

Homily Guide
Sunday, February 6, 2011
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Salvation

What does the Catholic Church teach about Salvation? There is much debate about Salvation. Some think they are saved by "Faith Alone." Others Through Baptism, others by faith and works, others by "double predestination."

But what does the Catholic Church teach about Salvation?

- Catholics and Protestants agree that to be saved, you have to be born again. Jesus said so: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).
- These different ways of talking about being "born again" describe effects of baptism, which Christ speaks of in John 3:5 as being "born of water and the Spirit." In Greek, this phrase is, literally, "born of water and Spirit," indicating one birth of water-and-Spirit, rather than "born of water *and of* the Spirit," as though it meant two different births—one birth of water and one birth of the Spirit.
- In Acts 2:38, Peter tells us, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When Paul was converted, he was told, "And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).
- We are told that at Paul's conversion, "he rose and was baptized, and took food and was strengthened. For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus" (Acts 9:18–19). This was a water baptism. In Romans 6 and Colossians 2, Paul reminds his readers of their water baptisms, and he neither says nor implies anything about some sort of "invisible spiritual baptism."

Infant Baptism:

There are many non-Catholic groups that believe that Baptism is only for Adults or older children who have been born again. They do not see it as a "Sacrament" in the same way as Catholics.

- Jesus said that no one can enter heaven unless he has been born again of water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5). His words can be taken to apply to anyone capable of belonging to his kingdom. He asserted such even for children: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14).
- Luke 18:15 says, "Now they were bringing even *infants* to him" (Greek, *Prosepheron de auto kai ta brepha*). The Greek word *brepha* means "infants"
- Paul notes that baptism has replaced circumcision (Col. 2:11–12). In that passage, he refers to baptism as "the circumcision of Christ" and "the circumcision made without hands." Of course, usually only infants were circumcised under the Old Law; circumcision of adults was rare, since there were few converts to Judaism. If Paul meant to exclude infants, he would not have chosen circumcision as a parallel for baptism.
- The indications are clear. In the New Testament we read that Lydia was converted by Paul's preaching and that "She was baptized, with her household" (Acts 16:15). The Philippian jailer whom Paul and Silas had converted to the faith was baptized that night along with his household. We are told that "the same hour of the night . . . he was baptized, with all his family" (Acts 16:33). And in his greetings to the Corinthians, Paul recalled that, "I did baptize also the household of Stephanas" (1 Cor. 1:16).
- Origen, for instance, wrote in the third century that "according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants" (*Homilies on Leviticus*, 8:3:11 [A.D. 244]). The Council of Carthage, in 253AD, condemned the opinion that baptism should be withheld from infants until the eighth day after birth. Later, Augustine taught, "The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned . . . nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic" (*Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39 [A.D. 408]).

Faith Alone

Catholic do not believe you can be saved only by doing good deeds. One must have faith in order to be saved. But we do not believe in what is called "Faith Alone." We believe that works and faith are very much intertwined. You cannot be saved by your works, but you will be judged by them. Many believe that in a principle called, "Once Saved Always Saved." As Catholics we reject this. We believe that Sin can sever our relationship with God and effect our salvation. Sin will be covered on a different Sunday.

- Nowhere in the Bible does it say, "We are saved by faith alone."
- In fact the only time the two words Faith and Alone are put together is in James 2:24. There the inspired apostle denies that justification is from faith alone. "You see that a man is justified by works and *not by faith alone*."
- "You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works" (Jas. 2:22). And then in verse 24 James concludes again, "A man is justified by works and not by faith alone."
- Not everyone who says to me "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who *does* the will of my Father in heaven. (Mat 7:20). Doing something is an action/work.
- **2 Cor 5:10** "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has *done* in the body."
- **Rev 20:12** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the **dead were judged according to their works**, as recorded in the books. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done.
- **Matt: 19:21** Then someone came to him and said "Teacher, what good **deed** must I do to have eternal life...[Jesus said] go sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven...When the young man heard this word he went away grieving, for he had many possessions..."
- **Mat 25:40-43** I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

I want to emphasize that we do not believe that it is solely works that give us Salvation, but Faith and Works. We believe these two are not mutually exclusive, but act as one. Without both we cannot be saved...The Church teaches that neither can be left out nor excluded. They are like the Holy Trinity...they are different persons, but so closely tied together that they share the one nature of God.

