



WINNOWING FAN

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

Vol. XXXIV No. 1 ENGLISH EDITION Jan. 2017

THE 15 MARKS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH by St. Robert Bellarmine (2)

This is the first of many forthcoming translations of the corpus of St. Robert Bellarmine's works. St. Robert was one of the most important writer of the so-called "Counter Reformation." He based his writings on the works of many great writers before him.

These are the 15 Marks of the True Church which can be visibly discerned in history, and he used these to refute Protestant teaching, though they can all be referred back to the aforesaid Four visible signs mentioned in the Nicene Creed.

During the time of St. Bellarmine, the question of which is the true Church was one of the great controversies. Bellarmine wrote this treatise to train seminarians to debate Protestants. The Church must prove that the true Faith, the true remission of sins, the true hope of eternal salvation, can be found in the true

Church alone. We must know which is the true Church.

Lactantius wrote; "It is only the Catholic Church which retains true worship. Further, this is the font of truth, this is the household of Faith, the temple of God, whereby, if anyone will not have entered, or if one would have gone out from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and eternal salvation." So in all the controversies that filled the Church during his time and which continues today, the first basic controversy that must be settled is, which is the true Church that Christ established. Fortunately, Christ, Himself had established the four visible signs of the true Church. We must be able to prove that "our" Church is that Church.....which, however, many parishes and dioceses, today, cannot prove. And as a consequence, many individuals cannot prove, either.

The Priesthood Today.

The Catholic Church enjoys the nobility of the priesthood to serve her. But it is a dignity that easily makes a person proud as it did the Pharisees and the Scribes. Besides, the devil knows very well that if he wants to destroy the Church, the way is to destroy the priesthood. It is easier to destroy two or three priests than to destroy a whole diocese.

So even from the very beginning, the devil's target was aimed at the priesthood; at the young men in the seminary. Destroy them even before their ordination and the devil's work is done.

So the work of the Church is very much directed towards the sanctification of her priesthood: in which so much success is dependent on the efforts of the men of the robe.

The history of the Church is filled with holy priests, bishops and Popes. While on the other hand it is equally dotted by heretical priests, schismatic bishops and anti-popes.

Day and night I am pursued by the same thought: one does not pray enough for the dead. Eighty thousand people in this nation die every day.

Bl. Eugénie Smet

We are faced with both possibilities, that is why great care is needed.

The Catholic Church in the Liturgy.

From Advent to Christ the King, the Liturgy has been describing the Catholic Church: how one enters the Church and the degrees of depth that one can enter the Church.

One does not just enter the Church and that is it. One begins by approaching the Church. Then he enter slowly. Then he goes deeper into the soul of the Church.

The depth by which a soul enters the Catholic Church depends upon the growth of its theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

The entire Liturgical Year shows the slow entrance of a soul into the Church. While Advent shows a soul merely approaching the Church, the Feast of Christ the King shows the soul completely inside the Catholic Church.

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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

Entered as Second Class Mail at the Makati Central Post Office on March 14, 1984
Permit # 2nd-07-15-NCR



ADVENT —

Setting down the steps in the establishment of the Catholic Church, God started with the establishment of the Church together with the choosing of His first preacher, John the Baptist.

So, the Mystical Body of Christ, who is Christ Himself was born almost at the same time with His first preacher St. John the Baptist.

John the Baptist is described as one who lived in the desert, who came out of the desert to talk to men to point to them “the Lamb of God.”

John, the preacher must know Christ and have Faith in Him. He acquired this Faith by being in the desert where, according to the Book of Revelation, the Church, who appeared to John as a Great Sign in Heaven, can only be found in the mystical desert.

The Mystical desert as described by St. John of Chrysostom, can be lived anywhere even in one's home.

The preacher must come from the mystical desert. His preaching consists in telling people to find the Lamb of God, the Church, in the mystical desert.

Note that the existence of the Church co-existed with God raising up a preacher like John to invite people to enter her.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PROPHECY.

God had prepared His people for the future by giving them prophets who would prophesy about the future. But to check on these prophecies, God gave prophecies that were written down to help men check the prophets. The coming of Christ was the most important subject of prophecies from Creation up to the Birth of Christ.

So God provided prophets and prophecies in the Old Testament. Today we can use both to see what will happen in the future; the most important event is the approach of the Second Coming of Christ.

This Second Coming is the most important event for men because it will be the day when men will undergo the last general judgment of mankind by God. And we have to be prepared for it otherwise we could lose our souls.

And the life of Christ as found in the Liturgy is a preparation for His Second Coming.

SERMON *in a sentence*

The Holy Spirit helps us (and to a certain extent compels us) to keep the Commandments. For no one can keep the Commandments unless he loves God: “If any man loves Me, he will keep My word.”

We learn from the Holy Spirit (by His gift of knowledge) to do not our own but God's will, and by virtue of this gift we pray to God that His will may be done on earth as it is in Heaven. It is in this that the gift of knowledge is proved.

We should ask nothing of God but that His will be done in our regard (in other words, that His will be fulfilled in us). For man's heart is right when it agrees with the divine will.

We owe God that which we take away from His right, and God's right is that we do His will in preference to our own. Hence, we deprive God of His right when we prefer our own will to His, and this is sin.

Human law judges deeds and words, but divine law also judges thoughts. This is because human laws are made by men, who

see things only exteriorly, but divine law is from God, who sees both external things and the very interior of men.

Nothing is more suitable to man than to imitate his Creator, and to carry out, to the degree that he is able, the will of God.

Last and above all, let us take tender care of God Himself, doing everywhere and always that which He most desires us to do and that for which He has particularly destined us.

Perfect attachment of the will to God is brought about by love and by grace, whereby man is justified, according to Romans 3:24: “Being justified freely by His grace.” For man is made just by union with God through love.

merciful God, grant that I may desire ardently, search prudently, recognize truly, and bring to perfect completion whatever is pleasing to You for the praise and glory of Your name.... Bestow upon me the power to accomplish Your will, as is necessary and fitting for the salvation of my soul.

It is just that we should be subject to God. The highest perfection of a thing is that it should be subject to that which perfects it.

St. Thomas Aquinas

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