

Act of Confusion Puppet Show*(Introduces the Act of Contrition and Philipians 4:13)*

Gerald	Greetings Cindy. (<i>Gerald is nerdy, goofy</i>)
Cindy	Hi Gerald!
Gerald	What are you doing out here with the bugs and dirt? And bugs. Ew.
Cindy	Sitting under this beautiful tree in the soft, green grass helps me think and pray.
Gerald	Really? What about? Pest control?
Cindy	No. I'm going to go to my First Reconciliation pretty soon, so I've got to pray an Act of Contrition.
Gerald	An act of who?
Cindy	An Act of Contrition.
Gerald	What's that?
Cindy	That's a simple prayer that helps me tell God how sorry I am for my sins. It's good for me to pray it because it reminds me to try harder.
Gerald	Why, that's fascinating. How does it go?
Cindy	"Oh, my God I am heartily sorry...."
Gerald	You're hardly sorry? What kind of attitude is that?
Cindy	No, I didn't say "hardly," I said "heartily," that means I'm really, really sorry; from the heart. <i>You</i> know!
Gerald	Oh. Forgive me. Begin again, please.
Cindy	"Oh, my God I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee."
Gerald	Who is THEE?
Cindy	Thee and Thy are lovely old-fashioned ways of saying YOU.
Gerald	I see. Thee and Thy. Hmmm. Very nice, indeed.
Cindy	"And I detest all my sins because of Thy just punishment."
Gerald	Detest? You have to take de TEST? I hate taking tests! I'm not going to that Reconciliation thing! No WAY!
Cindy	Not a test, Gerald! You need to clean your ears! I said, "detest." Detest means to hate. We're supposed to hate our sins and love God. Sins are when we turn away from God's love. Oh, I do hate sin when I really stop and think about it.
Gerald	Oh. Yes, of course. But if I hate sins, I'll hate everyone, because everybody sins, right?
Cindy	No, Gerald! We hate the sin, but we must never hate the sinner. We're not supposed to hate anyone.

Gerald	How do you figure?
Cindy	Well, God loves us so much that even when we sin He doesn't stop loving us; not for a moment. So, if <i>God</i> loves us when we sin, then we have to love ourselves, too. And we have to love other people when they sin, too.
Gerald	But what about this "just punishment." It's not just punishment to me! I don't think I would feel God's love if He just punished me.
Cindy	Just means fair. He punishes fairly. Like our moms and dads do. He still loves us even when He has to teach us the hard way because we didn't listen to Him.
Gerald	Ah. I believe I understand. Continue.
Cindy	"But most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art all good and deserving of all my love."
Gerald	Yes, yes. God is good. He certainly deserves all our love, but this prayer is quite long, don't you think?
Cindy	It isn't, really. It just seems long because we're stopping to talk about it.
Gerald	Yes. Excellent point. Continue.
Cindy	"I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more..."
Gerald	Wohohoho. Firmly resolve?
Cindy	It's like a promise to myself; I want so much to do better, so I <i>resolve</i> to do better. (<i>she makes a strong gesture, possibly swinging one arm</i>)
Gerald	Firmly. (<i>makes the same gesture</i>)
Cindy	Yes!
Gerald	Alright. With the help of what?
Cindy	Thy grace! God's life. His power. His love. He helps me to...
Gerald	Firmly resolve – er – not to sin, right?
Cindy	You got it. "I firmly resolve with the help of Thy grace to sin no more and to avoid the near occasions of sin. Amen!" (<i>relieved to be finished</i>)
Gerald	I'm a little worried. What the heck is a near occasion? Is that like a special occasion? Like Christmas or – or birthdays? Do we have to give up special occasions?
Cindy	(<i>laughs</i>) No, Gerald. A near occasion is anything that tempts us to sin. Like something close by that gives us a choice to do right – or wrong.
Gerald	Like a full cookie jar and nobody's looking? Mmmmmmm.
Cindy	Oh, yes. That would tempt me! (<i>they laugh</i>)
Gerald	Or like wanting to hit my little brother so bad, because he wrecked my humungous tower of blocks?

Cindy	That would definitely be a near occasion of sin. We're supposed to try and avoid them.
Gerald	But how do I <i>avoid</i> those near occasions? They are ever so tempting!!
Cindy	You need God's grace to avoid them. Ask Him to help you by praying this prayer and He will start whispering in your ear at those times, encouraging you to step back and be strong and NOT sin. You always have a choice, you know. If you try to be loving and honest ESPECIALLY when it's hard, God will make you stronger in His love!
Gerald	My, my. God's grace must be very powerful if He can help me to avoid walloping my little brother and sneaking cookies.
Cindy	It is! "I can do all things in Christ Who strengthens me."
Gerald	That's the spirit!
Cindy	Actually, that's the Bible! Philippians 4:13. Saint Paul said it.
Gerald	I can do all things... Hmmm. This is fascinating. "I can do all things in Jesus Christ, my Lord, who strengthens me." Phillipians 4:13, you say?
Cindy	Yes, Gerald. Well done!
Gerald	Why thank you. I'm feeling quite inspired. Now. Would you be so kind as to recite the entire prayer, whilst I listen and ponder its meaning under this lovely tree?
Cindy	It would be my pleasure. (<i>clears her throat, folds her hands and recites with great feeling</i>) The Act of Contrition: Oh, my God, I am <i>heartily</i> sorry for having offended <i>Thee</i> . And I <i>detest</i> all my sins because of Thy <i>just</i> punishment; But most of all because they offend Thee, my God, Who art <i>all good</i> and deserving of <i>all my love</i> . I <i>firmly resolve</i> (<i>they both gesture</i>) with the help of Thy <i>grace</i> To sin no more and to avoid the <i>near occasions</i> of sin. <i>Amen</i>
Gerald	Well done, Cindy.
Cindy	Thank you, Gerald.

The End