

C. The Sacrament of Penance

“How to become penitent”



Meditation

Dear pilgrim, did you notice them? These men wearing black or white cassocks, walking behind most chapters. Why do they wear a purple stole around their necks? Why do certain pilgrims spend a good amount of time with them and then catch up with their chapter a radiant smile on their face? These very men are here to dispense God’s mercy.

Because Jesus, as always, is here waiting for us, even when we have sinned. The entire Gospel is a call to conversion and a welcome to sinners. “*Go and sin no more*” says He to the adulterous woman, and “*Yours sins are forgiven*” to everyone who approached Him with confidence.

I. We are all sinners

Are you a sinner? In each Hail Mary (Ave Maria), have you paid attention to this sentence “*Pray for us sinners*”? Indeed, we are all sinners. Poor sinners at that. Maybe you never took it upon yourself to keep company to one of these men in cassocks at the back of a chapter? Maybe you forgot all about your sins? Maybe you feel crushed under the weight of your sins? Or maybe, simply, you do not know how to go about it?

Do not be afraid, dear pilgrim. Before you, on this very road, thousands of other pilgrims have approached a priest and received **God's forgiveness** and got **peace** and **joy** back in their lives.

With the help of this booklet, prepare yourself with a **good examination of conscience**. Feel free to ask your Chapter leader, a seminarist, any religious who walk with you and get ready for the Mercy from the Blessed Heart of Jesus. Not tomorrow, not later but...now!

II. Acknowledge your misery

“*Mercy*” is a word to describe an essential reality; that of the Blessed Heart of our Lord coming to meet your misery. One condition only: **to be truly humble**. Become humble and small enough to recognize that you need God. It is not fun to confess all our sins; that's an understatement! It may seem like a very difficult task – except for children. But what peace afterwards! What joy after this small effort!

Maybe you are afraid of what the priest might say to you or of you? No such thing. The priest will only repeat, with Jesus, “*Go and sin no more*” . He will also give you some **valuable advice**, very hard to find anywhere else. He will **help** you, if you are having a hard time telling everything. He might **explain** to you what you might not necessarily know. He will rejoice with you because “*there is more joy in Heaven for one sinner that converts than 99 justified who do not need Him*”

Listen to this story: it is about a drug trafficker who was sentenced to 13 years in jail. His cell mate patiently told him about God and the “Exercises of St Ignatius”. You read correctly; it happened in jail! That man converted and today brings testimony. He is a penitent!

Young pilgrim who discovers the Love of God on this road, mothers and fathers who suffer from the burden of a difficult life and under the weight of the Cross, chose to become a “penitent”. Allow yourself to be loved by Him who shed all His Blood for you!

And, if you are in the habit of going to confession regularly, take advantage of this opportunity for a **better confession than normal!** On this road, you have plenty of time to prepare, to make a really good examination of conscience, to truly wake up a sincere contrition in your soul. Because it is truly crucial, for everyone, to discover, with the help of the Pilgrim's Booklet, how you may have offended God.

The **main requirement of a good confession is to have contrition.** It is not a bonus; it is a prerequisite for returning to God!

III. Be sorry for your sins

What Jesus expects out of each of us is this sincere and true regret of having sinned, having offended God. Without this regret, your confession is worthless. And this sincere regret is automatically accompanied of a **firm resolution** not to relapse into sin. If not, you would be mocking God, wouldn't you think!? This firm resolution will help you come up with **concrete steps to prevent you from relapsing**, such as not to spend time with someone or watch a specific program.. This being said, even with a firm resolution, you may still relapse and then say to yourself "*what is the point of going to confession as I keep falling again and again*". Dear Pilgrim, do not be confused between **being willing** to relapse and **knowing** that you might most likely relapse at some point.

For example, someone who confesses having been angry and seriously does not want to relapse, yet knows, because of his temperament or disposition, that he will most likely become angry again at some point. Hypocrisy would be to say "*I accuse myself of having been angry*" while all along wanting to continue to become angry at any occasion. Did you get it? So, let's **return to our loving God**, the same way a son goes back to his father after having offended him, with **sincere humility** and a **trust without limit**, just like the Prodigal Son.

Dear Pilgrim,

This road between Paris and Chartres is truly a beautiful one, because in front of you and soon with you, it will be that of

forgiveness, mercy and the love of Jesus. So, don't delay and go find one of the priests that accompany us: you will give God the joy of having a new "repentant".

And, please have no fear because:

- Each priest you address **knows all too well what it takes to undertake this task** as he also has to subject himself to it as a sinner
- Each priest most likely has heard it all already and **won't likely be surprised** by what you have to share with him
- Each priest, as *Alter Christus*, is vowed to **absolute secrecy**. The secret of a confession may never, under any circumstances be revealed.

Now, let us remove ourselves to a quiet spot in order to better meditate on the beauty of this wonderful sacrament and in order to better prepare ourselves with the help of our "Pilgrim's Booklet"