

CHAPTER II

THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH MILITANT AND HER NECESSITY FOR SALVATION

8. The Necessity of the Church for Salvation.

The Holy Synod teaches, as God's Holy Church has always taught, that the Church is necessary for salvation¹ and that no one can be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded by God through Jesus Christ, nevertheless refuses to enter her or to persevere in her.² Just as no one can be saved except by receiving baptism--by which anyone who does not pose some obstacle to incorporation³ becomes a member of the Church--or at least by desire for baptism,⁴ so also no one can attain salvation unless he is a member of the Church or at least is ordered towards the Church by desire. But for anyone to attain to salvation, it is not enough that he be really a member of the Church or be by desire ordered towards it; it is also required that he die in the state of grace, joined to God by faith, hope, and charity.⁵

9. Members in the Proper Sense.

Although many real relations exist in the juridical⁶ and sacramental order, and indeed can exist in the mystical order,⁷ by which every baptized person is linked with the Church, still, according to the most ancient tradition, only they are called members of the Church in the true and proper sense in whom the Church, one and indivisible, indefectible and infallible, comes together in unity of faith, sacraments and government. They, therefore, are truly and properly to be said to be members of the Church who, washed in the bath of regeneration, professing the true Catholic faith, and acknowledging the authority of the Church,⁸ are joined in its visible structure⁹ to its Head, Christ, who rules it through his Vicar,¹⁰ and have not been cut off from the structure of the Mystical Body because of very serious offences.¹¹ As for those ordered by desire towards the Church, these include not only catechumens,¹² who, moved by the Spirit, consciously and explicitly desire to enter the Church, but also those who, even if not knowing that the Catholic Church is the true and sole Church of Christ, still, by God's grace, implicitly and unknowingly desire the equivalent,¹³ either because they sincerely will what Christ himself wills or because, though ignorant of Christ, they sincerely desire to fulfil the will of God their Creator. The gifts of heavenly grace will never be wanting to those who sincerely desire and ask to be renewed by the divine light.¹⁴

10. Union with Those Separated.

With those who do not profess the true faith or unity of communion with the Roman Pontiff, but still desire it, even if unknowingly, kindly Mother Church knows herself to be linked on many counts; this is true in a singular way if the baptized exult in the Christian name and, although they do not believe with Catholic faith,¹⁵ still lovingly believe in Christ as God and Savior, particularly if they excel in faith and devotion towards the Most Holy Eucharist and in love for the Mother of God. For, besides that common faith in Christ, there is also a share in the

same baptismal consecration, at least some communion in prayer, expiation, and spiritual benefits,¹⁶ indeed some union in the Holy Spirit, who does not only work by his gifts and graces in the Mystical Body herself, but also acts by his power, not excluding sanctifying grace, outside that venerable Body so that the separated brethren may be incorporated into her in the manner established by Christ.¹⁷ That this activity of the Spirit of Christ for the growth of the Mystical Body may achieve a fuller effect, the Church never ceases to pray that the separated brethren, showing themselves freely and spontaneously docile to the internal impulses of divine grace, may strive to leave that state in which they lack so many and such great heavenly gifts and aids for obtaining eternal salvation, gifts and aids which they alone may enjoy who are really members of the Church.¹⁸ Let all the children of the Church, therefore, be mindful of their own privileged condition, which they must ascribe not to their own merits but to the special grace of Christ; and, if they do not correspond to this grace in thought, word and deed, not only will they not be saved, they will be the more severely judged.¹⁹

NOTES

¹ For the teaching of the Fathers, Ignatius of Antioch, Origen, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, Fulgentius, see Tromp, *De Spiritu Christi Anima*, pp. 210-13. For the teaching of the Church, see the *Athanasian Creed* (Dz 40); Pelagius II, Letter *Dilectionis vestris* (Dz 247); Innocent III, *Profession of Faith for the Waldensians* (Dz 423); Boniface VIII, Bull *Unam sanctam* (Dz 468); Clement VI, Epist. *Super quibusdam* (Dz 570b); the Council of Florence, *Decree for the Jacobites* (Dz 714); the *Tridentine Profession of Faith* (Dz 1000); Benedict XIV, *Profession of Faith for the Maronites* (Dz 1473); Gregory XVI, Enc. *Mirari vos* (Dz 1613); Pius IX, Enc. *Quanto conficiamur maerore* (Dz 1677); *Syllabus*, n. 16-17 (Dz 1716-17); Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis* (AAS 35 [1943], pp. 242-43); *Humani generis* (Dz 2319); *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston*, Aug. 8, 1949 (found in the Appendix to Fr. Tromp's third edition of *Mystici Corporis*).

² Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston.

³ The obstacle may be posed both with regard to grace and with regard to the juridical effect; see CIC, can. 87. The obstacle to grace, for example, is had if an adult to be baptized does not want to abstain from mortal sin; there is an obstacle to membership, if an adult to be baptized lacks faith. In Church documents the limitation, "unless some obstacle is posed," is often presupposed. See the *Tridentine Profession of Faith* (D 996), where it is said that "sacraments confer grace," without any restriction, in opposition to the Canon on Sacraments in general (D 849). And a Sacrament is generally defined as "a sensible sign instituted by Christ which confers the grace it signifies," and no one requires the addition, "to those who place no obstacle."

⁴ Council of Trent, Decree on Justification (D 796), collated with ch. 14, "on the lapsed" (D 807).

⁵ Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston: "Nor should it be thought that just any desire to enter the Church suffices for a person to be saved. It is required that the desire by which someone is ordered towards the Church be informed by perfect charity, nor can the implicit desire have an effect if the person does not have supernatural faith (Hb 11:6; Council of Trent [D 801])."

⁶ Every baptized person, in virtue of baptism, is subject to the laws of the Church. See Benedict XIV, Enc. *Singulari nobis*, #14; Leo XIII, Enc. *Annum sacrum* (ASS 31 [1898-99], p. 647); Pius XI, Enc. *Quas primas* (AAS 17 [1925], p. 601; D 2196; can. 12).

⁷ See #10 on union in the Holy Spirit.

⁸ The words of *Mystici Corporis* have been changed because among the baptized who do not acknowledge the Church's authority there are very many who never personally separated from the Church, as, for example, all the Baptists who, while they are being baptized, place an obstacle in the way of membership.

⁹ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, l.c., pp. 199-100; 223-24.

¹⁰ Boniface VIII, *Unam sanctam* (D 468); Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, l.c. p. 211.

¹¹ See: (1) Clement VIII, Instruction *Magnus Dominus*: "#1. Recently the venerable brother Michael, Archbishop and Metropolitan of Kiev... and with him several of his fellow bishops in the Province... *with their hearts illumined by the divine light of the Holy Spirit*, began to think in themselves and to confer together with much deliberation and prudence, and seriously to consider that *they and the flocks they shepherd are not members of the Body of Christ* which is the Church because they are not in unity with the visible head of that Church, the supreme Roman Pontiff... For that reason, they decided to return to the Roman Church, their Mother, the Mother of all believers."

(2) Benedict XIV, *Singulari Nobis*, nn. 13 and 14: "It is certain that a person who *rightly* receives baptism from a heretic becomes, by virtue of that baptism, a member of the Catholic Church... We consider it established that those baptized by heretics, if they reach the age at which they can by themselves distinguish good from evil and commit themselves to the errors of the one who baptized them, are cast off from the unity of the Church and are deprived of the benefits that are enjoyed by members of the Church; they are not, however, freed from its authority and laws."

(3) Pius IX, *In suprema* (Acta, P. I, vol. I, p. 89f): "Nor can it ever happen that people are in the communion of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic [Church] if they wish to be separated from the solid Rock on which the Church was built by God... We do not, therefore, wish to place on you any other burden than what is necessary, namely that, returned to unity, you agree with Us in the profession of the true Faith which the Catholic Church holds and teaches and that, with the Church herself, you retain communion with this See of Peter."

(4) Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, l.c., pp. 202-203 and 242-43.

(5) Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston.

(6) See also Pius V, *Regnans in Ecclesia*: "#3. ...Elizabeth the heretic... and those who agree with her on the matters mentioned, has incurred the sentence of anathema and is cut off from the unity of the Body of Christ;" and many other similar statements.

(7) To know the mind of John XXIII, happily reigning, see Address *In sollemnis* (AAS 52 [1960], p. 1009): "[The brethren] who are separated from Us and who are outside the fold of the Catholic Church... so that... they may someday enter into that unity [of which Jn 17:19-21 speaks]." *Prayer to the Holy Spirit*: "We also pray for the sheep who are *no longer* in the one sheepfold of Jesus Christ, that they also, if they glory in the name 'Christian,' may finally again find unity under a single Shepherd." What is meant by the Supreme Pontiff's words, "if they glory in the name 'Christian,'" is clear from his Address to the Faithful of Ireland (*L'Oss. Rom.*, March 18, 1961): "Be *Romans*, just as you are Christians. Belonging to the Church of Rome is the distinctive mark of every *true* Christian."

The Letter, *Quotiescumque Nobis*, to Cardinal Tien-Chen-Sin (*L'Oss. Rom.*, June 29, 1961): "... And in the first place, we exhort you, Venerable Brothers, that you not fail to remind the sheep entrusted to your oversight of these most serious and salutary truths: namely, that no one can render to Almighty God the worship due him nor be joined to him except through Jesus Christ; that he cannot be joined to Christ except in the Church and through the Church, which is his Mystical Body; finally, that he cannot belong to the Church except through the Bishops, successors of the Apostles, who are joined to the Supreme Pastor, who is the successor of Peter."

Enc., *Aeterna Dei sapientia* (AAS, 53 [1961], p. 794): "But it must be kept in mind that believers do not have that perfect union with the divine Redeemer and Head of all things by which they constitute with Him one living and visible body, unless, in union with one another in virtue of the same virtues of

soul and by sharing in religious rites and sacraments, they all also maintain and profess the same faith."

¹² On catechumens, see St. Ambrose, *De obitu Valentini*, 51 (PL 16, 1374); St. Augustine, *De Baptismo*, IV, 21,28 (PL 43, 172); Innocent II, *Epist. ad Episc. Cremon.* (PL 179, 624f) collated with Dz 388; Innocent III, *Epist ad Episc. Meten.* (PL 215, 986f), collated with Dz 413.

¹³ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, l.c. pp. 242-43; Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston.

¹⁴ See Pius IX, *Singulari quadam* (D 1648).

¹⁵ A distinction must be made between divine faith simply and catholic divine faith. Catholic faith can be considered objectively (see, for example, Dz 1000) and subjectively (see Dz 1792). Subjective Catholic faith presupposes the magisterium of the Church as the norm of faith and as a motive of credibility. Baptism does not make one a member unless there is subjective Catholic faith. When, in the Council of Trent's Decree on Justification, ch. 7 (D 800), that faith is discussed by which someone is made a living member of the Body, if grace is present, it is a question of that subjective faith which catechumens beg of the Church, that is, of *Catholic* faith, formed by charity.

¹⁶ The phrase "Communion of Saints" is not employed because it has various interpretations in the tradition.

¹⁷ Note Augustine's distinction: between "leading on the way" and "leading to the way," between "leading in Christ" and "leading towards Christ;" see *In Ps.* 85, 15 (PL 37, 1092); Clement VIII, Instruction *Magnus Dominus*, "#1. ...with the divine light of the Holy Spirit illumining their hearts, they began to think among themselves ...that they and the flocks they shepherd are not members of the Body of Christ which is the Church."

¹⁸ Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis*, l.c., pp. 242-43. See Clement VIII, l.c.; Pius IX, *Syllabus*, n. 17 (Dz 1717); Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston.

¹⁹ Mt 5:19-20; 7:21-22; 25:41-46; Jas 2:14.

