

The remission of sins.

We profess in this article (1) that we can obtain of God the remission of sins; (2) that Jesus Christ has given to His Church the power to remit the sins of men. God alone can forgive sins, because He alone can pardon the injuries done Him. Now, God in His mercy has deigned to pardon the sins of men, but not without exacting an atonement: He willed that Jesus Christ should expiate them on the Cross.

Through the merits of the passion and death of Jesus Christ pardon is offered to all men, and the Church has received the divine power to remit, in the name of Jesus Christ, all sins, all iniquities, no matter what their number and enormity, provided sinners truly repent of them.

There are three kinds of sin: original sin, venial sin, and mortal sin.

The first is remitted by Baptism.

The second by prayer, penances, good works, and sacramental absolution.

As regards the third that is to say, mortal sin it is forgiven us (1) by the power of the priest in the Sacrament of Penance; (2) by perfect contrition, accompanied with a desire of receiving the Sacrament. This perfect contrition is the sole plank of salvation for those who, being in the state of mortal sin, cannot obtain the services of a priest at the time of death. We cannot, therefore, too forcibly urge all to make every night, before retiring to sleep, an act of perfect contrition.

So, how is an act of perfect contrition done?

Practically, there are two things a Catholic must do.

The first is to pray an act of contrition "out of love for God."

Being sorry out of love for God has often been described as having a desire to be reunited to God because of who he is-- because of God's perfect love for us, and because of sorrow for having offended God by sin. It means wanting to live in unity with God, and to put aside the sins that stand in the way.

There is no set formula for making an act of contrition, but a common one is: *"O my God, I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven, and the pains of hell; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen."*

Let us thank God, my brethren, for having given to His Church the power of pardoning our sins; and, when we have the misfortune to offend the divine Majesty, let us go with confidence and sorrow to the tribunal of Penance to receive forgiveness. Let us never abide in the state of mortal sin: nothing is more hazardous, since death may at any moment surprise us, and advance us into hell.