



WINNOWING FAN

The Spiritual Life according to the Fathers
and Saints of the Catholic Church in
preparation for Christ's Second Coming.

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'YEAR OF FAITH' part 3 editorial

The definition of Faith is as many as there are users of the word. The problem with many Catholics is that they define Faith as different as there are Catholics. And usually their definitions are wrong. So let us clearly explain Faith because this is the crux of the 'Motu Proprio'. If we get it right the way will be clear in making the act of Faith. If we don't get it right the act will remain only as an act of the intellect and not an act of Faith. "Porta Fidei" defines Faith as an act of the intellect assenting to the truth at the command of the will. Putting it another way: Faith is the intellect assenting to a truth at the command of the will that had consented to the same truth.

In an act of Faith the object apprehended (the articles of Faith) is not sufficiently strong to force the intellect to assent firmly to the articles of Faith.

Faith is an assent to an object that one does not see. The act of believing in an incomprehensible truth is an assent of the intellect depending upon the command of the free will. So the act of faith depends upon two factors, the intellect and the free will. And we must know how each faculty of the soul functions to understand how the act of faith is made.

How can the intellect assent when it does not understand its object (the mysteries of faith)? The lack of understanding of the mysteries of religion does not give the intellect inconclusive evidence of the truth. As such the intellect cannot give its assent. It is the will that gives the firm conviction regarding the truth of the proposition proposed to the intellect. It is not understanding of the mysteries of

religion that gives the intellect reason to assent. It is the influence of the will over the intellect that makes the intellect assent.

Let us look at those steps in general before we describe the act of Faith in more detail. First, the intellect thinks of the truth (for example: that there is a God). That truth has a comprehensible aspect and an incomprehensible aspect. Our intellect should know the comprehensible aspect because this can be learned naturally. The free will commands the intellect to believe also the incomprehensible aspect though it is incomprehensible and as a result unacceptable to the intellect. And the intellect in spite of that will give its assent which ordinarily it will not but because of the command of the free will. With the assent of the intellect and the consent of the free will the person now makes an Act of Faith.....to the first truth of the Creed. The person must go through all the procedure over the next 11 Articles of Faith in the Creed.....and to all the articles of Faith in the Catechism of the Catholic Church before we can truly say that he has made the Act of Faith to the truths of the Catholic Church. It is not enough for him to make an act of Faith to the first article of Faith alone.

Now, can we see why the Holy Father is worried? "Porta Fidei" shows

us how hard the Act of Faith is done that most probably as he suspects most Catholics are not Catholics because they have not done their act of Faith. And as a consequence, putting it in popular language, few will enter the kingdom of heaven.

VIRTUES

Virtues means that the person is right both in the natural and supernatural level. The Moral virtues make one a gentleman, and the theological virtues make one a saint.

Virtues raise man to his highest potential, to the ultimate of what a human person can be both in the natural and supernatural sphere. The virtuous person is in such a way that, from the innermost tendency of his being, he realizes the good through his actions.

While the moral virtues shows man in his highest natural possibility, the Christian is differentiated by the distinctive theological virtues. The theological virtues taken together, are of a higher order than the four moral virtues.

PRUDENCE

The bridge all must cross from the Old Testament spirituality into the New Testament spirituality is the bridge of the 4 Moral virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. The first is Prudence. It is the mother of the 3 other moral virtues. It gives birth to all the moral virtues.

When there is Prudence there will surely be Justice, Fortitude and Temperance.

To attain gentlemanliness and holiness man must do good, both the good in the natural and in the supernatural level.

But before we can do what is good we must know REALITY and then judge it as either good or evil. The first thing that is required of a person who acts is that he is aware, says St. Thomas. One who does not know how things really are cannot do good, for the good accords with reality. Here we mean: real contact with objective reality. Contact with reality through Divine Revelation is superior to scientific contact.

The inability to get in contact with reality is described in psychology as insanity. The insane is not in contact

with reality. Such a possibility is most common in the world so that both Gilbert Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc had for a long time described modern society as insane because man is surrounded with unreality.....or as often described as surrounded with virtual reality.

OBJECTIVE REALITY

In Prudence, objective knowledge of reality plays a decisive role for action. The prudent person looks, on the one hand, at the objective reality of things and, on the other hand, at will and action. But he looks first at reality. And by virtue of and on the basis of his knowledge of reality he decides what is to be done and what not, and how it is to be done and how not.

And so in truth all virtue is dependent on prudence. And every sin is somehow in contradiction with prudence.

All just and courageous action, all good action at all, is just and courageous and good, because it corresponds to the divinely created truth which is reality; and this truth contained in reality finds fruitful and definitive expression in the virtue of prudence.

EDUCATION *is* *education in Prudence.*

Education is rooted in training oneself in Prudence, i.e. the ability to view objectively the realities surrounding our actions and making them have, depending on their kind and significance, a direct bearing on our actions.

Morality is dependent on the realities that are viewed. Prudence shows the relationship between the two. It is the reality that dictates our obligation. Moralism says: good is what obligation requires, and because obligation requires it.

The doctrine of prudence says; good is what accords with reality; it is obligatory because it corresponds to reality.

The wonderful medieval saying states: a man is wise if all things taste to him as they really are. This is an experience of modern psychology; that

a person to whom things do not taste as they are but who in all things tastes only himself because he has an eye only for himself – that this person has not only lost the real possibility of justice and of any kind of moral virtue but has also lost his mental health, and that the whole category of mental illnesses consists essentially in this self-centered non-objectivity.

SUPERNATURAL vs NATURAL REALITY

Supernatural realities can only be learned through Divine Revelation. Therefore we must get in contact with supernatural realities like the reality that there is an invisible God.

Natural realities can be discerned through our senses or from a teacher who knows better than us. We can learn what is a tree through our eyes or learn that there are far flung islands from tourists who had been there.

When men wish for old age for themselves, what else do they wish for but lengthened infirmity.

St. Augustine

