

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD: BELIEF AND OBEDIENCE
SESSION 7

Prayer: Tri-Parte (Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be...)

Image: Vladimirskya (Our Lady of Vladimir)

Road to Emmaus

Homework:

CCC 198-354

REVIEW: WHERE WE HAVE BEEN:

RCIA/Confirmation: Being the Sacraments (or final Sacrament of Initiation) the goal of formation and this process is to put us on the path in our life in the Church and receive the gifts and tools that the Church provides in helping us along the Way. Along the Way we come to know God, so that at the end, in the Upper Room, we recognize Him and experience Communion with Him.

Man was created with the capacity to know and love God.

God reveals Himself to man. In a general way, through Sacred Scripture, in Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of His revelation, the Apostles and the Church, but also in an intimate way through personal relationship. In other words, God presents Himself to man.

What, then, is our response? God comes to man by revealing Himself to us. This is the first action of God. Our response, therefore, is a matter of what we do with His self-revelation.

MAN RESPONDS IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

The Catechism describes man's response to God as an act of belief. Belief itself is an active response. Recall for a moment that God is desiring and trying to reveal Himself to us. In the light of this revelation, it may be easier to see that our response is two-fold.

Do we accept and believe what He has revealed?

Do we then accept or reject Him?

Our response, therefore, is what we believe, not what we do.

CCC 143: Faith is the surrender of the intellect and will to God. This is what the Church calls the "Obedience of Faith"

CCC 166: It is "a personal act—a free response of the human person to the initiative of God who reveals Himself"

Obedience comes from the Latin, to listen to. Although our modern minds tend to think of obedience as an act of submission in negative light, the divine understanding, or request of obedience, is an act of listening and being attentive to God's word out of reverence, faith, love and in recognition of His perfect Wisdom. We can even reconsider the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in this Divine light. Rather than demanding the obedience of a contemptuous child who isn't allowed to do what he wants, God told Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of Good and Evil because they would die.

However, they chose not to believe God. Rather, Eve listened to the arguments of Satan and chose to believe someone other than God. Their disobedience was an act of not listening and not believing the Word of God. Obedience, understood in this light, becomes less of a yoke or whip directing our actions, and more clearly understood why the saints taught so forcefully about the necessity and value of obedience in developing virtue and advancing in

the spiritual life. Obedience is an act that denies opposition to God (or the one you are being obedient to) and frees us (CCC 144) to act in accord with the Word of God that we have heard, such as the freedom from fear that the Virgin Mary possessed that allowed her to obey the word given to her by the Angel Gabriel.

In a way, we can also consider that we are always being obedient to someone. In other words, when making choices about how to act or what to believe, we are always listening to someone: God; other gods, other people, or even ourself.

WHAT IS FAITH? THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH

Abraham, *the father of believers* is the model of faith (CCC 145-146)

It is through his righteous belief that God chose him to become a father to all nations.

Mary, in her response to the Angel Gabriel, similarly became the Mother of all believers.

Blessed is she who believed (CCC 148)

Grace that is a gift and enacted by God. He is the source of our ability to believe:

CCC 153: We can only have Faith based on the Revelation of God, but “Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God”

What does this mean for those who do not believe?

Faith is a human act: Even though Faith originates, or must be initiated by the act of God, it is not God believing in God’s self. Faith is both how we participate and is our participation in the revelation of God. (CCC 154)

Faith is Credible, it is not blind. Faith is based on “the authority of God himself” who has revealed Himself to us and “who can neither deceive nor be deceived.” God has provided external evidence of His Revelation. This is what we call “motives of credibility.” That is, the motivations behind what we believe, or, what makes what we believe credible. It is not a “blind impulse of the mind,” but the cooperation of man’s reason with God’s Revelation

Abraham had a basis for his faith, as did Peter when he called Jesus the Son of God.

MOTIVES OF CREDIBILITY

The Formal Motives of Credibility:

Miracles of Christ and the saints

Prophecies in Sacred Scripture

The Church’s growth in holiness, fruitfulness and stability

St. Thomas Aquinas describes 3 Wings to heaven:

Miracles

The Mass Conversion of Christians

The Endurance of the Church

Other Motives of Credibility (Why you believe):

Testimony of Others

Personal encounters or miraculous events

The rationality and apparent truth of the Faith (it makes sense)

Witness of the presence of God in the lives of others

Apostolic Teaching; Church Fathers; Magisterium, Local church

Motive of Credibility (a formal definition)

The rational grounds for accepting divine revelation in general, or of the divine establishment of the Catholic Church in particular. These grounds are also called the preambles of faith. They include the evidence from reason that God exists; that what he reveals is believable because he is all-wise and true; and that he did actually make a revelation because he performed and continues to perform verifiable miracles testifying to his having spoken. (Formal definition)

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITH (CONTINUED)

- ◆ **Certain (Confident):** Because faith is founded on Divine Revelation, articles of faith are more certain and possess far greater confidence than articles of human knowledge. The Deposit of Faith is, in fact, more certain than modern science. (CCC 157)
- ◆ **Seeks Understanding (CCC158):** Faith desires to know God better and more fully. This is not the question of Faith seeking an understanding of why, the way that we often ask why God has allowed a certain thing to happen. The danger in holding on to faith that is driven by trying to understand, or needing to understand why things happen, is that such faith tends toward questioning whether God exists or if He has good intentions for the people He has created. But since Faith itself begins from God, it inherently has already answered the question of if, and has already answered, beyond any doubts, that indeed God's intentions are good. Otherwise, we could not have any Faith in God's revelation of Himself. The understanding that Faith seeks is a matter of who God is (it is only in this light that seeking to understand why can be fruitful when it is seeking and leads us to know God better, such as understanding why one's spouse acts a certain way doesn't test their love, but helps the other spouse to know them and love them better. Faith wants to see its object more clearly such that if the object of Faith is knowledge of God, then Faith seeks more Faith so that the one who possesses Faith, seeks more Faith.
- ◆ **Free:** Since Faith is man's response to God, it must be a free act without coercion or force, otherwise, the object of Faith would be empty and meaningless. As a result, we would also say that the decision of Faith cannot be made on misinformation, distortion of truth, deceit, through promises of rewards, by threat or any other motive that would bind or subvert a person's free will. (CCC 160)
- ◆ **Necessary:** Faith is necessary for obtaining salvation. If this sounds harsh, we may think about it in a simplified way. We know that God desires to be known by each person and He has both revealed Himself to the world and to each person. If a person chooses to deny the Revelation of God's self, which is denying Faith, then it is clearly reasonable, that such a person cannot be saved who has denied the one offering salvation. Since there is no other salvation than what is offered by the One God and Creator of all creation, accepting and knowing Him is necessary to that salvation (CCC 161). It is important to notice here, that in the necessity of Faith, the Church does not say that Faith in the Church is necessary, although in other ways, because the Church is part of the chosen means of revelation of God and salvation of the World, we would say in a different way, that the Church is necessary, that is a matter of God's choice, not absolute necessity.