

the Holy Ghost, through the Sacrament of Penance, restores to man the supernatural life he had lost, and gives him back the image of God in all its pristine beauty and loveliness. And thus the new creation daily operated by the spirit of God, through this sacrament, is, if possible, more glorious than the original creation; it seems more worthy of God, since it is a brighter revelation of His infinite mercy, compassion and love, and because the *re-creation* and salvation of the soul is a greater exercise of omnipotence, a greater work than the creation of the material world, with all its wondrous harmonies and beauties.

This line of thought is in accord with what the great St. Cyril writes on this subject. "In the beginning," he says, "man was made by the word of God, and God breathed into him the breath of life, and enriched him by a participation of his spirit. But since by disobedience man fell, and lost his pristine comeliness, God again formed him and restored to him a new life through his Son, in order that he might learn that it is the same God, who in the beginning, created human nature and sealed it with the holy Spirit, and again in the beginning of the restoration of human nature communicates by *breathing* the Holy Ghost to his disciples to the end, that as we were created in the beginning, so also we might be renewed." The Sacrament of Penance is therefore one of the greatest of God's works, one of the greatest of His institutions of divine mercy and love, and a most powerful and efficacious means of salvation. It is indeed the true refuge of sinners, the sanctuary of asylum in the new law, which shields sinners from the consequences of their guilt, and hides them from the wrath of God and His terrible judgments. And if the Church in the excess of her joy, dares to sing on Holy Saturday "O felix culpa," "O happy fault which merited such and so great Redeemer," may we not venture, in the exuberance of our heartfelt gratitude to God, to say, "O happy sins which deserved the institution of so great, so wondrous a Sacrament