 2) The suffering and death of Christ.
- 3) The loathsomeness of sin.

- 4) The everlasting reward lost by sin.
- 5) The everlasting punishment to which sin makes one liable.

### **Perfect Contrition**

Perfect contrition is sorrow which proceeds from a pure or perfect love of God, who is infinitely good and perfect in Himself and deserving of all our love. It is sorrow for sin because sin displeases God. Our Lord said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." (Matt. 22:37). These words contain the essence of perfect contrition, for as the Council of Trent declares, "Perfect contrition is that which is conceived out of a motive of charity, namely, the love of God as He is in Himself, or on account of His goodness."

### **Effects of Perfect Contrition**

Perfect contrition immediately cleanses the soul from all guilt of sin and reconciles it to God, even apart from the Sacrament of Penance. Perfect contrition always includes at least an implicit desire and intention to receive the Sacrament of Penance, and the obligation to confess all mortal sins still remains, even after one has made an act or acts of perfect contrition. One should note well that if one has committed a mortal sin, perfect contrition alone without the Sacrament of Penance is not sufficient before receiving Holy Communion. The person must first go to Sacramental Confession; otherwise, he commits a mortal sin of sacrilege.

Perfect contrition is necessary as a means of salvation for dying sinners (in the state of mortal sin) who have not received and cannot receive the Sacrament of Baptism (\*Salvation under these circumstances presumes the gift of faith and Baptism of Desire. —Publisher, 2000) and for dying sinners who, though baptized, cannot receive the Sacrament of Penance. Perfect contrition is the last and only key to Heaven for sinners at the hour of death (be they Catholic or non-Catholic) who cannot have recourse to the keys of mercy entrusted by God to His priests in the Sacraments of Penance and Extreme Unction.

Perfect contrition, however, is not necessary for the valid reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Here, imperfect contrition (also sometimes called attrition) suffices. One ought, nevertheless, to strive to have perfect contrition, for the greater one's sorrow for sin, the more pleasing it is to God and the more temporal punishment is remitted at the reception of the Sacrament; the greater also is the penitent's merit, the measure of which determines his degree of heavenly glory.

Theologians unanimously agree that merits which have been lost through mortal sin revive at the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. It is not certain, however, whether all the merits one possessed before sinning are restored, or whether these merits are increased or diminished. Saint Thomas is of the opinion that the merits are restored in proportion to the disposition of the penitent, so that "sometimes the penitent rises in greater grace than he had before, sometimes in a lesser grace." Obviously, then, the more perfect one's contrition, the greater will be the measure of merit restored.

In the case of a person who has committed no mortal sins, perfect contrition (even outside of Confession) increases and more greatly secures the state of grace, remits the venial sins of which he repents, cancels temporal punishment due to sin, and strengthens and increases in the soul a true and steadfast love of God. How to Make Acts of Perfect Contrition Perfect contrition is a grace, a great grace, springing from the love and mercy of God. It must be earnestly sought for, not only when preparing for Confession, but habitually. "O my God, give me the grace of true repentance, a perfect contrition for my sins," should be one of our most frequent prayers.

To dispose his soul for perfect contrition, one ought to place himself either in reality or in imagination before a Crucifix and look on the Wounds of Jesus, reflecting seriously for a short time on Who it is that suffers there, on the dreadful torments He endures, on the shame and sorrow that overwhelm this innocent Victim of sin, and on the infinite love with which this merciful Redeemer

atoned for these sins. Then, with heart and lips, he may repeat slowly and fervently an act of contrition, such as that given on page 69.

### **Imperfect Contrition**

Although, as stated above, it is better and more profitable to the soul to have perfect contrition in receiving the Sacrament of Penance, the second kind of supernatural contrition, which we call imperfect contrition, is sufficient for a good Confession. Imperfect contrition, also called attrition, is defined as that supernatural sorrow and hatred for sin which arises from reflection on the heinousness of sin, from dread of the loss of Heaven, or from fear of Hell and its torments. Hence, the motive of imperfect contrition is the fear of God and His judgments. Though imperfect contrition springs from a supernatural motive, it is lower than the motive of perfect contrition. Nevertheless, imperfect contrition proceeds from the grace of God and from motives springing from faith. It is therefore pleasing to God.

Imperfect contrition is more easily excited in the soul than perfect contrition because it is accessible to all who have even the least degree of faith. Even the greatest sinners can make an act of contrition arising from the fear of God or the dread of Hell. With such contrition, the pardon of sins may be obtained within the Sacrament of Penance.

### **3. Universal Contrition**

The third requisite for contrition is that it be universal; that is, it must extend to all mortal sins without exception or reserve. Contrition is not genuine unless every mortal sin be detested. It is impossible for some mortal sins to be forgiven and others to remain unforgiven. All are pardoned, or none is pardoned. It is impossible for light and darkness to be in one and the same place. Hence, Sanctifying Grace and mortal sin cannot dwell together. If there be grace in the soul, there can be no mortal sin; and if there be mortal sin, there can be no grace, for mortal sin expels all grace. If Sanctifying Grace abides in the soul, the soul has a claim to Heaven. If the soul is in the state of mortal sin, it is headed for Hell. The sinner must therefore necessarily be sincerely sorry for all mortal sins if he wishes to be reconciled with God, for it is impossible to have a claim on both Heaven and Hell simultaneously; it is impossible to be a friend and an enemy of God at one and the same time.

In his epistle, St. James the Apostle states the principle thus: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all." (*James* 2:10). One single mortal sin retains the soul in the devil's power. And since no mortal sin is forgiven without sorrow, contrition must extend to all mortal sins. This, of course, does not mean one must make a special act of contrition for each individual mortal sin. It is sufficient that the act of contrition embrace all the mortal sins committed. In the case of venial sins, however, contrition need not be universal, though of course it is desirable that it should be.

Venial sin does not make the soul an enemy of God, but only lessens its degree of friendship. This fact, however, should not make one minimize the grievousness of venial sin. A person may make a good Confession if he is truly sorry for some venial sins, even though he still has an attachment to others. But only those will be forgiven for which he is sorry. A Confession is valid and good, therefore, if sorrow exists for the principal venial sins, when there are no mortal sins to confess. But if there are both mortal sins and venial sins, the Confession is good even though one has sorrow only for the mortal sins. If the penitent has only venial sins to confess and is sorry for none of them, the Confession is invalid, that is to say, the sins are not forgiven—though the Confession is not necessarily sacrilegious, for absolution was given on the presumption of the penitent's having sorrow, whereas he did not.

#### **4. Sovereign Contrition**

Finally, contrition must be supreme or sovereign, which means that contrition for sin should be the greatest of all sorrows. It should exceed the sorrow caused by the loss of all earthly goods or friends, because sin is the greatest of all evils, bringing not a temporal, but an eternal loss to the soul. Yet as mentioned earlier, this sorrow does not have to be felt with the emotions. From these considerations, it is clear that in preparing for Confession special attention should be given to the act of contrition, which should always be made before entering the confessional to insure that one has true sorrow for his sins, because sorrow for one's sins is the principal requisite for receiving God's forgiveness. In the confessional, the act of contrition should then be renewed, rather than made for the first time. Otherwise the penitent would run the risk of possibly not having true sorrow for sin, or of having only a vague sense of sorrow and not a firm purpose of amendment.

#### **Relapses into Former Sins**

It is not to be concluded that a person was lacking in true contrition if he again falls into the same faults after Confession, for sin tends to become habitual and is often deeply ingrained in a person's behavior. Contrition is an act of a moment, and it is quite possible that bad habits and a certain affection for sin may cause a relapse, even though at the time of Confession one was firmly resolved not to commit sin again. Relapses into mortal sin that spring from a perverse will, however, must not be tolerated. They must be attacked in their root until they are conquered. They can be entirely overcome

through persistence in receiving the Sacraments of Confession and Communion worthily and through persistent and fervent prayer—especially prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and especially through her holy Rosary for this intention. This combination is guaranteed to work if the penitent is genuinely sincere and is absolutely persistent in these devotions. In the case of impurity, it may be necessary for the penitent to go to Confession and Communion daily in order to overcome this sin. Our divine Lord Himself gave us the cue for success in overcoming sin when He said, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." (Matt. 11:12). In other words, one has to resort to every extremity to overcome certain types of mortal sin, in an effort to save his soul. And it is proper to do so! One's confessor should readily understand and will even applaud such a valiant, determined effort.

After mortal sins, one must work at eradicating purposeful venial sins. But relapses into venial sin which proceed from inadvertence, from surprise, from the infirmity and frailty of human nature, can never be entirely overcome except by some special privilege from God. (Council of Trent, Sess. VI, can. 23). St. Francis de Sales says that if we rid ourselves of such faults a quarter of an hour before death, we shall do well.

### **III. PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT**

The third requisite for a good Confession is a firm purpose of amendment. This is intimately connected with sincere contrition, being its second element. A firm purpose of amendment is a resolution to avoid, by the grace of God, not only sin, but also the dangerous occasions of sin. The purpose of amendment should be firm, universal, efficacious and durable. It is firm when the penitent is disposed to avoid sin at any cost. Like contrition, a firm purpose of amendment is universal when it extends to all mortal sins; it is efficacious when the penitent earnestly endeavors to correct his evil habits and shuns all proximate or near occasions of sin; it is durable when it is lasting and is not a mere passing sentiment.

#### **A. OCCASIONS OF SIN**

An occasion of sin is any person, place or thing which ordinarily puts a person in danger of committing sin. Holy Scripture warns us: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it." (Ecclus. 3:27). The occasion leads one into sin, or pressures one into committing sin. Therefore, in order to avoid sin, the occasion must be shunned. There are four kinds of occasions of sin: 1) near occasions, in which one generally falls; 2) remote occasions, in which one sometimes falls; 3) voluntary

occasions, which one can avoid if one wills to do so; and 4) involuntary occasions, which one cannot avoid.

A person who is unwilling to avoid a near or a voluntary occasion of sin is not fittingly prepared to receive absolution and forgiveness of his sins. If the priest is aware of his imperfect dispositions, he will refuse absolution. Persons who are occasions of sin are those in whose company one usually falls into sin. Places are those locations where one usually falls into sin, such as taverns, theaters of ill repute, public beaches, dance halls, and all immoral resorts of any kind, whether one actually commits sin in them or not. Things that are occasions of sin are bad books, indecent pictures, immoral or lewd movies and videos, and suggestive songs, jokes, and the like. Our Saviour says of occasions of sin: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into [eternal] life maimed or lame, than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." (Matt. 18:8).

## **B. PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT MUST BE SPECIFIC**

Though a firm purpose to lead a better life in the future is sufficient for a worthy Confession, a more specific resolution will be more fruitful. The more a person resolves to do battle against his besetting faults in a positive way, the more likely he is to succeed. His resolution will be more effective. Instead of saying, "I am going to avoid sin in the future and practice virtue," one ought to resolve to stay away from this or that particular place or thing which led him into sin. Then he must also make definite, positive efforts to overcome his habitual sins, and even impose upon himself a small penance to be performed when he finds he has failed in a particular matter. Another effective means is to resolve to perform the contrary act of virtue a certain number of times a day, in order to establish oneself in the habit and to lessen the possibility of offending in that point again.

Prayer—especially the prayer of the Holy Rosary—ought always to accompany our efforts to overcome our faults, for all depends on God's grace, and grace is obtained by prayer. God Himself tells us, "Without Me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Even though a person may have misgivings about a relapse because of his weakness, or even if he does actually fall, it is not an indication that his purpose of amendment was not sincere. Like contrition, this depends, as we said, on his good will. A firm purpose of amendment is neither a simple wish nor a positive knowledge, but an earnest determination to do one's best to avoid sin in the future. Firm confidence in God's help when difficulties arise will be of immense value in successfully overcoming temptations.

## **IV. CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION**

### **A. THE CONFESSION OF SINS**

Confession is the fourth condition required of the penitent for the forgiveness of his sins. The word "confession" comes from the Latin word *confessio*, which means an acknowledgment, a manifestation. Sacramental Confession, therefore, is the manifestation or acknowledgment of one's sins to a priest, who is duly authorized by the bishop of the diocese for the purpose of granting forgiveness in Confession. The Sacrament of Penance is a Sacrament of mercy. It should be approached with confidence and peace of heart. It has two component parts: 1) the Confession proper, that is, the penitent's telling of his sins; and 2) the Absolution or pardon imparted by the priest...

Taken from [\*Confession - Its Fruitful Practice\*](#) by [TAN Books & Publishers](#), Inc.

Ref.: [http://www.tanbooks.com/doct/confession\\_manual.htm](http://www.tanbooks.com/doct/confession_manual.htm)

Look more here: [www.Liturgy.CatholicChurch.ph](http://www.Liturgy.CatholicChurch.ph)