



Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Saint Maximilian Kolbe wrote a letter to his followers.

The purpose of this letter was to exhort his disciples to prepare themselves for the approaching feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, for us it this coming Easter on April 12th.

But it also showed them how to receive forgiveness for sin in the coming war, as in the war against the coronavirus Covid-19 that we are now experiencing, where priests were scarce and it was hard to receive sacramental confession.

He wrote:

"Whoever can, should receive the Sacrament of Penance. Whoever cannot, because of prohibiting circumstances, should cleanse their soul by acts of perfect contrition: i.e., the sorrow of a loving child who does not consider so much the pain or reward as he does the pardon from his father and mother to whom he has brought displeasure."

This is a magnificent formula and lesson on how to make an act of perfect contrition.

As most people know, there are two types of contrition:

- *perfect*: out of love of God;
- *imperfect*: out of fear of Hell.

Catholic teaching distinguishes a twofold hatred of sin; one, perfect contrition, rises from the love of God Who has been grievously offended; the other, imperfect contrition, arises principally from some other motives, such as loss of heaven, fear of hell, the heinousness of sin, etc. (Council of Trent, Sess. XIV, ch. iv de Contritione). (The Catholic Encyclopedia, "Contrition")

When we go to confession, imperfect contrition is sufficient to receive the pardon of our sins.

However, in extraordinary circumstances where [when] we cannot get to confession, we can make an act of perfect contrition, which is sufficient to have our sins forgiven.

Important: The act of perfect contrition includes the desire for the sacrament of Penance (or Reconciliation) and the intention to receive sacramental confession at the very first opportunity.

NOTE: One who is conscious of mortal sin may not receive the Holy Eucharist without prior sacramental confession, even if they made an act of perfect contrition.

The fact that we can always make an act of perfect contrition, in any circumstance, and at any time, is very consoling and very important to remember.

Especially when we think of our troops who are in harm's way. They may not have a chaplain in their battalion before entering battle, just as our priests are being asked to practice social distancing. In that case, they should always say an act of perfect contrition, as we can also say an act of perfect contrition during this time of self-quarantine if we intended to go to sacramental confession prior to Easter.

Actually, not only in extraordinary circumstances should we make acts of perfect contrition. At any time, if we have the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, we should seek to reconcile ourselves with God as soon as possible by an act of perfect contrition before going to confession.

Furthermore, even not being guilty of serious sin, we should make frequent acts of perfect contrition to ask forgiveness for the serious sins of the past, and for the venial sins of the present.

In doing so, we show our love for God. And we prove our aversion to sin, which offends Him. In doing so, we surely receive more abundant graces to sin no more. A highly recommended practice is to include an act of contrition in our "before bed" prayers.

Act of Perfect Contrition

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; but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who are all good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life.

Amen.

Adapted from the website below by Deacon Rick Stachura, St. Mary's Church in Swormville, NY

<https://www.americanneedsfatima.org/Conversions/how-to-make-an-act-of-perfect-contrition.html>