



Satisfaction for Past Sin

PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art here present. I acknowledge that on account of my many sins I am utterly unworthy to appear before Thy sacred countenance. Yet, confiding in Thy infinite goodness and mercy, I venture to address Thee, to call upon Thy holy name, and meditate upon Thy commandments, in order that I may acquire a better knowledge of Thy holy will, and accomplish it with more fidelity. Wherefore enlighten my understanding that I may perceive what I ought to do or leave undone for the promotion of Thy glory and my own salvation; at the same time excite my will, that I may repent with my whole heart of my past sins, and resolve for the future to do all that Thou requirest of me. Grant me above all to know Jesus, my divine Teacher and Guide, more clearly, that I may love Him more dearly, and consequently labor, struggle and suffer with greater generosity and self-sacrifice in imitation of His example. Holy Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, show Jesus to me now, and let me study thy divine Son to the salvation of my soul. Holy Guardian Angel, keep far from me all distracting thoughts; my patron saint, come to my assistance. Amen.

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Satisfaction or the performance of penitential works is also an important part of the virtue of penance. When to our sorrow we add some penitential works we are in a great measure restrained from returning to sin. These voluntary punishments inflicted on ourselves are a proof of our sincerity, and move God to extend His mercy towards us. Works of penance have great power with God as is clear from many parts of Sacred Scripture. The Prophet Daniel joined works of penance to prayer, and God granted his petitions. "In those days, I, Daniel, mourned the days of three weeks. I ate no desirable bread, and neither flesh, nor wine entered into my mouth; neither was I anointed with ointment" (Dan. x, 2, 3).

"Know ye that the Lord will hear your prayers, if you continue with perseverance in fastings and prayers in the sight of the Lord" (Judith iv, II). The Ninevites prayed to God and did penance in sackcloth and ashes and God spared them.

The great St. Paul knew well how efficacious penance is to bring the flesh into subjection to the Spirit. He knew that punishment was a powerful means to mortify the pride of our flesh, and to weaken our unruly passions. **"I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway"** (i Cor. ix, 27). If St. Paul needed such mortification what can we expect if we neglect to have recourse to it. By judging and condemning ourselves to punishment for our sins we stay the anger of God and the severity of His judgments. **"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"** (i Cor. xi, 31). **We must with St. Paul chastise the body and bring it into subjection to the spirit, receiving the trials and crosses of this life with resignation, as a punishment for our sins. This practice not only serves to discharge our debt of temporal punishment due to the Divine justice, but also to deter us from committing sin in the future.**

We have been considering up to the present only external works of penance, which consist principally in prayer, fasting, and almsdeeds, but internal works of penance are also required from us.

The internal acts of penance consist in humbling ourselves before God for our sins and spiritual miseries; crying to Him for mercy and pardon; acknowledging our unworthiness, and firmly resolving to suffer all evils rather than ever again commit sin. These acts of penance purify the soul from the stains of sin, they produce a hatred for sin, they are a powerful preservative against relapse, and contribute, in a great degree, to satisfy the Justice of God for the debt of temporal punishment due to our sins.

To repent of and to grieve over our past sins, although painful, is yet sweet and tender, because the grief is accompanied with trust in God. The soul remains transfixed with this sorrow, the iron sword always pierces it through and through, always compels it to weep and to mourn. Thus holy David confesses of himself, that he ever kept his sins before his mind's eye, **“for I know my iniquity, and my sin is ever before me”** (Psalm iv. 5). Thus, too, Ezechias was ever repeating, **“I will reflect on all my past years, and in the bitterness of my soul detest all my sins”** (Isaias xlvi, 15).

St. Thomas, speaking of interior repentance of heart which is none other than the sorrowing love which we are now considering, says that it should cease only with life, because one who loves should ever grieve at having offended the object of his love (Part 3, quaest. 84, Art. 8).

St. Augustine is of the like opinion, saying that **“we should always do penance as long as we abide in this mortal flesh.”** He moreover adds, that if one had never defiled his conscience with mortal sin, still he should daily do penance, on account of the dust of venial faults which is ever accumulating on the soul that lives in this wretched exile (Lib. i, Hom, ult., Cap 2). And his reason is, that although these slight faults do not inflict a fatal wound as is the case with grievous sin, yet, taken together, they form an eruption and a leprosy that mar the beauty of the soul, and debar it from the chaste and delightful embraces of the heavenly Bridegroom, unless they be healed by the remedy of daily penance.

St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi was wont to say that the love of Contrition, this sorrowing love, is more suited to the present life, while the rejoicing love of Complacency is fitter for that which is to come: for it is meet that those who have reached the term should love God in gladness, while we, who as yet are far from our heavenly country, more fittingly love Him with mourning, with tears, and contrition.

St. Jerome relates of St. Paula, that she had made her eyes two fountains of tears, wherewith, day and night, she wept over her faults, and, after the example of holy David, watered her couch with her tears. He adds, that she wept so bitterly over trivial failings, that anyone would have considered her guilty of grievous excesses. The holy Doctor used to exhort the virgin to give herself peace, and to restrain the floods of tears which were continually streaming from her eyes. But she answered, that she needed to wash away, with her weeping, the paint wherewith she had adorned her cheeks; that it behooved her to afflict the flesh she had indulged with luxuries, and to punish herself for her immoderate laughter in days gone by (In Vita, S. Paulae ad Eustoch.).

When we consider the Infinite Goodness of God in Himself, His Goodness to us, the great evil of sin, our ingratitude to God, the great sufferings Our Blessed Lord had to endure in order to

satisfy for sin, the injury our sins do to God, the fear of hell and the loss of heaven, all these considerations ought to move us to sorrow for sin and to make satisfaction for it.

PRAYER AFTER MEDITATION.

My God, I give Thee heartfelt thanks for all the graces and all the light Thou hast conferred on me during this meditation. Pardon me all the negligence and the distractions of which I have been guilty, and give me strength to carry out the resolutions that I have made. Fortify me, that from henceforth I may diligently practice this virtue . . . avoid this fault . . . perform this action . . . to Thy honor. Help me to do this, sweet Virgin Mary; and if I ever forget my good resolutions, I entreat my Angel Guardian to recall them to my memory. Amen.

- by Rev. P. Ryan

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If the devil tempts me by the thought of Divine justice, I think of God's mercy; if he tries to fill me with presumption by the thought of His mercy, I think of His justice. – St. Ignatius of Loyola, Letter 8.

March Devotion: *St. Joseph*

Virtue to practice: *Mortification*

O St. Joseph whose protection is so great, so strong, so prompt before the throne of God, I place in you all my interests and desires. O St. Joseph, do assist me by your powerful intercession and obtain for me from your Divine Son all spiritual blessings through Jesus Christ, Our Lord; so that having engaged here below your heavenly power, I may offer my thanksgiving and homage to the most loving of fathers. O St. Joseph I never weary contemplating you and Jesus asleep in your arms. I dare not approach while He reposes near your heart. Press Him in my name and kiss His fine Head for me, and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath. St. Joseph, patron of departing souls, pray for me. Amen.

Prayer to St. Joseph by Pope St. Pius X

O Glorious St. Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations, to work with gratitude and joy, in a spirit of penance for the remission of my sins, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God, to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, without ever shrinking from weariness and difficulties, to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, having always death before my eyes and the account that I must render of time lost, of talents wasted, of good omitted, of vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God. All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thine example, O Patriarch, St. Joseph. Such shall be my watchword in life and in death. Amen.

"God made us without us, but He will not save us without us." *St. Augustine, Bishop & Doctor*