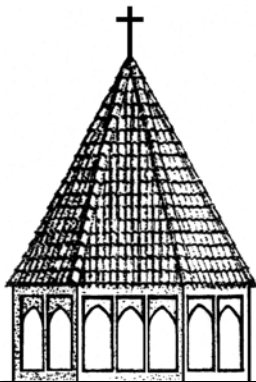


WINNOWING FAN

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 THE

PRIEST - Meditation 13 - FAITH

The Liturgy of the Mass teaches us that there are four steps we must take to go to heaven. We must live a life of Repentance according to the Old Testament (Advent), perfect our life of Repentance according to the New Testament (Lent), make an act of Faith (portrayed in the lives of the Apostles when they left all things and followed Christ), increase our faith (Passion Week), perfect our Faith (Easter) and finally perfect our Charity (Pentecost).

These steps are portrayed in the life of Christ thus: He spent 30 years of hidden life (showing us how to live a life of Repentance according to

both the Old and New Testament); He was baptized in the river Jordan (showing us the need for grace together with its accompanying virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity); He spent forty days of fasting in the desert (showing us how to activate the newly acquired theological virtues by obedience to the so-called commands of Jesus in the N.T.); He had His bout with the devil (showing us that we can be victorious if our Faith, Hope and Charity has matured); then He lived His public life saving souls (showing us that we can be instrumental in saving souls if we have matured theological virtues.)

Of course Christ did these for our instruction. He did not have to do these because He was God.



The above two paragraphs describe exactly the same

saying he is out of the Church. Repentance washes away his past sins. As a consequence of his repentance he regains the state of grace with its accompanying virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. These virtues aside from helping remove the last traces of sin will immediately help him by imbuing in him the opposite virtue of chastity to enable him to overcome the vice of unchastity (or bestiality, incest or child abuse.) If the virtue of Penance is attained the past vice is removed and supplanted by its opposite virtue. That is how the virtue of Penance that should accompany the Sacrament of Penance works. So the priest sins only once and never sins again.

If that priest approaches me for confessions all I have to do is teach and guide him to repent and reach Faith—and see to it that he does what he is told. There is nothing else to be done. If the priest repents and reaches Faith, he would be a saint in no time. If he refuses to repent he won't reach Faith and remains outside the Church (or remains a dead member of the Church) to the embarrassment of the Church.

There is no need to report them to the authorities or be judged by their peers or any other futile procedure that goes contrary to the nature of the virtue of Penance and of the seal of confession. The priest should be treated just like any sinner...with justice but with mercy. Everything else is vaudeville which the Pope refuses to dignify. This should bother neither the Pope nor anyone. We all know that all men have sinned. What should shock us is if priests don't sin.

steps towards salvation. The former using the Liturgy of the Church, the latter from the life of Christ as commented by St. Thomas of Aquinas on the Lenten Liturgy.

In Scriptures Christ emphasized only the first two steps: to repent and believe. Because from there God takes over. Pope Benedict had been doing exactly the same thing. Especially this Lenten season he had been stressing the need for conversion (another word for repentance)... AND faith that comes with grace after one's repentance. The more important word is "Faith" which Christ in instructing us received at His baptism and activated in his sojourn in the desert. This is the reason the first Christians were attracted to the desert. The desert or the monastic life was the place to repent and activate the virtues of Faith (Hope and Charity.) After Baptism most Catholics do not know how to activate the virtues they have received, therefore easily losing it.

Faith brings us into the Catholic Church; but activating it is what makes us grow in maturity, uniting us to the created soul of the Church (Jesus Christ) and to the uncreated soul of the Church (the Holy Spirit), that eventually makes us a good Catholic.

Let us see how repentance and faith can be applied to solve the current problem of the Church with her priests. When a priest commits that much publicized sin, he loses the virtue of charity which he received at Baptism and his Faith and Hope becomes dead. He becomes a dead member of the Church. That's like

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The *Winnowing Fan* hopes "... to do what little it could to solve the evils that beset the Church." St. Teresa of Avila

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The so-called 'victims' should, on the other hand, be treated in exactly the same way: teach them repentance that leads to Faith. Though victims they also have their own personal sins (for all men have sinned). Their inability to forgive their seducers (thus unable to pray the "Our Father" devoutly) is due to their lack of Faith because they are unable to repent (usually due to ignorance: just like the priests.) It is Repentance leading to Faith that enables the victims to forgive those priests. Their inability to do so shows the lack of repentance and the grace with its accompanying virtue of Faith.

We seem to have the victim and the priest in the same boat. But we have the same Catholic solution....repent and believe....taught to us every year in the Liturgy and in the vast treasures of the writings of the Fathers and the saints (like the Shepherd of Hermas, and the writings of Sts. Ambrose and Augustine on the same topic.) The existing deplorable ignorance is difficult to explain.

Occasionally I would read the right solution in ecclesiastical notices: 'Send them to a monastery.' That worked well before. St. Benedict decreed that monastic life is a perpetual Lenten observance of a life of Repentance leading to the theological virtue of Faith. St. Peter Damian, a Benedictine, in cooperation with Pope Gregory VII, also a Benedictine, collaborated in combating this same sin prevalent among the clergy and among the monks in Benedictine monasteries in the 1000 A.D. simply by imposing the monastic

life to rehabilitate them. And it worked, but only as long as St. Peter Damian was alive. When St. Peter died the problem remained unresolved up to the present and no one seems to know the successful solution used in that era.

Today, 'sending them to a monastery' no longer works: shown by the prevalence of the same vice among the monks, even among the abbots and recently even among the Abbot Generals (notably one consecrated Bishop in the US). The reason is that they had watered down the repentance element of monastic life. As a pill that should be taken 4 times a day, today's monastic repentance is only a once a day pill. It is under-prescribed and it does not work. True Faith as defined in the Compendium of the Catholic Church by Pope Benedict is a rare commodity today.

If Christ came today He would not find Faith here on earth.

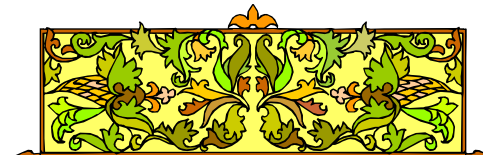
THE NEED FOR PERFECTION

Perfection is part of the ordinary way that leads to the salvation of one's soul. It is not an extraordinary stage reserved for a few. Though many would not reach it in their lifetime, all must aim for its attainment.

The ordinary steps towards salvation is: repentance, Faith, Hope and Charity. As we have seen Faith, Hope and Charity often go together. If Charity is lost then Faith and Hope may remain

but are lifeless. The emphasis, therefore, is on the importance of Charity.

When a soul finishes his repentance shown by the fruits of repentance, he enters into the realm of Faith, Hope and Charity. Though at the beginning these virtues are immature the role of the Christian soul is to make it grow with the help of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. These seven gifts are connected with the development of Charity and are an important part of the spiritual organism. These are also necessary for perfection.



THE INTERIOR LIFE

Both in the religious life and in the life of the ordinary layman, the interior life is of the utmost importance. It is what gives backbone to all the exterior practices in the Catholic Church like fasting, novenas, processions and adoration. And yet it is the least known or understood, though it is the very basis of Catholic beliefs...the doctrine on grace.

The doctrine of grace had been the battle front for many centuries in the battle for orthodoxy. And the greatest heresies are on grace. And the corruption in the Church today is due to a lack of knowledge or a heretical interpretation of the doctrine of grace.

What is the nature of a spiritual organism in the state of grace? When a person is in the state of grace he receives the infused theological virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. How does he function? Being in this state the soul becomes the dwelling place of the Blessed Trinity. And he is continually influenced by Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. How does that happen?

This is the normal way to salvation and yet hardly anyone can describe how this occurs and how is this put into actuality. And the ignorance, oftentimes, is from the Bishop to his priests. In fact all the problems the priests have today is due to lack of grace.

The problems of priests is due to sin that prevents them from receiving the state of sanctifying grace to which the virtues and the gifts are attached. Sin prevents the souls from having any interior life, which is the life in grace and Eternal life begun here on earth.

A soul is either in the state of grace or in the state of sin; it is either turned to God or turned away from God. And after the fall of Adam and Eve all men are called to the supernatural end, the vision of God.

To have an interior life it is not sufficient to be in the state of grace as every child after baptism or every penitent after the absolution of his sins. The interior life needs further efforts against everything that inclines us to fall back into sin.

