

produce its effect, unless a person has supernatural faith. For he who comes to God must believe that God exists and is a rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews, 11:6). The Council of Trent declares (Session VI, chap. 8): Faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God and attain to the fellowship of His children (Denzinger, n. 801).

From what has been said it is evident that those things which are proposed in the periodical From the Housetops, fascicle 3, as the genuine teaching of the Catholic Church are far from being such and are very harmful both to those within the Church and those without.

From these declarations which pertain to doctrine certain conclusions follow which regard discipline and conduct, and which cannot be unknown to those who vigorously defend the necessity by which all are bound of belonging to the true Church and of submitting to the authority of the Roman Pontiff and of the Bishops whom the Holy Ghost has placed . . . to rule the Church (Acts, 20:28).

Hence, one cannot understand how the St. Benedict Center can consistently claim to be a Catholic school and wish to be accounted such, and yet not conform to the prescriptions of Canons 1381 and 1382 of the Code of Canon Law and continue to exist as a source of discord and rebellion against ecclesiastical authority and as a source of the disturbance of many consciences.

Furthermore, it is beyond understanding how a member of a religious institute, namely Father Feeney, presents himself as a Defender of the faith, and at the same time does not hesitate to attack the catechetical instruction proposed by lawful authorities, and has not even feared to incur grave sanctions threatened by the sacred canons because of his serious

violations of his duties as a religious, a priest and an ordinary member of the Church.

Finally, it is in no wise to be tolerated that certain Catholics shall claim for themselves the right to publish a periodical, for the purpose of spreading theological doctrines, without the permission of competent Church Authority, called the imprimatur, which is prescribed by the sacred canons.

Therefore, let them who in grave peril are angry against the Church seriously bear in mind that after Rome has spoken they cannot be excused even by reasons of good faith. Certainly, their bond and duty of obedience toward the Church is much graver than that of those who as yet are related to the Church only by an unconscious desire. Let them realize that they are children of the Church, lovingly nourished by her with the milk of doctrine and the sacraments, and hence, having heard the clear voice of their Mother, they cannot be excused from culpable ignorance, and therefore to them applies without any restriction that principle: submission to the Catholic Church and to the Sovereign Pontiff is required as necessary for salvation.

In sending this letter, I declare my profound esteem, and remain

Your Excellency's most devoted
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Letter to the Archbishop of Boston, 8 August 1949, concerning Fr. Feeney and the Doctrine of “No Salvation Outside the Church”

THE SUPREME SACRED
CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY OFFICE

From the Headquarters of the Holy Office
August 8, 1949
Protocol Number 122/49.

To His Excellency
Most Reverend Richard James Cushing
Archbishop of Boston

Your Excellency:

This Supreme Sacred Congregation has followed very attentively the rise and the course of the grave controversy stirred up by certain associates of St. Benedict Center and Boston College in regard to the interpretation of that axiom: Outside the Church there is no salvation.

After having examined all the documents that are necessary or useful in this matter, among them information from your Chancery, as well as appeals and reports in which the associates of St. Benedict Center explain their opinions and complaints, and also many other documents pertinent to the controversy, officially collected, the same Sacred Congregation is convinced that the unfortunate controversy arose from the fact that the axiom: outside the Church there is no salvation, was not correctly understood and weighed, and that the same controversy was rendered more bitter

by serious disturbance of discipline arising from the fact that some of the associates of the institutions mentioned above refused reverence and obedience to legitimate authorities.

Accordingly, the Most Eminent and Most Reverend Cardinals of this Supreme Congregation, in a plenary session, held on Wednesday, July 27, 1949, decreed, and the August Pontiff in an audience on the following Thursday, July 28, 1949, deigned to give his approval, that the following explanations pertinent to the doctrine, and also that invitations and exhortations relevant to discipline be given:

We are bound by divine and Catholic faith to believe all those things which are contained in the word of God, whether it be Scripture or Tradition, and are proposed by the Church to be believed as divinely revealed, not only through solemn judgment but also through the ordinary and universal teaching office (Denzinger, n. 1792).

Now, among those things which the Church has always preached and will never cease to preach is contained also that infallible statement by which we are taught that there is no salvation outside the Church.

However, this dogma must be understood in that sense in which the Church herself understands it. For, it was not to private judgments that Our Savior gave for explanation those things that are contained in the deposit of faith but to the teaching authority of the Church.

Now, in the first place, the Church teaches that in this matter there is question of a most strict command of Jesus Christ. For He explicitly enjoined on His apostles to teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever He Himself had commanded (Matt., 28:19 - 20).

Now, among the commandments of Christ, that one holds not the least place, by which we are commanded to be incorporated by Baptism

into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and to remain united to Christ and to His Vicar, through whom He Himself in a visible manner governs the Church on earth.

Therefore, no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth.

Not only did the Savior command that all nations should enter the Church but He also decreed the Church to be a means of salvation, without which no one can enter the kingdom of eternal glory.

In His infinite mercy God has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation which are directed toward man's final end, not by intrinsic necessity, but only by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when those helps are used only in desire and longing. This we see clearly stated in the Sacred Council of Trent, both in reference to the Sacrament of Regeneration and in reference to the Sacrament of Penance (Denzinger, nn. 797, 807).

The same in its own degree must be asserted of the Church in as far as she is the general help to salvation. Therefore, that one may obtain eternal salvation, it is not always required that he be incorporated into the Church actually as a member, but it is necessary that at least he be united to her by desire and longing.

However, this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when a person is involved in invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire, so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person wishes his will to be conformed to the will of God.

These things are clearly taught in that dogmatic letter which was issued by the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope Pius XII, on June 29,

1943, *On the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ* (AAS, Vol. 35, an. 1943, p. 193 ff.). For in this letter the Sovereign Pontiff clearly distinguishes between those who are actually incorporated into the Church as members, and those who are united to the Church only by desire.

Discussing the members of which the Mystical Body is composed here on earth, the same August Pontiff says: Actually, only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed.

Toward the end of this same Encyclical Letter, when most affectionately inviting to unity those who do not belong to the body of the Catholic Church, he mentions those who are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain unconscious yearning and desire, and these he by no means excludes from eternal salvation, but on the other hand states that they are in a condition in which they cannot be sure of their salvation since they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church (AAS, loc. cit., 243).

With these wise words he reproves both those who exclude from eternal salvation all united to the Church only by implicit desire, and those who falsely assert that men can be saved equally well in every religion (cf. Pope Pius IX, *Allocution Singulari quadam*, in Denzinger, nn. 1641, ff. - also Pope Pius IX in the Encyclical Letter *Quanto conficiamur moerore* in Denzinger, n. 1677).

But it must not be thought that any kind of desire of entering the Church suffices that one may be saved. It is necessary that the desire by which one is related to the Church be animated by perfect charity. Nor can an implicit desire