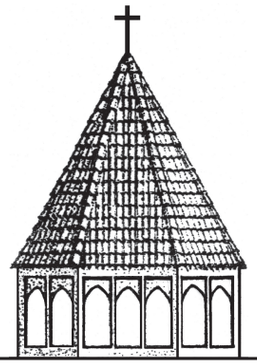
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The *Winnowing Fan* hopes "...to do what little it could to solve the evils that beset the Church."
St. Teresa of Avila



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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NEW EVANGELIZATION

PART THIRTEEN

What Caused the Crisis of Faith?

We have seen the "New Evangelization" introduced first by Pope John Paul II and expounded by then Cardinal Ratzinger in a speech to Cathechists in Rome. Cardinal Ratzinger's outline consists of four steps: 1. Conversion, 2. the Kingdom of God, 3. Jesus Christ and the Holy spirit, 4. Eternal Life. As Pope Benedict XVI he emphasized the first, 'Conversion' that will lead to Faith. Christ, Himself emphasized, also, the first: "Repent" that will lead to "Believing," "Repent, believe." The entire Scriptures is mostly about 'Conversion.' And so with the Fathers and Doctors of the Church. Because it is only in 'Conversion' that men can contribute something in the work of his own salvation. The rests is God's role.

The second step, the Kingdom of God, the third, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and the fourth, Eternal Life are supernatural topics and we usually leave them to God, because He alone can explain these to us: "I will teach you all things." "Flesh and blood had not taught you this but only My Father in Heaven."

In effect we never study truths pertaining to the Catholic Church and how to go to heaven because these fall under the supernatural level. And Pope Benedict explained that the Method of Evangelization consists in teaching others, NOT the doctrines of Divine Revelation, but to teach others how to rise from the natural level to the supernatural level. Christ's apostolic commission in the Gospel of Matthew confirms this.

Then we noted that the 'Lineamenta,' a document issued by Rome addressed to the Bishops of the world for their reactions, had deliberatly removed the need for "Conversion" which both Christ and Pope Benedict declared as the only way towards Faith. And the 'Instrumentum Laboris', which contains all the reactions of the bishops around the world did not touch upon "Conversion" following the instruction from the 'Lineamenta.' If this defective outline is given to the whole Catholic World on October, which is the beginning of the Year of Faith, the ignorant Catholics would follow the outline and because "Conversion" is not taught, they will never reach Faith and lose their souls. But if the few who have the right knowledge because they have read some of the talks of Pope Benedict .....and heared the Bishops and priests omit the need for "Conversion" and follow suit, they, too, will not reach Faith and would be lost.

What is the Church confronted with? With the words of Pope Benedict, most Catholic Bishops, priests, nuns and faithful are without Faith. The Liturgy of the Mass alone teaches us more than 30 signs of the presence or absence of Faith, during what we call the Sundays in Ordinary Time. So any honest Catholic can just sit down during Sunday Mass and ask himslef if he has Faith or not. With more than 30 signs in the Liturgy it would be easy for anyone to find out if he has faith or not. And because these signs are external signs we can even discern if others have faith or not .....and if not evangelize them.

The problem facing the Church today is this: that because of the wrong method of instruction in the Faith, which Pope Benedict mentioned as the first defect, most do not have Faith. The second point is the more serious problem. The supernatural truths which only God can teach and explain well were spoken by God to men in the form of WORDS..... and this is the content of Divine Revelation. St. Thomas states that the deep, penetrating meaning of the Words of Divine Revelation can only be explained and interpreted by God and cannot be taught by human professors even in seminaries. But these words have sounds which the natural man can hear. So the natural man can try to learn

the natural, dictionary meaning of the words of Divine Revelation without being able to learn the deep penetrating meaning of the same. And because they study the human, dictionary meaning of the words of Divine Revelation they think they know the supernatural teachings of the Catholic Church. They don't! Because those teachings are so deep only God can teach them.

So we are faced with an almost impossible task.....of trying to Evangelize Catholics who do not have Faith but who firmly believe they have Faith. Priests, seminarians and religious nuns and brothers think they have Faith because of their status. All members of lay communities think they have Faith because they belong to this or that Catholic organization. In fact, we believe that all Catholics who die go to heaven. Even Protestants believe they have Faith. And all pagans believe they go to heaven when they die. All converts believe they have Faith just because they converted. Writers and publishers in the internet think they know the Faith. Then here comes Pope Benedict and tells all of us to check if we have the true Faith in the 'Year of Faith.' And the Lineamenta' says, we don't have to discuss 'Conversion' that leads to Faith because we are already Catholics. What we have is natural Faith, a faith in which we only have a natural understanding of Divine Revelation though we use the sophisticated language that gives the impression that we know supernatural truths; but we do not have the supernatural, deep and penetrating meaning of Revelation.....which is given to us by God with the supernatural, theological virtue of Faith.

Conversion is a work of grace. Today, there is so much human efforts to convert, efforts on the verge of Pelagianism. Is this why such efforts seem futile?

The "New Evangelization" is meant for such a chaotic situation: where we have a 'catholic' population that has no Faith but who think they have Faith. And where human efforts have supplanted Divine Mercy. This is the backdrop of Pope Benedict's 'New Evangeliation' so that we shall only understand his description of it with this backdrop.

Though a better understanding of the steps he had spelled out will be more appreciated if we have a background of St. Augustine's treatise on Conversion, the Pope's favorite Father of the Church; St. Bonaventure's theology of history and St. John Newman's 'Development of Christian Doctrine'. This we hope to clarify first to ourselves and express it in the next articles.

THE GROWTH OF FAITH

Faith comes into our soul like an infant. It has to grow to perfection and towards the goals of hope and charity…..without which it is useless. “If you have faith but no charity….”

Faith is not man made. It is infused. Only God can make it grow. So it can grow greater in a poorly educated but holy man than in a theologian.

St. Thomas of Aquinas states: “A man’s faith may be described as being greater, in one way, on the part of his intellect, on account of its greater certitude and firmness, and in another way, on the part of his will, on account of his greater promptitude, devotion or confidence. The reason faith results from the gift of GRACE WHICH IS NOT EQUALLY IN ALL. Thus our Lord described his disciples as men ‘of little faith’ but the woman of Canaan as one with great faith.

There are holy individuals who have never made a conceptual analysis of the dogmas of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Eucharist and who have never deduced from these dogmas the theological conclusions known to all theologians, but in these souls the infused virtue of faith is far more elevated, more intense than in many theologians. St. Bernadette of Lourdes or St. Gemma Galgani hardly read theological treatises. And yet theologians envy their faith.

Our Faith grows when we learn all that has been defined by the Church on the mysteries of our religion. Theologians may know explicitly all that has been defined by the Church but it does not follow that they have a faith as intense and profound. But there are saints who do not know the dogmas declared by the Church yet they deeply understand the mysteries of salvation as pronounced in the Gospel. St. Joseph Benedict Labre, for instance, had never read a theological treatise yet lived the deep mysteries of the Eucharist.

Rightly, therefore, had the Apostles prayed to Christ: “Lord, increase our faith.”

> In detachment, the spirit finds quiet and repose for coveting nothing. Nothing wearies it by elation, and nothing oppresses it by dejection, because it stands in the center of its own humility.
>
> **St. John of the Cross**

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P.O. Box 1759, MCPO
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