

DEADLY SINS

LIVING VIRTUE

Interior Conversion

Interior conversion is

- a radical reorientation of our whole life,
- a return,
- a conversion to God with all our heart,
- an end of sin,
- a turning away from evil,
- with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed.

Interior Conversion

At the same time, it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace.

This conversion of heart is accompanied by a salutary pain and sadness, which the Fathers called “affliction of spirit” and “repentance of heart.”

Interior Conversion

Conversion is first of all a work of the grace of God who makes our hearts return to him.

It is in discovering the greatness of God's love that our heart is shaken by the horror and weight of sin and begins to fear offending God by sin and being separated from him.

The human heart is converted by looking upon him whom our sins have pierced.

Interior Conversion

Jesus' call to conversion and penance . . .
[aims first] at the conversion of the heart.

Interior conversion urges expression in
visible signs, gestures and works of
penance.

Confession

- The sacrament of *conversion*
- The sacrament of *Penance*
- The sacrament of *Confession*
- The sacrament of *forgiveness*
- The sacrament of *Reconciliation*

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition

Sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.

When it arises from a love by which God is loved above all else, contrition is called “perfect.”

Such contrition remits venial sins; it also obtains forgiveness of mortal sins if it include the firm resolution to have recourse to sacramental confession as soon as possible.

Catechism, 1451, 1452.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition

Sorrow of the soul and detestation for the sin committed, together with the resolution not to sin again.

The contrition called “imperfect” (or “attrition”) is also a gift of God, a prompting of the Holy Spirit. It is born of:

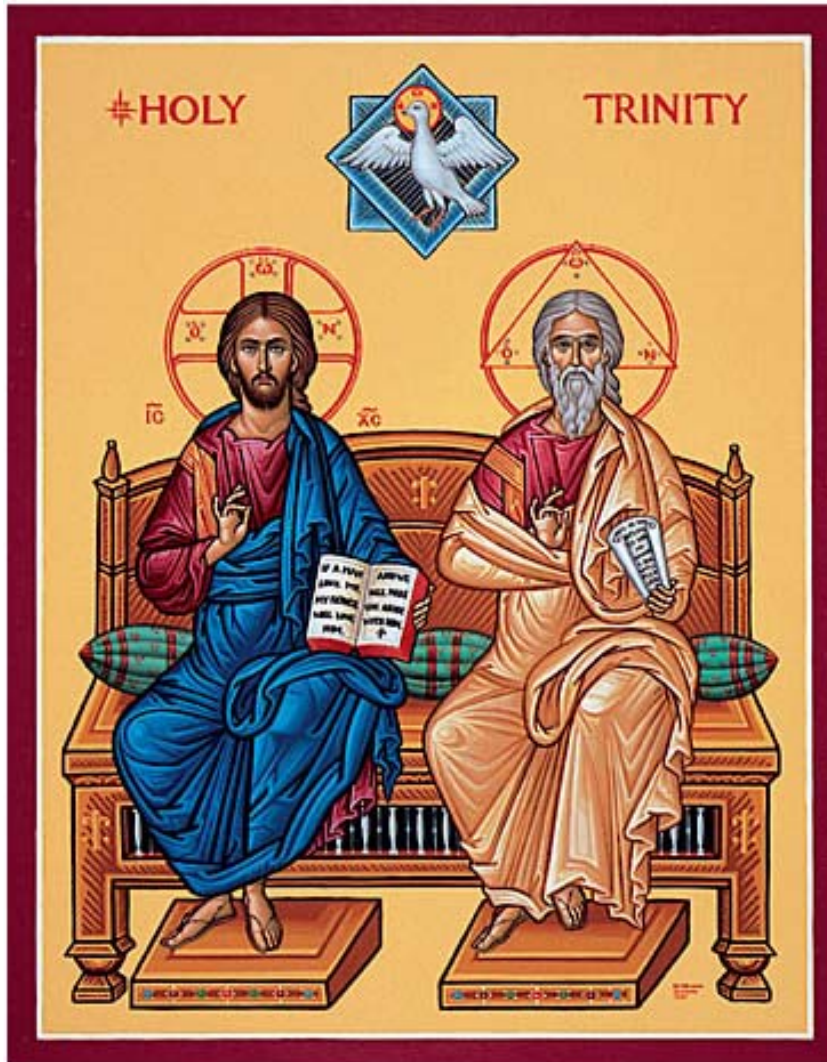
- the consideration of sin’s ugliness, or
- the fear of eternal damnation and the other penalties threatening the sinner.

Examination of Conscience

He who wishes to advance in spirituality should never skip . . . a particular examination of conscience, even outside of the time of sacramental confession.

Before going to confession or taking counsel with our director, it will be very useful to pray for a sincere good will to become a really holy person.

Examination of Conscience



1. Turn to the **Father** in gratitude for the gifts and opportunities he has offered to you throughout the day.
2. Turn to the **Son** and seek forgiveness for the sins you have committed that day.
3. Turn to the **Holy Spirit** and ask for help to meet the challenges that are coming that night and the next day.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition
2. Confession

The confession (or disclosure) of sins, even from a simply human point of view, frees us and facilitates our reconciliation with others.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition
2. Confession

Through such an admission one

- looks squarely at the sins he is guilty of,
- takes responsibility for them,
- and thereby opens himself again to God, and to the communion of the Church
- in order to make a new future possible.

Confession

Lay bare your wound to the healer. . . . Tell him, and do not be ashamed:

“This is my wound, Father; this is my injury. It happened because of my negligence, and not from any other cause. No one is to blame for this, no man, spirit, body or anything else. It is all through my negligence.”

Confession

When we go to confession, we first should accuse ourselves of our worst sins and of those things we are most ashamed of. By this means we put the devil to greater confusion and reap more fruit from our confession.

The devil, who is a most haughty spirit, is never more completely mastered than by humility of heart and a simple, clear, undisguised manifestation of our sins and temptations to our confessor.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition
2. Confession

The regular confession of our venial sins helps us

- form our conscience
- fight against evil tendencies
- let ourselves be healed by Christ, and
- progress in the life of the Spirit.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition
2. Confession
3. Satisfaction

Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused.

Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin.

The Acts of the Penitent

1. Contrition
2. Confession
3. Satisfaction

He must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins.

This satisfaction is also called “penance”.

Effects of the Confession

1. Reconciliation with God
2. Peace and serenity . . . with strong spiritual consolation.
3. A true “spiritual resurrection”:
restoration of the dignity and blessings of the life of the children of God, of which the most precious is friendship with God.

Frequent Confession

Frequent confession is the cause of great good to the soul, because it purifies it, heals it and confirms it in the service of God.

One of the very best means of obtaining humility is sincere and frequent confession.

In trying to get rid of bad habits, it is of the greatest importance not to put off going to confession after a fall and also to keep the same confessor.

Confession

We must not for every trifling occasion omit our ordinary devotions, such as going to Confession on our fixed days, and particularly attending Mass on weekdays.

We ought to go to confession first and to business afterward, and the first will help the second.

Effects of Confession

Confession is like a bridle that keeps the soul which reflects on it from committing sin, but anything left unconfessed we continue to do without fear as if in the dark.

If we picture for ourselves the face of the *abba* . . . if we think of him as always standing nearby, if we avoid every gathering, word, meal, sleep or indeed anything to which we think he might object, then we have really learned true obedience.

Spiritual Direction

A most excellent means of keeping ourselves pure is to lay open all our thoughts, as soon as possible, to our confessor, with the greatest sincerity, and keep nothing hidden in ourselves.

Let us always go to confession with sincerity and take this as our rule: Never out of human respect to conceal anything from our confessor, however inconsiderable it may be.

He who conceals a grave sin in confession is completely in the devil's hands.

Spiritual Direction

[The young monks] are taught never, through a hurtful shame, to hide any of the wanton thoughts in their hearts, but to reveal them to their *abba* as soon as they surface, nor to judge them in accordance with their own discretion but . . . as the *abba's* examination discloses and makes clear.

Spiritual Direction

The devil in all his slyness will not be able to deceive or cast down a young man unless he inveigles him, either by haughtiness or by embarrassment, into covering up his thoughts.

[The desert Fathers] declare that it is an invariable and clear sign that a thought is from the devil if we are ashamed to disclose it to an *abba*.

Spiritual Direction

As soon as a wicked thought has been revealed it loses its power, and . . . the loathsome serpent . . . departs as a kind of laughingstock and object of dishonor.

For his harmful counsels hold sway in us as long as they lie concealed in our heart.

Discernment

The Holy Spirit makes us *discern*

- between trials and temptation
- between being tempted and consenting to temptation

Discernment unmasks the lie of temptation, whose object appears to be good . . . when in reality its fruit is death.

Discernment

The Holy Spirit gives to certain of the faithful the gifts of wisdom, faith and discernment for the sake of this common good which is prayer (this is called *spiritual direction*).

Men and women so endowed are true servants of the living tradition of prayer.

Choosing a Director

They who really wish to advance in the ways of God . . . must subject themselves of their own accord to a learned and discreet confessor, whom they must obey in the place of God, disclosing to him with perfect freedom and simplicity the affairs of their soul, and they should never come to any resolution without his advice.

Choosing a Director

We should follow those who we recognize have shaped their lives in a praiseworthy and upright manner as young men, and who have been instructed not in their own presumptions but in the traditions of their forbears.

Choosing a Director

The person wishing to advance toward perfection should “take care into whose hands he entrusts himself, for as the master is, so will the disciple be, and as the father is so will be the son.”

“In addition to being learned and discreet a director should be experienced . . . [Otherwise] he will be incapable of leading . . . the souls whom God is calling, and he will not even understand them.

Catechism, 2690; St John of the Cross,
The Living Flame of Love, 3, 30..

Choice of a Director

Before someone chooses his confessor, he ought to think well about it and pray about it also, but when he has once chosen, he ought not to change, except for most urgent reasons, but put the utmost confidence in his director.

Penitents should not generally change their confessors . . . a few particular cases excepted.

Choosing a Director

They should turn humbly and in confidence to the fathers . . . and accept their counsel as though from God himself, even when that counsel goes against the grain, even when the advice comes from those who do not seem very spiritual.

Even if those consulted are stupid, God . . . invisibly speaks through them, and anyone who faithfully submits to this norm will be filled with humility.

Choosing a Director

Having once entered the stadium of holy living and obedience, we can no longer start criticizing the umpire, even if we should notice some faults in him. After all, he is human, and if we start making judgments, then our submissiveness earns no profit.

Do not run from the hands of him who has brought you to the Lord, for never in your life again will you respect anyone as you did him.

Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

The Eucharist is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father, a blessing by which the Church expresses her gratitude to God for all his benefits, for all that he has accomplished through creation, redemption and sanctification.

Eucharist means first of all thanksgiving.

Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

The whole Church is united with the offering and intercession of Christ.

The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer and work, are all united with those of Christ and with his total suffering, and so acquire a new value.

Fruits of Holy Communion

Holy Communion augments our union with Jesus Christ.

What material food produces in our bodily life, Holy Communion wonderfully achieves in our spiritual life. Communion with the flesh of the risen Christ . . . preserves, increases and renews the life of grace received at Baptism.

Fruits of Holy Communion

Holy Communion separates us from sin.

The Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from our past sins and preserving us from future sins.

As bodily nourishment restores lost strength, so the Eucharist strengthens our charity . . . and this living charity wipes away venial sins.

Fruits of Holy Communion

Holy Communion separates us from sin.

By the same charity . . . the Eucharist preserves us from future mortal sins. The more we share the life of Christ and progress in his friendship, the more difficult it is to break away from him by mortal sin.

Fruits of Holy Communion

Every time this mystery is celebrated, “the work of our redemption is carried on,” and we “break the bread that provides the medicine of immortality, the antidote for death, and the food that makes us live forever in Jesus Christ.”

*Catechism, 1405; Lumen gentium 3;
St. Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Ephesians, 20.2..*

Frequent Communion

In order to begin well and end better, it is quite necessary to attend Mass every day, unless there be some lawful hindrance in the way.

The best preparation for . . . Mass is to be always prepared for it, and to live in such a manner that at any hour one would be able to receive Communion worthily.

At Holy Communion we ought to ask for the remedy of the vice to which we feel ourselves most inclined.

Frequent Communion

As this sublime sacrament towers above all the others in dignity and efficacy, it is the most terrible of all weapons to the infernal powers.

The Eucharist is given that we may fight against the enemy with Jesus. For by eating the body of Jesus, and drinking his blood, we dwell in Him and He in us.

Prayer

There is nothing the devil fears so much, or so much tries to hinder, as prayer.

A man without prayer is an animal without the use of reason.

A most excellent means of learning how to pray is to acknowledge ourselves unworthy of such a benefit and to put ourselves entirely into the hands of the Lord, who will teach us to pray.

Prayer of Petition

By prayer of petition, we express awareness of our relationship with God.

We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him.

The first movement in the prayer of petition is asking forgiveness.

Prayer

The prayer of faith consists not only in saying, “Lord, Lord!”, but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father.

Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan.

Only by keeping watch in prayer can one avoid falling into temptation.

“Lead us not into temptation”

This petition . . . means both “do not allow us to enter into temptation” and “do not let us yield to temptation.”

[God] wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin. . . . This petition implores the Spirit of discernment and strength.

“. . . but deliver us from evil.”

In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*διαβολος*) is the one who “throws himself across” God’s plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.

“ . . . but deliver us from evil.”

Victory over the “prince of this world” was won once for all at the Hour when Jesus freely gave himself up to death to give us his life.

When we ask to be delivered from the Evil One, we pray as well to be freed from all evils, present, past and future, of which he is the author or instigator.

The Battle of Prayer

Prayer is a battle . . . against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God.

The “spiritual battle” of the Christian’s new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer.

The Battle of Prayer

In this battle we are faced with

- erroneous notions of prayer
- failure in prayer
 - discouragement during periods of dryness
 - disappointment at not being heard
 - wounded pride
- difficulties in prayer
 - distraction
 - dryness

Failure in Prayer?

After a long spell or prayer, do not say that nothing has been gained, for you have already achieved something.

For, after all, what higher good is there than to cling to the Lord and to persevere in unceasing union with Him?

Failure in Prayer?

When requests are made to God and are not immediately answered, the reason may be one of the following:

- the petition is premature
- it has been made unworthily or vaingloriously
- if granted, it would lead to conceit
- negligence and carelessness would result

Failure in Prayer?

We must not leave off our prayers because of distractions and restlessness of mind, although it seems useless to go on with them.

If in times of dryness in prayer we make acts of humility, self-knowledge, protestations of our own inability to help ourselves, and petitions for God's assistance, all this is real and substantial prayer.

Filial Trust

Our filial trust is enkindled by [God's] supreme act: the Passion and Resurrection of his Son.

For St Paul this trust is bold, founded on the prayer of the Spirit in us and on the faithful love of the Father who has given us his only Son.

Filial Trust

The power of the Spirit who introduces us to . . . prayer is expressed by

- straightforward simplicity
- filial trust
- joyous assurance
- humble boldness
- the certainty of being loved.

Prayer

We must pray incessantly for the gift of perseverance.

Without prayer, a man will not persevere long in spirituality. We must have recourse to this most powerful means of salvation every day.

Rules for Effective Prayer

1. We must sincerely desire to serve God.
2. We must have a vibrant, living faith and a firm confidence in being heard.
3. Our motive for prayer must be the will of God rather than self-will.
4. Our actions must suit the petitions.
5. Thanksgiving must precede petition.
6. We must be mindful of the merits of Jesus' passion and Resurrection.
7. We must persist in prayer and not lose confidence in God.

Prayer

We ought to pray God fervently to increase in us every day the light and heat of his goodness.

The most beautiful prayer we can make is to say to God, “As you know and will, O Lord, so do with me.”

Prayer

He who is unable to spend a long time at once in prayer should often lift up his mind to God by aspirations.

It is an old custom of the servants of God always to have some little prayers ready and to be darting them up to heaven frequently during the day He who adopts this plan will get great fruit with little pains.

The Name of Jesus, pronounced with reverence and affection, has a kind of power to soften the heart.

Focus of Prayer

1. The goodness of God.
2. The power and willingness of God to help us in our need.
3. Our need to increase our desire to do God's will.
4. The many gifts we have received that deserve our gratitude.
5. The life and example of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin and the Saints.
6. Our connection with them in the Communion of Saints.

Devotion to the Saints

Let no day pass without imploring the assistance of Our Lady, the queen of all the saints; your guardian angel; the glorious archangel St Michael; or any other saint to whom you have any particular devotion.

Moreover, [pray] daily . . . that you may be particularly under the protection of St Joseph, the worthy spouse of the most chaste of virgins. . . . For innumerable are the instances of assistance afforded to those who have called upon St Joseph in their spiritual or temporal necessities.

Devotion to the Saints

There is nothing more to the purpose for exciting a spirit of prayer than the reading of spiritual books.

It is useful for those who give themselves up to prayer, to read the works of authors whose names begin with “S”:

such as **Saint Augustine, Saint Bernard, etc.**

Devotion to Our Lady

To begin and end well, devotion to our Blessed Lady, the Mother of God, is nothing less than indispensable.

There is no better means of obtaining God's graces than through his most holy Mother.

Our Blessed Lady is the dispenser of all the favors which the goodness of God concedes to the sons of Adam.

Devotion to Our Lady

To obtain the protection of our Blessed Lady . . . it is very useful to say 63 times, after the fashion of a Rosary, “*Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray to Jesus for me.*”

When we make this prayer . . . we give her every possible praise in the least possible compass . . .

“Listen and let it
penetrate your heart,
my dear little son.

“Do not be troubled or
weighed down with grief.
Do not fear any illness or
vexation, anxiety or pain.

“Am I not here, I who
am your Mother?

“Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not
your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle?
In the crossing of my arms?

“Is there anything else you need?”



Arregladora Nuestra

He hurried down the hill taking the roses to the Lady of heaven. She took them in her hands, and then replaced them in his *tilma* . . .



Nican Mopohua

It does not matter how weak you are—
how strong the enemy may seem,
either in number or in power.

Do not be discouraged.

The help you have from heaven
is more powerful than all that hell can send
to destroy the grace of God in your soul.

**God, the Creator and the Redeemer,
is Almighty,**
and more desirous of your salvation
than the devil can be of your destruction.



My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin.

But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one.

He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for those of the whole world.

The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments.



Whoever says “I know him,” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

This is the way we may know that we are in union with him: whoever claims to abide in him ought to live as he lived.

Prayer to Saint Michael

Saint Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the
devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou,

O prince of the heavenly host,
by the power of God,
cast into Hell Satan and all the evil spirits
that prowl throughout the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.