



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 FIVE

‘New Evangelization’ is, indeed, ‘NEW’ because it is entrance into a New, Grown, Mature Church.

The Catholic Church is a living institution. It is like a child that grows up. When a child becomes a grown mature man, he is still the same child. But he is quite different from when he was a child. The Church was once upon a time a child. But now she is a grown-up, a young girl. Let us compare again the Church to a classroom. There was a time when the classroom was for kindergarten children. But now the Church is a classroom for spiritually

young adults. A soul that is about to begin his entrance into the Catholic Church must first enter the classroom for kindergarten souls. And a soul that has been studying for a long time should be in the classroom for young adults. Let us take another similitude. Christ came to heal and save souls. A soul seeking healing and salvation should first go to a hospital room... the Church. When he has stayed long enough in his hospital room he should be better after a time and should be ready to be discharged. No one within the Church ever gets worse. As Pope Benedict says, quoting St. Bonaventure, the ‘Seraphic Doctor’: The Church has 7 stages of growth. She grows forward and never

regresses backward. So she is more perfect now than before. And her knowledge of God's teaching is deeper now than before. In fact, by now the Catholic Church should have reached the heights of her perfection, a perfection that she had never experienced before. Most souls never saw the way the Catholic Church looks today. And most do not know how to enter this perfected Church today. This is the reason for the ‘New Evangelization’: an invitation to uncharted territory. It is new to us all. It was never taught in seminaries or schools of theology. Only the Pope with the advice of St. Bonaventure and Blessed John Cardinal Newman seems to have an inkling on how she looks and how to join her. The results of the Bishop's Synod show that they had no idea of what the Pope is talking about. They discussed many things—in fact too many things—but did not discuss the ‘new evangelization’ that leads to Faith (the entrance to the kingdom of God that has a new face) which the Holy Father mentioned in his 2000 AD address to catechists.

Let us now present some problems which Pope Benedict is trying to solve. What if a soul wants to enter the Church as a kindergarten pupil but the only available classroom is for young adults? What if a patient is very serious and needs a ‘trauma emergency room’ but the only rooms available are rooms for those who are already well and ready for discharge? What if the applicants to the Catholic Church are young rich men but the Church only accepts those who go

home, sell all their things, give them to the poor and follow Christ?

These questions can be answered if we know the background of the Holy Father's instructions with regard to the ‘new evangelization’ that leads to ‘porta fidei.’ As a young priest Pope Benedict's thesis was on the “Theology of History according to St. Bonaventure.” St. Bonaventure is the ‘Seraphic Doctor,’ and he described the history of the Catholic Church as she progresses to perfection in six stages as related to the 7 days of creation, the sixth day being the day of Sabbath. The Holy Father believes that the Catholic Church has reached the sixth day, her mature state; that she is the ‘*ecclesia contemplativa*.’ From her birth on Pentecost day, the Catholic Church had grown and become as perfect as her founder and has become a contemplative Church. The Catholic Church was never stagnant in her growth. She continuously grows spiritually towards her goal of perfection. Her members TODAY, according to the Seraphic Doctor, should be contemplatives, meaning that they have the four moral virtues (prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude), they have the three theological virtues (the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity) and they are perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord). That is asking too much from a soul, but that is the description of the members of the Church TODAY, described by St. Bonaventure as ‘*Ecclesia Contemplativa*.’ Only God can do this and at this age God has done

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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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it. Except nobody knows where it is. Only those with Faith can find her; that is why the Pope had called the ‘Year of Faith’ to enable us to find the Church and be a part of it.

For this reason the Holy Father had been repeating that Evangelizers should be contemplatives because they must recruit members for a contemplative Church. But none of the seminaries, both diocesan and religious, train contemplatives. Which is understandable because only God can make contemplatives. And this is the reason why one of the Patronesses of the New Evangelization is St. Therese of Lisieux because she was a contemplative by the work of God and not by the work of her order or convent.

This image of the Catholic Church as ‘*Ecclesia contemplativa*’ was also confirmed by St. Thomas of Aquinas in his commentary on the last chapter of the Gospel of St. John where he mentioned that this is the last chapter of the last Gospel because this is the last image of the Catholic Church on earth. It was the last boat trip of the Apostles in Lake Tiberias. The 7 Apostles were in their boat fishing (The Church) and were now approaching the shore (Heaven) where Christ was waiting. The Catholic Church was now approaching her final destination... eternal life with Christ standing on the shore. St. Thomas described the Church as having become perfect and where her evangelizers are perfect and where her doctrines are now perfectly understood. Note that there were only 7 Apostles indicating the perfection of the evangelizers. Note that

they were told where exactly to lower their net, which is possible only to contemplatives (unlike in the other boat trip where they were told to lower their net anywhere.) They were told to lower their net in a place where they only caught good fishes, only perfect fishes. The Church is perfect, the members inside are perfect, symbolized by the number of fishes, 153, and the 7 evangelizing Apostles were the symbol of perfection.

Where is that ‘*ecclesia contemplativa*?’ Is it here now.... the perfected Church, with contemplative members and contemplative evangelizers? They can be found in the supernatural level. Those who have remained in the natural level will never find them. Pope Benedict gave us the strategy. To find and enter this Church we must first rise from the natural and go up to the supernatural level. This is done by a life of conversion (which both Pope Benedict and the International Theological Commission had emphasized.) If we finish our conversion we shall receive the gift of Faith which is entrance into the Catholic Church.....where at the beginning we would probably have imperfect Faith. But it is only when we have the beginnings of this theological virtue of Faith can God, Himself, guide us towards the perfection of Faith (which is the contemplative life), then lead us towards the perfection of Hope and Charity together with which God will grant us the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit, thus perfecting and putting us amongst the 153 fishes that were hauled into the

perfect Church to be brought to Christ in heaven.

This ‘*ecclesia contemplativa*’ is a NEW, mature image of a Church that was once upon a time a child. Most would not recognize her. And the way to enter her is a NEW way which is a perfection of the old way of entering her....shown to us by the first Apostles but much watered down through the centuries. This is the ‘New Evangelization’ that leads to ‘*Porta Fidei*’ a NEW EVANGELIZATION that leads to a ‘Contemplative Church’ which most of us had never seen and in which most of us have never been. Our Holy Father has to lead the way and he is doing so. But most of us like children led by our parents in a shopping Mall are infinitely distracted by the hundreds of shops catering to worldly concerns.

In the next post we shall describe this Church as described by the Seraphic Doctor and as quoted by Pope Benedict and we shall describe the process of evangelization as described by Blessed John Cardinal Newman and as quoted by Pope Benedict. ...two favorite authors of the Holy Father.

When one is in love, one is humble, one sees oneself as very insignificant, as nothing beside one’s beloved.

Venerable Charles de Foucauld

SERMON in a sentence

None should despair of his neighbor, even though he see him lying in vices; because he knows not the riches of the Divine mercy.

Is it not better to have to answer for mercy than for severity?... Do you seek thereby the character of sanctity? Be strict in ordering your own life, in that of others, lenient; let men hear of you as enjoining little, and performing much.

He whose duty is to teach should not teach what is contrary to the truth.... The act itself of teaching is one of the spiritual almsdeeds.

The love of God is the end to which the love of neighbor is directed.... God is loved in our neighbor.

The reason why we ought to love others out of charity is because they are nigh to us, both as to the natural image of God, and as to the capacity for glory.

We must presume good of everyone, unless there be proof of the contrary.

St. Thomas Aquinas

