

Men of Saint Michael

“Iron sharpens iron, as one man sharpens another”

Proverbs 27:17.



Newsletter



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“Habere non potest Deum patrem qui ecclesiam non habet matrem.”

“He cannot have God for his Father who has not the Church for his mother.”

— St. Cyprian, *The Unity of the Catholic Church*. 6.

Missionary Motivation

“It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on." Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 851.

What Must I do to be Saved?

Many Christians believe that when Jesus died on the Cross he paid the ultimate price for all of man's sins and therefore nothing is required of us except making a “personal commitment to a personal savior.”

“Jesus said to them, ... “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40).

What an extraordinary promise — Believe in Him and we will have eternal life.

However, what does it mean to truly believe in Him? Does it not mean that we must believe everything He said is true? Does it not mean that we must be in total submission to His will in our lives? Does it not mean that we must obey His every command?

Let's take a more in-depth look at what the New Testament Scriptures teach on this subject.

Belief is necessary.

Rom. 10:9, "Because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

We must do God's will.

Matt 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

We must obey Jesus.

John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him."

Baptism is necessary for salvation.

John 3:5, "Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." See also: Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5-8.

We must also love God completely and our neighbor as ourselves.

Luke 10: 25-28, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live."

We must keep the Commandments.

John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." See also: Matt. 19:16-17.

Good works are necessary for salvation.

Romans 2:7, "For he will render to every man according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life." See also: James 2:14,26; Phil 2:12.

We must hold out to the end.

2 Tim 2:12-13, "If we endure, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful-- for he cannot deny himself." See also: Mark 13: 13; 1 Cor 10:12, 27.

We must also eat His body and drink His blood.

Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." (John 53-59).

Would Jesus command us to do something impossible? Jesus would have had to have made some provision for His followers to carry out the command to "eat His flesh and drink His blood".

One of the fundamental differences between Catholics and the hundreds of different denominations is how the above verses are understood.

Isn't it true that all Christians are taught to interpret the Bible literally, except where the use of symbolic or figurative language is obvious? So, the issue is: "Did Jesus really mean that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood?"

"The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (John 6:52).

The fact that the Jews questioned the words of Jesus tells us that they understood Jesus' words literally.

The Catholic Church has always taught that Jesus was speaking literally, and this can be proved by the Bible and Church history.

Let us begin with the creation story in Genesis 1:1-31: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day."

God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." And God made the firmament and separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament. *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years and let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." *And it was so.*

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth according to their kinds." *And it was so.*

Everything God said came to pass.

"So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

Jesus, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is the Word, and the Word was and is God (John 1:1).

As God, Jesus performed numerous miracles. He cured the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, and raised people from the dead. Whatever He declared came to pass.

Jesus declared that His flesh is real food: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh" "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed*" (Jn. 6:51; 53-55).

During the Last Supper, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise, the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you" (Lk. 22:19-20).

Who, *not what*, was Jesus holding in His sacred hands at that moment? He was holding Himself! At that moment, the bread became His Body, simply because He said it was His Body.

He then took a cup of wine and declared it to be His Blood.

Once again, Jesus held Himself in His own hands! At that moment, the wine became His Blood, simply because He said it was so.

I repeat, as soon as he declared the bread and wine to be His Body and Blood, they became His Body and Blood. As you may know, Catholics call this food Eucharist.

He then commanded His disciples to do the same, "Do this in remembrance of me", thereby empowering them to do so. This was the beginning of the New Covenant Priesthood.

St. Paul was certainly a believer in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist:

And St. Paul said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

And St. Paul said, "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27).

And the Early Church Fathers said!

Ignatius of Antioch was a disciple of the Apostle John for over thirty years, before suffering a martyr's death in the arena in Rome.

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "Pay close attention to those who have wrong notions about the grace of Jesus Christ, which has come to us, and note how at variance they are with God's mind. They care nothing about love: they have no concern for widows or orphans, for the oppressed, for those in prison or released, for the hungry or the thirsty. They hold aloof from the Eucharist and from services of prayer, because they refuse to admit that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins and which, in his goodness, the Father raised [from the dead]. Consequently, those who wrangle and dispute God's gift face death" (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 6, 19-20, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes. Where the bishop is present, there let the congregation gather, just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church". (*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*, 8, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "Be careful, then, to observe a single Eucharist. For there is one flesh of our Lord, Jesus Christ, and one cup of his blood that makes us one, and one altar, just as there is one bishop along with the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow slaves. In that way whatever you do is in line with God's will" (*Letter to the Philadelphians*, 4, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

And St. Ignatius of Antioch said, “Try to gather together more frequently to celebrate God's Eucharist and to praise him. For when you meet with frequency, Satan's powers are overthrown and his destructiveness is undone by the unanimity of your faith” (*Letter to the Ephesians*, 13, [ca. A. D. 104 / 107]).

The Teaching:

“You must not let anyone eat or drink of your Eucharist except those baptized in the Lord's name. For in reference to this the Lord said, ‘Do not give what is sacred to dogs’” (*The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, Commonly Called the *Didache*, [ca. 70 / 80 A. D.]).

St. Justin Martyr:

Justin Martyr, an early Church Father (105-165 A. D.) is the first person to furnish us with a complete description of the Eucharistic celebration (c. 150). He speaks of it twice, first in regard to the newly-baptized and secondly in regard to the Sunday celebration.

And St. Justin Martyr said, “But we, after we have thus washed him who has been convinced and has assented to our teaching, bring him to the place where those who are called brethren are assembled, in order that we may offer hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized [illuminated] person, and for all others in every place, that we may be counted worthy, now that we have learned the truth, by our works also to be found good citizens and keepers of the commandments, so that we may be saved with an everlasting salvation. Having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss. There is then brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to ge'noito [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion” (*I Apol.* 65).

Justin goes on to specify that the bread that has been consecrated by the prayer formed from the words of Christ.

“And this food is called among us Eucharisti'a [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Savior, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, "This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;" and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, "This is My blood;" and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn” (*I Apol.* 66).

A second description of the Eucharist complementing the first is found a little later in his *Apology* with regard to the Sunday liturgy.

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise

together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succors the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration” (I *Apol.* 67).

St. Irenaeus of Lyons

And St. Irenaeus of Lyons said, “And just as the wooden branch of the vine, placed in the earth, bears fruit in its own time-and as the grain of wheat, falling into the ground and there dissolved, rises with great increase by the Spirit of God, who sustains all things, and then by the wisdom of God serves for the use of men, and when it receives the Word of God becomes the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ-so also our bodies which are nourished by it, and then fall into the earth and are dissolved therein, shall rise at the proper time, the Word of God bestowing on them this rising again, to the glory of God the Father” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, [Inter A. D. 180 / 190]).

It is clear from the words of Jesus, St. Paul, and the Early Church Fathers that Jesus meant it when He said that we must eat His body and drink His blood.

There is an avalanche of evidence in support of the Catholic understanding and absolutely none to support the Protestant contention. Jesus was not speaking symbolically. The only refutation offered by Protestantism is opinion, as no proof exists.

To be fully Christian is to believe in these words of Jesus and *come home* to the Catholic Church. There is no greater intimacy than eating His flesh and drinking his blood.

Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly. This can only be fully experienced in the Catholic Church.

Clarifying, “There is no salvation outside the Church”

Victor R. Claveau, MJ

Question: There is a small, but very vocal group in our parish that is creating much confusion about the Catholic Church’s position that “There is no salvation outside the Church.” They claim that a person must be baptized by water or will not be saved. Further, they claim that the Church’s teaching on the baptism by desire or martyrdom is incorrect. Would you please shed some light on this topic?

Answer: “Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Second Vatican Council teaches that the Church is necessary for salvation. Christ is the mediator and way of salvation. He is present to us in His body, which is the Church. He explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and baptism. By doing so, He affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church, which people enter through baptism. Because of that, there are people who could not be

saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or remain in it” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §846).

The Catholic Church has also, always and everywhere, taught that baptism is necessary for salvation. Still, that necessity is not strictly absolute, as we learn from the Council of Trent, which declared that “since the promulgation of the Gospel there is no translation from the state of Old Adam to the state of grace... without the laver of regeneration, *or the desire of it...*” (Sixth Session, *Decree concerning Justification*, Ch. 4, January 13, 1547). (1) So, Baptism of water is not, the only Baptism.

This brings us to the important point of Baptism of desire. In case of necessity this baptism will suffice for salvation. (But only Baptism by water can confer the baptismal character and render a person capable of receiving the other sacraments.) St. Augustine and St. Ambrose taught that perfect love of God and sorrow for sin surely includes the desire to fulfill Christ’s every command. This is Baptism of desire. Baptism of blood or martyrdom is also equivalent to Baptism of water.

The Catholic Church *is* the one society for man’s salvation instituted by Jesus and therefore a person must be affiliated with the Church in some way to be saved. That is what St. Cyprian meant when he said: “No one can have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his Mother” (*On the Unity of the Church*, 6). But many souls, apparently outside the Church are really within her fold in the sight of God. While not united with her *in fact*, they are in communion with her *in desire*.

The Catholic Churches teaches that God gives sufficient grace to all men to be saved; that unbelief is never sinful unless it is voluntary. Intelligent people often recognize the boundless charity of the Catholic Church, which condemns only those who freely and deliberately sin against God.

The Church has always taught that no person is lost except through his own fault; that God holds no one responsible for an obligation that he cannot fulfill because of his invincible ignorance. (2) How could God condemn a person for not entering a Church of whose very existence he is unaware? Pope Pius IX stated the Catholic Doctrine clearly when he said, “Far be it from us to dare set bounds to the boundless mercy of God; far be it from us to desire to search the depths of the hidden counsels and judgments of God, an abyss that the mind of man cannot explore... We must hold as of faith, that out of the Apostolic Roman Church there is no salvation; that she is the only ark of safety, and whosoever is not in her perishes in the deluge; we must also, on the other hand, recognize with certainty that those who are in invincible ignorance of the true religion are not guilty for this in the eye of the Lord. And who will presume to mark out the limits of this ignorance, according to the character and diversity of peoples, countries, minds and the rest” (*Allocution*, Dec. 9, 1854).

In his Encyclical to the Italian Bishops, August 10, 1863, he wrote: “It is known to us and to you that those who are in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion, but who observe carefully the natural law, and the precepts graven by God upon the hearts of all men, and who being disposed to obey God lead an honest and upright life, may, aided by the light of divine grace, attain to eternal life; for God who sees clearly, searches and knows the heart, the disposition, the thoughts and intentions of each, in His supreme mercy and goodness by no means permits that anyone suffer eternal punishment, who has not of his own free will fallen into sin.”

This is a hot-button issue for many, who are quick to criticize the Church, but there is a more fundamental issue involved in this debate, and that is the issue of authority.

Would a Good God, “who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4), fail to provide His revelation with a living infallible witness? Would a just God command us to believe under penalty of hell (Mk. 16:6), and at the same time leave us to the mercy of every false prophet (Matt. 13:21) and lying teacher (2 Peter 2:1), preaching a Gospel opposed to His (Gal. 1:8)?

No, the Catholic Church is spoken of in the New Testament as a divine, infallible teaching authority. Jesus said that His Church is like a city built firmly upon a foundation of rock, which can never be destroyed by Satan and the power of evil (Matt. 7:24; 16:18).

Throughout the Gospels the mission of the Apostles and their successors is said to be identical to the mission of Jesus and His Heavenly Father. “As the Father sends me (to bear witness to the truth (Jn 18:37) I send you” (Jn 20:21). “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Jn 13:20). “He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Matt. 10:40).

When Jesus gave to the Apostles the divine commission for all nations until the end of the world (Matt. 27:20), He promised: "I am with you always." This phrase is used at least 90 times in the Bible, and usually signifies that God will ensure the success of the person's undertaking. If the Apostles are to be successful in their divine mission of teaching for all time, they and their successors must have divine infallibility.

In His last discourse to the Apostles, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit, who would live with them forever, and teach them all things that He had taught them (Jn. 14:26). He is the Spirit of Truth, whom the world of unbelievers (Jn. 15:19; 17:9, 25) cannot receive, (Jn 14:13-17, 25-26; 15:26; 16:13). The Church that witnesses to Jesus (Lk. 24:28; Acts 1:9) must be infallible.

The Apostles always declare that their teaching is the Word of God (Acts 4:31; 8:14; 12:24; 13:44; 15:35; 1 Cor. 14:35; 2 Tim. 2:9), which they voice infallibly by the assistance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:31; 15:25-28; 1 Cor. 2:4-16), who confirms their witness by miracles (Acts 3:16; 4:29-31; 5:12, 16; 9:32-42). All other teaching is false and blasphemous, even if it were to come from an angel of God (Acts 13:18; Gal. 1:8-9).

The Catholic Church, with St. Paul says to her children: "For our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction" (1 Thes. 1:5). The Church is "the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

If you study the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, the various creeds, and the Councils of the Church from Jerusalem to Vatican Council II, you must admit that the Church has always considered herself infallible, condemning as a heretic anyone who denied even one dogma of the Faith. As St Irenaeus said in the second century: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God, and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace, For the Spirit is the Truth" (*Adv. Haer.*, 3:24).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: "The task of giving an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form or in the form of Tradition, has been entrusted to the living, teaching office of the Church alone. Its authority in this matter is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ." This means that the task of interpretation has been entrusted to the bishops in communion with the successor of Peter, the Bishop of Rome" (§85).

"Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it. At the divine command and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it listens to this devotedly, guards it with dedication, and expounds it faithfully. All that it proposes for belief as being divinely revealed is drawn from this single deposit of faith" (§86).

"The Church's Magisterium exercises the authority it holds from Christ to the fullest extent when it defines dogmas, that is, when it proposes, in a form obliging the Christian people to an irrevocable adherence of faith, truths contained in divine Revelation or also when it proposes, in a definitive way, truths having a necessary connection with these" (§88).

The authority required by the moral order derives from God: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment" (Rom 13: 1-2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17) (§1899).

To reject the legitimate authority of the Church is to fundamentally reject Christ. Rejection of Christ may ultimately lead to loss of salvation.

(1) The Church teaches infallibly when she speaks through the Pope and bishops united in general council, or through the Pope alone when he proclaims to all the faithful a doctrine of faith or morals. All Catholics are required to give assent.

(2) Ignorance is invincible (from the Latin meaning "unconquerable") when it is present indeed but there is no reasonable way, here and now, of correcting it so that the person cannot be held responsible for doing what he does not know is wrong.

Is Evangelization Necessary for Salvation?



Peter preaching in Athens by Raphael

“Service of and witness to the faith necessary for salvation.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. 1816.

How can we serve Him? God gives each and every person various gifts. What we do with these gifts is our offering back to God. Jesus established the Church in order use it to bring all to salvation. The purpose of the Church is to spread the Gospel message. Each of us, as members of the body of Christ, has certain responsibilities toward the spreading of this message and the furtherance of the Kingdom of God on earth.

The time will come when each of us will stand before Jesus and be judged according to our life in the body. Some will reap the reward due to a good and faithful servant and spend eternity enveloped in God’s love, some will have to be purged of the self-love that caused their sins before they reach the perfection required to enter heaven, others will be cast into Gehenna to suffer for all eternity.

How will we be judged? What standard will Jesus use? There is only one, and that is perfection. Jesus made that clear in Matthew’s Gospel (Mt. 5:48). Most would say that perfection is unattainable, but why would Jesus set a goal for us that we could never reach. Does He say, “Run the race, but you will never reach the finish line?” No, of course not, there must a finish line and the corresponding reward for running a good race.

The key is in understanding what Jesus meant by “perfection”. The answer, I believe, is found in St. Luke’s Gospel, “And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him (Jesus) to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live" (Lk 10:25-28). Love is the answer.

One most important way in which we can show our love of God and neighbor is by sharing the Gospel message. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that evangelization is necessary for salvation (§1816). What will you say when you stand before the Master on your day of judgment and He asks, “Whom did you bring with you?” Winning souls for Christ must be the focus of our spiritual existence.

Both Pope John Paul II, and Benedict XVI have stressed the need for a new evangelization. Few have heeded their calls. The Church is in state of turmoil, both at home and abroad. Tens of thousands fall away from the Church each and every year, primarily because they do not have a proper understanding of the Gospel message. Leaving behind Christ’s Church, they travel the highways and byways in search of the true Gospel. For some the quest will bring them full circle, back home to Catholicism; others will spend their lives in a maze of contradictory theological propositions.

Yet, Church history demonstrates us that whenever the Church has been in trouble, God raised up saints and heroes to fight the good fight. Many of the men and woman we now call Doctors of the Church, were involved in the struggle to reclaim souls after the Protestant Revolt of the sixteenth century.

God is calling each of us to be soldiers for Christ. We must serve the Lord by reaching out to those within our parishes, and provide educational programs, for both youths and adults, which will enable a full understanding of the truths of Catholicism and sink Catholic roots so deep that they will never be undermined. We must also go beyond the parish into our communities and invite our churchless friends and neighbors to worship with us, in truth and in light.

We must be on fire for Christ. Anything less is just not acceptable. Scripture states, "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15-17).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes the sacraments as "Masterworks of God" (§1116) and "necessary for salvation (§1129). We must do all we can to lead our loved ones, friends and neighbors to the glories of the Church and, most importantly, the sacraments.

The rewards are plentiful. Each time you share your faith with another, both benefit. The listener may begin a joyous new life in Christ and you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are living up to the mandate of Christ to be a good and faithful servant.

Question: Do you find that one of the greatest obstacles for conversion today is the outlandish character of too many Bishops and Priests? I find this especially true when trying to guide lapsed-Catholics home.

Answer: I believe that most lapsed Catholics, in their hearts, want a reason to come back to the Church, if nothing more than to reinforce their self-image; that they were not fools to believe in the first place. People leave the Catholic Church because they are not grounded in the true teachings of Jesus. My answer to your question is No! If a person really understood the beauty of our religion, they would never leave, regardless of the sinful behavior of other Catholics, whether clergy or laity.

As for non-Catholics, the task is to get them to listen and not feel threatened. A lot depends on our approach. If we know our faith and sincerely desire to win souls for Christ, we will explain the teachings of the Church with consideration of others fragile egos. Everyone wants and needs to believe that they are right when it comes to matters of Christian doctrine and it takes intellectual integrity to examine our most cherished beliefs. Our self-image is wrapped up in these beliefs. It takes a lot of strength of character to admit that you have been wrong about something so crucial and personal as religion.

The person, who sincerely desires to follow Christ, will conquer their fears and listen, on the off chance that we might have something to offer. If we present our faith with truth and conviction, they will eventually tear down the barriers they constructed to keep themselves safe and secure in their beliefs and enter a new world of true intimacy with God.

Most Protestants, believe that they have a personal relationship with Jesus and it is difficult for them to understand that there is a far deeper intimacy with Christ in the Catholic Church than the superficial one they presently enjoy. Again, success in evangelization is having the desire to share the most precious gift of all; Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. There is so much we have to share with others.

Many non-Catholic Christians live lives of quiet desperation, hoping that their beliefs are true. There is no way for them to be absolutely certain, because there is no fundamental authority for them to refer. They simply trust in their pastor and hope they are living lives that will be acceptable to Jesus. In the end, they simply put their hope in their personal understanding of the Bible.

I am a Catholic, not simply because I was born into a Catholic family, but because I have done my homework and have no doubt whatsoever that the Catholic Church teaches the full truth of the Gospel. As a result, I have totally submitted my life to Christ. In return for my submission through his Church, I received "the peace that passes all understanding," and a yearning to leave this life and be enveloped in the love of God for all eternity. Obviously, God is not yet done with me in this world.
