

Looking for Answers – Explore What The Catholic Church Really Teaches – Part 8



Question:

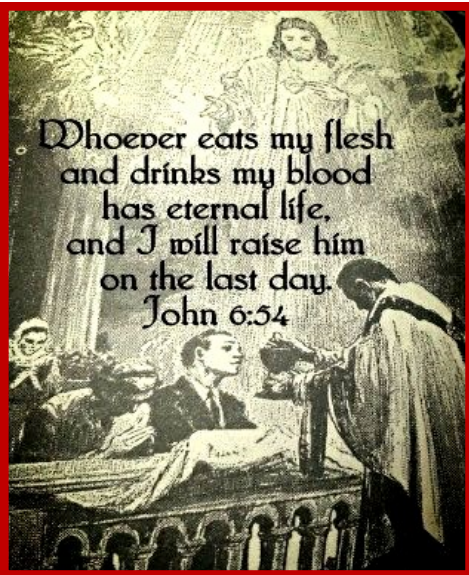
Why do Catholics try to earn their own salvation, despite the fact that salvation can only come as a free gift from Jesus Christ?

Answer:

Catholics fully recognize that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for their sins and thus *opened the gates of Heaven*, and that salvation is a free gift which no amount of human good deeds could ever earn. Catholics receive Christ's saving and sanctifying grace, and Christ Himself, into their souls when they are baptized. Yet they also know that Christ has established certain conditions for entry into eternal happiness in Heaven – for example, receiving His true FLESH and BLOOD (St. John 6:54) and keeping the commandments. (St. Matthew 19:17). If a Christian refuses or

neglects to obey Our Lord's commands in a grave matter (that is, if he commits a mortal sin), Our Lord will not remain dwelling in his soul; and if a Christian dies in that state, having driven his Lord from his soul by serious sin, he will not be saved. As St. Paul warned the Galatians with regard to certain sins: *They who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God.* (Galatians 5:21). It must be added that Christ will always forgive and return to a sinner who approaches Him with sincerity in the Sacrament of Penance.

Catholics follow St. Paul, who did not think that his salvation was guaranteed once and for all at the moment he first received Christ into his soul; for he wrote: *I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway.* (1 Corinthians 9:27). Also: *With fear and trembling work out your salvation. For it is God who worketh in you...* (Philippians 2:12 – 13). *And unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.* (St. Luke 12:48). *He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved.* (St. Matthew 10:22). Nevertheless, Catholics realize that even the fulfilling of Our Lord's requirements for salvation is impossible without the free gift of His grace.



Question :



Why do Catholics believe that good works are necessary for salvation? Does not St. Paul say in Romans 3:28 that *faith alone justifies*?

Answer:

Catholics believe the faith and good works are both necessary for salvation, because such is the teaching of Jesus Christ. What Our Lord demands is *faith that worketh by charity*. (Galatians 5:6). Read St. Matthew 25:31 – 46, which describes the Last Judgment as being based on works of charity. The first and greatest commandment, as given by Our Lord Himself, is to love the Lord God with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength; and the second great commandment is to love one's neighbor as oneself. (St. Mark 12:30 – 31). When

the rich young man asked Our Lord what he must do to gain eternal life, Our Lord simply replied: *Keep the commandments*. (St. Matthew 19:17). Thus, although faith is the beginning, it is not the *complete* fulfillment of the will of God. Nowhere in the Bible is it written that faith alone justifies. When St. Paul wrote, *For we account a man to be justified by faith, without the works of the law*, he was referring to works peculiar to the old Jewish Law, and he cited circumcision as an example.

The Catholic Church does NOT teach that purely human good works are meritorious for salvation; such works are NOT meritorious for salvation, according to her teaching. Only those good works performed when a person is in the state of grace – that is, as a branch drawing its spiritual life from the Vine which is Christ (St. John 15:4 – 6) – only *these* good deeds work toward our salvation, and they do so only by the grace of God and the merit of Jesus Christ. *These* good works, offered to God by a soul in the state of grace (i.e., free of mortal sin, with the Blessed Trinity dwelling in the soul), are thereby supernaturally meritorious *because they share in the work and in the merits of Christ*. Such supernatural good works will not only be rewarded by God, but are *necessary* for salvation.

St. Paul shows how the neglect of certain good works will send even a Christian believer to damnation: *But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel*. (1 Timothy 5:8). Our Lord tells us that if the Master (God) returns and finds His servant sinning, rather than performing works of obedience, *He shall separate him, as shall appoint him his portion with unbelievers*. (St. Luke 12:46).

Furthermore, Catholics know they will be rewarded in Heaven for their good works. Our Lord Himself said: *For the Son of man...will render to every man according to his works*. (St. Matthew 16:27). *And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward*. (St. Matthew 10:42). Catholics believe, following the Apostle Paul, that *every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labor*. (1 Corinthians 3:8). *For God is not unjust, that He should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in His Name, you who have ministered, and do minister to the saints*. (Hebrews 6:10). *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love His coming*. (2 Timothy 4:7 – 8).

Still, Catholics know that, strictly speaking, God never owes us anything. Even after obeying all God's commandments, we must still say: *We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do*. (St. Luke 17:10). As St. Augustine (5th century) stated: *All our good merits are wrought through grace, so that God, in crowning our merits, is crowning nothing but His gifts*.

Had St. Paul meant that faith ruled out the necessity of good works for salvation, he would not have written:... *and if I should have all faith, so that I can remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*. (1 Corinthians 13:2). If faith ruled out the necessity of good works for salvation, the Apostle James would not have written: *Do you see that by works a man is justified; and not by faith alone? ... For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead*. (St. James 2:24 – 26). Or: *What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?* (St. James 2:14). (Ed. This letter of St. James was referred to by Martin Luther as an "epistle of straw").

If faith ruled out the necessity of good works for salvation, the Apostle Peter would not have written: *Wherefore, brethren, labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things, you shall not sin at any time. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. (2 Peter 1:10 – 11). If faith ruled out the necessity of good works for salvation, the primitive Christian Fathers would not have advocated good works in such powerful words. St. Irenaeus wrote, one of the most illustrious of the primitive Christian Fathers: *For what is the use of knowing the truth in word, while defiling the body and accomplishing the works of evil? Or what real good at all can bodily holiness do, if truth be not in the soul? For these two, faith and good works, rejoice in each other's company, and agree together and fight side-by-side to set man in the Presence of God*. (Proof of the Apostolic Preaching). Justification by faith alone is a new doctrine; it was unheard of in the Christian community before the 16th century.

From: www.pamphletstoinpire.com