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



Year of the PRIEST

twelve

YEAR OF THE PRIEST - Meditation 12 - The Catholic Church

Man because he has a soul and a body grows both in soul and body. And while the body grows from childhood, adolescent and young adulthood the soul should grow into the beginners, illuminative and unitive stages of the spiritual life. Similarly the Catholic Church grows into three stages : infancy, adolescence and young adulthood. This is portrayed by the three Biblical descriptions of the fishing trips of the Apostles. Though there are many types of the Church in Scriptures let us concentrate on the above 3 fishing trips.

The first stage of the Church is when the Apostles were in the boat, they were not yet fishing because they were infant members of the Church and had to be trained before they went fishing for other souls. This was the boat scene where the Apostles were caught in a storm. Weak or infant in their faith, they feared. Nevertheless these Apostles were described as having finished their life of repentance (thus having their past sins forgiven) and have entered into the theological virtue of Faith (though still weak) when they left all things (an act they could only do if they had Faith.) Faith is what enables us to enter the Church. So by this time the Apostles may be described as sinless and faithful but still with the relics of sin which they had to remove by perfecting their Faith, Hope and Charity.

Multi-Part Year of the PRIEST SERIES

By the very essence of Faith, the Apostles continued their life of Repentance though sinless and with Faith because that is the way Faith is preserved. And so, 'Poor in Spirit,' they continued to keep their remitted 'sins always ever before their eyes.' Those with Faith are continuously conscious of their once being sinful. Not because they still have sins but because of their humility as Sts. Peter and Paul were continuously aware of their sins against Christ up to the end of their lives.

Their repetitious consciousness of their forgiven sins (which Psalm 50 reminds us to do) gives us the impression that they are still sinners and that the Church is sinful. This is not the case. It is only an impression but not the fact. Having finished their repentance they had obtained the remission of their sins and regained the state of grace with the accompanying virtue of Faith that makes them members of the Church.

Christ commanded the Apostles before His Ascension, that they should go and preach repentance unto the remission of sins that will enable their listeners to receive Graces together with the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity that will make their souls members of the sinless Church, a sinless Church where each member has their former sins always before them. This must be clear before we can describe the Church in her second stage as portrayed in the fishing scene in Lake Genesareth.

The second image of the Church in her adolescence is portrayed by the Apostles fishing in Lake Genesareth. This time they were mature enough in their faith to fish for other souls and bring them inside the Church. The catching of both good and bad fishes into the same net would give the impression that both good and bad fishes are part of the Church. In which case the danger of saying that the Church is made up of both good and evil. However, the parable of the Cockle and the Wheat should clarify the picture. Here we see Tares and Wheat together. But it was clear that the wheat was planted by the husbandman while the Tares were planted by some evil agent. We cannot say that Satan can plant souls inside the Catholic Church. He cannot do that. He does not have supernatural Faith. How can he bring anyone inside the Church? Obviously, this is only a physical presence and not a spiritual presence. The Tares were only physically inside the physical confines of the Church but not spiritually inside the Church through

Faith.

Note also the fact that the Apostles offered to remove the Tares. So they can be removed because they are not part of the Church. And when Christ said 'no' because of the danger of removing also the wheat, Christ said that at the End Times, the angels, themselves will remove the Tares; which shows they can be removed because they are not part of the Church. No one can remove someone with Faith, Hope and Charity from the Church. They are the Church!

The Liturgy of the Lenten season precisely showed this. During the Last supper when Judas was still with the Apostles they symbolized the Church in her second stage made up of saints and sinners. But there is a portion of the Last supper when Christ expelled Judas out of the Church without him knowing it. Suddenly we have the image of the Church in her third sinless stage.

When Pope John Paul apologized for the sins of the Church he was not apologizing for the true Church that is sinless but for those who are outside the Church but are perceived to be inside the Church. The true Church, the Mystical Body of Christ and of which Mary is a type, cannot be sinful. The Pope is the head of the sinless Church. He has nothing to apologize for. But because of the confusion caused by the countless souls outside the Church who think they are Catholics, call themselves Catholics and are perceived by others as Catholics, Pope John Paul had to speak based on the false perception of others and apologize.... like a father apologizing for the mischief of his neighbor's children, which is a charitable act. Pope Benedict is faced with the same universal ignorance of Catholic theology. And the ignorant are forcing him to apologize for the sins of children that are not of the Church. He could very well say: "Those are not my children." But due to the defective ecclesiology among so-called Catholics, and even worse theology of outsiders, the Pope had to adjust his language to guide them slowly to the truth by even saying: "these are caused by sins within the Church." When he wants to say: the Church has no sin. These are the sins of those outside the Church. They do not know my voice and I do not know them.

This is the reason why Pope Benedict is treating those who think they are Catholics but who are not, as Gentiles and unbelievers. Note his address to the Irish Catholics. He was telling them to repent and forgive. This is an exhortation for Gentiles and unbelievers, not for Catholics. Catholics have repented, have been forgiven and believe. They have regained the state of grace with its accompanying virtue of Faith that makes them Catholics. 'Holy'

is the visible sign of the true Church. Not sin.

Since the beginning of Christianity, the Church had been trying to weed out the Tares from the wheat field of the Lord. That time Christ said 'No.' But he said one day, at the End Times, He will command the angels to remove the Tares planted by the evil one. Keeping the pure wheat alone within the Church. And this is the third image of the Church as a young adult and portrayed in the last apostolic fishing trip in Lake Tiberias that occurred after the Resurrection.

The 7 Apostles fishing caught 153 big and good fishes. The Fathers of the Church, especially St. Augustine, describe the ones running the Church (represented by the 7 apostles) as perfect fishers of men. And the 153 fishes represent the Catholics within the Church as perfect Catholics. What do we mean perfect? Those who have the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity, which means they have repented, their sins had been remitted and now they have the infused theological virtues perfected by the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit. There is no blemish in them because they are on the way to wed the bridegroom.

In the Year of St. Paul, Pope Benedict is encouraging the lay people to see if they correspond to the description of the 153 fishes caught in the net of the Catholic Church. In the Year of the Priest, the Pope is asking the priests and bishops if they are as perfect as what the 7 Apostles represent.

SOLILOQUY

Upon hearing Hamlet's soliloquy one wonders what is so interesting in listening to someone talking to himself.

When man talks to himself he is talking interiorly with himself about what preoccupies him most. When a person is young and concerned about his ego and the worldly things that satisfies his self, the man is talking with his body's concupiscence and entertaining those senses.

But when a person grows into some maturity he talks to his intellect about the concerns of his natural intellect. And we see him behaving more like a human being.

But a person whose intellect talks with his own intellect about truth and goodness could easily transcend the boundaries of the natural and rise up into the supernatural. And his conversation tends to be a conversation with God called prayer. And this conversation is the part that cannot be taken away from a faithful even though it loses everything else.

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