

A person who for some capital crime has been condemned to death or to imprisonment for life, with what transports of joy does he receive the glad tidings that his sentence is cancelled and that he is soon to be restored to liberty; with what feelings of heartfelt gratitude is he not animated for the remission of his sentence. Sometimes the joy of the pardoned has been so overpowering as to deprive them of life.

Should not we, therefore, whose sentence of eternal death has been so often remitted and cancelled from the book of judgment by the sacrament of Christ's compassion, feel forever deeply and heartily grateful to our merciful Lord? Should we not unceasingly thank him for his infinite mercies; should we not remain for ever true, faithful and loyal to our heavenly King whose royal prerogative of pardon he has left behind him on earth embodied for all time in this institution of penance for the release of prisoners held captive in the chains of Satan, for the pardon of the condemned and their restoration to spiritual life and the liberty of the children of God.

The sacrament of which we treat can pardon the greatest of sinners if they be truly penitent and can forgive the greatest sins. No matter how wicked a sinner may have been, no matter how habitual in his relapses, he is within the reach of forgiveness through this sacrament. When our Lord said to the apostles "whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven," he excluded no child of Adam from this universal commission of pardon, all races and conditions of men were included in it provided they were believers and penitents. The greatest and most grievous sins, though they were as red as scarlet and black as midnight may be forgiven by it; no matter how numerous one's sins may be, even though they were as countless as the stars of heaven or as the sands on the sea shore, the tide of the Precious Blood flowing through the channel of Penance will rise above them and drown them in eternal oblivion. There is but one sin that will never be forgiven and this is the sin against the Holy Ghost, viz., the sin of final impenitence and that sin is excluded from the universal