

Session E — Morning of the Third Day

Fourth Talk

Important Information for the Speaker

Given the orientation of post-Trent pastoral training toward theology rather than spirituality, many pastors are not used to thinking about repenting and believing, accepting Jesus as personal Lord and Savior, from the perspective of Catholic spiritual formation. So we need to devote more than one talk to the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry. We need to explain how initial pre-catechetical evangelization relates to the advanced formation Catholics require once they have a personal relation to Jesus.

Without further discussion of repenting and believing as the foundation of Christian spirituality, the retreatants might jump to the false conclusion that once Catholics have a personal relation to Jesus, pastors can take justification by repentance and faith for granted and talk solely about other things. But Jesus made sure the apostles kept hearing “Repent and believe the Great News” even as he gave them advanced teaching. And the pastors who wrote the epistles constantly reminded their converts of the greatness of the glorious and entirely unmeritable Gift of God.

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:

- The fruitfulness of the sacraments and of continuing catechesis depends on the regular reinforcement of personal faith and repentance as the essential foundations of all other dimensions of the Christian life.
- Catholics need to know that everything else we need comes from the uncomplicated foundation of accepting Jesus as personal Lord (repent) and Savior (believe).
- Catholics need to know that we live the whole of the Christian life by allowing Jesus to work in us and that we can rely on him to do it.
- 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.

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 will the retreatants understand how to present these points?

1. To cooperate with grace Catholics need to know many things:
 - a. They need to know: what to repent of, which means knowing Christian morality and the laws of the Church; the difference between mortal and venial sins; that Jesus distributes all his grace through the Church and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist; about prayer, penance good works and Church dogma.
 - b. Today, they especially need sexual morality based on the infinite dignity of God's children and of sex as our ability to procreate children of God.
2. Catechesis and spiritual instruction will be without power unless they are based on our continuously renewed relation to Jesus as personal Lord (repentance) and Savior (trust in him, not in ourselves).
3. We must exhort Catholics to try harder, but do not put more emphasis on calls to try harder than on proclaiming the Great News. Homilies often give Catholics more burdens. But the core meaning of the rest of the Mass is that Jesus took our burdens to himself.
4. The apostles, not the crowds, received advanced teaching that presupposed the constant reinforcement of "Repent and believe the Great News" that the apostles heard as they went from town to town.
5. The visible aspects of Christianity are much easier to focus on than the invisible; so pastors must ensure, as the epistles do, that the invisible aspects are regularly reinforced.
6. The evangelistic approach to pastoring need not produce a "Jesus and me" attitude that sees no need for the Church. If we don't seek the help Jesus gives through the Church either we have not truly repented or we don't truly believe we need Jesus' help.
7. If a "predominant fault" continues though we have repented, God can use the problem to increase our awareness of our dependence on him and increase our faith by perseverance in asking in faith for the sincere desire to do his will.
8. The most important thing the Lord teaches us when our faults continue is to be as forgiving and patient with others as we want the Lord to be with us.
9. If a serious fault continues, we must seek objective counsel, spiritual and/or professional, from another person. Never lack the humility to seek the "secular" help, like psychotherapy or membership in AA.
10. Preaching must not make faith an inner subjective search or an athletic feat. "Mustard-seed-sized" faith means putting our eyes on Jesus' strength, not our own.
11. Evangelizing must consider the needs of different Catholics. Don't make good Catholics feel they are doing something wrong if they do not yet have the joy of a personal relation to Jesus. Tell them that Jesus has much more for them.
12. Protestants see us as a sacramental rather than an evangelical church. Today, we must be

just as evangelical as we are sacramental. If not, we putting up the walls and roof of the building without the foundation.

13. Summing up the retreat so far: The regularly reinforced foundation of our spiritual lives must be an appreciation that Christianity is good beyond our wildest dreams, because it is God's own infinite life and is an entirely free gift.

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. To cooperate with grace Catholics need to know more than that they must repent and believe.
- II. But Catholics also know that all the other dimensions of Christian life are based on our ongoing, continuously renewed relation to Jesus as Lord (repent) and Savior (belief).
- III. Christianity is radically different from other religions. Our pastoral ministry must reflect that difference.
- IV. Catholics may have problems with or misunderstand the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry.
- V. There are some mistakes to avoid in the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry.
- VI. Some Protestants classify churches as evangelical or sacramental, but not both. We should be both according to *The Catechism*, 1072.

- VII. To sum up all this retreat has said so far: To cooperate fully with grace Catholics need to know that Christianity is good beyond our wildest dreams. Why is it so good?

Expanded Outline

- I. To cooperate with grace Catholics need to know more than that they must repent and believe.
- A. They certainly need to know what to repent of, which means knowing Christian morality and the laws of the Church. They need to know the difference between mortal and venial sin.
 - B. They need to know that they must grow beyond avoiding sin to doing the Lord's will in all things, and they need to know what they must do to grow in that way.
 - 1. They need to know that Jesus distributes all his grace through the Church and the Sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
 - 2. They need instruction in prayer, penance and good works.
 - C. They need deeper instruction in Church dogma.
 - D. In our post-Christian world, they especially need instruction in Christian sexual morality.

Here hand out copies of Appendix A, on the connection between the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry and sexual morality.

- II. But Catholics also know that all the other dimensions of Christian life are based on our ongoing, continuously renewed relation to Jesus as Lord (repent) and Savior (belief).
- A. Catechesis and spiritual training will be without power, if they are not based on our ongoing, continuously renewed relation to Jesus as personal Lord (repent) and Savior (trust in him, not in ourselves).
 - B. We must call Catholics to advanced repentance. Exhort them to try harder. Challenge them to full discipleship.
 - 1. Calling for advanced repentance without proclaiming that Jesus will be the one doing it in them puts on them the burden that Jesus took on himself.
 - 2. If pastors do not regularly reinforce the fact that Jesus will do everything for us, exhortations to try harder can be telling Catholics to make themselves better, rather than give Jesus permission to make us better.
 - 3. Pleas to try harder can only succeed if they are founded on continuous reinforcement of the reasons the Great News is great enough to be worth trying harder for. Calls to advanced repentance must be balanced by

regular proclamations that Jesus has won the victory for us.

Doing what full discipleship calls for requires nothing more on our part than sincerely wanting to do it and giving Jesus permission to do it in us.

- C. In today's pastoring, there is more emphasis on calls to try harder than on proclamations of the Great News that Jesus will do all things for us, if we let him.
 - 1. After hearing the homily, Catholics leave Mass with more burdens. But the core meaning of the rest of the Mass is that Jesus took our burdens from us and put them on himself.
 - 2. Catholics need to know that they must make choices and carry them out. But they also need to know that when they make and carry out choices, God is the one causing them to do it.
 - 3. The sufficiency of faith and repentance does not mean we do not have to make efforts. But if we truly desire to make the efforts (repent), we can't need anything more to fulfill our desire than to ask God with faith.
- D. Because the visible aspects of Christianity are much easier to focus on than the invisible, pastors must ensure that the invisible aspects are regularly reinforced.

III. Christianity is radically different from other religions. Our pastoral ministry must reflect that difference.

- A. Other religions are human beings' attempts to lift themselves up to God. Christianity is God himself reaching down and lifting us up to him.
 - 1. All religions have doctrines on which moral, spiritual and liturgical practices are based.
 - 2. What is principally based on Christianity's doctrine is not practices but a relation to a person, Jesus of Nazareth.
 - 3. Christianity's practices just follow from our relation to that person.
- B. Catholics need to appreciate that difference between Christianity and all other religions.
 - 1. Would people who heard all your homilies for the last year know that Christianity is so radically different from other religions? Would they know that Christianity is something God does for us, not that we do for him?
 - 2. Or would people who heard all your homilies think that Christians are just like everyone else, trying to save themselves by practices that follow from

belief in a set of doctrines?

- C. Think about how the greatest seminary teacher of all, Jesus, taught future pastors. And think about how his “seminarians” pastored their converts.
1. The way Jesus taught the apostles: They heard “Repent and Believe the Great News” (Mk 1:15) repeatedly as Jesus traveled.
 - a. Jesus gave the apostles advanced teaching not meant for the crowds, but only against the repeated background of “Repent and believe the Great News” which the apostles heard as they moved from town to town.
 - b. The other teachings Jesus meant only for the apostles presupposed the constant reinforcement of that foundation. Is Catholic formation like that today?
 2. The apostles imitated Jesus by never assuming that they did not need to reinforce Christians’ awareness of the greatness and freedom of the Great News.
 3. Our guides for balance between giving advanced teaching and reinforcing Christian foundations are the epistles and the hierarchy of Christian truths.
- IV. Catholics may have problems with or misunderstand the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry.
- A. Some Catholics, clergy and lay, in pastoral ministry fear a “Jesus and me” view of Christianity that sees no need for the Church.
1. But we can’t blame all pastoral failure on the lack of Catholics’ *personal* response if they don’t understand *personally* accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.
 2. Personal evangelism needn’t lead to a privatized Christianity. But a pastoral ministry not based on personal evangelization can lead to a lukewarm institutional Christianity.
 - a. Believing that Jesus will do everything for us does not mean we don’t need help to live as Christians; it means the opposite. We continuously need his help to make decisions by which we avoid sin and grow in his life.
 - b. Permitting Jesus to save us means continuously seeking all the help he offers us. If we don’t, we haven’t fully repented or don’t really believe we are helpless on our own.
 3. The most important thing Catholics need to learn after being personally

evangelized is that their perseverance and growth in Christianity depends on their being faithfully with other Christians in his Kingdom, the Church, with all its sacramental, teaching and leadership ministries.

Catholics especially need to be reminded that the Church is Jesus continuing to live physically in the world and giving us the grace we need through his sacramental actions.

4. Still, the most basic reason for the Church is not the distribution of grace but the fact that God is a family of persons. We can't receive Jesus without being united with our brothers and sisters in God's Kingdom.
- B. If we have taken advantage of all the help Jesus gives us, why do we still have a predominant faults or faults?
1. Overcoming a "predominant fault" can require many things (the sacraments, prayer, penance, counsel, good works, etc.). But if we are properly instructed in what do to and do not do it, either we have not truly repented or are putting faith in our own ability, not in Jesus.
 - a. If we worry that we haven't sincerely repented, our job is to admit that we are helpless to repent without his grace and ask him with faith for the grace to repent.
 - b. We must ask in faith for the sincere desire to do God's will. If we do, we have already cooperated with the grace of repentance. But asking for that desire with faith is the place to start.
 2. If a fault continues for some reason though we have repented, God can use that problem for our spiritual benefit.
 - a. Jesus can use that problem to strengthen our faith by increasing our awareness of our dependence on him and increasing our faith through our perseverance in asking for his help, despite the temptation to discouragement.
 - b. We might have a blockage stemming from a nonmoral psychological or physical problem that Jesus will heal when perseverance has allowed our faith to grow sufficiently.
 - c. Or there might be a deeper spiritual problem like a failure to forgive that Jesus will deal with when our faith has grown sufficiently. (Quote Ps 19:13, NAB; 139:23–24).
 3. The most important thing the Lord teaches us when our faults continue is this: We need to be as forgiving and patient with others as we want the Lord to be with us.

- a. No repentance is more important for our spiritual growth than repenting of not forgiving others. (Mt 6:14–15).
 - b. The context of “Be perfect as your heavenly Father” is perfection with respect to loving our enemies as he loves both the just and the unjust. (Mt 5:48).
 - c. It is not the perfect witness of faultless individual Christians that will convert the world. It is the love of Christians for other Christians despite their imperfections, shown by our forgiveness of and patience with one another: (see Jn 13:34–35; 17:20–26).
 - d. At this point, the speaker should pause and ask the retreatants to pray that when we fall in the future, God will remind us to give others the forgiveness and patience we want him to give us.
4. If a serious fault continues, we must especially seek counsel, spiritual and/or professional. “Someone who is his own doctor has a fool for a client.”
- a. We need a spiritual director who can give us an objective discernment of things like:
 - i. Whether and how we are not really doing what we need to do
 - ii. Whether our fault has a nonspiritual cause
 - iii. Whether we are putting ourselves back “under the law” by trying to save ourselves by our own efforts.
 - b. A Christian, clergy or lay, must never lack the humility to seek the “secular” help, like a psycho-therapist or membership in AA, appropriate to a particular problem.
5. Saying that salvation is as *simple* as allowing God to work in us by repenting and believing does not mean that cooperating with grace is always *easy*.
- a. Turning from sin or toward more commitment and good works is not always easy.
 - b. It is not always easy to have faith during our trials. But Catholics need to know that God perfects us by permitting us to have trials.
 - i. The difficulties of trials don’t disprove the simplicity of repenting and believing. They reinforce it by reinforcing our awareness of our dependence on grace. They show that

relying on Jesus is all we can do in the last analysis.

- ii. We can't choose to avoid suffering altogether. We can only choose to face our sufferings without Jesus or the "easier yoke and lighter burden" (Mt 11:30) of facing them with him.

V. There are some mistakes to avoid in the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry.

A. We must avoid two three unbalanced ways of preaching justification by repentance and faith:

1. The "inner search": Too much emphasis on the subjective side of responding to the Great News can make us eat our hearts out wondering if we are truly repentant or have enough faith.

Hearing the objective greatness of the Great News proclaimed should put our eyes on Jesus, not on ourselves. We must preach faith in Jesus, not faith in our faith; faith is just a response to the objective truth about Jesus and the great thing he did for us.

2. The "bench press": We make faith look like an athletic feat that we must strain to achieve.

True faith is the opposite; it lets Jesus take the burden that we cannot carry.

B. The meaning of "mustard-seed-sized" faith: don't look inside and worry about how much faith you have. Just use whatever faith you have and let me give you enough.

C. We must remember the needs of different kinds of Catholics when we evangelize.

1. Some Catholics are still "under the law" in different ways.
 - a. Some Catholics are trying to save themselves out of an unhealthy kind of fear. They need to know that if we sincerely want divine life, all we have to do is let God give it to us.
 - b. Some Catholics do not yet see Christianity as great news but resent its "restrictions." They need to know how glorious the Gift of God is.
 - c. Some Catholics make their good life a matter of personal pride. They need to know we have no righteousness of our own.
 - d. Pastoral ministry that simplifies responding to grace by just preaching love takes us from being under one kind of law, a moral

code, to another kind of law, the law of love. This leaves out the crucial link between receiving grace and performing good works: allowing Jesus to cause us to perform good works.

- D. There are many sincerely good and virtuous Catholics who do not yet have the joy of a conscious relation to Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior.
1. Our evangelization must not suggest that this is their fault, that they are doing something wrong or omitting to do something right.
 2. We evangelize them by telling them that Jesus has much more for them, as Jesus told the apostles at the last supper and at the Ascension that he had much more for them.
 3. Leading already virtuous Catholics to a conscious personal relation to Jesus is important not just for improving their own spirituality. When they have the joy that comes from a personal relation to Jesus, how much more could they do for the salvation of others?
- VI. Some Protestants classify churches as evangelical or sacramental, but not both. We should be both according to *The Catechism*, 1072.
- A. We must be both sacramental and evangelical to fight secularism.
1. In the past, pastors did not have to make personal evangelization a priority. The family did it, and society did not interfere.
 2. In post-Christian society, until we become as evangelical as we are sacramental, we are de facto trying to use the sacraments to accomplish things they were never meant to accomplish.
- B. The speaker should quote St. Paul:
- Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Great News (1 Co 1:17).
- C. *Operato* the grace for our personal relation to Jesus comes through the Church and the sacraments. *Operantis* the quality of our response to the sacraments' grace and adherence to the Church comes from our personal relation to Jesus.
- D. Despite all their theological shortcomings, evangelical preachers are better trained than we are at laying the pre-catechetical foundation of Christian spirituality, a personal relation to Jesus.
1. Since we have the sacerdotal sacraments and integral doctrine, we have the ability to build on that foundation that they do not have.
 2. But until we become as evangelical as we are sacramental, we are trying

to put up the walls and roof of the building without securely laying the foundation.

VII. To sum up all this retreat has said so far: To cooperate fully with grace Catholics need to know that Christianity is good beyond our wildest dreams.

A. Why is it so good?

1 Because of what it is, God's own infinite life.

2 Because it is an entirely free gift that we do not have to merit.

B. A conscious appreciation of both reasons why the Great News is so great must be the regularly reinforced spiritual foundation of the whole of Catholics' spiritual lives.

Explanation of the Outline:

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

Let us assume that we have succeeded in bringing our parishioners to the joy that comes from being personally evangelized and understanding what Christianity is. Where does pastoral ministry go from there?

Section I.

Despite the third talk's, Session C's, explanations, you might still think that calling faith and repentance "all we need to cooperate with grace" makes things too simple. That can sound as if Christians only have to sit back and watch God work. If we were saying that, we would be offering you a recipe for sure spiritual death.

To cooperate with grace Catholics certainly need to know a lot more than that repenting and believing the Great News, accepting Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior, is the foundation of the Christian life. They absolutely need to know what to repent of. They need teaching about the moral laws of the Christian life and about the difference between sins that deprive us of that life and sins that do not. They also need to know about the necessity of growing from wanting to avoid serious sin to wanting to do the Lord's will in all things. And they need to know what they have to do to grow in that way.

They especially need to know that Jesus distributes all his grace through the Church and the sacraments; the only way they will persevere and grow in Christianity is to participate faithfully in the life of the Church, which is Jesus continuing to be really present in the world. So they need instruction on grace and the sacraments, especially the greatest, the Eucharist. They need teaching about the laws of the Church and which of those laws involve serious sin. And, of course, this list of what Catholics need instructions on could be extended.

Sexual morality is an area of special need for catechesis in our post-Christian world. The sad truth is that many younger people do not even know what the Church's teachings on sexual

morality are. And many Christians who know what traditional Christian sexual morality was no longer take it seriously. That even includes some Christians, both Catholic and Protestants, who call themselves evangelical and claim a to have a personal relation to Jesus.

We do not have time to go into sexual morality during the retreat. But after this talk we will hand out a brief paper on how to integrate teaching on sexual morality with the evangelical approach to pastoral ministry. We do not have to separate that moral teaching from the evangelical approach.

In fact, we cannot expect moral teaching to bear fruit apart from personal evangelism. The paper will explain that if Catholics know how great the Great News really is, they will have an appreciation of the sacredness of human sexuality deeper than anyone else could have.

So catechesis and instruction in the spiritual life will never be out of business. In particular, the Christian morality that grace calls us to, as well as the roles of the Church and the sacraments in the distribution of grace, need to be regularly recalled to Catholics' attention.

Section II.

But catechesis and spiritual training will be without power, if they are not based on our ongoing, continuously renewed relation to Jesus as personal Lord (repent) and Savior (trust in him, not in ourselves). If knowing what practices Christians need to perform was sufficient for actually producing Christian behavior, we would not be saved by free gift.

The reason our cooperation with grace depends on theological and moral catechesis is that the acts of will God creates in us are not mechanical acts but conscious voluntary acts. He causes them through our awareness of what we are doing and what is at stake in what we are doing. They cannot be voluntary and personal acts unless we know what we are doing and why.

So on the one hand, the fact that, in the last analysis, all we have to do is to allow God to work in us does not mean Catholics don't have to keep making virtuous decisions and carrying them out. But on the other hand, when we look back on any virtuous choices we may have made, we need to know that Jesus was really the agent causing us to make those choices, and that we added nothing to what he did other than ~~gave~~ give him permission to do it.

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

It is God who causes both the choice and the carrying out of what we choose to do. (Ph 2:13, literal translation)

When we make a virtuous choice, it is completely caused by God, since any act of any creature must be completely caused by God. Still, it is a free act on our part because we could have refrained from permitting him to cause us to make that choice. But if we refrain from allowing him to cause a virtuous choice, we are completely responsible for the absence of what God wanted to cause, the absence of what should be there. And that is the nature of evil, the absence of what should be there, the lack, the nonexistence of a good that should have been there. So if we make a virtuous choice, all the goodness comes from God. But if an act is evil

because some necessary good is missing from it, we are completely responsible for the evil.

So this retreat is in no way suggesting that you put aside everything your training has told you about what Catholics need to know. We need pastoral exhortations to, for example, “be more committed,” to “internalize our faith,” to “take our baptismal vows seriously,” to “have more attentive minds and hearts when we are at Mass,” etc. But how do we accomplish these things; where do we get those dispositions?

Exhortations like those amount to calls to advanced repentance, to wanting to do God’s will fully, not just wanting to avoid sin. But without equally prominent proclamations that it is Jesus who will do these things in us, if we ask him with faith and repentance, such exhortations unintentionally make repentance a decision for self-improvement, for making ourselves better by our own efforts. Then we wonder why those exhortations do not bear more fruit.

When we said that, *if properly understood*, ongoing repentance and belief in the Great News are all we need to cooperate with grace, “properly understood” meant that to grow in the Christian life, our repentance has to grow beyond the minimum of turning from serious sin. It must grow to wanting to do God’s will in all things.

So to help us grow in grace, the Church must call us to advanced repentance; it must challenge us to full discipleship without sugarcoating what that means. But we cannot possibly achieve full discipleship by our own power. It is literally true that what Christianity asks is humanly impossible: to die unto ourselves and live for Jesus. The speaker should quote Jesus saying:

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. (Lk 9:23-24)

If the Church presents discipleship as it truly is but we hear that call with merely human ears, the result can only be discouragement. A strong call to discipleship must be accompanied by an equally strong proclamation that Jesus will do it for us, a proclamation of Jesus’ free gift of complete victory over everything that holds us back. “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Ph 4:13).

Many of the doctrinally sound and pastorally well intentioned homilies Catholics hear week after week amount to “Try harder.” Such homilies can have the effect of placing a burden on the hearers, the burden of making themselves better. Unless we know that Jesus has taken all our burdens on himself and already won the victory over them for us, we cannot respond successfully to calls to do better. Doing the things that make us better requires nothing more on our part than cooperating with grace, and we cannot properly cooperate with grace unless we know that our part is just to want and permit Jesus to give us the free victory he has already won for us.

Many more priests and deacons do an excellent job of calling us to various aspects of full discipleship than of proclaiming the faith that alone frees those who sincerely desire it (the fully repentant) to be disciples in the fullest sense. If we don’t equally reinforce the truth that we can rely on Jesus to be the one doing it, regular calls for advanced repentance amount to

regularly giving Catholics greater burdens. So Catholics leave Mass every week with more burdens. But the core meaning of the rest of the Mass is that Jesus has taken our burdens from us and put them on himself.

Continuously repeated pleas of “Try harder!” are certainly necessary. This retreat is just trying to help those pleas actually succeed, actually bear fruit. They can only succeed if they are made on the continuously reinforced foundation of the reasons why the Great News is great enough to be worth our trying harder. Ongoing repentance and belief never cease to be the foundations of every new step in Christian growth.

So we must not jump to the pastoral conclusion that after personal conversion we can cease preaching about repenting and believing in the sense of accepting Jesus as personal Lord and Savior. Contrary to some of our beloved evangelical brethren, taking Jesus as our Lord and Savior is not something that happens once and for all. Repenting and believing have to be ongoing and growing.

Catholics’ awareness of the need for ongoing repentance, and our awareness that all we need for our reformed desires to be fulfilled is ongoing joyful belief in what Jesus does for us, must be regularly reinforced. We cannot accept the challenge of doing God’s will in all things if we aren’t regularly reminded that Jesus will do it for us; that we don’t have to rely on our own power and virtue.

Pastors do not have to reinforce the reasons why the Great News is great every time they call people to try harder. But they must reinforce them regularly for us never to forget just how good Christianity really is. Again, the visible aspects of Christianity are much easier to focus on than the invisible; so we must ensure that the invisible aspects are regularly reinforced.

Section III.

Christianity is radically different from other religions, and Catholic pastoral ministry should reflect that difference. Other religions consist of doctrines on which liturgical and moral practices are based. Christianity has doctrines, but what is based on them is not principally a set of practices. What is based on Christian doctrines is principally a relation to a person, Jesus of Nazareth. The practices follow from our relation to that person, and Catholics need to know that.

But there is a more fundamental way of expressing the difference between Christianity and other religions. Other religions are human beings trying to lift themselves up to God. Christianity is God himself reaching down and lifting us up to him.

Ask yourself: Would people who knew nothing of Christianity but then heard all the homilies in your parish for a year know that they were hearing about a religion that is so radically different from other religions? Would they know unequivocally that we believe the Christian life is something God does in us, not something we have to do by our own power and virtue? Would they know unequivocally that God gives us the Christian life as a totally free, unmerited gift that we get just by sincerely wanting to live it and by asking for it with faith in God’s love?

Or would they judge from the homilies that Christians are just like everyone else: people

trying to save themselves by belief in a set of doctrines, and therefore belief in an institution, and therefore by keeping the institution's rules? If people who knew nothing of Christianity heard the homilies in many parishes, they could only learn how radically different Christianity is if they were able to read between the lines.

But then the pastoral effectiveness of those homilies for people already Christian depends upon their reading between the lines. Even homilies that are spiritually deep can be misleading to anyone not firmly grounded in the truth that Jesus, not our reformed intentions, will produce the spiritual acts those homilies call for. Such homilies are really appropriate for people who already have this kind of personal relationship to the Lord and are in environments that continually remind them of it and call them to renew it.

Think about how the greatest seminary teacher of all, Jesus, taught future pastors. And think about how his "seminarians" pastored their converts. Jesus gave the apostles plenty of advanced teaching that he did not give the crowds. But as the apostles followed Jesus from town to town, they heard over and over again "Repent and believe the Great News of the Kingdom." So Jesus gave the apostles advanced teaching only against the background of his regularly proclaiming "Repent and believe the Great News." That regular reinforcement of the uncomplicated "Repent and believe" must have been an important reason why the advanced teaching Jesus also gave the apostles bore fruit in them.

Jesus didn't give the crowds details about the Kingdom. In effect, he was saying: "The details will come later. If you repent and believe now, you will be fully prepared for the details when they come. If you don't repent and believe now, giving all the details in the world won't help you."

Jesus did give the apostles more detail about the Kingdom. But most of his advanced teaching was on spirituality; less was on theology and ecclesiology. And the necessary background for the fruitfulness of that teaching was the reinforcement of the foundation of repentance and belief that the apostles regularly heard.

Some Catholics have said that if the apostles had pastored the way we do, Christianity would not have survived. How did the apostles conduct their pastoral ministry? Our first pastors usually began their epistles by joyfully reminding the converts of the great things Jesus has done for each of us, even though the converts already knew those things. Did the apostles ever tire of talking about Jesus and the great things Jesus did for us? Were the things he did great but not great enough to keep us from getting tired of hearing them? Did the apostles assume that because their converts had already heard those things proclaimed, the converts did not need to have them regularly reinforced?

The apostles also gave their converts plenty of commands and advanced teaching about how to behave and about how crucial it was that they follow those commands and teachings. But the apostles knew they were giving that advanced teaching to people whom they were also regularly reminding of the joyful greatness of the Great News. So the apostles' pastoral ministry followed the example of the greatest pastor: They gave Christians advanced teaching but did not expect that teaching to bear fruit apart from the regular reinforcement of the Great News.

Again, what we must strive for is pastoral balance. One guide for that balance is the

hierarchical fact that some Christian truths depend on others. But if you find the hierarchy of truths too abstract an idea to be helpful to you, let the epistles be your guide for balance. When you read the epistles, however, don't miss the pastoral forest for the theological trees. Notice the overall pastoral approach. And notice the relative emphasis put on different things Christians need to be reminded of in comparison to the emphasis our pastoral ministry usually puts on those things.

If Catholic pastoral ministry needs improving, it's not because of anything pastors do wrong but because of what they omit to do. Still improving pastoral ministry is not just a matter of adding things, or of emphasizing things now under emphasized, but of adding and emphasizing them in such a way that what we preach and the way we preach it is spiritually balanced. To ensure that balance, we must take seriously the balance the epistles display between regularly reinforcing Christian foundations and presenting advanced Christian teaching. Section IV.

Now we will discuss problems and misunderstandings that some Catholics may have with the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry.

Some Catholics, both clergy and lay, in pastoral ministry fear that emphasizing Jesus as each one's *personal* savior could lead to a "Jesus and me" attitude that sees no need for the Church. But those well intentioned Catholics can't have it both ways: They can't blame the absence of visible fruit from pastoral ministry entirely on people's failure to make the proper *personal* response to grace, and also expect people to respond as they should if they do not know Jesus as their *personal* Savior. The only reason I have the ability to make the proper response to grace is that Jesus has chosen to be my personal savior. And does Jesus not want Catholics to know that he loves us that much?

Still, among the things everyone needs to learn after accepting Jesus personally, one thing has primacy over all the others:

We can persevere and grow in Christ only through the ministries of the Church, which is Jesus still living bodily in the world.

If those who have been personally evangelized take advantage of the Church and its ministries, they will learn and receive everything else they need for persevering and growing in Christ. If they do not take advantage of the Church and its ministries, they cannot get what they need.

So personal evangelism needn't spawn a privatized Christianity. But pastoral ministry that is not based on personal evangelism can spawn an institutional Christianity that is spiritually lukewarm.

And again, in the hierarchy of truths, the most basic reason for the Church is not the distribution of grace. The most basic reason for the Church is the fact that God is a family of persons; so we cannot receive God's life without being united to each other in that family, united in the Kingdom.

Another possible problem is that sincere Catholics may wonder why, if all they have to do is, at bottom, give God permission to work in us, they still have so many faults. But again,

permitting God to sanctify us does not absolve us from making decisions and carrying them out. After conversion, we must decide to do what we need, first, to keep away from sin and, second, to grow in Jesus' life.

Believing that Jesus has done and will do everything for us does not mean we don't need help to live the Christian life. It means the opposite: If we really believe we are helpless on our own, we need to seek all the help that Jesus offers in all the ways he offers it. The connection between, on the one hand, allowing Jesus to save us by believing and repenting and, on the other hand, our ongoing need for all the help Jesus offers us is this:

Permitting Jesus to save us means taking advantage of all the help he offers. So if we don't seek all the help Jesus offers us, we haven't truly repented. For example, in the Act of Contrition, Jesus offers us the wisdom to avoid, not just sin, but the near occasions of sin. To the extent that we do not heed this instruction, we are not willing to take all the help Jesus offers; so we haven't fully repented and fully acknowledged our need for Jesus' help.

Through Scripture and Church tradition, Jesus teaches that he causes his grace to grow in us through the sacraments, prayer, study, spiritual exercises, counsel, penance, good works, etc. Pastoral ministry must especially ensure that Catholics are always reminded of our need for the sacraments, the principal source of the grace by which we lead Christian lives. We cannot persevere and grow in the life of divinizing grace without taking advantage of the help that comes through the sacraments. If we don't permit Jesus to save us by taking advantage of the help he offers us through the sacraments, either we don't really want his help (read: our repentance is insincere), or we don't believe that he will give us the help we need (read: we are not really using the gift of faith).

Still, why do we have our continuing predominant fault or faults, after we have been making use of the sacraments, prayer, and all the other means necessary to get the help Jesus offers us? We may wonder whether we are truly repentant, and indeed we may not be. And if we have not repented, we cannot cooperate with grace. So what is there to do?

We must ask Jesus for the grace to repent, believing that he will give it. He knows that none of us can repent without his grace. Our job is to believe that he knows that and wants to help us. If we do believe that, we will turn to him and admit, to ourselves and to him, that we have a problem we cannot solve on our own, and ask for the grace to sincerely intend to do his will.

If we have requested the grace of repentance sincerely, we have already repented; and so we have already received the grace of repentance and permitted it to work as a matter of objective fact. We do not first love God; he first loves us. Still, if we have reason to think that we have not sincerely repented, the place to start our cooperation with God, from the subjective, psychological point of view, is to ask, with faith, for the grace of sincere repentance.

For example, it might be that there is a blockage stemming from a nonmoral psychological, or even merely physical, problem that Jesus will heal when perseverance has allowed our faith to grow sufficiently. People have seen an apparent moral problem eliminated or alleviated by a supportive environment, good advice, a psycho-pharmacologic drug, or just physical exercise. And there is such a thing as compulsive, not fully voluntary, behavior. At least

one compulsive swearer stopped after he began taking Prozac. But before that, he must have sincerely wanted to stop swearing; otherwise, he could have kept it up despite the Prozac.

Or it might be that there is a deeper spiritual problem, perhaps a failure to forgive someone, we have not recognized as such that needs to be dealt with first, a problem that Jesus plans to deal with at the right time, when our faith has grown sufficiently. There is a reason why the Lord gave us these prayers in the Psalms:

Cleanse me from my unknown faults. (Ps 19:13, NAB)

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)

As we say these prayers, we must have faith that God will do these things for us at the proper time, if we do not withhold permission.

Whatever their source, God is always using our faults to increase our faith in his mercy and increase our humility, our awareness of our dependence on him. But that is not the only way he is using them. Very importantly, he uses them to increase our awareness of the need to forgive and be patient with others. Forgiveness of others and patience with them does not get enough attention when we consider how God uses our continuing faults. God wants to make us perfect in all respects. But when we quote Jesus' command to "be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48), we must not forget that the specific kind of perfection Jesus is talking about in this context is love of our enemies.

The speaker should briefly paraphrase the following passage leading up to "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is" and hand out (or display in PowerPoint) the whole quote:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt 5:44–48)

For us to eventually become perfect in all respects, we must start practicing love and forgiveness for others no matter how imperfect we and they still are. The Lord makes it clear that no repentance is more important than repenting of not forgiving others (see, for example, Mt 6:14–15).

At this point the speaker should interrupt the presentation and ask the retreatants to join him in praying that whenever we fall in the future, God will remind us to give others the forgiveness and patience we want God to give us.

If we continue in a serious fault, we should seek spiritual counsel. A spiritual counselor who knows us well might discern that we sincerely do not want the fault. If so, Jesus is

strengthening our faith by our perseverance in asking with faith, despite the temptation to discouragement in the results that we have seen so far.

For those still not convinced that cooperating with grace is as simple as giving God permission to create good works in us by repenting and believing, let me stress that simple does not mean “easy.” In a crucial sense, Jesus’ “yoke *is* easy” and his “burden light” (Mt 11:30), and we need to understand that sense. But we also need to know that Jesus will perfect his life in us by giving us trials; sufferings are absolutely part of the covenant he offers us. Obviously, turning from sin or turning toward fuller commitment and more good works is *not* always easy; nor is having faith while we are suffering.

But if our trials are not teaching us our weakness and dependence on God’s grace, and so making us more aware of our need for repentance and faith, what point is there in God’s sending them? So the difficulties in living the Christian life do not disprove the simplicity of what we must do to cooperate with grace. They show that giving God permission to change us by repenting and believing is all we can do, in the last analysis.

No human being can escape suffering. But Christians have the choice of suffering with Christ or of trying to face our sufferings without Christ. Which burden is “lighter,” and which yoke is “easier”?

Section V.

Now we will discuss some errors to avoid when implementing the pastoral strategy based on personal evangelization. At least two kinds of errors can result from an unbalanced presentation. One mistake is the “inner search” view of spirituality. The subjective side of Christianity is our response to the Great News. The objective side is the glory of the Great News itself. Too much stress on the subjective side and not enough on proclaiming the objective side can lead to an unhealthy kind of self-reflection. We can eat our hearts out asking if we are truly repentant or have enough faith.

Repenting may require some introspection. But faith is meant to turn our eyes from ourselves and to the Lord. Hearing the Great News proclaimed should put our eyes on Jesus. An unbalanced stress on our need for the interior disposition of faith can create the illusion that we are being asked to put faith in our faith, not faith in Jesus.

The proclamation of the Great News should inspire us to put faith in Jesus, not faith in our own faith. It should not inspire us to obsessively focus inward. If we do, we will always find inadequate faith and virtue. The proclamation should open us to the objective remedy for our subjective inadequacy: Jesus’ own power and virtue now dwelling in us due to our personal relation to him.

The other mistake is the “bench press” view of repenting and believing. Some preachers make faith and repentance sound like athletic feats. Some even close their eyes and shout to the Lord, as if repenting and believing were things we do by straining. (This could also be called the “hernia” view of spirituality.) The truth is the exact opposite. Repentance is not always easy, but genuine faith allows us to trust the Lord and not take on the burden ourselves.

When the apostles asked Jesus to increase their faith, he told them neither to look inside and measure the faith they had nor to strain toward more faith. He simply told them that they only needed faith the size of a grain of mustard seed (Mt 17:20). That means we shouldn't look inside worrying about how much faith we have; if we do, it will never seem that we have enough. Worrying about how much faith we have is the opposite of faith.

In effect, Jesus' answer to "Increase our faith" and his cure for worrying too much about our lack of faith is "Just use whatever faith you have. I will be the one giving you enough faith if you are just willing to let me work in you."

We can also err in our evangelizing of already catechized and sacramentalized Catholics, if we do not keep in mind the needs of different kinds of Catholics. In St. Paul's vocabulary, some sincere practicing Catholics feel and act as if they are still "under the law." Some are still under the law because, out of fear of an unhealthy kind, they are in effect trying to save themselves by their own efforts. Such Catholics need to know that if we sincerely want divine life, all we have to do is to let God give it to us as a free gift.

Some practicing Catholics are still "under the law" because Christianity is not yet Great News for them. They believe in the Church intellectually but resent the "restrictions" it places on them, although they might obey out of fear. Such Catholics need to know how glorious and free the Gift of God is.

Under the law in another way are the modern pharisees who rather than resenting Christian restrictions make their efforts at keeping them a matter of pride. Such Catholics need to know that we have no righteousness of our own.

Pastors sometimes try to simplify the response to grace by just telling us to love. Since love sums up the moral law, the de facto answer to the question how we respond to grace is that we respond primarily by performing works of love of God and neighbor. But without our prior response of ongoing personal acceptance of Jesus as our Lord and Savior—without our prior response to the fact that God first loves us, not we God—we leave out the crucial personal link between grace received from God and acts of love produced in us. For accepting Jesus as personal Lord (repent) and Savior (believe the Great News) is the necessary link between grace and its fruits.

We must preach love, of course. But preaching love without proclaiming justification by faith and repentance replaces one form of law, the moral code, with another form of law, the law of love.

On the other hand, many good and virtuous Catholics who are not under the law still do not have the joy of a conscious personal relation to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. We should personally evangelize them by telling them that Jesus always has much more for them. But we must be careful not to imply that the reason they do not yet have what he wants to give them is any failing on their part. We must not give them the impression that they have been doing anything wrong.

For example, many sincere Catholics have inhibitions about singing at Mass. We should not make them feel guilty for that, as if it was their fault. But they need to know how much more

Jesus has for them if they just accept with faith the free gift he has already given, by asking Jesus, who is already dwelling in them, to be their personal Lord and Savior.

Any practicing Catholic can be saved without a conscious personal relation to Jesus (and those with such a relation can lose salvation). But Catholics are not just called to their own salvation; they are called to advance the salvation of all. If they know how glorious the Great News is and that all they have to do is give Jesus permission to work through them, how much more can those who are already good practicing Catholics contribute to the salvation of others?

So the evangelistic approach to pastoral ministry is not just for the sake of the personal spirituality of individual Catholics; it is for the sake of advancing the Church's work of the salvation of all. (The ninth talk, Session K, develops this aspect of the Great News.)

Section VI.

Some Protestants classify churches as evangelical or sacramental according to the church's pastoral emphasis. All churches have liturgical services and preach a version of the Great News, but some emphasize accepting the proclamation of the Great News as the means of salvation more than they emphasize the sacraments, and some do the opposite. Those who use that distinction look at the pastoral life of Catholics and classify us as a sacramental church rather than an evangelical one.

But in our theological essence, we should be both. (The speaker should quote the following, and either display it by PowerPoint or include it on a handout:)

“The Sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum consilium*, 9); it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity. (*Catechism*, 1072)

So if our pastoral practice conformed to our essence, people should look at us and say, “Hey, the evangelical/sacramental distinction doesn't apply to Catholics. They're just as evangelical as they are sacramental.” The *Catechism* says that if we are not both sacramental *and* evangelical, the liturgy won't produce its fruits as fully as it should.

The reason our current pastoral ministry does not seem as evangelical as it is sacramental is, again, that for centuries pastors haven't had to be trained for personal evangelism, since evangelism took place in the family. Now that we cannot count on the family to lay the foundation of faith and repentance as the key dispositions for responding to sacramental grace, we are in effect (and unintentionally) using the sacraments to accomplish things that they are not meant to accomplish.

Remember that St. Paul said, “Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Great News” (1 Co 1:17). Read:

Christ did not tell me to make the act of celebrating the sacraments (“to baptize”) the main *pastoral* instrument of my priestly ministry. Christ told me that the power that comes from the sacraments is always there; it takes care of itself. He told me that pastoral

work has to focus on what does not take care of itself, the effects that sacramental grace is intended for. He told me to aim at creating the context of faith in his freely given personal indwelling (“to preach the Great News”) that is required for the effectiveness of the sacraments, required because their purpose is to produce and work through that faith.

Again, *operato* the grace for our personal relation to Jesus comes through the sacraments. *Operantis* the quality of our response to sacramental grace depends on our personal relation to Jesus.

Around the world evangelical churches are taking communicants from us because their pastors are better instructed than ours are in laying the evangelical foundations of cooperating with grace. Lacking integral doctrine and the sacraments that require apostolic succession, they cannot adequately build on the foundation they lay. But we too often learn how to build the walls and the roof without learning how to lay the foundation. We understand the theological *ex opere operato*, how sacramental grace produces effects independent of us; evangelicals often practice better than we do the pastoral *ex opere operantis*, fostering the dispositions needed for the lived effects of grace.

To live up to our essence in our pastoral practice, we must learn to be just as evangelical as we are sacramental. The power of the sacraments cannot be fully unleashed against secularism until we become as evangelistic as we are sacramental. As Cardinal Dulles said: [Before reading these quotes from Cardinal Avery Dulles, the speaker should hand them out and ask the retreatants to follow along as he reads. He may also display the quotes in PowerPoint.]

Catholic spirituality at its best has always promoted a deep personal relationship with Christ. In evangelizing we are required to raise our eyes to him and to transcend all ecclesiocentrism. The Church is of crucial importance, but it is not self-enclosed. It is a means of drawing the whole world into union with God through Jesus Christ. Too many Catholics of our day seem never to have encountered Christ. They know a certain amount about him from the teaching of the Church, but they lack direct personal familiarity. . . . The first and highest priority is for the Church to proclaim the good news concerning Jesus Christ as a joyful message to all the world. Only if the Church is faithful to its evangelical mission can it hope to make its distinctive contribution in the social, political, and cultural spheres.¹

Let us hope that the cardinal was also right in saying:

Today we seem to be witnessing the birth of a new Catholicism that, without loss of its institutional, sacramental, and social dimensions, is authentically evangelical.²

Section VII.

Everything this retreat has said so far can be summed up this way. To be disposed to cooperate fully with grace, we need to know how great the Great News really is, how good Christianity really is. How good is it? It is literally good beyond our wildest dreams and beyond anything our intellects could think up on their own.

The goodness of Christianity is so great that it is “unbelievable” if *belief* is understood in an exclusively human sense. Even the Jews of Jesus’ time weren’t ready to believe that the Great

News could be as great as it really is. And if we don't know that Christianity is good beyond our wildest dreams, we are not disposed to cooperate fully with grace; for if we don't know that Christianity is good beyond our wildest dreams, we have not been properly instructed in what the Great News is.

Why is Christianity so good? Both because of what it is, having God's infinite life, and because it is an entirely free gift that God has made as simple as possible for us to get. All we have to do is give him permission, and all we have to do to give him permission is repent and believe. If we don't know how simple God has made it for us to cooperate with grace, we don't know how great the Great News is. If we don't know how great the Great News is, we cannot fully respond to sacramental grace.

Usable Quotes

"Exhortations to Rejoice" Quotes

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)

"Salvation by Grace" Quotes:

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, 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 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. 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)

12. (Jesus) will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord. (1 Co 1:8)
13. 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)
14. 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)
15. The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me. (Ps 138:8)
16. Cleanse me from my unknown faults. (Ps 19:13, NAB)
17. 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)

Advanced Repentance Quote:

18. If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. (Lk 9:23-24)

“Our Sins Have Already Been Forgiven” Quotes:

19. In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them. (2 Co 5:19)
20. You, who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death. (Col 1:21–22)
21. (Christ) canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Col 2:14)
23. 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)
24. 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” Quotes:

Before even discussing justification by faith apart from works of the law in Romans, Paul

unequivocally proclaims the need to repent:

25. 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:

26. 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:

27. I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing 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 that which dwells in my members [the flesh]. (Rm 7:15–16, 18–19, 22–23)

28. 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 continues:

29. 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)

30. . . . 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” Quote:

31. 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)

“The Church Must be BOTH Sacramental and Evangelical” Quote:

32. “The Sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church” (*Sacrosanctum consilium*, 9); it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity. (*Catechism*, 1072)

Endnotes

¹ Avery Dulles, "John Paul II and the New Evangelization," *America*, February 1, 1992, pp. 59–63, emphasis added.

² *Ibid.*