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The Sacrament of Penance--I.

Dr. Cooper, in his Religion Outlines for Colleges, advises: "If you have, say, 10 or 15 minutes to give to preparation before going to the confessional, spend 7 or 10 respectively on your contrition, and then 3 or 5 on the examination of conscience."

The disposition of the Prodigal in the Gospel goes from imperfect to perfect contrition. To help you make this progress in your preparation for Confession, the following parallel is drawn:

Luke XV, 11.... Attrition--fear of the Lord, beginning of wisdom.

"A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father: Father, give me the

portion of substance that falleth to me.... And not many days after, the younger son...went abroad...and wasted his substance living

riotously... And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine..and he began to want.. and he cleaved to one of the citizens of that country. And he sent him to his farm to feed swine...

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....

Attrition, imperfect contrition, sufficient with sacramental absolution, but not alone, is not the fear of the slave, the craven, cowardly, base fear which, but for the infinite justice of God, would despise the Commandments. Accompanying it, according to the Council of Trent, there is the beginning of the love of God. The imperfect love of God--originating in prudent self-regard--leads the soul to perfect, unselfish love and sorrow.

In the romantic and beautiful parable of the Prodigal's Return, the starving youth, casting about himself the eye of prudence and intelligent self-love, resolves to leave the dread dearth of husks and go home to his father, through whose goodness and unfailing love he confidently expects admission. A humbled, sorrowing youth starts the trudge homeward.

And he fain would have filled his belly with the husks the swine did not eat; and no man gave unto him.... And returning to himself, he said:

How many hired servants in my father's house abound with bread, and here I perish with hunger? I will arise, and will go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee. I am not worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy servants. And rising he came to his Father.....

I FIRMLY RESOLVE WITH THE HELP OF THY GRACE TO CONFESS MY SINS, TO DO PENANCE, AND TO AMEND MY LIFE. AMEN...

The Christian, returning to himself, seated on the dunghill of his misery and deformity, scarred, torn by mortal sin, experiences the surge of a holy fear. The grace of repentance drives him on. He cannot perish, he must not forever miss his destiny. He cannot afford to be homesick everlastingly. His proper self-love and natural intelligence will not permit it. The grace of God prevents, aids, elevates fear. Home he must go, he must make himself the friend of God. "I will arise, and will go to my father." His sorrow includes the yearning: I want to love Thee, O my God! His hope embraces the vision of the "true country," "the lasting city," which is the friendship of God. His purpose of amendment contains the pledge of a firm loyalty to God's commands, the love of God above all for His sake and the love of all else in God. Like a free man he goes to the Sacrament of Penance. He is on his way home.

PRAYERS: Deceased - Charlie O'Connor's mother; Professor Delandero's brother-in-law; Rev. Francis C. Ryan, Milwaukee, Wis.; Rev. John Snyder; an aunt of Bob Lee; the wife of John Gerrits; a friend. Ill - Don Fullen's mother. Three special intentions.