

SALVATION AS TAUGHT BY CATHOLICISM

This is a challenging area to address having been a former Catholic. For a Catholic, the answer is cloudy and ambiguous because of the financial, political, and sustainable interests of the Catholic Church. For example, the Catholic church will state that homosexuality is sin (scborromeo.org/ccc/p3s2c2a6.htm Catechism Part 3, Sec. 2, Ch. 2, Art. 6, 2357), but pope Francis will ask, "Who am I to judge them if they are seeking the Lord in good faith" (Allen). Therefore, traditional teachings on salvation will be reviewed with the disclaimer that all Catholics and Catholic authorities may not choose to agree to that which has been formerly declared as essential.

Extra Ecclesiam Nulla

This is a latin phrase meaning, "outside the church there is no salvation" and has been a motto of Roman Catholic authorities throughout the centuries. Catholic tradition teaches that the Roman Catholic church is the first church established by Christ and that all those wanting salvation must be a member of that church (however, some teach that one who dies outside of the church not having known the church is not held accountable for such ("Baptism")).

This reasoning that the Roman Catholic Church is the first church is problematic when one views the scriptures. In the beginning chapters of Acts, the apostles are in Jerusalem where they are told to wait for the promise of the Father (cf. Acts 1:4; 2:14). Upon receiving that promise, the gospel was preached and those who obeyed were added to the church by the Lord (cf. Acts 2:1-4, 12, 22-24, 36-38, 40-41, 47). The birth and beginnings of the church of Christ was in Jerusalem, not Rome. As a matter of fact, when Paul wrote the Romans, he did not uphold the church there as if it were a predominant, all-authoritative body that was first founded before all others; rather, he told them that the "churches of Christ" greet them (Rom. 16:16). Notice that Paul did not say, "all the Roman churches greet you." The church belonging to Christ transcends all nations and has her headquarters in heaven (cf. Acts 10:34-35; Gal. 3:28; Mark 16:19; Eph. 1:22-23).

According to George Joyce in the Catholic Encyclopedia:

The doctrine is summed up in the phrase, *Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*. This saying has been the occasion of so many objections that some consideration of its meaning seems desirable. It certainly does not mean that none can be saved except those who are in visible communion with the Church. The Catholic Church has ever taught that nothing else is needed to obtain justification than an act of perfect charity and of contrition. Whoever, under the impulse of actual grace, elicits these acts receives immediately the gift of sanctifying grace, and is numbered among the children of God. Should he die in these dispositions, he will assuredly attain heaven. It is true such acts could not possibly be elicited by one who was aware that God has commanded all to join the Church, and

who nevertheless should willfully remain outside her fold. For love of God carries with it the practical desire to fulfill His commandments. But of those who die without visible communion with the Church, not all are guilty of willful disobedience to God's commands. Many are kept from the Church by ignorance. Such may be the case of numbers among those who have been brought up in heresy. To others the external means of grace may be unattainable. Thus an excommunicated person may have no opportunity of seeking reconciliation at the last, and yet may repair his faults by inward acts of contrition and charity (Joyce 752).

Baptism

Catholics believe that baptism is essential for salvation; however, the mode of baptism that is required varies depending on what Catholic member or authority is teaching. Pouring, sprinkling or immersion is acceptable (Jennings 17). Some priests however say that sprinkling is not acceptable and that pouring at a minimum is essential. The Greek Orthodox Church which is in full communion with the Catholic Church has maintained baptism by tri immersion (three separate immersions in the name of the "Godhead") as the primary method. Many times, infants are baptized because of the desire of the child's parents and the Catholic doctrine of original sin ("original sin" is the belief that man is born a sinner and such is clearly refuted in scripture (cf. Eze. 18:4, 20; Mat. 18:2-4; 19:14). However, other doctrinal standards teach that "baptism of desire" or "baptism of blood" is acceptable. The doctrine of baptism of desire essentially teaches that if one desires to go to heaven and be like Jesus then such a one has been baptized efficiently for salvation ("Baptism"). The doctrine of baptism of blood involves martyrdom and excuses one from having to be baptized if he is killed for the Roman Catholic faith ("Baptism"). However, the examples given in the scripture, two of which are the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) and the description given by Paul (Rom 6:3-4), only describe a baptism by immersion.

According to William Fanning in the Catholic Encyclopedia, the following statements are made on baptism:

The fate of infants who die without baptism must be briefly considered here. The Catholic teaching is uncompromising on this point, that all who depart this life without baptism, be it of water, or blood, or desire, are perpetually excluded from the vision of God. This teaching is grounded, as we have seen, on Scripture and tradition, and the decrees of the Church. Moreover, that those who die in original sin, without ever having contracted any actual sin, are deprived of the happiness of heaven is stated explicitly in the Confession of Faith of the Eastern Emperor Michael Palæologus, which had been proposed to him by Pope Clement IV in 1267, and which he accepted in the presence of Gregory X at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274. The same doctrine is found also in the Decree of Union of the Greeks, in the Bull "Lætentur Caeli" of Pope Eugene IV, in the Profession of Faith prescribed for the Greeks by Pope Gregory XIII, and in that

authorized for the Orientals by Urban VIII and Benedict XIV. Many Catholic theologians have declared that infants dying without baptism are excluded from the beatific vision; but as to the exact state of these souls in the next world they are not agreed (Fanning 266).

The Bible teaches that one who is immersed in water for the purpose of having their sins forgiven by Christ based upon their belief and confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is saved and added to the Lord's church (cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 8:35-39; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 2:37-38, 40-41, 47). Infants do not have the ability to meet the conditions to baptism- belief and confession (cf. Acts 8:36-37). Desire to follow Christ without obedience to God's word is labeled as lawlessness by Jesus (cf. Mat. 7:21-23). One's submissive will to Christ grants salvation, and not even physical death by martyrdom can replace the submission of will (cf. Heb. 5:9).

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Catholic created "sacrament" that involves the official (Catholic Bishop) confirming one's membership to the Catholic Church by their own decision to be Catholic. Those who were baptized as babies will be confirmed with a group of peers as a pre-teen or teenager. However, those who are converting to Catholicism as an adult, will often times be confirmed the same day they are baptized after they have completed the required classes. The confirmation process involves instruction in the Catholic catechisms, sacraments, and traditional Catholic doctrines. Mandatory service projects are often required and allow those seeking confirmation to earn credits to engage in the ceremony. In order to defend confirmation, Thomas Scannell stated in the Catholic Encyclopedia:

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (8:14-17) that after the Samaritan converts had been baptized by Philip the deacon, the Apostles "sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for he was not yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus; then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost".

Again (19:1-6): St. Paul "came to Ephesus, and found certain disciples; and he said to them: Have you received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost. And he said: In what then were you baptized? Who said: In John's baptism. Then Paul said: John baptized the people with the baptism of penance . . . Having heard these things, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had imposed his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied".

From these two passages we learn that in the earliest ages of the Church there was a rite, distinct from baptism, in which the Holy Ghost was conferred by the imposition of hands

(dia tes epitheseos ton cheiron ton Apostolon), and that the power to perform this ceremony was not implied in the power to baptize (Scannell 217).

This man derived and meritorious work based act is in contradiction to the scriptures. First, the concept of confirmation is found nowhere in the Bible. Men and women, old enough to choose obedience, were the one's being baptized in the first century based upon their response to belief (cf. Acts 8:12). Upon their obedience to the Gospel they were immediately added to the Lord's church (cf. Acts 2:47). Salvation is a gracious gift of God granted based upon the choice of a believing and penitent individual to be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Rom. 6:23; Acts 8:35-39). Notice what Paul states in Romans 6:17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." Nowhere in scripture does one read of the concept created by the Catholic church where one is baptized against their will as an infant and then confirmed as a youth if proper merits are met, regardless of their actual understanding and sincere self-initiated desire to do such. Paul says that the first century Christians "obeyed from the heart" and that which they obeyed was the gospel of Christ which taught them to be baptized (cf. Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; Rom. 6:3-5).

Questions on Salvation

Question 1) At the time of the writing of this question, was homosexuality forbidden or not within the Catholic church?

Question 2). What does "Extra Ecclesiam Nulla" mean?

Question 3) The Roman Catholic Church claims to be the first church- what does Acts chapter 2 teach regarding the origin of the Lord's church and it's location- was there any hint of the church in Rome being the "head" church as Paul wrote the Romans?

Question 4) Where is the "headquarters" located in the Lord's church- Jerusalem, Rome, or heaven (provide scripture)?

Question 5) What mode(s) of water Baptism are used for salvation as taught by the Catholic Church?

Question 6) Is original sin a Biblical teaching- what scriptures can be used to answer this question?

Question 7) Explain additional forms of baptism that do not require water and are acceptable by the Roman Catholic Church?

Question 8) What does the Bible teach about baptism: who can be baptized, what baptism does, how baptism is to be administered, etc?

Question 9) What is confirmation and how can one become confirmed?

Question 10) Discuss the Catholic "sacrament" of confirmation as compared to the scriptures.



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