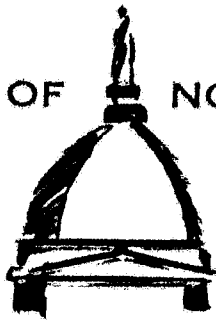


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EFFECTIVE CONFESSION OF DEVOTION

For two kinds of penitents especially the sacrament of penance frequently presents great difficulty -- for the sinner who has been away from the sacrament for a long time, many years perhaps; and for the person who, trying to lead a good life, habitually has no mortal sins to confess. It's the second group that generally gets little attention. Consequently, their confessions become routine, and they themselves sometimes become discouraged at their lack of progress.

To offset this sameness, routine, and lack of meaningfulness in the reception of the sacrament of penance, Father John E. Corrigan, in America (March 14, 1964), has some most helpful suggestions. After discussing the manner of confessing the sins and means of avoiding formalism, and after making suggestions for a meaningful examination of conscience, Father Corrigan gives a sample of what might be an effective confession of devotion.

"Give me your blessing, Father, for I have sinned; it has been a month since my last confession. I am married, the father of four young children and teach high school. In my last confession I promised to spend more time with my wife and children; I like to read and study and find that often I all but ignore them. I meant to do better during the last month, but for the most part I didn't. I rationalized a good bit about this, I know.

"Since my last confession I have lied a few times to my children to avoid taking time to answer them.

"I underwent a severe temptation against purity regarding a single girl who is in my car pool. I resisted but was astonished at my weakness. I'll make sure in the future that she is not the last one to be dropped off.

"I avoided speaking about my convictions when my fellow teachers discussed with approval the use of abortion. I think I was too much of a coward.

"I'm beginning to notice a tendency in my teaching to ignore those who are slow and spend almost all my

time with the bright and attractive students.

"I haven't prayed much at all. In fact, I find it awfully easy to forget about God most of the time and live mainly for myself.

"I excuse myself from taking part in parish activities on the ground that I'm too busy. I'm going to try to find time to offer my assistance to the pastor. Father, this will be my special resolution for this month, and I shall continue working on my resolution from the last confession."

Then Father Corrigan proceeds to point out why this is an effective confession.

This is patently a confession of devotion. The penitent realizes, of course, that his primary obligation is to confess only when he has committed mortal sin and knows that venial sins may be forgiven in other ways than through the sacrament of penance. Yet he is using the sacrament, conscious that to be a Christian is to be one concerned with Christlikeness. His confession reveals that he is seeking, in addition to forgiveness, the healing and guidance inherent in this sacrament.

The values in a confession of this kind shine forth from the very beginning when he obviously asks for a blessing. For many people, the invocation "Bless me, Father" is a stylized formula for beginning an account of one's sins. As a petition for a real blessing to make a good confession, this part of penance is a sacramental meant to assure the penitent that Christ's representative is there to welcome him and bless him.

The penitent identifies himself at least according to state in life, profession and circumstances of his life. (The imaginary penitent may identify himself as a person the priest-confessor knows, with the words "I am John Smith, Father," although no one ever need be constrained to identify himself by name.) Early in his statement he establishes a continuity with his previous confession. He is "reporting in" on his effort to carry out the resolution at his last confession. Ordinarily this would assume that the penitent has established a regular relationship with one confessor.

He confesses the sin of lying, but puts this into a definite context. Moreover, he commits himself not to repeat it. Such a resolution is obviously superior to the

blanket and undefined promise of amendment that concludes his act of contrition.

He cites the temptation, not because he feels it is a sin or to be "on the safe side," but because it was a traumatic experience that pointed up his fragility. He is seeking the sacramental grace to heal this weakness. The next several things may not be deliberate sins at all. They are of value, however, because they reflect a consciousness of attitudes that are not fully Christian.

He concludes with a specific resolution to aid his pastor, as well as continuing the resolution from the previous month to give greater consideration to his family life.

A Christian is a member of family, community and Church, and has responsibilities to each. Above all else, a confession like this evinces an understanding of what it means to be a Christian. It is freed of any narrow, legalistic view of sin and surely sees that minimum requirements of morality are far from the call of Christ, which invites all to perfection. Further it reveals that the only true view of spiritual life is one that includes a man's existence. It does not view spirituality merely from the point of view of prayer and keeping the Commandments. It refers, not to an aspect of life, but to life itself -- the whole of man's activity and attitude toward God, himself and the world.

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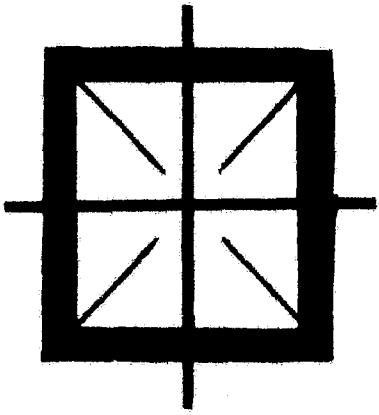
IN YOUR CHARITY please pray for the following: Ill -- father of Father Cletus Bachofer, C.S.C., of the Biology department; mother of Robert Millman, '58. Deceased -- father of Father William Graham, C.S.C., in Pakistan; Edward G. DeGree, '23; John J. Laskowski, '50; Walter E. Klauer, '22.

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I have often thought that a boat running snug, and properly reefed to suit the wind, is a model of the virtue which the theologians call temperance, and which has nothing to do with the historical dread of wine bred in those who have themselves suffered from, or have seen in their families, the disease called dipsomania. For temperance does not mean doing things half-heartedly, still less does it mean doing or not doing things extremely. It means suiting your implements to your motive power, and not carrying on at a risk. It is not unconnected with dignity, and there is something profound about it; I will call it the contralto among the virtues, and leave it at that.

--from H. Belloc

PERSPECTIVE ON SACRIFICE



Sacrifice: Do without... Break off... Give up... This is the negative side of sacrifice. If this is all that we are concerned with, then the real purpose of our sacrifice is lost. It's purpose is not to cut us off from the things we like, but to unite us with God and with others. Sacrifice is not simply doing something difficult. It involves a person, an action, and a consecrating of that action in view of that person. The key notion is relationship.

Pre-requisite for sacrifice: acknowledgement of interdependence. We must realize that we are bound up with God and others. We can't be loners. We must acknowledge this relationship to God and others, and the Love that initiated it. We acknowledge that our own love is expected to reciprocate and extend it. In short, the basis for sacrifice is the acknowledgement of this meaningful relationship.

Expression of sacrifice: receiving and giving. This is simply living out this acknowledged relationship. It may seem strange to think of receiving as part of sacrifice, but the best way of honoring or showing our relation to another is to accept something from that person. This is not simply to use that person, but it can mean to ask his help, to appreciate his good qualities, and to assimilate them into our own personality. And sacrifice also means to give: to give our talents and what we have assimilated from God and others, to give in turn the best of ourselves to someone else.

Result and purpose of sacrifice: greater union of friendship. Through sacrifice, love deepens and develops, both on the natural and supernatural levels. It is not simply self-discipline. Because we have received and given, our bond with God and others matures and intensifies. Sacrifice counteracts the effects of sin, which make us selfish, hostile, and out-of-touch. Sacrifice releases the self to expand, to go outside the shell, to develop fully its potential by opening to others in a meaningful communication and interaction.

So sacrifice is not simply disciplining or depriving ourselves. It is giving and, what is more difficult, receiving in a personal way. Our own sacrifices of this kind reach their full Christian meaning and efficacy when joined to the Great Sacrifice of Holy Mass. For in the Mass, with Christ, we acknowledge a relationship; we give and receive by offering ourselves with Christ and receiving back divine life through Him. Through the Sacrifice of the Mass we intensify our union of friendship with God and with one another. How does our Lenten sacrifice fit into this perspective?