

NOW HEAR OUR SIDE

By The Rev. John J. Walde

A prominent newspaper columnist sat next to me at a civic luncheon not long ago. Turning to me he said: “Until I was twenty years old I heard a lot about Catholics, and everything was bad. In the meantime, however, I have had an opportunity to meet a great many Catholics. Now my best friends are Catholics.”

To many, the opportunity is never given to understand Catholics by close association, much less to study Catholic doctrine with an open mind. They, too, have heard only what is supposedly bad, without being given a chance to correct the wrong information given to them.

Just briefly, then, may I present what the Catholic Church has to say for herself? You, too, have perhaps listened to uncomplimentary things about the Church from her enemies. “Now, hear our side.”

Why Not Be a Catholic?

These few pages, my dear friends, have only this one purpose—to make you acquainted with Christ and His Church. They contain only a few very essential doctrines. But it is the fond hope of the author that being introduced to Christ and His Church will make you want to know more of Christ and more of His Church. By getting acquainted with Christ and His Church you will learn that the Catholic Church is not a thing of evil but is, instead, the one HOPE for the world.

Do not be disturbed because there are those who hate the Church. They hated Christ also and nailed Him to a Cross. By the very fact that the Catholic Church is hated does she thereby show herself Christ-like, for she is indeed Christ extended through the ages—His mystical Body on earth.

Won't you, my dear reader, make an earnest effort to understand the Catholic Church, to thrill to her beauty of doctrine, to feel the security which she offers in the one important task—the saving of our souls? She offers the solution for life's greatest problem, our salvation. Nothing else really matters; for “what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?”

Christ is God

The most fundamental doctrine of Christianity is the doctrine that Christ is God. Despite the fact that frequently we hear non-Catholics say “I did not know you Catholics believed in Christ,” the Church has defended this doctrine down through the ages. We do *not* believe that Christ is the Son of God in a vague sort of way, but that He is the Son of God by nature, equal, *in* all things with the Father. In other words—Christ is God.

At the very first opportunity, when the Church came out of the Catacombs, she defined this doctrine at the Council of Nicea in 325. The Church has held this doctrine ever since and ever will hold and defend it.

Far-reaching Consequences

From the fact that Christ is God there follow consequences which affect EVERY human life. If Christ is God we are His creatures. As creatures we owe Him our loyalty and our service. He has promised us an eternal reward, namely HIS HEAVEN if we do His will. Therefore, if we want Christ's Heaven, we must gain it on His conditions, not our own. He is TRUTH and truth never changes. Hence, we have no right to tamper with God's truth.

An essential for salvation is--

To accept Christ's teachings and model our lives according to His teachings -- “Thy Will be done.”

NOT— By picking and choosing and thus trying to make Christ's teachings conform to our *way of thinking*.

THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE

God's Will

We find God's will towards us, His Creatures, expressed in the Bible and tradition. As Catholics we have the highest

regard for the Bible. If you, by chance, heard that Catholics may not read the Bible, please forget it. That's one of the "bad things" said too often of the Church. Not only do we love and reverence the Bible, believe it to be God's word - from beginning to end, but had it not been for the Catholic Church - we would have no Bible at all.

The Catholic Church—

—Preserved the Old Testament.

—Under Pope Damasus III, gathered the various books of the New Testament

—Had St. Jerome translate the various books which gave the world the Vulgate Edition, the main source of all translations.

—Specified which books belong to the Bible.

—Had her monks make copies by hand centuries upon centuries before printing was invented.

—Preserved the Bible intact against barbarian invaders and through the ages against conscienceless translators.

Millions were converted before the Bible was completed. Other millions were converted who had no opportunity to read a word of its sacred text. They were converted by the Apostles and their successors who taught and preached Christ. Printing came only in 1440, so that until then Bibles were scarce. Besides, few could read. Yet by that time Europe was overwhelmingly Christian and Catholic.

TRADITION

The Meaning of Tradition

Tradition means the handing down of doctrines and practices of early Christianity through the Church. Christ commanded the Apostles "to teach" and "to preach" whatsoever He had commanded. Not everything was written in the New Testament of the Bible. Through the authority of the Church these doctrines and practices were preserved from generation to generation, and constitute what we call Tradition. In simple terms—Tradition is the teaching of the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Hence we must believe the Bible and the teachings of the Church.

A New Translation

Recently a new translation of the New Testament was given to the English-speaking world under the protection of the Catholic Church. Already this part of the Bible has found its way into millions of homes. Another book: "Daily Readings from the Gospels," by Father Stedman, has been procured by several millions of Catholics in the last year alone.

Hence—

Catholics do read the Bible and love it.

They also believe wholeheartedly in Christ's Divinity— that He is God.

All This and More

These two tenets of Christianity.....belief in Christ's Divinity and belief in the Bible —are the very cornerstone of Christian faith. As Catholics we believe them. For many these doctrines comprise the whole of Christianity; for Catholics they are only the beginning. Back of these doctrines there must be a voice which speaks with authority and infallibility. For how could we be certain that Christ is God, or that the Bible is the inspired word of God, unless Christ had left an institution which would speak with an infallible voice? In a matter which has eternal consequences and affects your soul and mine we want above all things—certainty.

A Difficult Church—Holy Mother Church

The Catholic Church is often looked upon as a difficult Church. Perhaps she is. But for the very same reason Christ is considered "difficult," for He, too, said things which were considered "hard sayings." The Church has but one object and that is to bring us to Christ, to unite us with Him. His teachings are not always easy on human nature, and if, therefore, the Church is considered "difficult" because she insists on her members following Christ, then she must accept the charge of

being difficult. But, as a matter of fact, the Church is not difficult. Her whole purpose is to make it easy for us to keep God's Commandments. For this reason we love to call her "Holy Mother Church," simply because she is wholly concerned with our salvation.

Church Founded By Christ

The Catholic Church has the unique distinction of being founded by Christ Himself. He founded it upon the Apostles, with St. Peter at the head. Simon, Son of John, had his name changed by Christ to Peter, which means "Rock," and upon this "Rock" Christ founded His Church. "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church (Note: Not Churches, but My Church). And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And *I will* give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, *it* shall be loosed also in Heaven." (Matthew 16: 18-19). Since that day, over 1900 years ago, there have been 262 Popes. They are the direct successors of *St. Peter*, the first Pope, and continue in unbroken succession to Pius XII, now reigning.

To everyone who recognises that Christ is God, that Christ founded a Church, two things should stand out clearly:

- (1) That only one of the many Christian denominations can be Christ's Church.
- (2) *That* this Church must have had a continuous existence since the time of Christ.

The first follows from the fact that Christ is God and, therefore, infinite truth. Truth never changes. Hence, His Church must be as He established it. The second follows from the fact that only if the Church has had a continuous existence can there be in the Church the powers conferred by Christ upon the Apostles.

How to Distinguish Between Churches

There are in the United States hundreds of differing Christian denominations. Each denomination must claim that it is the one true church or else it has no reason for existence. But they teach contrary doctrines, and, therefore, it must be evident that they cannot all represent Christ, for Christ is not a divided Christ. He is God, and as such He is TRUTH and truth is one. Because of all the conflicting teachings we are not surprised if many give up the search for truth in Christianity simply because there are so many interpretations of Christ's truths. The only logical solution in our search for God's truth and God's Church is to take the standards which Christ Himself has specified.

Christ specified that His Church must be—

1.—A United Church.

- (a) Christ prayed for unity. (John 17: 21.)
- (b) Christ foretold there would be one flock and one shepherd. (John 10: 16.)
- (c) St. Paul speaks of "One Lord, one faith, one Baptism. (Eph. 4: 5.)

2—**A Holy Church** through which holiness is conferred upon its members. It is Christ's command that we be holy. He said: "Be you perfect, therefore, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. 5: 42.) And also, "Be ye holy, because I the Lord your God am holy." (Lev. 19: 2.)

We judge the holiness of the Church—

- (a) By Its Founder.
 - (b) By the holiness of its doctrines and means to produce holiness.
 - (c) By its actual fruit, namely saints.

3.—A Universal Church.

The world wide scope of Christ's Church was clearly stated when Christ said: "Going, therefore, teach ye ALL

NATIONS.” (Matt. 28: 19.)

4.—**An Apostolic Church.**

Christ conferred many special powers upon the Apostles. These must be in the Church to-day. Only if a Church has had an uninterrupted existence since the time of Christ can it be Apostolic.

The Catholic Church Has All These Marks

In the Catholic Church you will find every mark specified by Christ to distinguish the one true Church from all others. It is One and United. Everywhere it teaches the same doctrines. Everywhere it has the same Sacraments, the same means of producing holiness. Though spread throughout the world, all members are united under one head, the Pope, the successor of St. Peter.

It is a Holy Church. Thousands upon thousands have found sanctity in her fold. When holiness is not reached it is not the fault of the Church, but of the individual who refuses to abide by the teachings and commandments of the Church.

It is an Apostolic Church. Through 1900 years the Catholic Church can trace her history. The present head is the two hundred and sixty-second successor of St. Peter, the first head appointed by Christ Himself.

It is Catholic. This means simply that it is universal. Spread throughout the world, the membership of the Catholic Church is greater than all other denominations put together. She numbers now more than 400,000,000.

CHRIST’S LIFE IN OUR SOULS

The Church, Christ’s Mystical Body

Christ’s plan for the salvation of mankind, for both man’s spiritual as well as temporal happiness, is to form us into one great family, into one body of which He is the Head and we the members. Christ’s life, the life of God, is the only thing that matters. In heaven there is only the Life of God. Unless God shares this life with others it is impossible to live the life of Heaven. This life God breathed into our first parents. They lost it when They disobeyed God’s command and committed the first sin.

God and Man

To atone for man’s sin *it* was necessary that God Himself come down to earth, for the offence against God was infinite and only God could atone. But since man had sinned it was also necessary that man make satisfaction. This satisfaction was wrought by Christ, the Man-God, for He us both God and Man in the same person.

Necessity of Baptism

By Christ’s coming, human nature was again united with a divine nature. God’s life was given to man. “I am come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.” (John 10: 10.) Because of Christ’s coming we can now share God’s life which He shared, not only with the one human nature which He took from the Virgin Mary, but through the Sacrament of Baptism which is a re-birth, we receive the life of God and are made one with Christ. That is why Baptism is so absolutely necessary. That is why Christ said:”Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven.” (John 3: 5.)

RESTORING GOD’S LIFE

The Power to Forgive

God’s greatest gifts are often misunderstood, still more often ignored. Among the chief gifts of God is the Sacrament whereby sins are forgiven. How thankful we should be that Christ, besides setting us on the road to heaven by way of Baptism, gives us still another chance to regain heaven if we have lost it through sin! Such a sacrament was instituted by Christ, and such power to forgive sin was given by Christ to the Apostles when He said:

‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’ (John 20: 21, 23.)

Instruments of God

“Only God can forgive sin,” we often hear it said. That is true. But this does not mean that God cannot give to man the power to forgive sin. That He did is clearly evident from Scripture. God gave this power to the Apostles, and through them to their successors. Hence how contrary to the Scriptures is the attitude of those who would limit God’s power and refuse to seek forgiveness of sin from those to whom Christ has entrusted this power. They do not forgive of their own accord, but through the power of God. Christ Himself made this evident when He first breathed the Holy Ghost into the Apostles and then gave them the power to forgive sin. Human beings, though entrusted with this real and tremendous power, are none the less only instruments in the hands of God.

Confession is Hard

We realise only too well that the necessity of confessing sins is often misunderstood and considered difficult. But why? There is only one thing which makes it hard. It is not that the Scripture is hard to understand in this matter. It isn’t even the idea of confessing our sins to a man, for the Scriptures are clear enough here also. It is simply this—It Hurts Our Pride.

Pride has caused every serious evil that ever happened. It caused angels to be cast into hell; it brought about the fall of our first parents; it has brought every one of the religious upheavals through the centuries. In the final analysis it is pride which is at the bottom of individual failures and the failures of nations. Would there be war to-day if individuals and nations humbled themselves and obeyed God?

If, therefore, you are opposed to confession, be frank and ask yourself why you are opposed. Isn’t it because you are too proud to acknowledge that you have sinned? Is it worth going to hell just to have your own way? Let’s always remember—sin bars us from heaven. To gain heaven we must do it on God’s terms, not our own.

THE REASON FOR RELIGION

Union With God

Why bother about religion? Because there is a God and we are His creatures. God made us, and our eternal destiny is to be united with Him forever. But God in His goodness gives us a foretaste of this happiness even in this life. He unites Himself with us in Baptism by giving us a sharing in His life; He restores this Life, if lost, through the Sacrament of Penance; He gives us Himself as food for our souls in Holy Communion. Through religion, then, we are given a foretaste of heaven, even here on earth, because religion unites us with God. In Holy Communion there is an actual physical union, Christ giving us Himself as Food for the soul.

THE TEST OF FAITH

Can You Say, “I Believe”?

Of all God’s gifts, the gift of Himself is the greatest. How sad so many doubt God’s word in this regard. Surely He could not have spoken more plainly than He did at the Last Supper, when He said:

‘Take and eat for THIS IS MY BODY.’

At the Last Supper Christ actually changed bread and wine into His Body and Blood. He promised He would do so after the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes when he said, “I am the bread which came down from heaven.” Read this promise as told in the Sixth Chapter of St. John’s Gospel. Read also the words of institution as given in St. Matthew, St. Mark, St Luke and in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. So plain are the words that we cannot misunderstand and so tremendous their meaning that we dare not misinterpret. Because Christ is God He could perform this astounding miracle and also because Christ is God He could give to others the power to do the same thing. Whom

then shall we believe? Christ or a mere man's interpretation?

As for the Catholic Church she has held consistently through 1900 years that Christ meant just what He said. Hence, the Catholic has the 'greatest privilege that even a God could confer, namely, to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion as Food for the soul.

IT'S THE MASS THAT MATTERS

Because Christ is God

Have you wondered sometimes what attracts Catholics to their churches Sunday after Sunday? Why there is the quietness and reverence in our Catholic churches?

The answer is simple. It is because Christ, as God and as Man, dwells within the tabernacle on the altar. During the Sacrifice of the Mass Christ actually becomes present. Even as at the Last Supper, so in each Mass bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. And when Christ is present it is He Who then offers anew the Sacrifice of Calvary. That is why the Sacrifice of the Mass and the Sacrifice of Calvary are one and the same sacrifice. But because we can be united with Christ we thereby have the glorious privilege of sharing with Christ in the offering of the "Perfect Gift," namely, the offering of the Son of God to the Heavenly Father. Hence, to offer a sacrifice with Christ Himself is the reason for going to church. It is not just a human form of worship, therefore, but a sacrifice commanded by God from the beginning with the inestimable privilege of offering it in union with Christ Himself, the Son of God.

Mediator Between God and Man

Since Christ is the mediator between God and man, it is through the Mass, where Christ is present as God and Man, that every petition of ours ascends to the throne of God. So, also, through the Mass, every gift of God is poured out in abundance upon us. That is why we treasure the Mass!

My dear friends, if the reading of these pages has been of interest to you and your conscience prompts you to investigate the teachings of the Catholic Church more fully, why not ask a Catholic friend to take you to church, or why not attend a series of instructions which any priest will be only too glad to give you?

Religion, whereby we are brought into intimate contact with God, is the most vital matter which concerns our immortal souls. But in seeking for the true religion do not cease your search till you have found the Church which goes back without interruption to Christ, the Church established on earth by Jesus Christ Himself.

Nihil obstat:
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Imprimatur:
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