

Session C — Afternoon of the Second Day

Third Talk

Important Information for the Speaker

This talk is not meant just to give pastors information. It is meant to give them the foundational pastoral *skill* of personal evangelization. Or at least, it is meant to show pastors their need acquire that skill, as opposed to just their need for theological knowledge about what personal evangelizing is. The theological information in this talk is intended for that pastoral and spiritual purpose.

An example is the statement that *operato* everything comes from the Church and the sacraments while *operantis* it comes from our personal relation to Jesus. If our audience was not composed of seminary graduates, we might not even have to use those terms. For an audience that has learned those terms, however, it is important to explain how the personal relation to Jesus fits in with what they know. But the reason using for those terms is not just theological clarity. It is so that pastors will understand the spiritual and pastoral importance of leading Catholics to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

Each talk should give the retreatants a general idea of how it connects with the preceding and following talks. Since the retreat's talks are meant to be interrelated and sequential, speakers will find some repetition from outline to outline.

This is a 40-minute talk.

Goals

To ensure that pastors understand that:

- Catholics need to know that they do not have to obtain the Gift of God by merit or good works. The Gift of God is an entirely freely given gift. It is ours for the asking.
- Catholics need to know that Jesus has done and will do everything for us that needs to be done for our salvation. We can depend on Jesus to do it all. What us up to us is just to allow him to do it.
- Catholics need to know that there are just two basic dispositions for allowing God to work: sincerely wanting to live God's life (repentance) and believing the Great News of what Jesus did and will do for us (faith).
- Catholics need to know that salvific repentance and belief are relations to a person, Jesus, not just to a doctrine or institution. We must accept Jesus as our personal Lord (repent) and Savior (believe the Great News).
- These principles should not be communicated as just doctrinal truths. Pastors must present them as attitudes of mind, interior dispositions, that Catholics need to acquire.

- Our most basic pastoral need is the personal evangelization of already catechized and sacramentalized Catholics. Repentance and personal faith in Jesus are the foundations for everything else in an authentic and dynamic Christian spirituality.

Checklist for the Speaker

To achieve these goals, the speaker should ask himself: As a result of my talk, how well will the retreatants appreciate Catholics' need to grasp the following points, and how well the retreatants understand how to present these points?

1. There is another reason why the Great News is truly great: The Gift of God is entirely free. We don't have to earn it by our virtue.
2. The Trinity's life consists of personal relations. We enter those relations by having a relationship to a person, Jesus, as the one who did everything that we need when we couldn't.
3. In the hierarchy of truths, that grace comes from the work of Jesus is a higher truth than that it comes through the Church and the sacraments. Truths about the Church and the sacraments depend on what Jesus did. Salvific repentance and belief are relations to a person, Jesus, not just to a doctrine or institution.
4. Operato our personal relationship to Jesus comes through the Church and the sacraments. *Operantis* the quality of our relation to the Church and sacraments depends on our personal relationship to Jesus.
5. Being in the right relationship with Jesus is very uncomplicated: We repent (intend to do God's will) and believe the Great News (trust that Jesus has forgiven our sins and conquered sin so that he could give his victory to us.) Repentance is accepting Jesus as our personal Lord and faith is accepting Jesus as our personal Savior.
6. Repenting and believing is not deciding to make ourselves better. Jesus makes us better. We can't add anything to what God does in us. When we do the good works necessary for salvation, we are just allowing God to create them in us, as Mary did when she said "Fiat," "Let it be done."
7. That God will save us if we just let him should be a source of overwhelming joy for Catholics.
8. Our most basic pastoral need is not teaching about the Trinity's presence. Our most basic need is for the personal evangelization of already catechized and sacramentalized Catholics.
9. The Church has called evangelization "pre-catechesis." Personal evangelization is not just teaching. It is proclaiming who Jesus is and what he did for us in a way that draws Catholics to him as our personal Lord and Savior.

10. Pastoral training could take for granted formerly, but no more, that the family had laid the evangelistic foundation that the rest of pastoral ministry depends on.
11. Repenting and personal faith in Jesus are meant to be the ongoing, constantly renewed foundations for everything else in Christian spirituality. Pastoral ministry must regularly reinforce those foundations.
12. Pastors can jump from sound doctrine to false pastoral conclusions about how to evangelize.

If any of the points in this checklist are things the speaker does not wish to include in his talk, for the sake of teamwork the speaker should (1) inform the rest of his team of the specific points he does not wish to cover (2) inform the rest of the team what he plans to do instead, and (3) get the consensus of the team for his plan.

If there is a consensus about not covering those points from the checklist, the team can do one of two things instead. (1) They can agree to cover the points in other talks and work out which talks will cover them and how. (2) They can agree not to cover the points at all, since the checklist is not infallible. But before choosing (2) each member of the team should read the paragraphs in the “Explanation of the Outline” and in the Appendix that explain those points and why they were considered pastorally important in the first place.

So checklist points should be deleted from the retreat only if the entire team understands why they were originally considered important from a pastoral point of view, whether or not they are important from any other point of view. The reason why they were included in the first place *may not always be obvious*, especially to alumni of post-Trent seminaries. For example, the reason may concern cultural conditions unique to us but so prevalent that we hardly notice them. (See, for example, the discussion of the phrase “children of God” in Section II.5 of the “Expanded Outline” and the “Explanation of the Outline.”)

Since the team’s discernment of whether to delete a checklist point, and what to cover instead, will take time, a speaker who does not wish to include a checklist point should give the rest of the team ample advance notice.

Brief Outline

- I. Opening exercise for retreatants: Write down in a list of points your brief answer to “What must I do to be saved?”
- II. For the power of the sacraments to be unleashed, Catholics need to know why the Great News is truly Great. The second talk, Session B, gave one reason. This talk gives another: Divine life is an entirely free gift that we do not have to earn.
- III. Jesus atoned for our sins, took away our guilt away, and offers us divine life as a free gift. Catholics need to know that there are just two basic dispositions are required for us to get the benefit of what Jesus did for us.

- IV. There are many ways to express repenting and believing. Pastors need to learn at least one more; for it is a way that is succeeding in converting millions to Christianity all around the world: Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior.”
- V. God has solemnly promised that he will do everything for us. And we cannot, nor do we have to, add one iota to what God does in us by grace.
- VI. If properly presented, these spiritual principle should be a source of overwhelming joy for Catholics.
- VII. There are some false ideas about how to personally evangelize that we need to avoid.

Expanded Outline

- I. Opening exercise for retreatants: Write down in a list of points your brief answer to “What must I do to be saved?”
 - A. Start them with one example of brevity: “Keep the commandments” rather than “Don’t lie; don’t steal, etc.”
 - B. Give them a few minutes to write down their list of the most important things including “Keep the commandments.”
- II. For the power of the sacraments to be unleashed, Catholics need to know why the Great News is truly Great. The second talk, Session B, gave one reason. This talk gives another: Divine life is an entirely free gift that we do not have to earn.
 - A. Session B’s talk explained the greatness of the Great News from the objective view point of what it is in its essence: the real presence of the Trinity’s life.
 - B. This talk explains its greatness from the subjective (interior) psychological viewpoint of what we do to benefit personally from the Gift of God.
 - 1. Human nature makes it easier to be aware of the visible aspects of the Church’s life than the invisible. So pastors need to regularly reinforce the greatness of the Gift of God.
 - 2. Preaching its greatness is necessary but not sufficient. The sixties showed that just preaching about love didn’t work.
 - C. Catholics need to know that the Christian life is something God does in us.
 - 1. They also need to know that there are interior dispositions necessary for them to cooperate with grace.
 - 2. One needed disposition is an appreciation of the glory of the real presence of the Trinity in them.

- a. A new convert from mortal sin could die and go to heaven with only the dimmest awareness of that glory.
 - b. But surviving secularism requires growth in holiness which requires a deeper appreciation of that glory.
 - 3. Since everything in creation is a gift from God, that appreciation is also a gift that we need to know how to get.
 - 4. So we need more basic dispositions to cooperate with grace. This talk is about those more basic dispositions.
- D.. The hierarchy of truths should guide pastoral ministry. Not only theology but spirituality should reflect that hierarchy.
- 1. Grace comes from the work of Jesus. This is a higher truth than the truth that it comes through the Church and the sacraments. Truths about the Church and the sacraments are dependent on truths about what Jesus of Nazareth did.
 - 2. *Operato* our relationship to Jesus comes through the Church and the sacraments. *Operantis* the quality of our relationship to the Church and sacraments depends on our relationship to Jesus.
 - 3. E.g., if your relations to the Church and the sacraments are poor, we have to go to Jesus and ask him to improve them.
 - 4. Again, Jesus could have saved us without the Church and the sacraments.
- E. Salvation consists of the Trinity's life, which consists of relations between persons.
- 1. We enter those relations by our relationship to a person, a conscious personal relation to Jesus of Nazareth, not just to the Church and the sacraments.
 - 2. Sacraments are meant to give us that relationship to Jesus, not a relationship to themselves.
 - 3. Without a relationship to Jesus, we are not properly disposed to benefit fully from the sacraments.
 - a. E.g., the fruits of reconciliation depend on faith that, before we receive the sacrament, Jesus has already taken away our guilt and forgiven us.

- b. How many have ceased coming to the sacraments because they did not get from the sacraments what a personal relationship to Jesus would have disposed them to get?
- III. Jesus atoned for our sins, took away our guilt away, and offers us divine life as a free gift. Catholics need to know that there are just two basic dispositions are required for us to get the benefit of what Jesus did for us.
- A. We get the relationship with Jesus we need by having a sincere intention to turn from sin and having confidence that Jesus, not our good intentions, will reform our lives.

Divine life is a gift. To ask the giver for it we must (1) truly want it and (2) believe in the giver's desire to give it to us.
 - B. The scriptural and liturgical names for these dispositions are repenting of sin and believing the Great News of what Jesus did and will do for us.
 - 1. Truly wanting it is *repentance*: the firm intention, not just wishing, at least to avoid grave sin. (E.g., a college student wanted the pleasing aspects of Christianity, but did not want to give up fornication.)
 - 2. Catholics need to know that repenting is *not* deciding to make ourselves better. Repenting is not enough to change our behavior.
 - 3. So we need another disposition in addition to repentance.
 - C. That other disposition is faith that God's gift is entirely free, including his freely offering to change us if we repent.
 - 1. We can't merit God's gift, even by repentance, but we don't have to merit it. We can change because God first loves us without our doing anything to earn it.
 - 2. Our faith is that Jesus himself will change our behavior and make us holy.
 - D. This is not just doctrinal faith. This is confidence in God's promise to change us if we sincerely want him to.
 - 1. Confident reliance on Jesus, with sincere repentance, is what St. Paul meant when speaking of justification by faith rather than by works of the law.
 - a. He wasn't denying the *theological* truth that we need good works. He was addressing the *pastoral* question of how Christians succeed in fulfilling the law.

- b. Paul explicitly assumes (Rm 6:17) his hearers have repented but adds that good intentions are not enough (Rm 7:15-23).
- E. Keeping the law doesn't come from good intentions but from relying on Jesus, not our own virtue, to fulfill the law in us. God will cause the repentant to do the works they need, if they just rely on him, not on their own virtue.
- 1. Quote and pass out several scripture passages that affirm over and over that it is God's work, not ours. (See the "Salvation by Grace" quotes below.)
 - 2. We must preach that Jesus did it all, and that our job is to accept the Christian life as a free gift by the two steps of
 - a. sincerely repenting
 - b. believing that Jesus had done and will do it all for us.
- IV. There are many ways to express repenting and believing. Pastors need to learn at least one more; for it is a way that is succeeding in converting millions to Christianity all around the world: "Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior."
- A. Evangelical Protestants tell people they must "Accept Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior."
 - 1. These words express what Christians need to do in a way that "repent" and "believe" often do not convey in today's pastoral environment.
 - 2. To accept Jesus as *Lord* is to repent, to want to do what he tells us to do. Today, "repent" often conveys deciding to make ourselves better.
 - 3. To accept Jesus as "Savior" is to believe in the salvation that Jesus has gained for us and will freely give us. Today, "believe" often conveys doctrinal faith rather than a relationship to a person.
 - 4. Doctrinal faith is an absolutely necessary condition for the relationship, but it is not the same as the relationship.
 - B. Evangelicals stress the word "personal" in the call to accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.
 - 1. Accepting our personal need to repent and believe is not just accepting doctrinal truth but is adopting an attitude of mind toward Jesus and ourselves.
 - 2. Each of us must recognize our personal need for salvation because of

- a. the sins of which I am personally guilty, sins which require atonement, and
 - b. my personal powerlessness to atone for and overcome my own sins.
 - 3. Today the word “spirituality” is used by popular movements that don’t say anything about repenting of sin and the need for atonement.
 - 4. Pastors must be firm about the reality of sin, but only if they are just as firm about the fact that Jesus has taken away the guilt of sin and will freely “fulfill the law” in us.
- C. We need to look beyond the sadly truncated *theology* of evangelical Protestants to see the importance for Christian spirituality of their way of proclaiming the Great News.
- 1. Catechesis that Jesus is the only way to salvation is not the same as calling people into a personal relationship with him.
 - a. Church documents call evangelism “pre-catechesis.” Evangelization is the foundation for achieving the spiritual goals of catechizing and sacramentalizing Catholics.
 - b. For centuries pastoral training could take pre-catechesis for granted since the family did it and society either supported it or at least did not undermine it.
 - c. So seminaries train pastors as if we could still take for granted that most Catholics already want what pastors have to give.
 - 2. Here recall the opening story about “What must I do to get to heaven?” and ask the retreatants to look at the lists they made.
 - a. Did their lists include “repent and believe the Great News,” or only things like prayer, the sacraments and good works?
 - b. If so, they were taking for granted that the personal foundations for the fruitfulness of the things on their lists have been sufficiently laid and maintained.
 - c. But that is precisely what we cannot take for granted in today’s pastoral environment. Where are all the former Catholics?
 - 3.. Seminaries train pastors to do a good job putting up the walls and roof of a spiritual building whose foundations have not been properly laid and maintained.

- D. Our most basic pastoral need is *not* to teach Catholics about the glory of the Gift of God.
1. Our most basic pastoral need is the personal evangelization of already catechized and sacramentalized Catholics.
 2. We must take St. Paul seriously when he says, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Great News” (1 Co 1:17).
 3. Again, from the *operato* viewpoint the whole of our spirituality *does* come from the Church and the sacraments. But *operantis* the basis of our cooperation with sacramental grace is our relationship to Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior.
 4. Unless Catholics know that God’s gift is entirely free and that he has made it as uncomplicated as possible for us to benefit from it, they can’t know how great the Great News really is.
- V. God has solemnly promised that he will do everything for us. And we cannot, nor do we have to, add one iota to what God does in us by grace.
- A. Read and hand out the Scripture passages in which God solemnly promises to do everything we need to save us. (See the “God Will Do Everything for Us” quotes in the Usable Quotes section below.)
- B. We do not have to add one iota to what God does for us. If creatures could add anything to what God causes in them, God would not be God.
1. Catholics need to know that they can’t add anything to what God does in us, even though that might lead to a problem about free will.
 2. The solution to that problem is in Aquinas but wasn’t found until the 20th century. So many seminaries have not caught up.
 3. You shouldn’t try to explain the theological solution to Catholics. But you need a basic idea of it, so that you can teach with confidence that we do not add anything to what God does in us.
- C. The solution to the problem of how we have free will is that when God gives us the grace to say yes, we are free to *refrain* from saying yes.
1. Refraining from saying yes does not add anything to what God does. Refraining is the absence of an action, the lack of an action, that should be there because God gave us sufficient grace to do it.
 2. Absence of what should be there is the nature of moral evil. So we can be

- responsible for moral evil without adding anything to what God does.
3. When we say yes, God causes our action, but the action is still free on our part since we could have refrained from saying yes.

D. A good way for Catholics to understand that we must cooperate with God even though we can't add to what he does is that all we do is just *let* God do what he wants in us, just *allow* grace to work, just *permit* God to save us.

1. Allowing something happen without causing it to happen is common concept that everyone understands.
2. Letting God work is not passivity or quietism. When we repent and believe, we actively produce, and so cause, our decisions but only because we allowed God to cause us to produce them.
3. Other words we can use for cooperating with God without adding anything to what he does are *yielding* to God's action, *surrendering* to grace, and *accepting* the salvation God offers us.
4. But pastors must make it clear that this does not mean that, at the time that we make a good decision, we are conscious that we are only permitting God to work.

For example, if someone sincerely asks for the grace of repentance, they have already repented in *existential* fact without being *psychologically* aware of it.

E. The idea of cooperating with God by just permitting him to do what he wants in us is in perfect harmony with traditional theology and spirituality.

1. For it is exemplified in the best model of cooperating with God that he has given us: Mary's "Fiat!"
 - a. When the angel promised Mary what God was going to do in her, she replied "Let it be to me according to your word!", "May it be!"
 - b. To permit God to fulfill his promise, Mary had to make an act of will. But all she was doing in making that act was to allow God to cause her to make it.
2. For Mary to want God's will to be done she did not have to repent of sin. But otherwise what she did to cooperate with God is what we do when we repent and trust in his promises.

Permission for God to work is what repenting and believing are; letting him work are what they do; that is what they are for.

3. Catholics need to know that, in order for repenting and believing to be salvific, they have to be ongoing throughout our lives; they can't happen just once.
 - a. We always remain free to cease letting grace work, to cease sincerely wanting to do God's will, in the future.
 - b. But no future failure will ever be due to a lack of God's grace.
4. Catholics need to know that to be saved they must certainly do many more good works than repenting and believing. But if those other works are anything more than a consequence of allowing God, by repenting and believing, to cause them, they are not really Christian good works.

VI. If properly presented, these spiritual principles should be a source of overwhelming joy for Catholics.

- A. What could be more joyful than knowing that God has promised to save us if we just let him, if we just sincerely want him to.
- B. Hope is the source of joy. First Peter 3:15 expects hope to be so obvious in Christians that nonChristians will ask why we are so hopeful.
- C. Overflowing joy is compatible with the healthy fear that we can still fail to let Jesus save us, but not with the unhealthy fear that does not rely on God to save us if we just let him.
- D. Paul often warns us against the temptation of going back to trying to save ourselves, that is, to relying on our own virtue.
 1. In other words, there is the temptation to live as if we are still "under the law."
 2. Due to theological errors about justification by faith not works, we often miss the pastoral importance of justification, not by faith and works, nor by faith alone, but by faith and sincere repentance.
 3. Theologically we need both faith and works. Spiritually, good works are a consequence of sincerely intending to do God's will and relying on him, not ourselves, to accomplish our good intentions.
 4. If Catholics interpret their duty to do good works as the duty to make themselves better by their own efforts, they cannot achieve the kind of good works that grace calls them to.
- E. Properly understood, the attitude of total dependence on God saves us from both pride and discouragement.

- VII. There are some false ideas about how to personally evangelize that we need to avoid.
- A. This talk might give the impression that your main tool for evangelizing should be teaching about faith and the law, or about grace and free will.
1. Catholics do need that teaching, but personal evangelizing is pre-catechesis, not catechesis.
 2. “Faith comes through hearing” (Rm 10:17, NAB) but not from hearing about the virtue of faith or the theological problem of free will.
 3. It comes from hearing the Great News about who Jesus is and what he did for us proclaimed.
- B. But well intentioned attempts to proclaim the Great News about Jesus can still be pastorally inadequate.
1. Wonderful homilies have proclaimed the glory of Jesus’ victory over sin, Satan and death without making the connection between Jesus’s victory and our own spiritual needs.
 2. We each need to know that Jesus’ glorious victory is for our sake. He won the victory not for the sake of our admiring him as a hero but for the sake of sharing his victory with us as a free gift we don’t have to earn.
 3. Jesus already has all the glory there is. What he is concerned about is that his glory be shared with us.
- C. Nor is it enough for Catholics to have a vague idea that God loves them and wants them to get to heaven.
1. They need to know that God’s love has a concrete human name and human face, Jesus of Nazareth.
 2. Only by their relationship to that concrete human being do Catholics get the benefit of God’s salvific love.
- D. A misunderstanding of the pastoral place of theological truths can also lead to inadequate ways of bringing people to Jesus.
1. Syllogisms like “The Church is Jesus; so bringing people to the Church brings them to Jesus” and “The Eucharist is Jesus; so bringing people to the Eucharist brings them to Jesus” are theologically sound but pastorally inadequate.
 2. That is why the equally theologically sound syllogism “God is love; so teaching people to love brings them to God” failed pastorally in the

sixties.

- E. Summary and preparation for the following talk.
 - 1. This talk can be summarized as a call for certain kinds of pastoral balance.
 - 2. Pastors and Catholics both need to know more about the place of ongoing repentance and acceptance of Jesus as Savior in Catholic spirituality. The next talk will go further into them from a pastoral viewpoint.

Explanation of the Outline:

Why These Points Are Important for Pastors to Know and for This Retreat to Teach

Section I.

At the end of the preceding talk, the speaker or the retreat's coordinator should remind all the retreatants to bring with them the notepads they were given on the first night and a writing instrument. Then at the beginning of this talk, the speaker or the coordinator should tell the true story of the priest who built a Sunday homily around a question a good practicing Catholic had asked him: Father, what must I do to be saved.

The person wanted a relatively short list of the most important things he should do. To give you an example of what he meant by short, the priest gave him a list of a few things including "To be saved, I must keep the commandments." But the priest knew he did not have to include things like "Don't lie," "Don't steal." That level of detail was irrelevant because this practicing Catholic would have known that things like that were all covered by "Keep the commandments."

Then, the speaker or the coordinator should ask the retreatants to write down their own short list of things that would answer that Catholic's question. Mention that you have given them a hint: The list should include "Keep the commandments." Now you are asking them what else they would put on a list that is short enough to include just the most important things we must do to be saved. Tell them you will refer to that list later in the talk. Then, give them a short period to write the list.

Section II.

The second talk, Session B, dealt with our appreciation of "the gift of God," which the Church calls sanctifying grace. The present talk deals with our understanding of how we cooperate with *actual* grace.

In Session B, we looked at what Christianity is from the objective ontological point of view. We proclaimed its essence, living divine life. Now we will look at what Christianity is from the psychological and practical point of view of our response to God: Catholics need to know what they have to do to cooperate with God. We can say this talk looks at Christianity from a point of view that is "subjective," but not in a pejorative sense. It means personal and

interior. We are looking at Christianity in terms of what we do personally and interiorly to live the Christian life.

Human nature makes it much easier to be aware of the visible aspects of Christianity, the Church's institutional structure and sacramental system, than of the invisible, the indwelling of the Trinity. But that invisible dimension is Christianity's essence. So pastors must frequently remind Catholics of Christianity's interior and invisible dimension. But pastors should not think that simply preaching about the greatness of the Great News can give Catholics an adequate appreciation of it. Teaching that Catholics have been divinized is not enough. The sixties showed that just teaching Catholics to love was not enough to achieve love.

One thing Catholics also need to know is that the Christian life is something God does in us. It is something beyond our own ability but something God does for us. For example, when we are praying, it is really the Holy Spirit who is praying in and through us. But if that were all Catholics need to know to have the power of the sacraments to be released in them, the Church's pastoral ministry wouldn't have to do anything more than deliver the sacraments.

It is the individual Catholic's obligation to cooperate with God, but it is the Church's responsibility to teach Catholics what they need to know to cooperate with God. Catholics need to know that there are interior dispositions that are necessary for benefitting from what God does for us. Pastoral ministry is about helping Christians have the interior dispositions they need in order to benefit from sacramental grace.

One of those interior dispositions is an appreciative awareness of the "surpassing," "inexpressible" Gift of God. To live the Christian life joyfully and dynamically in hostile environments, Catholics need to know how great the Great News really is; they need to know why it is truly great. It is true that a person just converted to Christianity from moral sin could die and go to heaven with only a dim grasp of what the Gift of God is. But growth in holiness depends on knowing greatness of God's gift. That is why we are translating "gospel" as "Great" News, not just "Good" News. We need a reason to be joyful about struggling against our pagan world.

Nor should pastors give the impression that Catholics can acquire an adequate appreciation of the indwelling of the Trinity just by deciding to get it and working at it. Like everything else in creation, an adequate appreciation of our participation in divine life is itself a gift from God. And since divine life is a supernatural gift, appreciation of it is also a supernatural gift; God cannot give it to us just by causing us to use our natural abilities. An adequate appreciation of the divine indwelling is something that itself requires our cooperating with actual grace.

So there must be dispositions for unleashing the power of the sacraments that are more fundamental than appreciating the indwelling of the Trinity. Like any supernatural gift, we cannot give ourselves the appreciation of God's indwelling that we need. But we can be disposed to receive it. The present talk explains the deeper dispositions we need for the power of the sacraments achieve their intended goals in us.

One reason why the Great News is Great is the awesomeness of sharing divine life. But

there is also another reason that Catholics need to know about. The Great News is also great because divine life is an entirely free gift that we do not have to merit by working for it. It is ours for the asking. Jesus took our guilt on himself, merited divine life for us, and offers it to us as an entirely free gift that we do not have to earn.

Here, the speaker should remind the retreatants of the Church's doctrine of the hierarchy of Christian truths, something that perhaps most of the retreatants may not have heard of before the first talk, Session A. The speaker should repeat a few of the first talk's quotes from the Magisterium about the hierarchy of truths.

Pastors need to be aware of the existence of the hierarchy of truths. But they also need to know that the significance of the hierarchy of truths goes beyond theology. More importantly, this hierarchy is significant for spirituality. The spiritual meaning of the hierarchy of truths is that our interior response to the Church and the sacraments depends on our relation to the divine persons those truths make known to us.

Specifically, that grace comes from the work of the concrete historical person, our brother Jesus of Nazareth, is a higher truth than that it comes through the Church and the sacraments. Catholics absolutely need to know is that Jesus distributes all his grace through the Church and the sacraments. And pastors must teach that firmly and clearly. But for that truth to bear fruit, we must teach it according to its place in the hierarchy of truths.

“A catechesis that neglects this interrelation and harmony of its content can become entirely useless for achieving its proper end.”¹

Truths about the Church and the sacraments are totally dependent on truths about Jesus and what he did for us. Jesus could have saved us without the Church and the sacraments. But if sin is an infinite offense, and if God's justice requires human atonement for human sin, sin would not be atoned for if a divine person had not come in human flesh.

Operato our personal relations to Jesus and the Trinity come through the Church and the sacraments. *Operantis* the quality of our relation to the Church and the sacraments comes through our personal relation to Jesus. This means that the depth of our commitment to the Church, our perseverance in believing and obeying its teachings, our coming to the sacraments with proper dispositions, all depend on the quality of our personal relation to Jesus. For example, if our commitment to the Church and devotion to the sacraments are weak, we must go to Jesus and ask him to strengthen them.

Doctrinally, the institutional Church and the sacramental system have a subordinate place, in the hierarchy of truths, to Jesus and what he did for us. And spiritually, doctrinal belief has a subordinate place to personal faith in Jesus and what he did for us. For example, we are sometimes taught about “what baptism did for us.” But the hierarchy of truths shows that teaching about what Jesus did for us is more important for spirituality.

If the presenter of this or any other talk is unclear about that subordination or its pastoral significance, he and they should reflect on the following. Although they need not go into this level of detail in their presentations, they need to have a clear idea of what the following means:

Once more, God was free to create an entirely different world with an entirely different history. He may even have already created such a world someplace else in the universe; the Church has not ruled that out. So Jesus could have saved us without founding a Church with a hierarchy and sacramental system. He could not save us without giving us a life that consists of relations between persons. So to fully benefit in our personal lives from what he gives us through the Church and the sacraments, we must enter into a personal relationship with him.

Logically and pedagogically, the truths that the Church has a institutional structure and a sacramental system are subordinate in the hierarchy of truths to the truth that Jesus gave his community the work of carrying on salvation by distributing grace. He could have saved us without the Church's institutional structure and the sacramental system, but he couldn't have saved us without grace.

And the truth that Jesus gave his community the mission of distributing grace is subordinate to the truth that Jesus founded a community. Unless he had founded a community, he could have not given the community that mission. But he could have founded a community without giving it that mission.

In fact, the main reason Jesus founded a community was not the distribution of grace. Since the divine life of which salvation consists is the life of a family of persons, he could not have saved us without uniting us as brothers and sisters in the divine family, whatever other purpose that community might serve.

But if the Trinity were not a family to which divinizing grace unites us, Jesus might not have had to found a community. If he had not founded a community, he could not have given it the mission of distributing all his grace. Perhaps he could distribute salvation through a sacred book, or sacred meditation practices, as some religious believe. And if he had not given a community that mission, the community's leadership structure, if any, could not have the purpose it now has, and there would have been no need for a sacramental system.

So in the hierarchy of truths, truths about the Church, its leadership structure, and the sacraments are dependent on truths about what Jesus of Nazareth did for us, since the purpose and power of everything else in Christianity derives from what he did for us. And being disposed to benefit from what he did for us depends on our personal response to those truths in the hierarchy that illuminate the other truths because the others are based on them.

Being disposed to cooperate with grace does not depend just on our response to those doctrines in the hierarchy of truths that other doctrines presuppose. It depends on our personal response to the realities—namely, the Trinity and their saving acts—which those higher doctrines express; for those realities are personal realities.

The reason that a relation to our brother Jesus of Nazareth is primary from the viewpoint of spirituality is that the gift Jesus offers us, divine life, consists of personal relationships between a Father, a Son he begets, and a third person who proceeds from the Father and Son's love for each other and is the expression of that love. Since God's life consists of personal

relationships, we can only enter that life through our own relation to a specific person, Jesus of Nazareth. To personally appropriate the Gift of God, we must enter a personal relationship with the one who gives it. Jesus obtained divine life for us because of who he is as a person, a member of the Trinity, and he gives us our personal relationships to the Father and the Spirit through our relationship with him.

Even more precisely, the reason why our way of responding to the Gift of God is by a personal relationship to the giver is that the gift and the giver are identical, God's Son. We need a conscious appreciation of our relation to the Trinity. To have a conscious relation to the Trinity we must have a conscious personal relation to Jesus, since we participate in the Trinity's personal relations only through our relation to Jesus. So Catholics need to know that underneath all the doctrines and practices, underneath all the rules and regulations, Christianity is basically a relation to a concrete historical person, Jesus of Nazareth, and to what he accomplished for us that we cannot do for ourselves. The hierarchy of truths tells us that.

What Jesus did came from his personal love for each of us, and the power of the sacraments comes from what Jesus did. If our response to sacramental grace is not primarily a response to the realities expressed by these two facts, in that order, grace cannot fully bear fruit. But if Catholics have a personal relationship to the realities expressed by truths about Jesus that are logically prior to truths about his perpetuating his work by forming a community (rather than, say, by writing a book, like some other spiritual leaders), then when we focus on distinctively Catholic truths, the Eucharist foremost, our pastoral work can bear the fruit it should.

In the absence of that personal relationship and its continual reinforcement, however, focusing pastoral work on the distinctively Catholic can only distort the meaning both of what is distinctively Christian and of what is distinctively Catholic. For example, the fruitfulness of the sacrament of reconciliation depends not only on the repentance but also on the faith of the penitent. But faith in what?

How many Catholics come to reconciliation not conscious that all their sins have already been forgiven by what Jesus did for them long ago? (Because some of the retreatants may not have looked at reconciliation this way, the speaker should hand out the scripture passages or display them in PowerPoint).

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2 Co 5:19).

You who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death (Col 1:21-22).

(Christ) cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross (Col 2:14).

For if, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rm 5:10).

How many come to reconciliation not believing that what happens in the sacrament is the application to them of the forgiveness that has already taken place?

Of course, if we teach that truth in an unbalanced way, there is a risk of some Catholics not understanding the need for the sacrament. But there is at least an equal risk that the sacrament will not produce its intended fruit, if we are not properly disposed about what to believe. Some Catholics may have ceased coming to reconciliation out of lukewarmness. But others may have ceased because they weren't getting out of it what they should. Getting out of it what they should depends on a pastoral ministry that disposes them to have faith in the forgiveness that Jesus has already gained for us.

Section III.

How do we personally relate to Jesus in order to enter into the divine life he gained for us? What interior dispositions do we need in order to benefit from what Jesus offers?

The basic dispositions for cooperating with grace at the practical level are not only different from what most Catholics, clergy or lay, would probably say, but they are also much less complicated (which does not mean they are always easy). We need many dispositions in order to benefit from what God does for us. But Scripture and Church tradition show that in the last analysis, two only and only two dispositions are fundamental for receiving and growing in the "one thing necessary" (Lk 10:42): the life of the Trinity. All the other dispositions we need spring from these two.

They are:

the sincere intention to reform our lives

confidence that Jesus will accomplish our reformed intention for us.

The speaker should slowly state these two, in sequence, twice. Catholics need to know that another reason the Great News is great is that, at bottom, all we have to do to respond to God's free gift is to sincerely want it and believe that Jesus will give it to us.

To Catholic ears, it might sound strange to say that all we have to do is sincerely want God's free gift and believe in it. But there are traditional Catholic names for these two dispositions that we are familiar with from Scripture and liturgy:

repent and

believe the Great News

The speaker should repeat the phrase "Repent and believe the Great News" slowly and clearly twice. To most of the retreatants, the pastoral approach we are presenting may not seem familiar, and its unfamiliarity may be disconcerting. So it is important that they recognize that we are just trying to give them a better understanding of something they have heard many times before.

Repentance means sincerely wanting to live the Christian life: repentance is an act of will by which we desire to live righteously, a firm purpose of amendment. To *sincerely* want the Christian life does not mean just wanting the aspects of it that please us. It means being willing to accept the whole package and to let go of the things in our lives that are obstacles to the Christian life, to sincerely intend to cease sinning. A college student once told a campus evangelist that he would really like to be a Christian but knew he couldn't because he did not want to give up his sexual relationship with his girl friend. He did not really want the whole Christian package, but only those parts that pleased him.

Repentance is an act of will by which we sincerely desire to amend our lives. But all Catholics need to know that *we do not accomplish that desire by an act of our will*. Despite the fact that we can make an act of will by which we sincerely intend to live the Christian life, we cannot accomplish our reformed intention just by wanting to. For we cannot live righteously by our own virtue or the strength of our own will.

So we need another disposition in addition to repenting. That other disposition is believing the Great News. This is not just doctrinal faith. It is the virtue of faith working with the virtue of hope, the virtue of confidence that, if we sincerely repent, God's power, not ours, will produce the changes in us that we want and need.

The first Gospel, Mark's, as well as modern Scripture scholarship, tells us that the main themes of Jesus's public ministry were "Repent and believe the Great News that the Kingdom is about to begin." The belief Jesus was asking for was not just assent to doctrine. The Jews already did that. He was telling them to confidently expect that God was about to fulfill the promises that their doctrine had informed them about.

When St. Paul spoke of justification by faith in contrast to works of the law, he wasn't talking about mere doctrinal faith. He explicitly assumed (Rm 6:17) he was talking to people who had repented and wanted to do good works, but he knew that reforming our intentions is not sufficient to accomplish good works. Christian good works are accomplished, not by our good intentions but by God working through grace. And we cannot give ourselves that grace even by repenting. The sincerely repentant acquire that grace through the faith that God, through our brother, Jesus of Nazareth, will live in us and be the agent causing "the just demands of the law to be fulfilled in us" (Rm 8:3-4, NAB).

The speaker should use these exact words or another correct translation of that phrase in Romans 8:3-4. The reason is that the pastoral approach we are presenting is nothing other than what Paul means by justification by faith (assuming we have repented) as opposed to by works of the law. That phrase makes it clear that neither Paul nor we are saying that faith removes the necessity of fulfilling the law.

In Christianity, all—the whole package—is by grace. And St. Paul says "Therefore, it [the whole package] is of faith in order that it may be according to grace" (Rm 4:16). For all to be by grace, it must be by faith (and repentance) as opposed to works of the law. Why must it be by faith and not works of the law, in order for it to be according to grace, according to gift? If we didn't need God's free, unmerited grace for justification, we could rely on — and so have faith in — our own power and virtue. Since we can't rely on ourselves, we must rely on — and so

have faith in — someone or something else to make up for our inadequacy by providing what we need.

The speaker should quote some of the following scriptures as well as hand them all out to the retreatants (and/or display them by PowerPoint.)

I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me (1 Co 15, 10).

For God is the one producing in you both the to will [to choose to do something] and the to do [to carry out the choice] (Ph 2:13; literal translation).

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ep 2:8-10).

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Co 4:7).

To him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (Ep 3:20-21).

It is no longer I who live [act], but Christ who lives [acts] in me (Ga 2:20). (To live is to act, to be active; where there is no activity going on, there is no life.)

How do the sincerely repentant get the grace they need to accomplish their reformed intentions? In the last analysis (really the first analysis), that grace is a person, Jesus of Nazareth, who offers us his life, which is really himself, as a free gift. So we receive the gift we need by faith in Jesus as the person who will cause the just demands of the law to be fulfilled in us. Again, the speaker should use the phrase “just demands of the law being fulfilled in us” or an equivalent correct translation of that passage.

Section IV.

“Repent and believe the Great News” are terms familiar to Catholics since they are scriptural and liturgical. But there are many other ways to express repenting and believing. Catholic pastors need to learn a way of expressing them that evangelical Protestants use, because their way is succeeding in bringing converts to Jesus all over the world. Evangelicals proclaim that to be saved all we have to do is accept Jesus as our personal *Lord* and *Savior*. The speaker should repeat the phrase “accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior” twice.

To accept Jesus as *Lord* amounts to repenting, being willing to obey him. To accept him as *Savior* is to believe the Great News that he has conquered sin for us and will share that victory with us, will fulfill the just demands of the law in us, as an entirely free unmerited gift. We need to look behind the serious *doctrinal* omissions in the way evangelical Protestants present that truth to see what we can learn about our own *pastoral* omissions.

The words “accept Jesus as personal Lord and Savior” express what Christianity is, a personal relation to Jesus, in a way that the words “*repent*” and “*believe*” often do not explicitly convey in the current pastoral environment. Today, “repent” often means to decide to make ourselves better, and “believe” often means doctrinal faith rather than a personal relationship.

The speaker should clearly and firmly state that doctrinal faith is an absolutely necessary presupposition of the relationship, but it is not the same as the relationship.

If my repentance is to be sincere, it has to include acknowledgment of my sinfulness and inability to win victory over sin myself. That’s why Evangelicals add another word to “accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior”: “accepting Jesus as my PERSONAL Lord and Savior” That means both admitting my own sin and need to be redeemed by God, and believing that Jesus took a way the guilt, not of sins in general, but of my own sins.

To accept Jesus as *personal* Lord and Savior is not just to acknowledge doctrinal truth but to adopt an *attitude of mind* that recognizes my need for redemption, due to my helplessness to save myself, and recognizes that Jesus has a personal love for me so great that he did everything for me that I cannot do for myself. We cannot be in the personal relation with Jesus necessary for grace to bear fruit unless we can say with Paul,

“I will all the more gladly boast of my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. . . . For when I am weak, then I am strong,” since Jesus had told him, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Co 12:9-10).

The second of the twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous tells the alcoholic that his recovery depends on admitting that he is completely powerless to overcome his problem by himself. Only when he admits that to himself will he have the attitude required to seek and accept the help he needs from a power higher than himself. AA is a great program that helps many Catholics. But a Catholic should not need to join AA to learn that piece of spiritual wisdom; he should learn it from the normal pastoral life of the Church. The fact that Christianity is something that God does in us by his power not ours has to be at the foundation of the attitude by which we respond to God’s call.

While we are discussing Catholic spirituality, we need to be aware that something else going under the name “spirituality” is now in fashion. All sorts of articles, books, television programs, and internet sites talk glowingly about the need for spirituality. But how often do those discussions of spirituality mention our need to repent of sin, much less our need of atonement for our sins? Catholics need to know that spirituality cannot be genuine if it does not include awareness of our need to repent of sin and to have our sins atoned for.

But Catholic pastoral ministry shouldn’t stress sin, UNLESS it also proclaims the joyful truth that sin has been atoned for in a concrete way, through the cross and Resurrection, by a concrete person, Jesus of Nazareth, and UNLESS it proclaims the truth that all we have to do to benefit from what Jesus did is to turn our intentions from sin and believe that Jesus himself will fulfill our reformed intentions for us.

When we hear Protestant evangelists, we often note their truncated theology and miss the

importance of personally accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior as basic to our spirituality. Ultimately, Protestant evangelists don't see themselves as giving people a doctrine but a relation to a person, a relation for which doctrine is a necessary step. We, on the other hand, are often seen as giving people a doctrine and a relation to an organization. Again, *operato* our relation to Jesus DOES come entirely through the Church and the sacraments. But *operantis* the fruitfulness of the Church's work comes from our personal relation to Jesus.

When learning from the way evangelical Protestants evangelize was suggested to a well known Catholic priest, he replied "But I already teach that Jesus is the only way to salvation." By interpreting Evangelicals as teaching doctrine, priest was thinking theologically, not pastorally. He was thinking about communicating doctrinal truth. Evangelicals aren't just giving doctrinal truth; they are making a call for an interior change that gives us a saving relationship to another person.

Personal evangelism is not catechesis. Church documents call evangelism "pre-catechesis."² Effective catechesis presupposes the foundation of personal evangelism. (*Catechism*, 1072) The family used to do the foundational pre-catechesis, but we cannot count on the family to do it successfully anymore. Not just since the Council of Trent but also for centuries before, priestly training has not had to focus on personal evangelizing. What priests were trained to do took evangelism for granted, so much so that priests often did not even learn that what they would be doing presupposed something more fundamental spiritually.

Here recall the story of the contemporary priest who structured his homily around the question: What must I do to get to heaven? The priest answered "Frequent the sacraments, pray, keep the commandments and do good works." Everything the priest said was true, of course. But no one seemed to notice that the priest left out the two things that all those others have to follow from: repent and believe the Great News. The priest left then out, not because he disagreed with them, but because he thought he could take them for granted, which is precisely what pastoral ministry cannot do in our post-Christian world. Without those two things, the question "What must I do to get to heaven" implicitly becomes "What must I do to save myself by my own works?"

You might think this talk has not yet told you anything new. You already know that holiness is the goal of pastoral ministry and that achieving holiness presupposes conversion as the first step. But we are saying that to achieve holiness, conversion to a set of doctrines and so to an institution and a set of religious practices is not enough, even when the practices are intrinsically holy sources of grace that act independently of our interior dispositions.

Conversion to a set of doctrines and making use of the sacraments are absolutely necessary. And if we convert in that way, we can die and get to heaven without repenting of anything other than mortal sin. But institutional Catholicism and mere repentance from mortal sin are not enough to maintain our initial good intentions in our pagan environments. Where are all the Catholics who used to attend Sunday Mass?

Seminaries have been training pastors to serve people who already want what the seminaries are preparing pastors to give. But the numbers of people who already want that has been constantly shrinking under the technological assault of secularism. And nothing in their

training has prepared pastors to fight back by supplying what is missing.

To survive, Catholics must grow. And we cannot grow adequately without an interior relation to something more than doctrines, an institution, and religious practices. The sacraments are intrinsically holy and powerful. But they are meant to give us a relation, not to themselves as sources of something abstractly called “grace,” but to Jesus as our concrete personal Lord and Savior. Pastoral ministry must lead Catholics to a conscious relation to Jesus that permits him, really present in them by grace, to direct their lives.

The epistle to the Ephesians tells us that we are all being built into a spiritual temple; St. Teresa of Avila compares the Christian life to a spiritual castle. Much of today’s pastoral ministry would be excellent for putting up the walls and roof of the temple or castle. But we can’t put up the walls and the roof well, even with our good intentions, if the foundations of the building aren’t properly laid. The foundation of the spiritual building from the *operantis* point of view is personal evangelization.

From the second talk, Session B, the retreatants might get the idea that our greatest pastoral need is to teach Catholics about the glory of the Gift of God. No, our greatest pastoral need is the personal evangelization of already catechized and sacramentalized Catholics. Our greatest pastoral need is to lead them to consciously relate to Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

But it is not enough for the retreatants to be exhorted to evangelize. To evangelize well they have to think differently than they were trained to think in the post-Trent seminary. They must approach evangelism from a spiritual rather than doctrinal or institutional point of view.

We need to take St. Paul seriously when he says, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Great News” (1 Co 1:17). Paul wasn’t denying the importance of baptism. Most of what we know about baptism comes from Paul. Paul was saying that Jesus sent him to do the pastoral work necessary for the *operantis* effectiveness of baptism and the other sacraments. And what was most necessary for that was proclaiming the Great News of justification by repentance and faith in Jesus.

Catholics also need to know that, spiritually, everything in our Christian life springs from just these two interior steps: repenting and believing the Great News, that is, taking Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior. For grace to be fully effective, that is what our response to grace principally and most importantly must be.

If Catholics do not understand the simplicity of the instructions Jesus gave us for taking advantage of what he has done for us, they understand neither those instructions nor what he has done for us. Essential to the Great News are the facts that Jesus did everything we need for us and that he made taking advantage of what he did as uncomplicated as possible.

Section V.

Catholics need to know that Scripture solemnly promises us that God himself will do things for us that we cannot do for ourselves. (The speaker should read the following passages aloud, and pass them out and/or display them in PowerPoint.)

I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezk 36:27).

(Jesus) will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord (1 Co 1:8).

May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and *he will do it*. (1 Th 5:23-24)

I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Ph 1:6).

These promises are from God. It is he who will cause us to observe his laws. It is he who is doing a good work in us, and he will complete it. He will sustain us guiltless to the end. He will do it because he is faithful.

But if that is what God does for us, what is there left for us to do? Did God make these promises so that we would think we can be totally passive? What does he want our attitude toward these promises to be?

Since God is God, we cannot add one iota to what God does in us. If we could add anything to what God does, there would be something in us that God did not create. If there were something in us that God did not create, God would not be the creator of all things. So God would not be God. That crucial truth is the source of the old theological problem about grace and free will, the problem of predestination.

That problem finally got a solution in the last century.³ Actually, the answer to the dilemma is found in Aquinas, but in only one line of his work. So we overlooked it for centuries, and most seminaries have yet to catch up with it. In a moment, we will give you a brief summary of the solution. We are *not* recommending that you make this technical metaphysics part of your normal pastoring. But as pastors, you need to be aware of this much background.

As you know, any activity a created cause performs is also caused totally by God. When a dog barks, the dog is producing that act only because God is causing him to produce the act. God is the primary cause of that effect; the dog is only the secondary cause. The same is true of a decision produced by our will. When we produce a meritorious choice, we are producing it only because God is causing us to produce it. He is the primary cause; we are only the secondary cause acting because God is producing the act in us.

But then how can our choices be free? How can one choice be meritorious for us and another choice demeritorious. How can either choice be our responsibility if they exist because God first caused them to exist?

The short answer is that we cannot be the primary cause of *anything*, of any positive reality. But we *can* be the primary cause of the *lack* of something, the *absence* of some reality that should be there. As you know, what makes something evil is not the positive reality it contains but the absence of what should be there. So we can be the primary source of evil since

being the primary source of evil requires us, not to cause the positive presence of something but to be responsible for the absence of something that should be there.

How can we have the primary responsibility for absence, if we cannot produce a choice unless God causes it in us? The line from Aquinas that solves the problem is this (the speaker should hand out the following and/or display it in PowerPoint):

There is *no need to seek a cause* of this [the absence, the lack that is the root of moral evil] because the liberty of the will itself, thanks to which it can act *or not act*, suffices for this. (*De Malo*, I, 3; emphasis added.)

There is no need to seek a cause since the basic freedom is not the freedom to choose A *as opposed to choosing something other than A*. The basic freedom is the freedom to choose A *as opposed to refraining from choosing A*. The basic freedom is not between an act of choosing A or an act of choosing non-A, but between producing an act of choosing A or not producing an act of choosing A. When God creates sufficient conditions to cause a dog to bark, the dog cannot refrain from barking. When God creates sufficient conditions to cause us to choose A, we can still refrain from choosing A.

Sufficient conditions for us to choose A mean sufficient grace for us to choose A. If God creates sufficient grace for us to produce a “Yes,” our refraining from producing a “Yes” is the moral equivalent of producing a “No.” But our refraining from saying “Yes” does not require God to cause an additional effect, which would be an act of saying “No.” Nor does our refraining from saying “Yes” require us to be able to cause some act that would be more than what God causes in us. For refraining from saying “Yes” is not an act; it is the absence of an act, the absence of an act that should be there. So, if the grace we receive is sufficient to cause in us an act of saying “Yes,” the negative state of just refraining from the act of saying “Yes” is the moral equivalent of a positive act of saying “No.”

Any time we say “Yes” to God, we do so only because God caused the act of saying “Yes” in us. But that act of saying “Yes” is still a free act which is our responsibility and which earns us merit, because we could have freely refrained from saying “Yes.” If we did refrain from saying “Yes,” the absence of an act that should be there would be our responsibility entirely. So our not refraining from saying “Yes” is also our responsibility, but not entirely. It is primarily the result of God’s grace being sufficient for us to say “Yes,” and only secondarily the result of our not freely refraining from saying “Yes.”

That, in brief, is the theological solution to the question of how we cooperate with grace. The majority of Catholics will probably never need to know the theological solution to the problem of grace and free will. And for those who don’t have the time to let it sink in, the theological solution can be confusing. Not cooperating with grace is a negative; for refraining from saying “Yes,” is a negative, an absence of what should be there. So from the technical metaphysical point of view, our cooperating with grace, our responding to God’s action in us, amounts to a double negative, our (1) *not* (2) *refraining* from saying “Yes, our (1) not taking responsibility for (2) an absence.

When the act of saying “Yes” occurs, all we contributed “on our own,” that is, over and

above what God did in us, is describable by the double negative that we did not refrain from saying “Yes.” But because refraining, nonacting, being responsible for absence, is always in our power, when the act of saying “Yes” is present, we have cooperated with God by freely not refraining when we could have refrained.

How do we communicate the fact that salvation is totally a free gift from God without asking all Catholics to understand that double-negative theology that took the best theological minds centuries to figure out—centuries of acrimonious, internecine battling? Catholics need to know that what grace does for us is to cause us to produce acts that are our acts, just as a dog’s barking is the truly the dog’s act even though it is also something totally caused by God. Grace saves us by causing us to produce meritorious acts like repenting and believing. And Catholics need to know that they need to make positive acts describable by positive verbs like repenting and believing. The opposite would be quietism.

But Catholics also need to know that when we make a meritorious choice, we have added absolutely nothing to what God causes in us. For if God were not the creator of everything, God would not be God. And if we did have to add something to what God does in us, we could not rely on God’s promises to do everything we need for us. So is there away at the pastoral level to ensure that Catholics have a firm grasp of the following three things without requiring Catholics to learn obscure, double-negative theology (the speaker should hand out the following and/or display them in PowerPoint)?

First, that we can rely on God to do all the work in us necessary for us to be saved.

Second, that cooperating with God requires us to make decisions, especially the decisions to repent and believe, to accept Jesus as our Personal Lord and Savior.

Third, when we make the necessary decisions, we are not adding one iota to what God does in us; we make those decisions only because his grace causes us to do so.

In short, the question is how Catholics can understand that there is *moral* burden on them in the process salvation without thinking that this burden requires them to add anything to what God does in them. Actually, there is more than one way to communicate these things. We will explain one way that most people understand without any problem, and then mention some other ways.

Most people understand when we say that a person didn’t cause something but only *allowed* it to happen, only *let* it happen, only *permitted* it to happen. We even say that about God himself, namely, that he doesn’t cause evil but allows it to happen. And we have all probably been in situations where we could have prevented something from happening, whether something bad or something good, but let it happen. We might allow the sun to melt the snow on a warm day rather than shoveling the snow ourselves. A football coach may allow someone to rush the quarterback, rather than have the person blocked, in order to set up a screen pass. A doctor may allow an infection to take its course rather than give a patient a medicine she is allergic to.

Sometimes allowing something to happen without causing it is for the good, sometimes

for the bad. On a regular basis, courts have to decide whether merely allowing something to happen does or does not make a person legally responsible for it. As confessors, you (the retreatants) sometimes have to tell a penitent whether they should or should not allow someone to happen even though the penitent is not the one doing it. For example, are there times when you may allow someone to die and times when you should not allow someone to die, even though you do no more to actively cause the death in one case than in the other.

So we can expect Catholics to understand that God will do everything for our salvation that we need to have done if we just *let* him, if we just *allow* him to, if we just *permit* him to. What God is solemnly promising in the passages we handed out is that he will cause us to walk in his statutes *if we just let him*; he will keep us blameless at the coming of the Lord *if we just allow him to*; he will sustain us guiltless to the end *if we just give him permission*. In the very common, everyday understanding of these words that we just illustrated, allowing God to work does not imply adding anything positive of our own to what God does in us.

Letting grace work is not passivity or quietism. It requires our making decisions. But Catholics need to know that we can produce meritorious choices only because God's power causes us to do so, if we just let it cause those choices. When we make a meritorious choice, we have cooperated with God. But what our cooperating with God means is that we have just let his grace produce its intended effect, have just allowed grace to do its work. We are just permitting it to save us because that all we have to do in order to be saved. That is all we have to do because that is all we can do.

From the point of view of metaphysical theological theory, cooperating with grace amounts to the double negative of not refraining from the meritorious choice grace is meant to cause. But from the point of view of what we are psychologically aware of there is no double negative, only the positive choice grace causes in us because we allowed it to. In order to make a choice of repenting, we have to cooperate with grace, but that just means letting grace cause the choice of repenting in us. And because all we have to do to make a meritorious choice is to allow grace to work, we are not adding one iota to what God does in us.

There are other ways to say this. Instead of talking about allowing grace to work, we can tell Catholics that all they have to do to be saved is to *yield* to God's grace, to *surrender* to his action within us, or to *accept* his promise that he will save us. Vocabulary is not the main point. We should not get caught up in it and certainly should not let those we are ministering to get caught up in it.

For example, someone may doubt her ability to sincerely repent. If so, she can ask for the grace to repent before she is psychologically aware of having repented. If her prayer for repentance is sincere and made in faith, she has de facto already repented and believed and so already allowed God's grace to work. For when we have produced an act of asking sincerely and with faith, we have only done so by allowing God to create that act in us. But at the time, she does not need to know that she has already repented; she just needs to know that God will answer her prayer with sufficient grace to cause her to repent.

To see that this understanding of how we cooperate with God is in perfect harmony with both traditional theology and spirituality, we only have to consider that the scriptural model for

cooperating with grace is our sister, Mary of Nazareth. When she learned what God was promising to do for her, she replied “*Fiat,*” “*Let it be,*”

Let it be to me according to your word. (Lk 1:38)

At the Annunciation, the angel made declarative statements about what God was going to do for Mary. He wasn't speaking hypothetically; nor did he speak in the subjunctive about what God would like to do if certain conditions were met. Still Mary knew that God's promise called for a reply on her part. She knew there was an implied condition to his promise of what he was going to do. She knew that God wanted her to give him permission; God would do those things if only she allowed him to.

Unlike the angel, Mary used the subjunctive, “Let it be done to me; may it be done to me,” to tell the angel that God had her permission to do what he had promised. She did not use a declarative statement or an active verb; for she knew that giving her permission did not make her the active cause of what was going to happen to her.

Still, Mary's trust in God was such that she also knew that letting God fulfill his promise to her was ALL she had to do. She knew that all she had to do was sincerely allow God to do what he willed to do in her life. She knew that because she knew her relationship to her creator; she was just a “handmaid of the Lord.” (Lk 1:38). And in order for the handmaid to give her Lord permission, she did not have to add one iota to what her Lord was doing in her.

In order for her to allow God to fulfill his promises, she had to sincerely want God's will to be done and to trust in his promise to do it. For Mary to sincerely want God's will to be done, however, did not require repentance as it does for us; it did not require a reform of her intentions. But in all other respects, what she did to cooperate with God is what we do, because all any creature can do with respect to what God wills to do in us is allow him to by sincerely wanting him to do it and trusting that he will..

Giving God permission to save us is what we accomplish by repenting and believing, and giving God permission to save us is the goal we are intending to accomplish when we repent and believe. That's what repenting and trusting in God *do*; they allow God to work in us. That's what our acts repenting and believing *are*; they are acts by which we give God permission to save us. They are acts by which we yield to his grace, surrender to his grace, accept his grace.

To be salvific, repenting and believing, relating to Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior, have to be *ongoing*. They cannot happen just once. That is one way in which the theology of some of our beloved Protestant brothers and sisters is tragically truncated. Some of them believe that accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior is a once and for all event such that nothing we do afterwards can deprive us of salvation.

In a crucial sense, ongoing repentance and belief in Jesus are ALL we that have do to live the Christian life successfully. And Catholics need to understand the sense in which they are all we have to do. But to live that life dynamically and joyfully, Catholics need to understand that sense properly, because saying that repenting and believing are all we need to do can be seriously misunderstood.

To be saved, we must certainly do many more good works than just repenting and believing. If those other works, however, are anything but a consequence of giving God permission, by on-going repentance and faith, to create those works in us, they are not Christian good works. A good example for the speaker to use here would be a voluntary penance or mortification. If you are not able to be joyful while doing a chosen mortification, that's a sign that the choice might be from you but not from the Lord, a sign that you are trying to do it by your own power rather than allowing his power to work.

Sincerely wanting and trusting are the spiritual and psychological counterpart of the theological and metaphysical double negative. If more were necessary in order for God to work in us than our sincerely wanting him to and asking him to with faith, God would not be God. If you worry that we are making cooperating with God *too* simple and *too* uncomplicated, consider this: Someone has a sincere purpose of amendment and asks with genuine faith that God cause her to keep his commandments. Will he turn down her request?

Of course, she may cease repenting or cease believing at any moment. Her freedom will always enable her to not allow God to do his will in her in the future. But not allowing God's grace to work in the future will not mean that God did not answer her prayer and give her grace that would have caused her to keep his commandments, if only she had continued to allow grace to work.

So Catholics need to know that God himself will sanctify and save us; all we have to do is just let him, just give him permission. And they need to know that all they have to do to give him permission is sincerely want him to sanctify them and believe that he will. Catholics can rely on the Lord of the universe to use his infinite power to save them if only they allow him to as Mary did.

Also, Catholics need to know God's grace is not just "available" to us on the condition that we ask for it. Before we ask, God's grace is always present and active. If it wasn't, we couldn't ask for further grace, because to ask for grace is just to yield to the action of prior grace. To say that God's grace is always present and active is just to say that his love for us is always present and active. If his love wasn't constant, we couldn't remain in existence, because his love is what gives us existence.

Section VI.

If these pastoral and spiritual principles are properly presented, they should be a source of incomparable joy for Catholics. Knowing that salvation is an entirely free gift that we do not have to earn should cause us joy. The other reason the Great News is great, namely, that we have the infinite life of God himself, should also cause us joy, of course. But both divine life and our appreciative awareness of it are gifts that come from our acceptance of God's more basic gifts of repentance and belief in Jesus' freely bestowed salvation.

What could be more joyful than knowing that God will bring me to eternal happiness, through all my trials and tribulations, and despite all my sins, if I just let him by sincerely repenting and trusting that he will do it? Trust in that promise, along with knowing the glorious nature of the Gift of God', is the reason for our Christian joy. The speaker should quote 1 Th

5:16 and Ph 4:4. Paul could not repeatedly command us to be joyful if we were not hoping for a salvation that so depends on God, not on us, that all we have to do is to let him do it.

The source of our joy is Christian hope, and our hope is not Christian if it is not based on the faith that God himself will save us, if we just let him. First Peter 3:15 tells us to be ready when people ask about the hope that is in us. So Peter expects Christian hope to be so obvious in us that nonChristians will wonder what the reason for our hope is. We are supposed to have that hope because we are certain that almighty God himself will ensure our salvation, if we just let him by sincerely wanting it and trusting that he will do it..

Overflowing joy is compatible with the healthy fear that I could still fail to give Jesus permission to save me. We remain totally free to allow or not allow future grace to produce its intended effect in us. But the fear that arises from knowing that I can still withhold that permission is the opposite of the unhealthy fear that arises from thinking that I might not have enough strength, virtue or faithfulness to my good intentions to be saved. In fact, I do not have enough. But the strength, virtue and faithfulness that I need to rely on are Jesus', not my own.

This is not to deny that after repenting and believing I now possess infused virtues. But those virtues are essentially personal relations to Jesus, the Jesus living in me, by which he will continue to offer me sufficient grace to make future meritorious decisions, if I just allow that grace to work.

“. . . That I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law, but that which is through faith in Christ” (Ph 3:8-9).

Our joy is compatible with knowing that we could lose salvation because we know that if we lose salvation, either we did not sincerely want to be saved from sin or were not relying on God to save us. Instead of relying on God, what would we be doing? We would be relying on our own righteousness, which is an implicit denial of our need to be saved by Jesus' sacrifice. We should have a healthy, joy-filled fear, not just that we can still fail to repent of sin but that we can still fall into trying to save ourselves.

In other words, there is a temptation, against which St. Paul so often warns us, for Christians to go back to living as if we were still “under the law” (Rm 6:14; etc.). When Paul talks about justification by faith not works of the law, he means that we cannot, and do not have to, save ourselves by our own efforts. If we did, the cross of Christ would be meaningless. But because of the theological error of justification by “faith alone,” we hear more often about the need for the pair “faith and works” than the pair “faith and repentance.”

When we are reading Paul on faith not works, however, we should think pastorally, not just theologically. Theologically, we absolutely do need both faith and works. But in our correct *theological* reaction against the error that we are justified by faith alone, not faith and works, we have neglected the *pastoral* significance of Paul's repeated insistence that we cannot achieve good works by relying on ourselves but can achieve them by repenting and relying on Jesus.

As a result, today's pastoral ministry cannot adequately lead us to achieve the good works, especially in the area of social action, that grace calls us to. For the pastoral question is

not whether we need good works in order to be saved but how to minister so that Catholics actually do the good works that theology tells us we need to do. That is what pastoral ministry is about, namely, what Catholics need to know to successfully cooperate with grace.

The combination “faith and repentance” is the answer to that pastoral question, the question of how Christian good works are actually accomplished. Catholics need to know that we don’t achieve good works in the Christian sense by our own power and virtue but by the repentance and belief that gives Jesus’ power and virtue permission to work in us. Catholics need to know that repentance is decision that we are responsible for, but repentance is *not* a decision to make ourselves better. It is a decision to allow Jesus to make us better.

The attitude of total dependence on God preserves us from pride in whatever success we have in living the Christian life. We are totally dependent on God’s grace, not our own power and virtue, and when we succeed in living the Christian life, we have added nothing to what God does but just allowed him to work. On the other hand, the same attitude preserves us from discouragement in our failures. God knows our helplessness and dependence on him, and he has freely willed to save us by his own power; all we have to do is let him.

Section VII.

To explain the pastoral significance of ongoing repentance and faith, we have spent time on deep issues like grace and free will and faith and the law. This could give you a false impression about how you should minister so that already sacramentalized and catechized Catholics can be led to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.

For Catholics to be properly disposed to cooperate with grace, you must teach them what repentance and belief, as opposed to saving ourselves and making ourselves better, really are. But teaching what repentance and belief are would not be enough to personally evangelize Catholics. Thinking that it would be enough would be jumping to another false pastoral conclusion.

On Pentecost, Peter evangelized by calling people to repentance but NOT giving them a teaching on justification by faith (see Ac 2:12-42). What did he do instead? He proclaimed the glorious *objective* truth about what Jesus has done for us. But he did not present that truth as a catechetical teaching. His proclamation of the objective truth was a call for his listeners to make a *subjective*, that is, interior, response to what Jesus did for them; it was a call for them to personally believe the truth about what Jesus did for them. Peter didn’t have to teach about the nature of faith as our personal response to Jesus, because his proclamation about Jesus was itself a call for that kind of personal response.

“Faith comes through hearing” (Rm 10:17, NAB). But it does not come from hearing about the virtue of faith; it comes from hearing about Jesus and what he did for us. You, on the other hand, are preaching to people who have already received catechetical teaching on the virtue of doctrinal faith. So you have to make clear to Catholics that their spirituality has to be based on a personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior that goes beyond doctrinal faith.

Catholics do need catechetical teaching about what it means to repent and believe, as

opposed to being justified by our own efforts. But without a proclamation of who Jesus is and what he did for us, teaching about faith and repentance won't bear the fruit it should. Catholics would know everything about faith but never have the chance to hear the OBJECT of faith proclaimed. And so they would never have a chance to personally respond to that object, which is what Christian spirituality is all about.

But when we do proclaim the glorious objective truth about who Jesus of Nazareth is and what he did, there is another pastoral mistake we can make.

There have been Easter sermons, for example, that proclaimed the Resurrection as the victory of Jesus over sin, Satan and death but that did not make a connection between Jesus' victory and a Catholic's own personal needs. We should proclaim the theology of the Resurrection not just for the sake of admiring Jesus as the really super super-hero. We should proclaim it for the sake of Catholics knowing that Jesus did it for each of us without our having to earn it. We must not just proclaim Jesus' victory; we must proclaim that Jesus won the victory for the sake of each of us and offers it to us as a free gift we do not have to merit. We only have to sincerely want and believe in his victory.

So we must proclaim to each Catholic that the Son of God came and did what he did "for you personally," for the personal salvation of each of us. Jesus does not want glory for himself. He already has all the glory there can be. Jesus is concerned about his *external* glory, that is, the glory he shares with us. That is the reason for the Resurrection, and Catholics need to know it is.

The second talk, Session B, showed that it is not enough for Christian spirituality that Catholics have a vague idea that God is always with us, or that Jesus is present in us because he is in our hearts, or that we are God's children in the same way all people are. And it is not enough to tell Catholics that God loves us, and forgives us, and wants us to get to heaven. God's love has a concrete name and face that Catholics need to know personally: Jesus of Nazareth.

And Jesus came not to teach a general idea about God's love but to do for us everything that we need but have no power to do for ourselves:

atone for our sins and take away our guilt

offer us divine life as a free gift

Only through a concrete person who is both fully divine and fully human, Jesus, could God love us in this specific way. So only by our personal relationship to Jesus can we take advantage of that love.

The retreat's first talk mentioned the difference between understanding a doctrine and understanding its spiritual and pastoral significance. Another way of jumping from a doctrinal truth to a false pastoral conclusion is well illustrated by the pastoral strategy in the late sixties of just preaching love of neighbor. That strategy was based on a syllogism that was perfectly sound from a doctrinal point of view: Since "God is love" and since "He who abides in love abides in God and God in him" (1 Jn 4:8, 16), then when we preach love, we are bringing people to God.

Though theologically impeccable, that syllogism proved to be pastorally inadequate. And there are other theologically impeccable syllogisms that can lead to false pastoral conclusions. One theologically sound syllogism would be “The Church is Jesus still dwelling bodily in the world; so if we bring people to the Church, we are bringing them to Jesus.” Another is “The Eucharist is Jesus himself; so when we bring people to the Eucharist, we are bringing them to Jesus.”

These syllogisms are just as theologically impeccable today as “Teaching people to love is bringing them to God” was in the sixties. But they are also just as pastorally inadequate. Despite being perfectly sound theologically, implementing these syllogisms would not bring Catholics to the personal relation to Jesus of Nazareth that is the spiritual goal of theological truths they contain. Truths about the Church and the sacraments are dependent, in the hierarchy of truths, on truths about what Jesus of Nazareth did for us. Our spirituality must reflect that dependence, and so our pastoral ministry must reflect that dependence.

In summary, this talk has been about the need for certain kinds of pastoral balance: balance between teaching

- a. that repentance as turning our intentions from sin is absolutely needed, and
- b. that repentance is not a decision to make ourselves better; it is a decision to give Jesus permission to do what we can't.

and balance between

- a. explaining repentance and belief as the basic subjective (that is, interior) dispositions on which the rest of our Christian life is based,
- b. proclaiming the joyful objective news of Jesus' victory over sin, death and Satan, and
- c. proclaiming that Jesus won the victory in order to bestow it on each of us as a free, unmerited gift.

What pastors and Catholics need to know about repenting from sin and accepting Jesus as our personal savior cannot really be covered in one talk. So the next talk will go further into them from the pastoral point of view.

Appendix to the Third and Fourth Talks: St. Paul on Faith and Works

*(The presenters need not go into the level of scriptural and theological detail contained in this appendix. But all the presenters, not just the presenters for these two talks, need to be in agreement about the **pastoral** significance of St. Paul's teaching on justification by faith as opposed to works of the law. So all the presenters should read this appendix and talk it over. And all the presenters should be ready to make use of any of this detail — though hopefully not all this detail --- if retreatants' reactions to any of the earlier talks shows that more discussion of this is necessary. Also, this appendix will be included in the retreat manual that is handed out to*

all the retreatants at the end of the retreat.)

Sometimes we hear it said that when Paul contrasts justification by faith to justification by works of the law, he has in mind the ritual, not the moral, laws of the Mosaic code—circumcision, for example. But Paul explicitly connects the law that does not justify with sin, with moral evil not just ritual evil:

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law (1 Co 15:56).

All who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. When Gentiles . . . do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts. . . .

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law . . . while you preach against stealing do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery (Rm 2:12-15-17, 21-22).

No human being will be justified in his [God's] sight by works of the law, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (Rm 3:20).

The law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression (Rm 4:15).

Sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law (Rm 5:13).

Law came in to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more (Rm 5:20).

For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace (Rm 6:14).

If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. . . . Apart from the law, sin lies dead (Rm 7:7, 8).

In Romans 2:25-27, Paul even contrasts being circumcised to keeping the law. In no way can the opposition Paul presents between faith and works of the law refer to only the ritual, not the moral, aspects of the Mosaic law.

The fact that the law of love sums up the moral code does not give works of love the power to justify. Again, the issue here is not whether Christians need to be continually reminded that love and good works are necessary for salvation and be instructed how to love and do good works. They surely do. If knowing those things was adequate for actually getting love and good works, however, we would be justified not by a free gift but by our own merit.

The context of Paul's statements about the law in Romans shows that when he contrasts

justification by faith to justification by “works of law” (Rm 3:28), he does not mean faith apart from repentance; he means faith with repentance. So when he contrasts faith and works of the law in Romans, we should read him as contrasting faith *and repentance* to works of the law. Before even discussing justification by faith apart from works of the law he unequivocally proclaims the need to repent:

Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent [unrepentant] heart you are storing up wrath for yourself For he will render to everyman according to his works. (Rm 2:4-5, 6)

And later when Paul contrasts living by grace to living by law, he assumes that he is addressing people who want to obey the law, that is, who repent in the sense of sincerely intending to do good and avoid evil. “You who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart” (Rm 6:17).

Paul makes it clear, however, that repentance, the intention to change behavior, is insufficient to change behavior:

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members [the flesh] (Rm 7:15-23).

The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed. This is why you do not do what your will intends (Ga 5:17, NAB).

But if even sincere good intentions are insufficient, what is the solution? Romans immediately continues:

Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rm 7:24-25).

Paul answers his question, not by giving further teachings on faith and law, but by proclaiming the Great News that Jesus will deliver him. This proclamation of the great objective truth that Jesus will deliver us is not a catechetical teaching. Like Peter at Pentecost, Paul presents that truth as a call for us to make a subjective (interior) response to it by having faith that Jesus will deliver us from our dilemma, the dilemma that sincerely intending to do good and avoid evil is not enough to accomplish our intentions. He is calling on us to supplement our repentance with the personal faith that Jesus will accomplish in us what our repentance alone cannot.

Two verses later, he adds some more teaching,

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (Rm 8:3-4).

Jesus' work was a conquest (see Jn 16:33), a victory over sin, Satan, the world and death. He won that victory for us, so that we could receive his victory over sin as a free gift.

How do we have access to what Jesus gained for us when we cannot merit it on our own? Knowing that his readers are aware of the need for repentance, Paul answers that we access grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not through works of the law, even the law of love:

That is why it depends on *faith* [as opposed to works], in order that the promise may rest on *grace* [a freely given gift as opposed to something we have to earn] (Rm 4:16).

Since we are justified by *faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this *grace* in which we stand. (Rm 5:1-2)

For this last sentence some ancient authorities have "we have obtained access *by faith* to this grace". For our purposes "by faith" is redundant (not that Paul is above redundancy). The context of Romans could not make it clearer that, assuming we have repented, faith in Jesus' merits, as opposed to any merit earned by our good works, is the way we obtain access to grace.

When we obtain the free gift of divinizing grace, we also receive the supernatural virtue of divine love; for to be justified in God's eyes, we must have love. From the love obtained by faith come works of love, since belief with repentance amounts to permission for God to create works of love in us. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love" (Ga 5:6).

Of course, as a desire to perform acts of love, repentance is itself a form of love. It is even a supernatural form of love, since it results from our allowing actual grace to cause repentance in us. But only when repentance is supplemented by faith is the virtue of supernatural love that comes with divinizing grace at work in us. On the other hand, faith is all that we need in addition to repentance to fulfill our sincere desire to live divinizing grace's life of supernatural love.

This is the meaning of justification by faith as opposed to justification by works of the law, whether the moral code or the law of love. Assuming we are repentant, our access to grace is through faith, not works. Those who sincerely want the gift, which includes recognizing their need for it and their inability to obtain it by their own merits, obtain it by believing in the love of the giver.

Theologically, we can say we are justified by faith and works of love. But "justified by" can mean different things. Although we are justified "by love" in the sense of being justified by *having* and *using* that virtue, we must still ask what we are "justified by" in the *pastoral* sense of what lets us *acquire* that virtue and *allow* it to work.

In that sense we are justified "by faith and repentance," not by love; for we acquire love by faith and repentance. And while Catholics certainly need to know the *doctrinal* meaning of the need for both faith and works, that knowledge is not sufficient for them to know the *spiritual* significance of successfully achieving good works by faith and repentance as opposed to by faith

and works (which would amount to, circularly, achieving good works by achieving good works).⁴ The goal of pastoral ministry must be the achievement of good works.

Usable Quotes

Exhortations to Rejoice:

1. Rejoice in the Lord always! I say it again. Rejoice! (Ph 4:4, NAB)
2. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances. For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. (1 Th 5:16-18)

Salvation by Grace:

3. It is no longer I who live [act], but Christ who lives [acts] in me (Ga 2:20).
4. I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me (1 Co 15, 10).
5. For God is the one producing in you both the to will [to choose to do something] and the to do [to carry out the choice] (Ph 2:13; literal translation).
6. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ep 2:8-10).
7. We have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (2 Co 4:7).
8. For this I toil, striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me (Col 1:29).
9. I can do all things in him who strengthens me (Ph 4:13).
10. To him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (Ep 3:20-21).
11. Cleanse me from my unknown faults (Ps 19:13, NAB).
12. Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Ps 139:23-24).

God Will Do Everything for Us:

13. I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Ph 1:6).

14. (Jesus) will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord (1 Co 1:8).
15. May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. (1 Th 5:23-24)
16. I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances (Ezk 36:27).
17. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me (Ps 138:8).

Our Sins Have Already Been Forgiven:

18. In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them (2 Co 5:19).
19. You who once were estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death (Col 1:21-22).
20. (Christ) cancelled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross (Col 2:14).
21. For if, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life (Rm 5:10).
22. Upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed (Is 53:5).

Faith Not Works Means Faith AND Repentance:

Before even discussing justification by faith apart from works of the law in *Romans*, Paul unequivocally proclaims the need to repent:

23. Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But by your hard and impenitent (unrepentant) heart you are storing up wrath for yourself. . . . For he will render to everyman according to his works. (Rm 2:4, 6)

Later when Paul is contrasting living by grace to living by law, he assumes that he is addressing people who want to obey the law, that is, who repent in the sense of sincerely intending to do good and avoid evil:

24. You who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart (Rm 6:17).

He makes it clear, however, that repentance, the intention to change behavior, is insufficient to change behavior:

25. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. . . . I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members (the flesh) (Rm 7:15-23).
26. The flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh; the two are directly opposed. This is why you do not do what your will intends (Ga 5:17, NAB).

But if even sincere good intentions are insufficient, what is the solution? Paul continues:

27. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rm 7:24-25). . . . For God has done what the law weakened by the flesh could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (Rm 8:3-4).

Mustard-Seed Sized Faith:

28. I assure you, if you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you would be able to say to this mountain, “Move from here to there,” and it would move. Nothing would be impossible for you (Mt 17:20; NAB; see Lk 17:6).

Endnotes

¹ Congregation for the Clergy, *The General Directory for Catechesis*, 1998, 39.

² *Ibid.*, 62.

³ See Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, Ch. 4, and *God and the Permission of Evil*.

⁴ The first sense of “justified by” concerns what constitutes justification, what it is—in technical terminology, formal causality; the second sense concerns what brings it into existence—efficient causality.