



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 ONE

WHEN ARE WE NEAR THE KINGDOM OF GOD?

The Holy Father had stated that this 'New Evangelization' is not 'new'. It is the old, traditional evangelization used from the time of Christ, through the Apostles and by the Magisterium of the Church up to the present. And the Pope said that he only used the word 'new' because today no one seems to know about it.

Then the Holy Father gave us the four steps that lead to Eternal Life, namely: a) Conversion, b) Entrance into the kingdom of God (or Faith), c)

Union with the created soul of the Church, Jesus Christ and union with the uncreated soul of the Church, the Holy Spirit (or Hope and Charity); and finally, d) Eternal Life. Those are the complete steps that lead to wisdom, happiness and union with God for all eternity.

During this "Year of Faith" the Holy Father is putting emphasis only on the first two steps: a) conversion and b) entrance into the kingdom of God (or entrance into the Catholic Church OR Faith). Notice how short and simple and how well summarized the Holy Father has shown us the path that leads to FAITH....two steps: a) Conversion and

b) Entrance into the kingdom of God. Since entrance in the Kingdom is God's work, the Holy Father wants us to concentrate on conversion ONLY, as he emphasized last March in a talk to priests and deacons, because the rest of the steps is God's work, not men's.

We have seen how the "Lineamenta" intentionally removed CONVERSION in the process of evangelization. We have seen, also how in the "Instrumentum Laboris" the first two steps are missing. And now we see the 58 proposals made as a result of the Bishop's just concluded Synod in Rome.

On the one hand the Pope gave us a short and simple schema. On the other hand we now have the long 58 proposals of the Bishop's Synod in Rome. To say the least, the Synod's proposal is too long and it is too confusing. I am more forced to focus on immigration and inculturation problems rather than finding out if I have Faith or not. What matters for me right now is IF I HAVE FAITH because my very salvation is at stake. At least I must know if I am far or near the kingdom of God, i.e., if I am near or far from attaining Faith. Better still if I already have the theological virtue of Faith or not. That is the goal of the 'Year of Faith.'

Then I saw the delegates attending the Bishop's Synod coming out from the assembly. I saw Protestants, heretics, schismatics, rebellious theologians and even a woman Methodist bishop. Are these the people who are going to implement the Evangelization that leads to Faith? Are these the people who

would advise a Church that had been splendidly evangelizing the world for the last 2000 years? It seems 'yes' because their ideas seem to be reflected in the 58 proposals.

The Sundays in Ordinary Time are perfect lessons from Holy Mother the Church on the topic of 'Faith.' From the first up to the 34th Sunday we can practically see how far or near we are from entering the kingdom of God (or from receiving the gift of Faith.) And the 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time beautifully shows us the present situation with the Pope and the Bishop's Synod. It shows us a Scribe who was 'not far from the Kingdom of God,' i.e. not far from Faith. Where do I stand? Am I 'not far' from Faith or am I very far?

The Gospel began with an argument between the Pharisee and Sadducees on one hand and the Scribes on the other hand. The Pharisees and Sadducees believed that to be saved one must do hundreds of external rituals like the washing of the hands and feet, washing of vessels, etc.; while the Scribes believed that to be saved they only had to make an internal act of Faith and good works. In the heated discussion the Scribes approached Christ and asked Him who was right. When Christ questioned the Scribe, he gave an answer which Christ described as "You are not far from the kingdom of God." The Scribe was not far from entering the Catholic Church. He was not far from making the Act of Faith that saves. What did the Scribe do that brought him close to the kingdom. And what was it

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St. Teresa of Avila

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that he did not yet do that prevented him from entering the kingdom where Faith is attained?

Let us look at the workings of the mind of the Scribe. He said: "The Lord our God is Lord alone." This is an act of the mind and that was the preamble of Faith. But it is in the natural level. It is not yet supernatural Faith. This was an act of the mind.

The above natural act of Faith as an act of the mind must be accompanied with good works because Faith without good works is useless. The Scribe believed that "God is Lord alone," and his Faith was accompanied with good works. He said: I must love God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind and will all my strength. That was one good work. And he adds another good work; and I must love my neighbor as myself. Those were two good works that accompanied his faith. At this point he still could not receive the supernatural gift of Faith from Christ because his assent and consent were still lacking.

By an act of his mind the Scribe knew that God is Lord alone and.... he had knowledge also that he must love God and his neighbor. That is the act preparatory to the act of Faith the mind knowing the existence of God and the duty to love God and neighbor. This is why Christ said he was not far from the kingdom of God.

If in my mind I have a natural description on God as Lord alone; if I have a knowledge on how the heart

works and how to love God with my heart; if I have a knowledge on how the free will works and how to love God with all my heart; if I know what is the strength God had given me and know how to love God with all my strength; if I know what is a soul and the knowledge of how to love God with all my soul.....and if I know myself and know how to love myself and if I know who is my neighbor and know how to love my neighborTHEN I am not far from the kingdom of God. I would not be far from Faith and not far from entering the Catholic Church. But I would not still be in IT.

How come the Scribe was not yet inside the Kingdom? He was just one step away. But the Scribe did not know what was lacking. Evangelizing him was not yet complete. His conversion was not yet total. His mind had to assent to what he knew and his free will must consent to what he knew. If he did these God would have given him the supernatural and theological virtue of Faith that saves.

Even if the Scribe was able to assent with his mind and consent with his free will to what he knew (that God is Lord alone and that he should love God and neighbor) he would have Faith but not yet Charity. What he had assented with his mind and consented to with his free will, he must now put into practice. And that is Charity, which together with Faith merits for a soul Eternal Life.



SERMON *in a sentence*

It is contrary to humility to aim at greater things through confiding in one's own powers: but to aim at greater things through confidence in God's help, is not contrary to humility; especially since the more one subjects oneself to God, the more is one exalted in God's sight.

Without falsehood one may avow and believe oneself in all ways unprofitable and useless in respect of one's own capability, so as to refer all one's sufficiency to God.

Nature is not sufficient, and grace is necessary.

Grace is caused in man by the presence of the Godhead, as light in the air by the presence of the sun.

The angel who announced Christ's birth did not go to Jerusalem, nor did he seek the Scribes and Pharisees, for they were corrupted, and full of ill-will. But the shepherds were single-minded, and were like the patriarchs and Moses in their mode of life.

The profit which accrues to men from Christ is chiefly through faith and humility.

Christ wished to be tempted; first that He might strengthen us against temptations . . . second, that we might be warned, so that none, however holy, may think himself safe or free from temptation.

It is the law of God that the things which we are unwilling should be done to us, we should not do to others; but that which we should wish to be done to us, that we should do to others.

He who does almsgiving obtains three good gifts– (1) temporal good; (2) spiritual good; (3) eternal good.

Leaves without flowers: these are they which have words without works.

We ought to repay Him [God] by giving alms to the poor.

We imitate God by being merciful, because mercy is bound to accompany love: "*Be ye merciful.*" And this must be in deed.

By patience a brother may be won back again.

One man should draw another to God's service.

