

ON CONFESSION

(Part 4)

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There are priests who are reluctant to administer this sacrament. (a) Because they are occupied with something else, which is completely alien to their state, they do not want to hear confessions.

(b) The other reason is that the office of the confessor is dangerous and very delicate, and that it contains many a risk to one's own soul. I agree that it is delicate. But I completely disagree that it is dangerous and risky for one's soul if we use the necessary precautions. The office of the confessor is truly delicate, and so we need to carry it out with some fear and trembling, which renders us cautious and attentive to what we do, but we should not have excessive fear so as to make us useless for the ministry. At the same time, I will never approve of a confessor who withdraws simply because of this fear. There are so many reasons why one should have some fear. (1) We are talking about 'souls' which are real treasures. Woe to anyone who loses one! One word more or one word less can save one or lose one. The delicate, intricate and difficult wounds have to be treated. This demands extraordinary knowledge, experience and skill. One has to deal with so many different characters, and how can one find the appropriate way for each of them? (2) There are



many sins, and the poor confessor has to keep a watchful eye. There are means to keep ourselves safe in every encounter. If we meet with difficulties and special dangers in this ministry, let us also be assured that there are also special graces for us! Do you believe that the Lord would allow his well-intentioned servant who, with due caution and solely for the salvation of souls, puts himself at risk, perish?

But some priests ask: But how can I know that I am doing what is possible, that I do not make mistakes, and that I am cautious? No one has ever said that the confessor is infallible or that he is not subject to making mistakes! One may make mistakes, but he does so without sin. We are asked to go ahead and not to fear. But we are still hesitating, wasting days and months in these fears! While we hesitate and delay, people sin and fall into hell without hesitation! Let us remember that the devil does not hesitate; he comes and goes, searches every possible way to victory. Even if the confessor is subject to temptations and difficulties in this ministry, he should not be afraid or worried; he will certainly have his reward!

CONCLUSION

My brothers, being convinced of the great good that we do to the people, let us encourage one another to administer this sacrament. Let us commit ourselves to

administering it constantly till death, without distinction of persons, to all who approach. As many penitents as we have confessed, so many will be the people who will, one day, have obligations towards us in Heaven or rather, God will have so many obligations towards us! Every soul we help to save by confessing is like a bond that the Lord places in our hands, in which He declares Himself bound and obliged to us! This was the feeling of St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi. She said that she preferred to help a soul to salvation rather than to go into ecstasy or perform some miracle! Let us encourage ourselves to become good and able ministers, worthy or at least 'less unworthy' of sitting on that great Tribunal, which, in a certain way and in a certain sense, is greater than that of God Himself.

You might tell me: Is this not pride or ambition? Would it be too ambitious for a son trying to become the best in the family? Would it be too ambitious for the servant to try to please his master better than anyone else? Would it be too ambitious to desire to become the bravest warrior to defend his King? Let us make a firm resolution to dedicate ourselves to this ministry so that at the end of our life we may deserve from our master those beautiful words: "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in little; I will appoint you over much, enter into the joy of your Master." (Mt 25:21)