



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 TWENTY

The Conversion of John Cardinal Newman.

The four steps enumerated by Pope Benedict that leads to happiness in Union with God are; first, Conversion. Secondly, entrance into the Kingdom of God or entrance into the Catholic Church. Thirdly, Encounter with Christ and the Holy Spirit. And fourthly, Life Everlasting.

We are discussing the first, Conversion. We have seen the ideal manner of conversion as exemplified in the life of St. Therese of Lisieux, co-Patroness of the "New Evangelization."

We saw how she had the natural, initial focus of her mind on the 'Self' and on 'God,' how she made the intellectual conclusion that the 'Self' is inferior to God and, therefore, she ought to subject herself to God.

Then, we saw how having had the proper disposition mentioned above, she received 'grace' from God and as a consequence made the Act of Faith with the assent of her mind and consent of her heart. Her proper disposition that is naturally lost early in age as a result of original sin was sustained by the zealous care of her parents, Zelie and Louis, giving her ample time to make her Act of Faith when her natural proper disposition

was prolonged due to the zeal of her parents.

Then we saw how St. Augustine like St. Therese, had the initial natural proper disposition but could not be prolonged because of his pagan environment and, therefore, could not make the Act of Faith in his youth. He lost the proper disposition needed for the Act of Faith but at his adult age he examined his memory to recall the childhood days when he had that proper natural disposition. He recalled that time, put himself in the same proper disposition and made his Act of Faith. A little late in life but he was able to make it. Of course, a sharp mind and a good memory was his advantage.

Let us now look at the conversion of another favorite saint of Pope Benedict, Blessed John Cardinal Newman. Like St. Therese and St. Augustine, John Newman had the initial, natural disposition wherein his mind at the very early age was focused on the 'Self' and on 'God.' His mind had realized that the 'God' was much superior to the 'Self' so he had to subject himself to that Creator. Unlike St. Therese, but more like St. Augustine, John Newman could not make the Act of Faith. St. Augustine could not make Act of Faith because he lost the natural, initial proper disposition. Newman preserved the initial natural disposition, he continued to use his conscience in thinking of 'Himself' and of 'God' but because of his Anglican upbringing he had wrong information about himself and about God. And he could not give an intellectual assent to an erroneous doctrine. And so he could not make an Act of Faith. Fortunately in his effort to prove that the Anglican Church was the true Church and that the Catholic Church was erroneous he studied the

Fathers of the Church. From that study he began to know 'Himself' and who is God, both in the right way. And with this right information, he was able to receive the grace of God and make his Act of Faith.....a little late but in good time enough for him to finish his conversion, enter the Catholic Church, become a priest, become a cardinal and become a "Blessed".

In making the Act of Faith necessary for our salvation, most of us cannot imitate St. Therese because we are no longer young children and we do not have saintly parents as she had. We, also cannot imitate St. Augustine because he had a very sharp mind and memory that enabled him to become like a child again. We cannot also be like Blessed John Cardinal Newman because we did not live our lives in imitation to his fidelity to the voice of conscience. And we cannot devour the writings of the Fathers of the Church to check on the things we believe. We, probably, have no other way except Pope Benedict's 'New Evangelization' to attain eternal life. So let us study his four steps zealously since the schema of the *Lineamenta* and *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Bishop's Synod is different from the Holy Father's....and this is what some Bishops are already using for their homilies. Basing those documents on the Traditional teaching of the Church, especially the Apostolic Commission of Christ to His Apostles written in the Gospel of Matthew, the two documents are defective. We are still hoping that the documents are modified to conform to Pope Benedict's 'New Evangelization.'

In the next article we shall describe an individual's act of Faith.

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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 Initial beginnings of the Virtue of Faith.

Pope Benedict had given us in his “New Evangelization” the four steps we must take to attain Eternal Life; namely, first, Conversion. Secondly, entrance into the Kingdom of God or entrance into the Catholic Church. Thirdly, encounter with Christ and union with the Holy Spirit. And lastly, attainment of Eternal Life. Reviewing the Plan of Salvation is the first thing that every Pope does as he begins his Pontificate: he reminds the faithful of the complete steps that lead to eternal life according to the teachings of Christ and as handed down to us by the Apostles and their successors the Popes.

I have lived through six Popes and Pope Benedict is my sixth. But it is now only that I am learning the way to have eternal life. I just did not mind the first five Popes though they did their duties. I guess we only become serious when we grow old. Now that I have checked the state of my soul with Pope Benedict's reminder I suddenly find myself nowhere near eternal life. My salvation is at stake. The Holy Father wants all of us to take our salvation seriously that is why he is calling the “Year of Faith.” He wants everyone, Cardinals, Bishops, priests, brothers, sisters, parents and children to check if they have the Catholic Faith by checking if they have accomplished, at least two of the four steps. Or as Christ Himself preached, if we had ‘repented and believed.’ This ‘Year of Faith’ is just precisely that.....to repent and believe.

From the first initial steps of Conversion, through entrance into the Kingdom of God up to the end, the attainment of eternal life.... these are all works of grace. There is absolutely nothing

human involved in all these processes. The moment a soul responds to the initial grace given by God to the soul, that grace simply grows from perfection to perfection until we are perfect as the Heavenly Father is perfect. This is growing from grace to grace. There is nothing man can do or contribute to aid the process. Any human effort might even forfeit the grace God gives because such attempts would be Pelagianism.

Let us look at the first initial grace. When does God give us that initial grace of Faith? Why does He give it to one and not to another. Why to Dimas and not to the other thief? This question bothered St. Augustine. He gave a very convincing reason but his answer can give us sleepless nights. This initial grace which is the beginning of Faith that gradually leads us to Eternal Life is not given to all. It is, in fact, given to very few. Let us pretend happily that we are one of those chosen; how is this initial grace given to us and how do we react to it by the prompting of the same grace?

Let us look at the Gospel of the 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (keeping in mind that all the Sundays in Ordinary time are all about ‘attained Faith’ and are perfect lessons for this ‘Year of Faith.’) The story of Bartimaeus, the blind man shows the gradual steps he took from a life of sin, through conversion, to the attainment of Faith and finally to perfection and the attainment of Eternal Life. The story shows the four steps enumerated by Pope Benedict except for the union with the Holy Spirit which was not yet given at that time but the wording of the Gospel showed that Bartimaeus eventually attained the final steps.

We want to know what Bartimaeus did to acquire the proper disposition that made God give him the Faith that healed and saved him. This is the disposition we want

to acquire during this year of Faith. The Gospel began by describing the blind man as quietly sitting by the way side. This is the state of all men born in sin. He is totally blind to all divine and supernatural realities. The ‘conversion’ of Bartimaeus began when spiritually, like a blind man he completely lost interest with the world around him. Being blind he knew that there was nothing in the world that can make him happy. The world cannot be a source of happiness for a blind man. So Bartimaeus was just by the road side hoping there was something that could be a source of happiness for him.

Then he heard a crowd passing by together with Jesus. Bartimaeus was not known to have been shouting at people before. But now he calls out “Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me.” Observe that just previously he had become completely convinced that there is absolutely nothing in the world that could make him happy. From this state he now felt there is someone who can make him happy, Jesus. But he addresses Him as a human, the way a patient calls for a doctor. “Jesus Son of David” was a human description of Christ. But that is the beginning of conversion. So the world around controlled by the devil tells him to shut up. “Don't ask for happiness from Christ. Ask it from us, from the world, from jobs, from good times, from men, etc.” This is the temptation not to begin one's conversion. But Bartimaeus cried out the louder but still in the human, natural level, “Son of David, have pity on me.”

Then Christ ordered his disciples to call him over. The disciples called him. And Bartimaeus did something that made him have the proper disposition to receive soon the grace of Faith. He obeyed. He obeyed Christ who gave the command. He did not obey the Apostles who simply repeated the command. He stood up, threw away his last possession—his coat—and went to Christ. At

this point Bartimaeus received the grace from Christ. Obedience enabled him to approach Christ. That is the only way to approach Christ, through obedience to His command. Then Christ asked him “What do you want me to do for you,” just for those around to hear what Bartimaeus wanted which he will eventually receive. “Rabboni, that I might see.” He was asking to see what could make him happy outside of the world that he had already found useless. He wanted to see divine truths and realities. He wanted to see the way to heaven and eternal happiness. He was praying for Faith. And Christ answered: I have already given you the virtue of Faith. Now, with Faith you will see divine realities, supernatural truths and the way to heaven. Faith has healed your spiritual blindness caused by original sin.

What is the sign of Faith? In the story of the calling of the Apostles, they all left all things and followed Christ. Bartimaeus had lost all desires for worldly things due to his blindness, he had thrown away his last possession, his cloak. To show his Faith he follows Christ by living a life in obedience to all His Commandments which he began when Christ first called him to come to him. Now he would continue to obey the rest of the commands.

The four steps that make up the necessary disposition that God may give us the grace of Faith are: first, the soul must be convinced that there is absolutely nothing in this world that can make him happy. Secondly, that he seeks and waits for a true source of happiness from all around him. Thirdly, that he listens to the Apostles of Christ who are telling us to go to Christ. And fourthly, he obeys Christ whom the Apostles preach. A confirmation that he has Faith is that the soul continues to follow Christ in obeying His other commandments. The third step is ‘Evangelization’ and the Fourth is ‘Porta Fidei.’

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