

Tomorrow at 4:45. The  
Public Holy Hour in  
Sacred Heart Church.

University of Notre Dame  
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Blood: We still need blood  
donors. See the Prefect of  
Religion, 117 Dillon.

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A Firm Purpose Of Amendment  
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The aim of repentance is reform. Removal of sin is an indispensable condition of reform -- but only a condition, not the goal. Confession, remember, has the dual purpose of eliminating and preventing sin. Our determination to sin no more may have little or nothing of the emotional, sob-stuff sorrow -- it doesn't have to have any. You best show your sorrow in your will -- by the reality of your determination to reform your life. And you show this determination best when you avoid the occasions of sin, and adopt effective means of reform. Whoever is still prepared to flirt with sin cannot really hate it, or have a firm purpose of amendment.

The steeling of the will, therefore, should be the major concern of the penitent. Never mind the emotions -- strong-willed people are never highly emotional. God wants sorrow in the will, not necessarily sorrow in the emotions or on the lips. Our firm purpose of amendment is not measured by the number of our sighs, and tears, and regrets -- but by the hardness of the will. We go to confession not simply to feel better, but to be better. The real value of confession is determined by the strength of our resolution to sin no more, and to take the adequate means required.

No one expects a four-minute mile from a convalescent. The Divine Physician does not expect to find His patients already in robust health; but He does expect to find in them the will and the determination to get better; and absolute confidence in Him.

Many non-Catholics, observing only our exterior conduct, get the idea that we go to confession, rattle off our sins, come out, and start to sin all over again. We may even give the impression that we regard the confessional merely as an unloading station, or a kind of garbage disposal, or even as a kind of shower bath -- a cleansing process only -- nothing more. And many of us, by our external conduct, give them reason to think thus, and so scandalize them when we regularly fall into the same sins. They imagine that we do what we like, in the comforting assurance that everything can be made straight by a subsequent confession -- get as dirty as you please, then take a shower; that's all there is to it!

But the Church reminds all -- even Catholic college men -- that a good confession must likewise include a firm purpose of amendment -- not only a willingness, but also a firm determination on our part -- to avoid not only the sin itself, but also the occasions that lead to that sin. Unless you take this stand you're only kidding -- that's all.

An occasion of sin may be a person, a place, or a thing. Under certain circumstances in the past, they have been occasions of sin because of our association with them. A firm purpose of amendment is the resolve to avoid these circumstances in the future. This resolve demands a moral strength that shows itself in self-denial, make no mistake about it. Glib, tongue-in-cheek protestations are not enough. God wants evidence

Our best intentions, however, are not very powerful, and offer little security. A humble man realizes this. God knows us even better than we know ourselves. And so, He comes to our assistance with His grace -- the grace of the Sacrament that not only removes our sins, but also bolsters our weak human limitations. He gives us the help we need to overcome our particular individual weaknesses.

But even here we must cooperate with God's grace by avoiding the occasions for sin. Otherwise, we are guilty of presumption. God helps those who help themselves. We must show good will by avoiding the occasions; then God will give us the strength we need to overcome a habit of sin. A confession without a firm purpose of amendment is useless. God's mercy, on the other hand, is infinite -- but it extends only to those who are sincerely resolved to sin no more.