



FORGET ABOUT wanting to be the record on her phonograph, or the feather in her pillow. Let's consider this thing called presumption. Maybe some of you have thought about it yourself. Others among you perhaps need a few ideas on the subject spelled out in detail. You know well enough, I'd suspect, that the most important feature of the sacrament of Penance is sorrow for sin. And because of repeated failures, the question often comes up: Am I really sorry? Am I perhaps guilty of presumption? Am I taking God's mercy for granted? The question can be phrased in a number of ways.

PRESUMPTION is usually taken to mean an unfounded expectation that one will get to heaven, and be supplied with the means necessary, in ways other than God ever willed. So, one is guilty of presumption, confessors will tell him, if he expects an eternal reward through his own efforts alone, or through Christ's merits alone without any good works on his part. And, then too, it's a sin of presumption he's guilty of if he expects that God is going to save him--because God is merciful--even though he doesn't keep the commandments, or even though he expects His help in sinning, or even though he thinks he's going to get his halo by following a course outside the ordinary course of God's providence. And he'd better consider himself presumptuous, too, if he sins and sins repeatedly, figuring all the while that God is always ready to forgive.

ANY STUDENT who sins repeatedly because he figures it is just as easy to confess three sins as it is to confess one ordinarily isn't regarded as presumptuous, because he is motivated not by any reliance on God's readiness to forgive him, but rather on the ease with which he can confess many sins. Such an atti-

tude, however, will easily lead to presumption, and is therefore very dangerous. To sin frequently because God can forgive many sins as easily as He can forgive one, or to sin because confession is so available and God forgives so easily is true presumption, and, fall into this, and you've gotten yourself into grievous sin--presupposing that this is what motivates you to sin.

THERE ARE STILL A FEW, I suppose, who are shaking test-tubes or reading Eliot, who haven't been to confession since last Spring. Well, I won't call them presumptuous for putting off confession (assuming they need it), but the best we can say for them is that they are spiritually indolent. One can hardly be called presumptuous either, if he remains in his sin out of frailty or passion, hoping some day to be pardoned. (If you know of such a one, maybe all he needs is to have you talk to him--by hand.)

TO COUNTERACT true presumption, a firm purpose of amendment is necessary. It consists of an act of the will. It implies not only a willingness, but also a firm determination to avoid not only the sin in question, but also those occasions that lead to the sin. It implies a resolve to avoid the circumstances that were an occasion of sin in the past. Not even frequent reception of holy Communion can help him who deliberately walks into what he is certain will be an occasion of sin.

GOD'S MERCY, it's true, is infinite. But it extends to those who are sincerely resolved to sin no more. In return for God's mercy in the past, strengthen your resolve and help form such a resolve in the mind of anyone you may know who has been away from the Sacraments too long.

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