

Baptize All Nations

Episode 11: Evangelization and Eternal Salvation

Hi, I'm Michael Miller... welcome to Baptize All Nations.

The new evangelization is concerned with the eternal salvation of everyone.

But there are two errors about eternal salvation that Catholics are falling in to... errors that lead people to damnation.

The first error is referred to as pay... pray... and obey.

This error is the idea that as long as you have been baptized... confirmed... and attend Mass weekly then you're "safe".

You "punch in"... do your time.. and don't make any waves and heaven should be pretty easy. Sure you might have to do a short stint in purgatory... but even that's ok.

But a Catholic who abides by that thinking WILL NOT be saved. God wants to be worshiped in certain ways but above all... He asks for our love. There is no love when we're just punching the clock.

People might object: "But God loves us!"

And yes... God does love us... but our ultimate destination doesn't depend on how much God loves us... but how much WE love Him.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew... the Lord says to the pharisees

"Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners." – *Matthew 9:13*

The point is... if a person abides by the pay... pray... and obey mentality they're only following the externals of Catholicism which are not enough to achieve salvation.

It was this idea of a mere external Catholicism which was St. John Paul II's motivation in calling for a new evangelization.

As we said in an earlier episode... the aim of the new evangelization... and evangelization in general... is to promote constant conversion... especially among practicing Catholics.

Another error is that ONLY Catholics are saved.

This comes from a saying of St. Cyprian of Carthage who said:

"Outside the Church; there is no salvation."

The popes and Church councils have specifically confirmed this teaching over twenty times.

In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council stated:

"There is but one universal Church of the faithful, outside which no one at all is saved."

Wow! Quite a statement! It doesn't seem to leave a lot of wiggle room for salvation.

So is the Church saying that ONLY Catholics are saved?

The short answer is no.

But the Vatican II document... *Lumen Gentium* clarifies the issue for us.

“Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.”

– *Lumen Gentium* 14

Salvation is available to people who follow the ten commandments but don't know that the Catholic Church is the one... true Church.

The document goes on to say:

“Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel.” – *Lumen Gentium* 14

Here too, the Church says that people who are “outside” of the Church can achieve salvation.

But the thing is... the Church is assuming that people who are ignorant of what the Catholic Church IS... and who have not actually separated themselves willingly from the Church... are able to be saved.

Some critics misunderstand these words to say that the Council Fathers of Vatican II taught against age-old doctrines of the Church... but it's simply not true.

But the council reaffirms the teaching of the Church when it says:

“This Sacred Council... teaches that the Church... is necessary for salvation.”

– *Lumen Gentium* 14

They go on further to say:

“They could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it, or to remain in it.”

– *Lumen Gentium* 14

It is clearly understood that this is not a blanket dismissal of the need to evangelize.

Notice that the passage clearly states that one must be ACTIVELY searching for God in the best capacity he can.

Visualizing the spiritual life as a battlefield can illustrate the state of affairs more clearly.

As Catholics, we are disciplined soldiers... trained and drilled in the truth of the incarnation... armed with the sacraments... and able to call in the power of God with prayer.

But to be outside the shelter of the visible church is like being parachuted into the battlefield with no weapons... no knowledge of friend or foe... and no understanding of what's even at stake.

Although our brethren may be validly baptized... they don't share in all of the means for salvation that

the Catholic Church offers.

They are fighting a spiritual battle for which they have no weapons or protection.

As evangelists... we can't be content to leave other members of the Mystical Body of Christ to be outside of the fullness of truth.

It's a sin against charity to leave somebody unevangelized because we may think that being Christian is good enough.

In the new evangelization... it's our mission to reanimate the faith within our own ranks so that we can go out to rescue our comrades who are cut off... confused... surrounded and pinned down by error.

Sure they can achieve salvation but only with the fewest tools and the greatest difficulty.