



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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The Proper Disposition for the Reception of the Virtue of FAITH.

The first thing a Pope does during his Pontificate is to remind the faithful on how to attain eternal life. Pope Benedict did this in his first three encyclicals where he reminded us of the importance of the three theological virtues, namely Charity in 'Deus Caritas Est', Hope in 'Spe Salvi' and in 'Caritas in Veritate,' where he partly described Faith. During this 'Year of Faith' he expressed plans to write an encyclical fully describing the virtue of Faith.

Let us go directly to the crux of the 'New Evangelization' that leads to 'Porta Fidei,' i.e., ...the act preceeding the 'Act of Faith'... or the proper disposition necessary before God gives us the virtue of Faith. This is the act of 'conversion.' The Holy Father insisted that this is the important element of Evangelization in an address to priests and deacons. And this was further emphasized by the International Theological Commission, now a Pontifical commission that advises the Magisterium.

Picture a soul with the proper disposition and is about to receive the grace of Faith from God. How would he look? Let us describe it in its essentials

and in summary form and leave the other details for later.

The 'proper disposition' consists of three steps. These steps are purely natural human acts done by every man when he acts. Man does it when he eats pizza. He has no reason why he cannot do it when he makes an 'Act of Faith.'

The first step: is for the mind, a faculty of the soul, to have two kinds of knowledge. On one side he must have a natural, human knowledge of the WHAT and HOW of the Commandments of God (as commanded by God in the Old Testament and by Christ in the New Testament). On the other side he must have a knowledge of himself, whether he had obeyed or disobeyed those commands.

From where should he learn the WHAT and HOW of the commandments of God? From the Catholic Church! Not from books, like the Bible, not from theology, not from theological schools.... but from the Catholic Church through her spokesman, the Holy Father, the Pope! When Christ came to earth to teach man the way to eternal life He established a Church with a spokesman. He did not write a book nor did He establish a seminary nor a theological school. When Christ wanted to begin teaching man the way to Eternal Life He established His Church to preach to all nations. He did not send printed bibles. So the first step towards the proper disposition to receive the theological virtue of Faith is to have a knowledge of God's commands as

taught by the Catholic Church through her spokesman the Pope. This is the knowledge we must have on one side of our mind. This knowledge is naturally given by God to all men and can be refined further by the use of common sense and conscience. All of these are still in the natural level.

Unfortunately we are not interested in what the Pope says. We are interested in what the world has to say or what theology schools have to say. The lack of this first step is the main reason for the crisis of Faith.

From where should we learn the state of our soul; a knowledge on what commandments of God we obeyed and disobeyed? From oneself! We should enter into ourselves, into our minds and free wills, and into our memories and see what are our thoughts, what are our loves and what we often remember. And compare these with the knowledge we have acquired from the Church through her spokesman, the Pope. Unfortunately we would rather go outside of ourselves and think of the defects of others rather than of our own defects.

The inability to do this first step is a sure sign that there is no Faith.

The second step is for the mind to check if both pieces of information are right. The soul must check if his knowledge of the WHAT and HOW of the commandments of God are right. And the soul must check if his knowledge of himself is right.

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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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How do we check if we got the 'WHAT are the commandments' from the Church through its spokesman, the Pope right? By checking it with Divine Revelation as found in Sacred Scriptures. Notice that when Christ came to teach man the way to Eternal Life He first established a Church to teach man. But later on He inspired writers to write Scriptures so we can use it TO CHECK if we understood the spokesman of the Catholic Church right. We do not use Scriptures to check if what the Pope said is right. NO! We use Scriptures to check if our understanding of the Holy Father, the spokesman of the Catholic Church, is right. Unfortunately we don't check the things that enter our minds. Almost everybody in the world, including Catholics, never check if they have joined the true religion. John Newman did and discovered he was in wrong religion and converted to Catholicism.

And how do we check if our knowledge of the 'HOW to obey the commandments' is right? We check if we understood it right from the writings of the Fathers of the Church, from the Liturgy of the Church and from the Magisterium of the Church. Unfortunately we often do not check if we are doing the HOW right. We do not even try to know the HOW, like HOW should we really pray according to God's command.

After the second step, the soul can now say 'I know and understand in the human level what is needed to have Eternal Life.' And 'I know and understand in the human level what will

prevent me from attaining Eternal Life.' These two items of knowledge are necessary for the soul to make a choice which is pre-requisite for the attainment of the virtue of Faith.

The third step: is the process of making a choice between the two ways of life represented by the two kinds of knowledge. This is a crisis for the soul, painful and unforgettable and sometimes a step that takes longer than the previous two steps. It is so traumatic most souls are able to remember and describe it years after the experience. The soul will keep on alternating from one side then choosing the other side. Often the soul tries to choose a little from both sides. This was evident in the experience of St. Augustine and Blessed John Newman. At this time actual grace is needed to swing the soul to the right side, the service of God. What makes the choice difficult is the fact that the choice must be exclusive of one another. You can choose only one side to the total exclusion of the other. Christ said: you are either for Me or against Me.

The fourth step: is when the soul decides. If the soul decides to choose the life in complete obedience to the commands of God which he has fully understood in the natural way as learned from the Church through her spokesman the Pope, after checking if he got it right from Divine Revelation and the writings of the Fathers.....the soul must now decide to completely renounce the world, his loved ones and all the desires of his heart.

The steps above which make up the proper disposition prior to receiving the grace of Faith from God is called 'conversion,' the first step in Pope Benedict's 'New Evangelization.' This topic was deliberately omitted as unnecessary in the Bishop's Synod. The omission goes against the 'first step' in the proper disposition to receive Faith. Though the Synod briefly mentioned it in Proposition 22, it was not explained. Maybe a bishop raised an objection to its omission; but isn't the failure to discuss a topic mentioned by the Pope as crux to evangelization a sign of the absence of Faith in most of the participants? What if this serious omission is propagated to the entire Catholic world? It is a serious disobedience to the Apostolic Commission given by Christ to the Apostles.

When the decision is made in the fourth step, God gives grace to the soul for the forgiveness of his sins and grants him the supernatural virtue of Faith. What the soul only understood in the natural level he will now understand in the supernatural level and in its depths. A knowledge that only God can teach him.

In this 'Year of Faith' the Holy Father wants us to check if we have the proper disposition to receive the virtue of Faith. Have you received from God the theological virtue of Faith? This is the question. In the just concluded Bishop's Synod, the documents, proposals and video interviews showed that everybody worked on the assumption that they all had Faith and that the business of the

Synod is just to try to find out how to share this Faith with others. That was not the question. The question is: Those of you who are attending the Synod have you checked if you have Faith? Have you checked it with the four steps given above by the Pope quoting St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Blessed John Newman? Apparently, the 58 proposals completely missed the question.

The Holy Father had expressed in his 'Ratzinger Report', and with John Paul II in 'Veritatis Splendor', in his 'Year of the Jubilee of St. Paul, in his 'Year of the Priest' and now in his 'New Evangelization' towards 'Porta Fidei.....that most priests have no Faith and consequently all the faithful under them. Would it not be the highest form of Charity for someone to take note of this and inform everyone? After all the eternal salvation of priests and of countless souls are at stake... and also the eternal salvation of the one who noticed the error and says nothing.

Our condition is most noble, being so beloved of the Most High God that he was willing to die for our sake, which he would not have done if man had not been a most noble creature and of great worth.

Blessed Angela of Foligno