

§ 3. *On the End of the Church, and on her Qualities resulting from this End.*

42. For what end did Christ establish the Church?
Christ established the Church, that by her He might lead all men to eternal salvation.

43. What has the Church to do, in order to lead men to salvation?

She has, 1. To preach the doctrine of Christ to them; 2. To administer to them the means of grace instituted by Christ; and 3. To guide and govern them in the way to eternal life.

44. How has Christ enabled the Church to do all this in a proper manner?

He has, 1. Entrusted the Church with His doctrine, His means of grace, and His powers, by conferring upon her His Teaching, his Priestly, and his Pastoral Office; and 2. He has given her the assistance of the Holy Ghost, in order that she might also perpetually preserve the Divine doctrine uncorrupted, rightly administer the means of grace, and exercise her powers for the salvation of mankind.

(1) *On the Infallibility of the Church.*

45. By whom is the Divine doctrine always preserved pure and uncorrupted in the Church?

By the *Infallible Teaching Body* of the Church.

46. Who composes this Infallible Teaching Body?
The Pope, and the Bishops united with him.

They are also called the *Teaching Church*, or simply the *Church* (Matt. xviii. 17), in contradistinction to the rest of the faithful, who are called the *Hearing Church*.

47. Why is the Teaching Church called infallible?
Because, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost, she is secured against erring both in matters of faith and of morals.

48. Who assures us that the Church cannot err?

Christ Himself, who has promised us, 1. That 'He will be with her all days, even to the consummation of the world' (Matt. xxviii. 20); 2. That 'the Spirit of Truth shall abide with her for ever' (John xiv. 16, 17); 3. That 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against her' (Matt. xvi. 18).

¹ Were it possible that the *Teaching Church* might err, the *Hearing Church* would likewise fall into error, as she is to be instructed and guided by the former; and then the *whole Church* would, contrary to the promise of Christ, be prevailed against by the spirit of lies, or the powers of hell.

49. What does St. Paul call the Church on account of her Infallibility?

St. Paul calls the Church 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Tim. iii. 15).

50. But have there not also been in the Catholic Church some individual Teachers who have fallen into error?

Yes; but this happened only because they taught differently from the whole Teaching Body; for Infallibility is not granted to each one individually, but to the Teachers (Bishops) collectively, when united with the Pope.

If non-Catholics pretend to say that the whole Catholic Church has, in the course of time, departed from the Divine doctrine, and fallen into errors, 1. They manifestly contradict the promises of our Divine Saviour; 2. They condemn all the Holy Fathers of the Church, who taught exactly the same as the Catholic Church teaches; 3. They set themselves at variance with one another, since they have always disagreed among themselves about what properly is Divine doctrine, and what is not; and 4. They must, if the nations had been deceived by the Teaching Church, lay the fault on God, who continually accredited the Catholic Church together with her Teachers, and confirmed her authority by evidently protecting her at all times, by spreading her over the whole world, by illustrating her by innumerable miracles, and blessing her labors with the most glorious success (*Short Hist. of Rel.*, Conclud. Remarks, §§ 6, 7, 8); whereas, on the other hand, the sectarians never could corroborate their pretended mission by any miracle, but, on the contrary, fell into many manifest contradictions and pernicious

errors, by which the world was only more and more corrupted-
(*Short Hist. of Rel.* §§ 43, 47).

51. If, then, differences arise in matters of faith, what are we to do?

We must adhere to the decisions of the Church.

'And He gave some Apostles, . . . and other some Pastors and Doctors, . . . that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive' (Eph. iv. 11, 14).

52. By whom are the decisions of the Church given?

Either by the Supreme Head of the Church, the Pope, or by a Council confirmed by the Pope (*Short Hist. of Religion*, § 36).

53. Are all Christians bound to submit to the decisions of the Pope?

Yes, as often as he decides as Head and Teacher of the whole Church in matters of faith and morals, the Pope is as infallible as the Church herself.

54. Is the Pope infallible?

Yes; the General Council of the Vatican, in 1870, defined that the Pope is infallible when he teaches the Church *ex cathedrâ*.

55. Is not this a new doctrine?

No; the Church then defined—that is, solemnly declared in formal words—a doctrine which had always been held and acted on.

In doing this the Church acted just as she had done in the first General Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), when she similarly defined the doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, which had been held and acted on before that date; and as she has acted at other times, in regard to other doctrines, whenever she saw that it was necessary to define them.

56. What is the meaning of the Infallibility of the Pope? Does it mean that he cannot do wrong?

By no means. The Pope is a child of Adam, and, like other men, can have faults and can commit sin.

Infallibility refers not to his life and conduct, but to his official teaching of doctrine, and means that in such teaching he cannot fall into error.

57. Are the words of the Pope, therefore, always infallible?

No; the words of the Pope are always to be received with the respect due to his high authority. But they are infallible only when he teaches *ex cathedrâ* as Pope.

58. When does the Pope speak *ex cathedrâ*?

The Pope speaks *ex cathedrâ* when, in the exercise of his office as Head of the Church, and Chief Pastor and Teacher of all the faithful, he declares what is to be held by the Universal Church as the true doctrine on any matter of faith or morals.

59. Why cannot the Pope teach error when he speaks *ex cathedrâ*?

Because God will not allow him to do so. Infallibility does not depend on the virtue or on the learning of the Pope, but on the special assistance of the Holy Ghost, given him according to the promise of Christ, who said to St. Peter: 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 32).

60. Is the Infallibility of the Pope the same as the Infallibility of the Church?

Yes, precisely. The Pope is the Supreme Pastor and Teacher, whose voice all the faithful, clergy and laity, 'lambs and sheep,' are commanded by Christ to hear and to follow. If he could teach error *ex cathedrâ*, the Church would then follow him into error, and would thereby fail; and so the promises of Christ would be falsified, which is impossible.

61. How do we know that this doctrine was always held and acted on in the Catholic Church?

Because from the beginning whoever obstinately refused to accept and believe a doctrine of Catholic

Faith, when so declared *ex cathedrâ* by the Pope, was always cut off from the communion of the Church, and condemned as a heretic.

'I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven' (Matt. xvi. 19). 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren' (Luke xxii. 32). 'Feed my lambs, feed my sheep' (John xxi. 15-17). The authority of the Pope to decide doctrinal controversies conclusively, and to define the true faith, for the whole Church, was ever acknowledged and acted on. Those who broached heresies in any part of the world, and were condemned by their own local Bishops, often appealed to the supreme decision of the Bishop of Rome. On the other hand, Catholic Bishops and Patriarchs, like St. Athanasius, St. John Chrysostom, and others, who were often persecuted and unjustly condemned by synods, appealed to the Pope, who reversed and annulled the unjust decrees, and decided in favor of the condemned ones, as holding the true doctrine. Nestorius, Eutyches, and other heresiarchs were condemned by the Popes, and the decisions of the Roman Pontiffs were received as conclusive, and were honored as 'the voice of Peter speaking through his successor,' which it would be heresy to depart from. St. Augustine held that a controversy was closed definitively when the Pope had decided it. *Roma locuta est!* In defining the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff, the Vatican Council did not introduce a new doctrine, but simply defined the ordinary and normal mode in which Christ has willed and provided that his Church shall in fact be kept infallibly in the path of Divine truth and saved from the assaults of hell, ever striving to lead her into error.

62. How does the Church decide when differences arise in matters of faith?

She decides conformably to the tenor of Holy Scripture and tradition.

63. Does the Church, then, teach nothing new, when, in such differences, she decides what is to be believed?

No; she only explains the Word of God entrusted to her in Holy Scripture and tradition, and condemns the opposite errors and innovations.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church is no other than the doctrine of Christ and the Apostles, which she has been en-

trusted with, in order that she may faithfully preserve and preach it. The Church, therefore, perpetually adheres to the old doctrine, inherited from the Fathers, and cries out with the Apostle to all: 'Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties of words, and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called' (1 Tim. vi. 20, and 2 Tim. i. 14). 'But evil men and seducers shall grow worse and worse: erring, and driving into error. But continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee' (2 Tim. iii. 13, 14). 'If any one preach to you a Gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema' (Gal. i. 9). 'What has been believed in all places, at all times, and by all people, that is really and truly *Catholic*' (Vincent of Lerins; d. 450).

(2.) *On Salvation in the true Church of Christ alone.*

64. If the Catholic Church is to lead all men to eternal salvation, and has, for that purpose, received from Christ her doctrine, her means of grace, and her powers,* what, for his part, is every one obliged to do?

Every one is obliged, under pain of eternal damnation, to become a member of the Catholic Church, to believe her doctrine, to use her means of grace, and to submit to her authority.

65. Who teaches us this obligation?

Jesus Christ Himself, in these words (Matt. xviii. 17): 'If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican'; and (Mark xvi. 16): 'He that believeth not [the Apostles and their lawful Successors]† shall be condemned.'

Hence the Catholic Church is justly called the *only saving Church*. To despise her is the same as to despise Christ; namely, His doctrine, his means of grace, and His powers; to separate from her is the same as to separate from Christ, and to forfeit eternal salvation. Therefore St. Augustine, and the other Bishops of Africa, pronounced, A. D. 412, at the Council of Zirta, this decision: 'Whosoever is separated from the Catholic Church, however commendable in his own opinion his life may be, he shall for this very reason, that he is at the same time separated from the Unity of Christ, *not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*' (John iii. 36).

* Compare page 140, quest. 42-44.

† Compare page 133, quest. 18 and 19.

66. Who is a member of the Catholic Church?

Every one who is baptized, and has neither voluntarily separated himself, nor has been excluded, from her.

67. Who have voluntarily separated themselves from the Church?

1. All those who by their own fault are *Heretics*, *i.e.*, who profess a doctrine that has been condemned by the Church; or who are *Infidels*—that is, who no longer have nor profess any Christian faith at all; and 2. All those who by their own fault are *Schismatics*—that is, who have renounced, not the doctrine of the Church, but their obedience to her, or to her Supreme Head, the Pope.

68. Who are excluded from the Catholic Church?

Excommunicates—that is, those who, as degenerate members, have been expelled from the communion of the Church.

69. Are not those also who are heretics without their own fault separated from the Catholic Church?

Such as are heretics without their own fault, but sincerely search after the truth, and in the meantime do the will of God to the best of their knowledge, although they are separated from the body, remain, however, united to the soul of the Church, and partake of her graces.

Even those who are heretics without their own fault are deprived, though not of all, at least of many, graces and blessings of our holy religion; as, for instance, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the *true* Lord's Supper, Sacramental Absolution, the Holy Sacraments administered to the dying, etc. Therefore, we should fervently pray for heretics, and by sincere charity, and an edifying life, contribute towards their conversion.

70. Who is a heretic by his own fault?

A heretic by his own fault is, 1. He who knows the Catholic Church, and is convinced of her truth, but does not join her; and 2. He who could know

her, if he would candidly search, but, through indifference and other culpable motives, neglects to do so.

71. Does it become us to judge whether this one or that is a heretic by his own fault or not?

No; for such judgment belongs to God, who alone is 'the searcher of hearts and reins' (Ps. vii. 10), and 'judges the secrets of men' (Rom. ii. 16).

'Judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts' (1 Cor. iv. 5).

72. Is it sufficient for obtaining eternal salvation to be a member of the Catholic Church?

No; for there are also rotten and dead members (Apoc. iii. 1), who by their sins bring upon themselves eternal damnation.

73. What, then, do we profess to believe by these words of the Creed, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church'?

We profess to believe that Jesus Christ has established a visible Church, endless in her duration, and infallible in her doctrine, which we must believe and obey without reserve, if we would obtain eternal salvation; and that this is no other than the *Roman Catholic Church*.

Application. It is right for us to call the Catholic Church our mother; for 1. She has regenerated us in a spiritual manner in baptism, and has made us children of God; 2. She feeds us with the Word of God, and with the Bread of Angels; 3. She brings us up in the fear of the Lord; and 4. She kindly prays for us, comforts us, and assists us, as long as we live here below, and even after we have departed this life. Honor and love, therefore, the Church as your mother; listen diligently to her instructions, and humbly submit to all her laws and directions; for 'he shall not have God for his Father who will not have the Church for his Mother' (St. Cyprian, Bishop and Martyr; d. 258).

§ 4. *The Communion of Saints.*

74. Are only the faithful on earth united together as one Church?

No; with the faithful on earth are also spiritually united the saints in Heaven and the souls in Purgatory.

The faithful on earth who are members of the Catholic Church constitute the Church *Militant*; the souls in Purgatory, the Church *Suffering*; and the Saints in Heaven, the Church *Triumphant*; yet these three Churches are, properly speaking, but one in different states.

75. In what does this spiritual union consist?

This spiritual union consists in this: that *all* are members of one body, whose head is Christ Jesus, and that therefore the different members participate in one another's spiritual goods.

'As in one body we have many members, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another' (Rom. xii. 4, 5). 'He [Christ] is the Head of the body, the Church' (Col. i. 18).

76. What is this spiritual union called?
The Communion of Saints.

77. Why are all the members of this Communion styled *Saints*?

Because all are called *to be Saints* (1 Thess. iv. 3), and have been sanctified by baptism; and many of them have already arrived at perfect sanctity.

78. What benefit do we reap from the communion with the Saints in Heaven?

We partake of the merits which they acquired while here below, and are assisted by their intercession with God in our behalf.

79. But does not death dissolve all union between the living and the dead?

No; no more than it dissolves their union with Christ, their Head.

80. What benefit do the souls in Purgatory receive from our communion with them?

We come to the assistance of these our suffering brethren, in order that their pains may be mitigated and shortened.

81. By what means can we assist the poor souls in Purgatory?

By prayers, alms-deeds, and other good works, especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the application of Indulgences.

'Judas [Machabeus] sent twelve thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins' (2 Mach. xii. 43, 46). That the Church has at all times prayed for the dead, and that the Apostles themselves ordained to remember them at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, is testified by the most ancient Fathers of the Church. (All Souls' day.)

82. What profit do we derive from the mutual communion with the faithful on earth?

We participate in all the Masses, prayers, and good works of the Catholic Church, and, in general, in all her spiritual goods.

'God hath tempered the body together . . . that the members might be mutually careful one for another. . . . Now, you are the body of Christ, and members of member' (1 Cor. xii. 24-27).

83. Do sinners, as long as they are not cut off from the Church, also participate in this communion?

Sinners as dead members forfeit, in deed, most of the spiritual goods; nevertheless, in virtue of their union with the Church, they still receive various blessings and graces, which help to their conversion.

Application. Every day pray for your fellow-Christians who are either combating on earth or suffering in Purgatory, and recommend yourself every morning and night to the protection of the Saints in Heaven. Above all, strive to lead a holy life; for 'we are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestics of God' (Eph. ii. 19).