

Again, the Church does not admit the maxim sometimes used by Protestants, that "once justified means always justified", or "once saved, always saved". The state of justification may be forfeited at any time by the commission of a grave sin. Moreover, the state of justification thus lost can, through God's mercy, be recovered by sincere repentance, and by the Sacrament of Penance. During this life no man is in an absolutely assured position of being guaranteed for eternal happiness, since he always retains his power of freely cooperating with grace or rejecting it, of sinning or abstaining from sin. Therefore, we must all work out our salvation with fear and trembling, not fear lest God should fail us, but fear lest by our negligence we should abandon Christ and fall away into sin.

Final Perseverance

Hence it is possible for a soul once justified to end by falling into hell. The final destiny of each person is directly determined by the good or evil state in which he dies. Theoretically speaking, an evil life may end with a good death, and a good life with an evil death. But practically, the probabilities are against this. It is not only risky, but also criminal; to count on deathbed repentance, and every Catholic is urged to make his last end as secure as possible by an earnest life, which is the highest assurance we possess of final perseverance.

Sanctification and "Merit."

Besides putting us in a new relation to God, justification carries with it a true quality of holiness or sanctification, but not such as to dispense with the need of spiritual efforts to grow in holiness. We must stir up the grace within us, and use it as a means of advancing in God's service. The Church also holds that our reward in heaven will increase according to our increase of holiness in this life. Catholics ordinarily speak of this growth in grace and good works as growth in "merit;" but with the explanation already given, that all the "merit" springs from the grace by which we perform these works. The only credit due to us is our willingness to cooperate with grace instead of rejecting it. Thus the faithful servant who gained the ten talents deserved his reward, not for the talents he used, which were not his own, but because of the good use he made of them, instead of putting them into a napkin.

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Pamphlet 238

Particular Doctrines of the Catholic Church

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This pamphlet has been written with a view of enabling non-Catholics to obtain concise and correct information regarding Catholic teaching. Those interested in its contents will have no difficulty in obtaining references to larger works by which to continue their inquiries.

Particular Doctrines an Obstacle to Entering the Catholic Church

One who believes in the authority of the Church will naturally argue that *therefore* whatever the Church teaches *must* be true. But Protestants sometimes reverse the argument, by saying that the doctrines taught 'by the Church are superstitious, or corrupt, or anti-scriptural; and therefore the Catholic Church *cannot* be the true Church of Christ, no matter what arguments may be brought in its favor; and so they cannot accept its authority. Hence, it is necessary to show that those doctrines of the Church, which run counter to Protestant ideas are not what Protestants imagine them to be, and that when rightly understood, they ought to afford no obstacle to accepting the authority of the Church.

Christ our Sole Mediator and Source of Merit

The Church strenuously maintains that Christ is our sole Redeemer, Mediator of reconciliation, and source of merit. Without the free gift of grace we can do nothing towards salvation, nor can we purchase the least title to grace by any work of our own. Our good works derive all their value from the grace, which moves us to perform them, and any merit they possess or heavenly reward they secure springs entirely from the merits of Christ. The only way in which merit can be called our own lies in this, that by our free cooperation with grace we have fulfilled the conditions attached to Christ's promise of eternal life, and thus deserve to receive the fulfilment of that promise which God has freely vouchsafed to make. In this way St. Paul speaks of the crown of righteousness laid up for him by the Just Judge, because he had finished his course and kept the faith.

Predestination and Reprobation

But although grace is a free gift, the Church repudiates the idea that God acts so unequally in its distribution as to predestine some souls to salvation and others to damnation. God wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He wills also that no man shall perish. Hence Christ was given as a redemption for all. (1 Tim. 2:4; Rom. 7:32; 2 Pet. 3:9.) Consequently God will never allow any man to fall into hell for want of grace, but only through his own fault in refusing to make use of it. The lowest degree of grace ever offered to any

man is amply sufficient for his salvation; and this grace is offered to all.

What is Justification?

Justification consists in the infusion of grace into the soul, by which we are put into a new relation with God raised from the state of original sin to the state of grace, from the position of servants into that of adopted sons, brothers and sisters of Christ and children of God. God is no longer merely our Creator and Lord; He becomes our Father and our Friend. We are made heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, and our inheritance is the enjoyment of God face to face for all eternity.

Baptism the Means of Justification

The divinely appointed means of justification is regeneration by water and the Holy Spirit in Baptism. Since justification is a free gift not depending on the act of any creature for its bestowal, even infants can and ought to be baptized. Being baptized, these children are put into the state of justification, and would enter heaven if they died in infancy. On coming to the age of reason the Church denies the need of any further justification, and only requires them to cherish and preserve the grace already possessed by avoiding grievous sin.

A grown person approaching baptism must do so with faith, sorrow for sin, and a desire to receive the grace of the sacrament. These dispositions of soul do

not give any right to grace, but are the requisite conditions for the worthy reception of the sacrament. It is possible for those who cannot be baptized to receive the grace of justification without it, but only supposing they would be willing to receive baptism if they could do so; and the obligation remains of receiving it when it becomes possible. *

** In case of invincible ignorance of this divine institution, submission of the will to God's known laws is understood to imply the requisite desire, when Baptism cannot be received. The same applies to the Sacrament of Penance.*

“Apprehending Christ by Faith.”

It will be seen that Catholic teaching about justification differs from the view common among Protestants that justification consists of a subjective "apprehending of Christ by faith," and a conscious sense of being justified. According to the Church, justification is quite an objective thing-viz., the infusion of grace; and the best means we have of knowing whether this has taken place is the external act of Baptism, to which the grace has been attached by Christ. The Church allows that justification *may* be attended by a sense of confidence; but such sentiments are not an infallible sign of justification, just as their absence does not prove the absence of justification.

“Once Justified Always Justified”