

The Doctrine of Justification in THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ¹

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¹ For this revision, I refer to the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 2nd ed., English version, based on the Latin text, (c) *Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Citta del Vaticano 1993*.¹ The Catechism has 2865 paragraphs. I will identify the paragraphs in brackets and disregard page numbers. There are other printings of this Catechism where only the paragraph numbering is consistent. The large Appendix contains the full text of each paragraph cited.

The Value Placed on this Catechism by the Roman Catholic Church

The CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH is a major piece of work, repeatedly presented by the Roman church as one of highest authority, “prepared over six years of intense work” by very capable theologians.¹ It was produced to meet the needs of Catholics who wish “to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation”, as well as a statement for non-Roman Catholic Christians “showing carefully the content...of the catholic faith”.² We should be very grateful that so much material of well-written work from the highest authority in the Roman Church is available to us. No one can ever treat this as a low level work of untrained persons who are not up to date on the current thinking of the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope’s opening letter has precluded that. It aims to be “an organic synthesis of essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine...” [11]. There are local catechisms in the Catholic Church — this one is not — it is far more catholic! This Catechism “is intended to serve ‘as a point of reference for the catechisms...that are composed in the various countries.’”³

The limitations of this lecturer. I wish I could say that I am one well read in the doctrinal statements of the Roman Catholic Church. I cannot make such a claim. I admit to running into distinctions in the Catechism that are new to me, such as *actual* grace and *sanctifying* grace. Thus I do not write as an expert in Catholic documents. Yet over the last three years I have renewed my earlier studies in the doctrine of justification. It is to lecture on that doctrine that I am in the Philippines. Your lecture would be of a higher quality if the one delivering it were well read in other reviews of this Catechism. In such secondary literature I am unread, so my review must stand as a novice reading this Catechism for the first time. But there is still some value in that. If you had many novices to the Catechism, yet all were conversant with the Biblical doctrines they are researching, all coming to a similar position about the Catechism after reading it individually, that would show a certain catholicity of theology in assessing it.

It is a very great grief that we are not able to agree with all that this Catechism says. But it does show a richness in its long connection with the history of the Christian faith over many centuries. Probably most Protestants are not familiar with the names and writings of great and godly men that the Roman church identifies with as if they were hers alone. We do owe much to these saints of God and to the church that for so many years defended and spelled out orthodoxy under the Bishop of Rome. As one who is not a Roman Catholic, I cannot begin this lecture with a callous stance that God has done nothing through the Roman tradition, and that only in “our circles” has truth been nurtured. This simply is not true. This Catechism says much that is edifying and one could learn from it. I cannot forget hearing a panel discussion of the Trinity on television back in the 70’s where only the Roman Catholics present knew what they were talking about, and none of the Protestants did.

I will seek to show later that the Roman church’s soteriology is riddled with error, but it is not consistently corrupted with error everywhere. The Catechism is better in some ways than

¹ John Paul, Bishop, Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum on the Publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* — Prepared Following the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, No.1.

² Ibid., No. 3.

³ Catechism Prologue, III, [11], citing the *Extraordinary Synod of Bishops* 1985, Final Report II B a, 4.

many current Protestant statements, since the Catechism is imbued with a thoroughly Trinitarian expression. One reads much of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Biblical Christianity is not directed to Christ to the exclusion of the Father. The Son came to bring us to the Father (1 Peter 3:18). The Trinitarian rhythm in the Catholic mind is a modeling we could benefit from.

I have another tribute to pay, this one to those who decided that this Catechism should come to be. We live in an age where theology is looked down upon as unworthy of our thought. Some even think the truth of God is divisive — the less truth, the more unity. Unfortunately, this Catechism will show in a sad way that losing truth harms unity. Leaders in the Roman Catholic Church thought that theology is worth a major piece of work comprising 800 pages. That catechisms seem to be of a day long gone is a sad commentary on the modern appreciation on how circumspectly God’s truth ought to be handled and stated. I say bring the catechisms back. In the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, justification is defined in thirty-six well-chosen words, which words, if they had been received throughout all of Christendom, would have precluded my verbose paper.

To all this, I think I must add that there is a consistent concern in the Catechism for a robust living of the Christian life. That such living is thought to merit our acceptance by God destroys the gospel, but that is not the burden in this paragraph. In reading the Catechism one might end up convicted that prayer, sacrifice and a multitude of good works are a normal expression of Christian living. Many today despise the sacraments of Christ’s church as if they are optional. Christian living is tied to many ethical principles throughout the Catechism. The Roman Catholic theologians have stood with Christian tradition well by seeking to reassert ethical living in the modern age of each “doing his own thing”. The Church really is important; faithful attendance at its worship is too, and the catechizing of the doctrines of the Word of God. A responsibility for the gospel’s worldwide dissemination is part of our calling. I am grieved that such good concerns are offset in a Catechism that expands the sacraments in number and exalts them above simple faith.

This Catechism is a child of Vatican II. It even embraces a universalism where those without Christ may be saved provided it is not through their own fault that they know not the gospel. It is asserted that people without the Spirit of Christ who somehow do God’s will in a good conscience “achieve eternal salvation” [847]. One is jarred at Christ being presented as necessary and then not so. Many ambivalences characterize the theology of the Catechism. But it is my assignment to focus on one doctrine — JUSTIFICATION. (This is not an exegetical paper on Bible passages but a theological review of the Catechism.)

The Catechism is also a child of the Council of Trent.¹ This must not be missed. There is no correction made of Trent in its doctrine of justification. I have not read all the Catechism in preparation for this lecture, but I have tracked as much as I could on justification. (I received the assignment recently while in Singapore away from my library.) Nowhere have I run into the anathemas of Trent, and that is probably noteworthy, but we still have explicit

¹ **The Council of Trent** (1545-1563) was first convened at the time of the Protestant Reformation under Pope Paul III. It identified and condemned what it considered to be Protestant heresies, and answered numerous Protestant charges. In doing so, it clarified Roman Catholic teachings concerning Scripture (the Canon), the role of Tradition, the nature and effect of Original Sin, Justification of sinners, the number and meaning of the Sacraments, the nature of the Eucharist, and veneration of saints. It issued numerous reform decrees as well.

endorsement and restatement of Trent's theology. In the Prologue, the contribution of Trent is acknowledged profusely [9]. Trent is quoted in the Catechism more than all the Councils of the first thousand years of the church put together. The Pope's opening paragraph sounds the note that this will be a Catechism highly tied to soteriology ("the truth of the gospel"). It will "better present" doctrine, but there is no hint of retracting the Roman reaction to the Reformation that the *Council of Trent* represented back in 1545-1563. Its doctrine of justification remains the same.

Justification and the Prologue:

It is instructive to see where this doctrine fits into the total picture. The Catechism has four major sections:

1. The Profession of Faith
2. The Celebration of the Christian Mystery
3. Life in Christ
4. Christian Prayer

Justification is not spelled out in the Profession of Faith as I had hoped. **It comes under Life in Christ.** All religion has a program and a teaching about the life and conduct of its adherents. So does the Christian faith. But where all others look for righteousness in its followers, only the Christian faith is built on a righteousness that is entirely outside the lives of its people. This is the essence of justification. I remind you that I am writing in Singapore where I have friends of many religions. I observe rather keenly that many have never even contemplated that there might be a righteousness outside their own that could be given to them. To so many, all there is, is only the life we are now attempting to live. Christian justification comes from an entirely different realm than our experience. Only in Christianity is righteousness imputed from one human to another.

The gospel precedes all issues of obedience to the law because there is a necessary, perfect, human obedience outside us which must first be placed on our record, so that when our justified status is secured, the Spirit can be given to produce righteousness within. Righteousness imputed precedes righteousness implanted.

The gospel is about the righteousness of Another that is imputed to us apart from any production of it in us. All the righteousness in us is, so far, faulty and could never be the basis of the Holy God accepting us. Thus justification cannot be defined as our life in Christ, nor is it a subset of it. Instead, justification focuses on the life Christ lived. One must be "forever" on guard, lest we confuse **causes** with **results**. Our life in Christ is a **result**. In Ephesians 2:8-10, Paul excludes works as a basis of salvation and then urges good works as the goal for all who have been saved. This is not a difficult distinction. But in the Catechism, we will not find our life in Christ to be only a result. Instead it often slips into being a cause of justification as well. Thus in the Catechism, justification, grace, and merit have all been placed under "Life in Christ." Such a placement is quite revealing.

This third section, "Life in Christ," is even more briefly stated in paragraph [13] as just "the Commandments" without further elaboration. That is a real Freudian slip. Law has become Gospel. Salvation is the commandments! (Of course, what is meant is the keeping of them.) This is very much the error that so grieved the Apostle Paul in his dealings with his own

people in Romans 10:1-4. This oversimplification (Life in Christ = the Commandments) is hardly fair to the Roman Catholic view of salvation, since the Roman church does believe in the absolute necessity of grace. But I did not make this oversimplification; *they* did, and it passed all their proofreading and committee processes. The unfairness to their actual doctrine is an unfairness they have placed in their own documents. But many Roman Catholics think salvation is just God getting us to obey Him, and if we ever succeed in doing that, we should be OK!

Salvation in that system is life in Christ, and life in Christ includes justification, a subjective change God works in us in a complex cooperation of grace and “right conduct freely chosen” [16] (below). Lest I confuse any reader, I was stating the Roman view. My understanding is that life in Christ is a consequence of the saving activity of God apart from our cooperation.

Salvation is about what God has done in the light of commandments we have broken. As guilty sinners our death is required by God’s justice, not some new attempt on our part at obedience. We sinners are already disqualified by our sin from any acceptance by God that might touch upon our improved behavior. And we are incapable of not sinning anyway.

Later an entire paragraph is devoted to the “The life of faith.” Remember this is one of the four major pillars of the entire Catechism. Here is how that entire unit is described:

[16] The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it — through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God’s law and grace (*Section one*), and through conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God’s Ten Commandments (*Section two*).

There is teaching on justification in the earlier sections, but the main treatment in the outline appears here in section three and not there. Justification appears after the sacraments (and rightly so, since in the view of this Catechism, it is caused by baptism) and in a unit described as “the Commandments.” Justification is in trouble by its placement even before any definition of it begins. That “Life in Christ” will focus on our conduct has been made very clear at the outset. Justification will be only a discussion of our lives which God by grace seeks to rectify.

Grace and Justification: [1987]-[2029]

Chapter Three, “God’s Salvation: Law and Grace,” contains Article two, titled “Grace and Justification”¹ That is the focus of our attention in this lecture. But the opening paragraph of Chapter Three introduces the general topic of *Law and Grace* this way:

[1949] Called to beatitude but wounded by sin, man stands in need of salvation from God. Divine help comes to him in Christ through the law that guides him and the grace that sustains him:

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Phil. 2:12-13

The Catechism has us begin the section on salvation **with a statement of a salvation already underway** by using the verse from Philippians 2 on sanctification to open the chapter. But how does the salvation we need to “work out” begin? I think we are at times

¹ Catechism, Part Three: *Life in Christ*, Section One: *Man’s Vocation, Life in the Spirit*, Chapter Three: *God’s Salvation: Law and Grace* [par. 1949], Article 2: *Grace and Justification* [par. 1987].

mired in a basic confusion of trying to become a Christian by being one. That switch is an impossible thing for any sinner to do. We can only BE Christians after we BECOME Christians. Justification will be buried in sanctification.

The divine help that the law gives is not to direct the sinner to his right choices — we *are* helped to know what sinners we are — but to condemn him for his wrong choices stripping him of all pretense, leaving him speechless and guilty (Romans 3:19,20).¹ One purpose of the law is to drive us to Christ Who is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness apart from it for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4). A man cannot work out his salvation until it has become his salvation. An important prior event is missing, justification itself.

It is not in the scope of this paper, but I cannot pass without commenting that we are not merely “wounded by sin” as in [1949] above. When we are separated from Christ (Ephesians 2:12), we are **dead** in sins (Ephesians 2:1). It would be a very valuable study for students looking at this Catechism to review all one can find in its view of man’s ability to obey. Martin Luther’s old book *The Bondage of the Will* deserves to be read along with this Catechism. A defective soteriology is often preceded by a defective anthropology. The problem is misunderstood and therefore the solution is directed to this mistaken understanding of the fall of man into death to God. In the day man sinned he did most surely die. When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we pass from *death to life*, not from being wounded to being healed (John 5:24).

In the succinct wording of Scripture we are told, “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3:1). Roman theology has errors of priority and necessity.

- First, it jumps over the prior event of regeneration² — which event is coupled in Colossians 3:1 with a heavenly status with Christ already secured. Only then does it address the dynamics of Christian living which rests on such a base. A change of status is the **priority in salvation**.
- Second, it ignores the **necessity** of being raised from death in order to live. The Fall is real and only a resurrection can get a communion with God active again. We do cooperate with divine grace in our sanctification, but we are as passive as a doornail

¹ None of the verses on sin in Romans 3:5-17 are ever quoted or footnoted in the entire Catechism, according to its own *Index of Footnotes* (<http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/NOTE.HTM>). Rom. 3:20 is referred to in [708] where the law is said to impart “a growing awareness of sin” and “a desire for the Holy Spirit.” I disagree that it imparts such positive desire in the unregenerate when all it does in the unregenerate is inflame sin. In Romans 7:8 the law engenders covetous desire — hardly the same as a “desire for the Holy Spirit”! It brings death — not life — Romans 7:10. It does not bring merely “awareness of sin” as [708] suggests, but a conscious guilt that leaves one silenced (without defense) according to Romans 3:19. There is no positive help in the law except to drive us to understand that there is no help within us, a most valuable truth to prepare us for Christ and for justification in Him from outside our personal law-keeping.

² Any informed Roman Catholic could be properly offended at this statement since Rome does not ignore the new birth, bestowed in their view at baptism. But if regeneration is defined as a divinely produced change in the sinner’s disposition from deadness in his ability to please God, a will that is hostile to God and incapable of faith, or any obedience from the heart, then that kind of regeneration is absent in this Catechism. The same terms are used but the content of some of them is sometimes radically different. It is in light of such a definition that I say that it jumps over the prior event of regeneration.

in our own resurrection to new life in Christ. Only those with live hearts can set their hearts on Christ.

Grace and Justification: Four Parts

Article 2, “Grace and Justification,” has four parts: (1.) Justification, (2.) Grace, (3.) Merit, and (4.) Christian Holiness

Justification is presented in [\[1987\]](#) as a cleansing from sin. The problem is that there is no indication that it is a removal of guilt. It is quite different to be relieved of guilt and the sentence that guilt brings, from being cleansed from the sins in our conduct.

Justification is forensic,¹ but the Catechism never embraces this extremely important element. The cleansing of our record in God’s court is not identical with the cleansing of the sins in our hearts. Justification belongs to the courtroom and sanctification belongs to the hospital. We all know there is a difference between having the status of a citizen, and the “good citizenship” of obeying a country’s laws. Justification has to do with our passport, and sanctification with our obedience.

There is a big difference between being relieved of the legal charge of guilt in God’s court and relieved of the sinfulness that is part of one’s life. The first is the priority of the gospel. But justification is not a refuge for continued sinning. It is always tied to a changed relationship where the same Christ who is our righteousness is also our sanctification (1Corinthians 1:30). The Lord who no longer lays anything to our charge (Romans 8:33) is the same Lord Who heals us (Ezekiel 20:12). In other words, a forensic matter leads to a “life in Christ” matter. The settling of the charge is an *act* of God and the healing of the life is a *process* of the Holy Spirit. We are not saying that the charge was dropped. It certainly was not dropped in Gethsemane. Christ went to the cross in our place. That is how God’s docket was cleared. Our Substitute was executed.

Sanctification is incongruous if the charge of condemnation is still in place. Can anyone imagine God working to improve the life of the person who is still condemned and under His curse, one headed to God’s eternal punishment? If God really wants to help such a person in that person’s salvation, the starting point is to deal with the condemnation. And that is what justification is! Justification happens in the mind of God; it is His changed verdict concerning us, entailing full forgiveness of all our sins. Further, it is based also on His putting the perfect human righteousness of the only obedient man, the Lord Jesus Christ, on our record. Is God still angry with us for our sin? Does He condemn us still? Are we under His wrath yet? All of that was provided for at the cross and is settled concerning each believer at the moment of justification. Reconciliation requires justification, because it is impossible for God to bless those He curses. That would make God operate on contradictory principles. He does not bless those He curses. (See James 3:10). His “help” for us is first of all to satisfy Himself concerning our sin by a Redeemer, so that His love may pursue an unhampered course of goodness toward us. Such love as this includes sanctification and every grace that comes through the Holy Spirit subsequent to justification.

¹ An adjective to define any situation as a legal issue ranging from guilt to innocence.

[1987] also mentions “the righteousness of God” is communicated through the Holy Spirit. What the Catechism means here is that it is produced in us, not provided for us. There is no reference to justification as the imputed righteousness of Another’s life being taught here, or anywhere, because justification is elaborated in [1988] as dying to sin, and being born to new life. In [1989] it is sanctification and “a renewal of the interior man.” In [1990] it is the purification of the heart of sin. “Justification detaches man from sin...” This is a rather odd thing to say and all mankind can see that it is factually false. We all have sin in us, so how can it be that we have been detached from it? That is just not good Roman theology. The Catechism elsewhere presents only Jesus and Mary as detached from sin. Detached must mean not having any. What should be very clear is that the Catechism never presents us with justification as a change of status, but only as a change of conduct.

The Catechism leaves us to fear whether this change of life, this “righteousness of God”, is one that includes our obedience, and how could it not? If so, justification would then be based on our participation at least in part, and all the disclaimers of it being initiated by grace in a thousand words cannot nullify the fact that our obedience is part of the formula, and the obedience of Christ is not the entire basis of justification. In fact, the obedience of Christ is not taught in this Catechism as the sole ground of anyone’s justification. We end up with a salvation that includes our works in spite of the vigor of the Bible to deny such a remedy.

In [1991] we have language similar to the Reformers’ wording:

[1991] Justification is at the same time as the *acceptance of God’s righteousness* through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or justice) here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted to us. [The italics are in the original.]

Justification is at the same time as a person’s acceptance of God’s righteousness. But what is the righteousness we accept? The definitions in this section are all similar. Justification is a rectitude that is inwardly produced in us by the Holy Spirit. [1992] says that justification “conforms us to the righteousness of God who makes us **inwardly** just by the power of His mercy.” Romans 3:19-26 is quoted as Biblical support for [1992].

Here, the disagreement with the Roman Catholic Catechism is serious. The Catechism is not like the Bible in holding out the perfect righteousness of Christ as a free gift. It is focused entirely on a righteousness that arises *within us* by our accepting the righteousness of God that He will implant in us. Maybe that sounds good to the reader. It is not! The only thing meant is righteousness native to us by divine grace, assistance, help, good modeling and obedience to God’s law. It is not an imputation of the obedience Christ performed to the law. This inward righteousness is a moral transformation of sinners who accept the grace brought by the sacraments, especially baptism, the instrument of initial justification. In that kind of gospel, our eyes are made to look to one place and one place alone, where the righteousness of God is happening, and that is within ourselves, in our hearts. The Council of Trent denied that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us apart from any obedience in us.¹

¹ **Some Statements by the Council of Trent**

The Sixth Session (January 13, 1547) produced the “Decree on Justification”. Some of that is quoted here. I have found nothing in the Catechism of the Catholic Church that disagrees with Trent. There are things which that council said with which we should agree. However, the issue right now is to identify some things said about

There are two ways to state a position clearly: one is to assert a position consistently, and the other is to deny any alternative to it. At Trent, Rome did both. The modern Catechism is softer, but it still asserts that the only place where the righteousness of justifications happens is in us. One may add a thousand assertions that that new product in us is the undeserved righteousness of God, all merited for us by Christ, but Roman justification is still subjective, not objective. There is no imputation of an alien righteousness since righteousness is not credited from one person's account to another's. It is only "homegrown" and underway with God the gardener, but our hearts are the garden, weeds and all, where this partial righteousness is growing. Is God supposed to call what is in us, righteousness? Not at all! There is sin in us but there was none in Christ. His righteousness was pure; ours is stained.

The Apostle Paul would be vigorous in disagreeing with the Catechism. He surely loved his own people and his heart ached for them, according to both Romans 9 and 10. The Jews did not know the righteousness that comes from God so they sought to establish their own along the same line of thinking as this Catechism, but in so doing they did not submit to God's righteousness (Romans 10:3) — a verse never touched upon in this Catechism. In Paul's conversion he learned that the One he was persecuting was Jesus, the Lord God of Israel. That was a major turnaround for him. But the other shock for him was that all his self-generated righteousness was rubbish. His conversion entailed a converted view of his personal righteousness which he did not improve with more guidance from the law and "right conduct freely chosen." No, his violent conversion was not just a crashing to the ground on the road to Damascus, but a trashing of his righteousness that came from keeping the law (Philippians 3:4-11). He came to look upon it as worthless, and he was blessed to discover that assessment in this life and agree with the Lord in it. He then embraced a righteousness that he could take no credit for, but God credited it to him, just as He did for Father Abraham long ago before the law was given to Moses (Romans 4:1-2; 4:13-15). When Paul embraced Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9), he also received the righteousness of Christ, because he received the Lord Who is his righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). It was then that Paul was saved. But Paul had lived and failed in a kind of Roman error long before it was codified at Trent.

Paul in his epistles is as careful as a lawyer who knows that the slightest slip of the tongue would be seized upon by his opponents. In Romans 3 he shows we have no righteousness (vv.10-18). He closed off that avenue as a place where it could be received by God as the basis of His declaration that we are righteous. *We are not!* So our attention must be turned

justification that we should not agree with. Many sentences in these documents are very long, so I quote fragments. (The material from the Council just on justification runs in my book to about 30 pages, with one half of the text in Latin.) In quoting fragments, I pledge that I will not misrepresent what the council was saying. Note further, that ordinarily when the council used the word *justice*, it meant, under the influence of Latin, *righteousness*.

"... Through God's quickening and assisting grace [sinners may] convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and co-operating with that said grace ..." (Chapter 5).

"... No one can know with a certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God" (Chapter 9).

"If anyone saith, that men are just without the justice of Christ ... or that it is by that justice* itself that they are formally just: let him be anathema" (Canon X). * "that justice" is the righteousness of Christ!

"If anyone saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and *the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherit in them* ... let him be anathema" (Canon XI). [The italics are in the original.]

elsewhere. And that is to Christ! Paul asserts again that there is a righteousness that comes from a different source; it comes “from God” (vv.21 & 22)! The Apostle asserts that this righteousness is totally and explicitly separate from all of our law-keeping (Romans 3:28).

Of course human righteousness must be defined in terms of human obedience. God is not playing games when He pronounces people righteous. The question is *whose* human righteousness is He looking at? Thankfully, Rome accepts as truth a vicarious suffering where another (the Lord Jesus) bears the penalty for the law breaking of another. No matter how that may be reduced by our making some kind of satisfaction for our own sins by penance etc. the principle of a vicarious action by one for another is admitted. To secure the Biblical doctrine of justification, all one needs now is for the same principle to be admitted again — this time in a **vicarious obedience** of one in the place of another. In the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH it never happens.

There are two possible human righteousnesses: that of the person in need of justification, or that of a substitute whose righteousness satisfies God — in other words, our righteousness or Christ’s. It is a serious failure of duty that in this new official teaching document, Rome neglects to teach the obedience of Christ apart from our activity as the basis of God’s declaration, and, as a result, is left only with the disqualified and unacceptable righteousness of sinners as the place where God looks. We need to read Romans 3:10-20 again.

Salvation is not God improving a rotten potato, but God making judicially a fresh start in the full, tested, absolutely righteous obedience of our Savior — all imputed to those He represented. This imputation occurs upon their faith and their surrender of all hope in any righteousness of their own. The position I have been setting out is not what the Catechism means in [1991] by “the acceptance of God’s righteousness.” There it means we accept His will with a resolve to do it, a kind of New Years’ resolution, all the time depending on the grace of God to stimulate our improvements. The Catechism knows no imputation, only the infusion of less-than-perfect righteousness into what it recognizes is a still sinful heart. If God declared us righteous on such a basis, He would not be speaking the truth. We argue with the Roman Catholic Church that it misses the real mission of Jesus Christ to save us, and whether it means to or not, it has an anti-evangelical theology that skirts around the One who is the Lord our Righteousness. The offensiveness of this is not that we are slighted but that Christ is. Christ is God’s way of justifying sinners, and frankly there is no way He could justify us on any other grounds and retain His veracity.

[1991] speaks of “obedience to the divine will granted to us.” It again is speaking of *our* obedience. In the theology of the Reformation, we speak of the obedience of Christ, not meaning just an obedience that issues from Him and is reproduced in us, but one performed for us by Him. What the Catechism means by obedience granted is that God has given us the privilege of a new life where we are helped to obey. No full obedience granted us from Christ is admitted in the Catechism. When we look closely at the small print of this salvation policy, we find that the coverage is not very complete.

But the Reformers did not invent their theology — they read these wonderful words, “so also through the obedience of the One man the many will be made righteous” [that is, constituted as righteous] (Romans 5:19). We participated in that obedience to the same degree we participated in the disobedience of Adam in Eden, and that is — not at all. We obeyed God in the righteousness that became ours, as much as we obeyed at the cross or in the Garden of

Gethsemane, or in the temptation in the wilderness, and that is — not at all! We were represented there by our Savior Who did all the necessary obedience on His own in the power of the Holy Spirit. Unless we hold to our contribution in our justification as absolute zero, we corrupt the gospel and compete with the role of Christ.

[1992] says justification “conforms us to the righteousness of God.” The gospel is that in justification we have been *supplied* with the righteousness of God. It is a free gift (Romans 5:17). [1992] also says it “is conferred in baptism” and the Bible never says that. Scripture leaves us instead with repeated assertions that faith is the instrument whereby we receive this righteousness from God (Romans 3:22, 28, 30; 4:5; 5:1 & 1 Peter 1:9).

[1993] and [1995] present justification as both sanctification and regeneration (without using the word regeneration). Both are non-forensic doctrines of Christian experience. Then [1995] says plainly, “The Holy Spirit is the master of the interior life by giving birth to the ‘inner man,’ justification entails the *sanctification* of his whole being.” [1995]; italics are original. (Here Romans 6:19 & 22 are quoted.)

In [1999] we read that grace is “infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.” Justification entails sanctification according to [1995], and thus we conclude that the new birth, the renewal of the Spirit, grace infused, and justification are all synonymous to express slight differences of perspective of the same spiritual transformation in us. The **objective** declaration by the Holy Judge of “guilty” or “not guilty” concerning us is missed in the flood of one **subjective** description of salvation after another. If Roman theology is true, then God has nothing at all that He can look at with respect to us and say that His new creation is very good. The Catechism would allow that for Mary and Jesus alone. But for the rest of us, it is all not quite there in this life, and full salvation may even need to extend into purgatory in the next. Gone is the amazing grace that would credit us with the obedience of Christ, and gone is the kind of assurance that the obedience of Christ can foster in us. Note, that an entirely subjective salvation does us the subjective damage of denying us subjective assurance, because we are left with nowhere to look but within — a rather depressing scene!

[2001] teaches that we **collaborate** in justification, so that puts us back under the burden of collaborating reasonably well, and justification will then be tied to the degree that we do so. Anyone with a marriage status based on so many variables could never know if he is truly married or not. That is very hard on the married person. Justification that is affected by the “collaboration” of the justified is a very shaky kind. God does not have graduated degrees of “guilty” or “not guilty.” Courts do not have forty-nine shades of guilt, even though they may have forty-nine shades of punishment for different offences. We have sinned, and we stand in our sin guilty, or else, we have been acquitted based on some righteousness we obviously have not brought to the Judge as our own. If He pronounced judgment based on what is in us, it would be an absolute sentence of guilty. But no one can lay any charge to God’s elect (Romans 8:33) This security is not because God is blind to the facts of our sin, but because He has imputed the guilt of our sin to Christ and has imputed the cleanliness of Christ’s account to all who have trusted Him to do that for us. Paul wrote: “... *He [God] made him [Christ] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

A Definition of Justification

Drawn from the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

This is my compilation. I think I can show every element in it from the Catechism, but the arrangement is to show my point. It is not a sympathetic statement. I am highlighting differences, but I think my compiled definition does not distort the position the Catechism promotes. I have drawn material mostly from paragraphs [\[1987\]](#)-[\[2029\]](#) and a few others as noted.

Justification is the sanctifying work of the grace of the Holy Spirit effected by man's conversion through "faith in baptism" [\[1271\]](#) in accordance with the command to repent. Man does this when he turns to God accepting forgiveness and righteousness from Him. All is merited by the Passion of Christ whose blood is also the instrument of justification.

Justification remits sins, cleanses and detaches from them, and purifies the heart. Those justified, die to sin and are born to a new life, a renewal of the interior man. In this sense alone is the righteousness of God communicated to sinners as God makes us inwardly just when we accept the rectitude of divine love. Faith, hope, and charity are poured into the heart, and obedience to all that God commands is infused in us and granted to us by grace.

Justification establishes a new cooperation with God's grace, because man's freedom has survived the fall, so that God and man can collaborate together in man's new righteousness. This is done through a charity that is expressed in living devoted lives in the ministry of the church. Grace is the help God gives us to respond. Only then, at God's initiative, do we participate in meriting eternal life. This we merit by virtues acquired by our effort, education and deliberate acts elevated by divine grace. [\[1804\]](#), [\[1810\]](#) It is this way, because it is God who has linked the response of man's obedience to His grace in a collaboration where we merit His gifts by earning them, even though the initial grace to the sinner is essential for salvation, and is undeserved and never merited.

Only Christ merits for us the opportunity to merit further grace. After initial grace the Holy Spirit moves us to merit for ourselves and others the graces needed to inherit eternal life. Christ alone expiated our sins once for all, but our penances allow us to become co-heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him.¹ We can do nothing of ourselves, but only by cooperation with Him who strengthens us, do we make satisfaction for our sins [\[1460\]](#).

Justification is repeatable and may be increased.² [*The righteousness of Christ could never be increased.*] Justification may be lost and then recovered by penance which includes fasting, prayers, almsgiving [\[1434\]](#), [\[1446\]](#), Bible reading, and prayer; in fact every sincere act of worship contributes to the forgiveness of our sins [\[1437\]](#). Faith alone does not fully unite one to Christ. Service and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation [\[1815\]](#), [\[1816\]](#). We should hope to persevere and obtain the joy of heaven as God's reward for the good works we have accomplished with the grace of Christ [\[1821\]](#).

1 Here the Catechism in [\[1460\]](#) footnotes the Council of Trent.

2 [\[1989\]](#) "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man." Council of Trent (1547): DS 1528.

My Appraisal of the Catechism's Doctrine of Justification

A. What is missing is righteousness!!

All the righteousness we have is: our being helped, renewed, assisted and hopefully ultimately completed. What is missing is an impeccable, perfect righteousness. What is missing is the righteousness of Christ, the very thing God gives by faith in the gospel message (Romans 1:16, 17). To have produced in us, a righteousness which cannot compare with Christ's, is to go without the one produced outside us in the human obedience of Christ. This is a terrible trade-off. Thus in this Catechism, we are mired in the incompleteness of our sanctification and the imperfection of our defective righteousness. An absolute justification, based only on His righteousness, is buried by a thousand substitutions of various Christian virtues never quite attained, and duties done by us which never compare with the perfect obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Faith needs to be recovered.

By this I mean, a *faith that receives* prior to a *faith that follows* — a faith that is apart from works, before a faith that does works. The confusion of receiving a status from God by faith apart from the fruit that that faith will later produce, needs to be overcome by a simple distinction. We come in saving faith to God, naked with nothing to offer as a basis of our righteousness. Upon becoming His children, we receive the immediate gift of the Holy Spirit Who brings spiritual fruitfulness into our lives. To make the result of justification to be a prior condition of justification is an unintended yet effective way to see that justification never happens. Saving faith keeps getting replaced by divinely assisted human works.

C. The monergistic work of God the Savior is contradicted by the synergistic cooperation of man the sinner.

Does God rescue sinners only with their help? Or raise the dead with their permission? In this Catechism, even the total satisfaction of Christ on the cross is weakened by little satisfactions for sin that we add to the work of Christ on the cross [1459], [1460]. (I think these two paragraphs contradict each other.) God's regeneration is with the participation of our free wills, so that the resurrection to new life is the healing of the wounded man, not the raising of the dead.

To this, the theology of the Reformation replies that a wounded man can do something, while the dead one is totally dependent on God for his resurrection to spiritual life. Cooperation with God does begin in our sanctification, though this legitimate synergism is a credit to the success of the Savior in all that preceded our sanctification, and that sanctification is never "our part/God's part." The Roman Church still needs reformation to accept that God works alone for His glory, and allows us to accept and worship the display of His unassisted work. He will not share His glory with idols or even His redeemed people. He wears the title of Savior proudly, properly, and unilaterally. We sin in taking any of it from Him. He made the first creation by His powerful word without assistance, and the new creation comes in precisely the same way (2 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18). In neither case has God allowed anyone to participate as co-creator with Him. He retains exclusively His role as Creator within His new creation. We can begin our work only when His finished work is already in place.

D. Our attention is drawn to our own righteousness

The attention of everyone reading the Catechism is turned to their own hearts, out of which comes much evil. This is a very bad place to look for what God will approve. If God calls what He sees there, He will not look at the evil thoughts, murder, adultery, etc. (Matthew 15:19) and pronounce it good. The Catechism expresses a regular concern for real righteousness, but it ignores the source from which we receive it, namely the Savior who is our righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). One cannot trust Christ for all we need while trying to approve the condition of one's own life which is a morally disqualified basis for justification. "What must we do to work the works of God?" Our Lord was asked. He replied, "The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent" (John 6:28, 29). This was a surprise to those who heard His reply. It must be one to this Catechism too, since in it the work of God is a multitude of duties never fully kept by those who cannot, but who just might fool themselves into thinking they can. It is far better to cease from one's own works and enter into His rest, "...for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work..." (Hebrews 4:10).

In whose body was the righteousness produced that God has approved? The gospel says it is our Lord Jesus Christ's. But this Catechism has its attention consumed with what goes on in ours. Only one man has behaved as we should. If God would allow His obedience to be imputed to us, our legal problems in God's court would be over in a moment. His was the only heart on earth where what God demands was fulfilled. Why not look in that direction, instead of into the dark chambers of our deceitful hearts? (Jeremiah 17:9). The Mediator bore our load of sin on the cross; maybe He could provide for our lack of obedience too!!

E. Rome needs to recover the basic representational structure of the human race under Adam or Christ.

In the first setting, Adam as head of the entire race represented all humanity and sinned for us all. In his representation of us, we all sinned "in him" (Romans 5:12). Christ as head of all who are in Christ obeyed and died, so all those represented by Him died in Him and rose in Him (Romans 6:3-11). The death He died for our offences was vicarious, and the law keeping He accomplished was vicarious as well. The Biblical justification of sinners who still have sins, can be understood if this simple structure of humanity, so clear in Romans 5, is accepted. The sin of Adam did not occur in my life or experience, yet the condemnation was mine. The condemnation of the new representative man, Jesus Christ, was once mine but became His, and the righteousness of His obedience to God was never mine, but it became mine by God's imputation when I believed. The pieces all come together just by accepting that God has created a human family structure with a head. Once it was Adam acting for us all. Likewise, in God's grace to those He would redeem, it was Christ acting for, in the place of, and apart from His people. We need to believe that Adam was a pattern for the One to come (Romans 5:14).

We need to see that if something as objective as the event in the Garden of Eden can bring condemnation, then something as objective as what happened in Christ can be the basis of an objective justification. Instead of this Biblical framework, the Catechism focused on the subjective battleground of our hearts, when the battle was actually won long ago in all the righteous behavior and sacrifice of Mary's Son.

F. The Catechism needs to include imputation.

There are three main areas of imputation given above. Rome has denied that Adam's sin was imputed to us. It says all men are **implicated** in Adam's sin [402] and sin is **propagated** to all mankind, [404]. Never does it say that Christ's obedience is imputed to us even though He was made to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2Corinthians 5:21). In the Roman view, the sins of His people were not imputed to Him but, since He embraces all human persons and constitutes Himself as the Head of all mankind, He only "makes possible His redemptive sacrifice for all" [616]. Thus there is no specific imputation of the sins of those He will justify, only a vague sacrifice that does not cause the salvation of anyone. In my reading of this Catechism, this is the closest that it comes to imputation because it does see Christ acting as Head for others.¹ The saving role of Christ combines His vicarious death (for our sins, imputed to Him) with His vicarious obedience (for our needed righteousness, imputed to us).²

G. The Catechism needs a clear definition that grasps the forensic nature of justification

Justification is forensic not in part but the whole, yet the Catechism never defines justification in legal terms, only in terms of new life. This is like asking a man if he is married and he replies, "I bring a woman flowers!" A marriage has a record in the county clerk's office. (Pardon me, I speak as a North American.) All cultures have people as married or not married, or at least we used to. We would scoff at a view of marriage that loses its legal aspect. If there is a quarrel, "I'm upset" is not the same as "I am no longer married!"

The opposite of justification is condemnation. When God condemns, He does not "make wicked" experientially, and when God justifies, He does not make men righteous experientially. (He does *make* righteous, but that is another aspect of salvation distinguishable from justification.) We should not be surprised if the Bible uses the vocabulary of the courtroom, that it has in mind the courtroom's meaning of the words. When a judge acquits, he does not make a person innocent — He recognizes and pronounces that a person is innocent. And when God justifies sinners while still sinners, He has changed their legal status all because of the One Who represents them. In justification, God is not making a statement about our lives, or it would be a very different one indeed. God is making a statement about Christ's life and what He deserves. Thus a declaration of righteousness is made for all those united to Him and believing in Him. It is a statement of His merits, made in spite of the wrath we had merited on our own. By missing the forensic aspect of justification, Rome has lost the entire doctrine, except where believing Roman Catholics trust in Christ alone for their salvation, trusting that Jesus died for them, and He has become for them their sincere hope. But with such a different notion of what justification is, I would be pleased if many in the Roman church see that our salvation has a settled judicial side. It is wonderful that the gavel has sounded for eternity with all charges against those in Christ forever dismissed. And the God-satisfying obedience of Jesus has been accounted to them. If

¹ I have written about imputation in another paper. It is posted on my website, www.grebeweb.com/linden

² See the paragraph below on Romans 4 under **The Catechism's Neglect of Certain Key Scriptures.**

Roman Catholics can articulate this Biblical teaching, they got it from their Bibles, not from this Catechism. **When God condemns, He does not make evil, and when He justifies, He does not make good.** The Catechism is confused on the judicial nature of justification.

H. The Catechism reverses causes and effects!

This is very serious, because it begins salvation by leaping into the middle of the Christian life. One cannot work out a salvation until he has it. Only when he has it, can he work it out. This reversal is like saying that the way to build a car is to start the engine, or the way to have a baby is to feed him good milk. In the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH consequences precede their causes. We all laugh at a funny cowboy song in the United States, “I am my own grandpa!” for reversing the obvious order. We just do not *become* Christians by *being* Christians. We need first the status of righteous persons or God would never dispense the blessing of His Holy Spirit to unreconciled enemies under His curse. Rome amasses and misapplies a volume of Biblical passages, and in the process gets it backwards. When God justifies, He acquits, and therefore has a reason why He may bless by beginning the repair work in His needy people. First they become His, and only then does He make them to be like Him. He is not at work in salvation improving the lives of those still under His unrelieved charge of sin. The criminal needs a pardon before he works outside the prison, marries the Governor’s daughter and starts to run the police department. First things first. Our first response to the gospel is faith in Christ. This results in our justification, and then the stream of Biblical data the Catechism wrongly put prior to justification, really does come into play, but only as the consequence of God accepting us and not in order for Him to do so.

I. Justification must be viewed as an event.

We have already seen that this is part of the Catechism’s position, but that is in the case of those being baptized. What follows after is the need for confession or penance to be rejustified, since in the Roman view it can be lost. But Biblical justification is unrepeatable. We must distinguish however, between the forgiveness of enemies and the multitudes of forgivenesses that God extends to His children every day. Justification is akin to the act of reconciliation, with justification being judicial and reconciliation being relational. The effect of both is peace. Both are the basis of God adopting believers as His children. But once that that is established by grace, God deals in a fatherly way in disciplining His children. His beloved children are never under His judicial wrath. We will all incur His parental chastening for our sins (Hebrews 12:5-11), but He no more treats us as enemies than our parents did when we tried their patience so sorely. Justification is the moment of acquittal and a new status conferred. God’s parental ongoing work is to make us good sons and daughters. Christians have been justified (Romans 5:1), and there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). The loss of justification would be a horror show that God does not put His justified children through. They are His and cannot be anything else. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? (Romans 8:33). It could never be God, because in justification He has done precisely the opposite. He has acquitted us. Let Satan and any other charge us with our sins — they will find lots of opportunities — but we have a judicial advocate on our side Who has already paid for all our sins, and the act of justification can never be reversed or the justified saints in jeopardy. Our bottoms may be

warmed in beneficial chastening, but we cannot be charged by the Judge Who has already ruled on us and will not reverse His final verdict.

J. The Catechism attaches the attainment of eternal life to our merit.

This is a gross sin for which the Roman Catholic Church should repent in deep contrition. If Christ has merited our salvation and all the joys of heaven for those who trust Him, why then is merit attached to the good lives of those being saved by Him? Roman theology is ambivalent in presenting a great banquet provided by the gracious divine host but partially paid for by the guests. Again, I am writing in Asia, and I can tell you that if I ever tried to pay for any banquet I have attended here, I would thereby deliver a stinging insult to my hosts, one that would offend them deeply. Roman theology pays deference to Christ's merit, and I am not making an accusation of insincerity, but it diminishes His merit when it adds in ours. In other words, it undermines the graciousness of God's grace. He is left to providing a great banquet that His guests "chipped in" to help pay for. The Catechism's doctrine of justification is enmeshed in this meritorious system: sinners earn eternal life that is a gift, and grace opens doors for us to merit grace. This is not just confusing, it is a contradiction of the meaning of the words, and worse, the intentions of God's heart and gospel.

The Apostle Paul once said that the remnant was "chosen by grace; and if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace" (Romans 11:5, 6). Justification can be merited or graciously given, but not both. Thus the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH fuses two incompatible principles. We cannot merit what grace gives. If grace provides it, it will not be our earned wages but His gift. (See Romans 4:4, 5). In Christian teaching, our work is never free of His grace (Philippians 2:12, 13). But His grace is always free of our deserving. Whenever we add meritorious works to His grace, our works survive and His grace is obliterated — not a very respectful way to treat the kindness of God. We do not earn the gift of eternal life, unless God in His grace is not really gracious at all.

The truth is just the opposite: His grace is the model of all grace, and we can never compare with it. If justification is based on our works in any way, then God would be less than holy to approve of our sinful works. Now we see that the disease has spread. First, His grace is compromised and now His character. Works produces an Ishmael, but the gospel is a supernatural gospel, not dependent on sinful flesh. The gospel produces an Isaac, the son of promise (Galatians 4:28). There is one sense only in which the gospel is a meritorious system, since it is Christ alone who merits for us our justification, and we produced not one iota of the righteousness which has arrived from Him to our record. We always have to ask, "Who is doing the meriting?" See [\[2008\]](#), [\[2010\]](#)¹

1 When we read in [\[2011\]](#) that the saints' merits are "pure grace", the Catechism contradicts itself, since it holds that WE merit for ourselves and others [\[2010\]](#). Merits are tied to deeds, yet deeds are always freely chosen by the sinner who could unilaterally choose not to do them. If the deeds are not done, the merit is not obtained. In spite of God's grace, any man in the Roman system could have freely chosen otherwise, since God does not make helpless sinners to walk in His ways. (But note Ezekiel 36:25-27.) So there is no "pure grace" in Roman theology that is free of man's choice to obey which, in their view, God does not cause. Their real view is **grace cooperated with**. There is **no pure grace**, because the human will is never resurrected by God apart from that person's consent. So, in Roman theology man participates in his own regeneration, because God resurrects to spiritual life only those who agree to it!! Its view that man is "wounded, not dead" fouls the real picture of Ephesians 2:1. If I have mistaken the theology of the Catechism, I ask to be shown. I also ask to be

K. God does not declare our sin righteous.

But neither does the Catechism — overtly. What it does do is embrace a justification where God declares a sinner’s life righteous when his life has sins! We lack perfect righteousness when He does it. This is irrational. In Christian teaching, God really does declare sinners righteous, but only because of their union with Christ Who is. Thus He can justify the wicked, while still wicked, since the righteousness He has in mind is Christ’s conduct and (obviously) not that of the ungodly man who believes (Romans 4:5). If justification is merely an analysis of us, and if God is only looking at us — and that is the Roman doctrine — then it is in logical and moral difficulty – logical according to the reasoning just given, and moral since it has God saying of sinners what is not true. If there is no perfect righteousness, yet God speaks a word of justification concerning us with only partial uprightness, then He has justified our sin. Surely, this cannot be.

L. Justification is not newness of life.

To follow this point, one should read [654] very carefully. First we agree, Christian doctrine does hold that the resurrection of Christ brings to us newness of life. Further, our baptism signifies union with Christ, and when this union is effected by faith (not baptism), a major change ensues for every believer. In contrast, the Catechism says that by the Resurrection the way to a new life is opened to us, but it then asserts that this new life *is* justification. [654] Since in the view of the Catechism justification is simply new life, this means it is a change in one’s experience. There is no room for a person being “reckoned as upright”.¹ Exactly when this new life is established is not indicated, because the Resurrection is the *way* to justification, so that participation in grace can begin. This is a far cry from a decree of God in heaven granting a sentence (irrevocable and immediate) of acquitted and righteous. Forgiveness happens in the Forgiver; it is not some improvement in the forgiven. Therefore genuine justification is not the beginning of a new life but the grant of a new status when a sinner believes. The Resurrection is God’s act of approval of our Savior/Priest Who has offered for us. This approval is shown by our Great High Priest being raised by the Father to Whom He made the offering of His body. Jesus’ resurrection shows that God has accepted His offering and *with it all those for whom it was offered*. Thus the Apostle can say in Romans 4:25 that He was raised for our justification and in 5:1 that we *have been* justified already.

Though the Catechism quotes Biblical texts profusely – thousands of them! – not one text referred to in [654] portrays justification as a new life. Nor does such a text exist in Scripture at all. Justification results in life, but that does not make it is a synonym for our new life. In a court setting the sentence of a judge acquitting a person is not a therapeutic intervention to improve that person’s conduct. To assume such a thing is to confuse categories. The Catechism’s view is repeated in [658] when it speaks of “the justification of our souls”. That paragraph views justification as ongoing throughout this life, because it views justification as our resurrected life now. Romans 5:1 says of the justified that we have been justified by faith. The Catechism takes the view that we are being justified throughout our lifetime by a

forgiven, and I will publish a retraction in the same circles where this paper is released. I have added an address at the end of this paper.

¹ This is taken from Romans 4 in The New Jerusalem Bible.

multitude of improvements and religious activities. Because of that, no one in the Roman view can be very sure if he is really justified. If a Catholic claims to be justified, he will be looked upon as a boaster in need of humility.

Here is how the Catechism reasons: Christ was raised for our justification (Romans 4:25) (true). That resurrection is replicated in us in newness of life (Romans 6:4) (true). Therefore, our justification *is* newness of life. With that I must disagree. My reply is that in the death and resurrection of Christ, God has acted to achieve reconciliation. God's justice has been satisfied by the Lord Jesus, and Jesus' obedience deserves divine acceptance, shown in God's justice by His raising Him from the dead. The gospel now calls us to come to Christ to receive forgiveness in His substitutionary death and the sentence of righteous in His vicarious obedience. The sinner who receives Christ has been united to Christ! What a mystery! Transformation of life follows. Because of Christ we are accepted as sons and then treated as such. The transformation of our lives comes from the active ministry of the Holy Spirit within us. The atonement of Christ happened on earth long ago; the justification of the sinner happens in the mind of God in heaven every moment a sinner believes. The activity of the Spirit happens here on earth in every one of His children all day everyday as a consequence of the Resurrection. Justification is not new life but the reason we can have it.

There is more in [654]. After establishing justification as a life of grace, the Catechism makes justification to be what brings about "filial adoption". We reply that when we receive Christ we become and are accepted as God's children immediately (John 1:12). Becoming such children is entirely an act of God to which we do not contribute (John 1:13). Instead of this, the Catechism makes the life process of participation and cooperation with grace a meritorious effort to gain for us a share in the life of Christ. This is a stark difference. We who stand in the Reformation heritage view our adoption as a totally gracious act of God matching a radical change of status. The New Testament does not speak to Christians as those on a path to gain filial adoption as we cooperatively walk in newness of life. The Roman view of justification makes one perpetually wonder whether he is in or out.

The Catechism's Neglect of Certain Key Scriptures

This is not stated to pick at what THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH could have said and did not say. We should not expect it to comment on everything in the Bible, and there is profuse reference in it to the Scriptures. But what Scriptures their cardinals and scholars chose or omitted relates to doctrinal positions they have adopted, The Roman theologians have known for 450 years why we of the Reformation heritage disagree with its doctrine of justification. Some of these Biblical statements strongly contradict the Catechism! I have drawn on the Catechism's *Index of Citations* to see what texts have or have not been used.¹

All of Romans 5:15-17 is ignored, and with it the "gift of righteousness" receives no mention. Had that simple truth been admitted, the entire section on justification would have to be revised, its entire soteriology as well, and, in my opinion, its full sacramental system.

Furthermore, I have tracked every reference to Romans 5:19 in the Catechism and nowhere does it consider that "through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." [397], [411], [605], [532], [402], [615], [623], [1009] The verse may appear in a

¹ <http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/ NOTE.HTM>

footnote or some slight connection drawn, but nowhere would any reader be led to think he should trust in a righteousness he did not perform in order to be justified. The Catechism is quite honest. Its doctrine of justification is simply another angle of the doctrine of sanctification.

In Romans 10:3, some established their own righteousness and refused to submit to God's. This too is ignored. Likewise, Philippians 3:9, where Paul says the same thing, contrasting his righteousness with Christ's. Romans 3:21, 22 maintains this same distinction between two competing righteousnesses. This too is not observed.

Rome teaches that the grace of God especially in baptism changes us so that we choose right conduct under the law's guidance and thus we are justified. But in another omitted text of sacred Scripture that doctrine is expressly contradicted.

We... know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith and not by observing the law, because by observing the law, no one will be justified.

Galatians 2:16

A person is justified by faith and not by doing what the Law tells him to do.

Romans 3:28 (New Jerusalem Bible)

The Avoidance of Imputation in Romans 4

No chapter in the Bible speaks more of righteousness being *reckoned* than Romans 4. In this paper I have been using the word *imputed*. In older English, they liked *reckoned*. In more modern times we find *credited* or *accounted*. To say, "Well I reckon you will just have to go without shoes," means that this shoeless situation is reality. Likewise, if we account for something, we show it is so. And if funds are credited to an account, it means the money is there. We do not reckon fictions as true. If a person is reckoned as upright in the sight of God, and if it is God doing the reckoning, then in some sense that person really is righteous in the mind of God. We may reckon that it will rain and be wrong, but all imputations or reckonings in the mind of God are truth.

Using the New Jerusalem Bible, a widely accepted translation within the Roman Catholic Church, we read that faith was reckoned to Abraham as uprightness (Romans 4:3). That means he was accounted righteous. Others also are reckoned as upright (or just)¹, and in the same way Abraham was, according to vv.5, 6, 9, 11, 22, 23, & 24. Then similarly v.8 is, "How blessed are those to whom the Lord *imputes* no guilt." In the original language, the word *imputes* is the same word as the word *reckoned* throughout all of Romans 4.²

¹ In the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, there is a preference for the terms *just* and *justice*, over righteous and righteousness. I make no complaint about that. It is not surprising that Roman scholars would prefer words closer to the Latin.

² Half of the instances (19 out of 40) where the word for "reckon" [Greek: *logizomai* or *λογίζομαι*] is used in the New Testament are found in Romans. Of these 19, 11 are in chapter 4. This is the greatest concentration of this concept in the Bible.

The notion of uprightness being accounted as the undeserved status of a person who believes receives no mention in the Catechism. This new standing before God (Romans 5:1,2) is granted apart from works (Romans 4:5, 6) "...when someone, without working, puts faith in the one who justifies the godless, it is this faith that is reckoned as uprightness." That is in the Catholic Bible but not in this Catholic Catechism. It is not a misprint to say, as the New Jerusalem Bible also does, that God justifies the godless. In Roman theology, God justifies those He has sanctified so that they cooperate and become upright. Yet the apostle said in Romans 4:5 that God justifies the ungodly.

We have here a tremendous miscommunication. This issue was at the heart of the Reformation debate and the Reformation division. If we are justified in any degree because of our obedient cooperation and meritorious lives, then justification is not by faith alone upon the merits of Jesus Christ alone earning our justification for us all by Himself. We who are children of the Reformation constantly point to a righteousness outside our lives which is reckoned to us. What Romans 4 has to say about that is absent, and so at a vital point the Catechism does not take a crucial step to heal a grave breach.

When Romans 4 is referred to by the Catechism, it draws from it statements about faith, a bit on hope, and more on the Resurrection.¹ It does not address reckoning, or imputation, or crediting, or accounting a person righteous. Naturally their scholars would like to avoid some Biblical element which they cannot fit into their system. Yet the theme comes up ten times in Romans 4! The catechism does quote Romans 4:3 in [146], "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." But that is all; what that verse means is not developed. Those eleven words are admitted to the Catechism without comment.² Nevertheless, being reckoned as upright appears in verses 5, 6, 9, 22, 23, & 24. The Catechism passes over all of these. V.8 speaks of guilt not imputed, and that too does not appear anywhere.

A clear resolution is needed. Justification rests either on native righteousness or alien obedience, that is, on ours or Christ's. If Christ's, it is perfect, and we can have the peace of reconciliation with God. If the obedience of justification is ours, then we can have nothing but joyless uncertainty.

Conclusion

Galatians 2:16 above is a Biblical statement that Rome must not avoid. No foundation can be laid except Jesus Christ. This very relevant statement from Scripture, the doctors of theology have chosen to ignore. It does not agree with the new Catechism. The new Catechism does not agree with the Bible. It cannot construct a Biblical doctrine of justification without including some of the key building blocks of that doctrine. Objective forensic justification is Biblical. But that massive stone of Christian teaching has been rejected by the Roman teachers, and as a result, Rome has a giant edifice of salvation theory which does not rest on a Biblical base. With justification and propitiation laid as the twin foundations of God's salvation, the building would stand.

¹ Some reference to Romans 4 appears in [146], [165], [298], [517], [519], [654], [706], [723], [977], [1819], & [2572].

² For this bit of research I have depended entirely on the Catechism's "Index of Citations".

I am disappointed to see in my recent research that so little progress has been made by the Roman teachers in their explanation of the gospel. The non-Christian religions look only to the lives of their followers, because they have no Mediator with God. But we have and we should look to Him for all He supplies. A clean slate with a Holy God is a wonderful provision and a wonderful way to begin Life in Christ. It is the only way.

In the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, Rome has made a major communications effort aimed at its many millions of faithful followers plus many of us that it now admits are Christians. In the Pope's opening words he spoke of "guarding the deposit of faith." I fear it has been buried under a pile of human duties all taken out of legitimate Christian living and inserted illegitimately as the means of justification. Therefore it has failed to make "the truth of the gospel shine forth" as the Pope wished for in his letter of introduction. Instead, the Catechism leads people to include faith in themselves alongside faith in Christ. We must never have two wives, two Lords or two object of saving faith. The Catechism is intended to be a document that fosters ecumenical relations with Rome. But our unity is based on one Lord (Ephesians 4:1-6) and the Catechism diverts attention away from that Lord the Savior in the very fundamental issue of saving faith. Thereby it has hurt ecumenical relations very much.

I had hoped for better. Human merit is maintained. Satisfaction for sin is made by sinners — oh yes, as well as Christ!! This is in there, too, but the Catechism lets in human behavior as a cause rather than a result. It hurts to see such precious things about our Lord adulterated. For Christ, it is His glory as Savior that is damaged; for us, it is that the good news of the gospel has become hard news of work, work, work, while never being sure of final acceptance by God throughout all of this life. Then even into the life beyond, the fires of purgatory may finally clean up what apparently the precious blood of our Savior on the cross could not do. We have reasons to reject this kind of teaching that have nothing to do with old animosities against Catholics, which should be an embarrassment to all of us who had them. I had really hoped for a more gospel-embracing Catechism. I did not find it. I hope the Roman Catholic Church will review its teaching on this subject. In the Bible, justification is based on what Christ alone has done; in this new Catechism it is based in part on what we do. [1821]

Christ is all we need, a complete Savior. Let us put our trust in Him, His blood, and His righteousness.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all.

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Appendix

9 “The ministry of catechesis draws ever fresh energy from the councils. The Council of Trent is a noteworthy example of this. It gave catechesis priority in its constitutions and decrees. It lies at the origin of the Roman Catechism, which is also known by the name of that council and which is a work of the first rank as a summary of Christian teaching....” The Council of Trent initiated a remarkable organization of the Church’s catechesis. Thanks to the work of holy bishops and theologians such as St. Peter Canisius, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Turibius of Mongrovejo or St. Robert Bellarmine, it occasioned the publication of numerous catechisms.

11 This catechism aims at presenting an organic synthesis of the essential and fundamental contents of Catholic doctrine, as regards both faith and morals, in the light of the Second Vatican Council and the whole of the Church’s Tradition. Its principal sources are the Sacred Scriptures, the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, and the Church’s Magisterium. It is intended to serve “as a point of reference for the catechisms or compendia that are composed in the various countries”.

13 The plan of this catechism is inspired by the great tradition of catechisms which build catechesis on four pillars: the baptismal profession of faith (the Creed), the sacraments of faith, the life of faith (the Commandments), and the prayer of the believer (the Lord’s Prayer).

16 The third part of the Catechism deals with the final end of man created in the image of God: beatitude, and the ways of reaching it - through right conduct freely chosen, with the help of God’s law and grace (Section One), and through conduct that fulfills the twofold commandment of charity, specified in God’s Ten Commandments (Section Two).

146 Abraham thus fulfills the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”:¹ “Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.”² Because he was “strong in his faith”, Abraham became the “father of all who believe”.³

165 It is then we must turn to the witnesses of faith: to Abraham, who “in hope. . . believed against hope”;⁴ to the Virgin Mary, who, in “her pilgrimage of faith”, walked into the “night of faith”⁵ in sharing the darkness of her son’s suffering and death; and to so many others: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.”⁶

298 Since God could create everything out of nothing, he can also, through the Holy Spirit, give spiritual life to sinners by creating a pure heart in them,⁷ and bodily life to the dead through the Resurrection. God “gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.”⁸ And since God was able to make light shine in darkness by his Word, he can also give the light of faith to those who do not yet know him.⁹

397 Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in his Creator die in his heart and, abusing his freedom, disobeyed God’s command. This is what man’s first sin consisted of. All subsequent sin would be disobedience toward God and lack of trust in his goodness.

402 All men are implicated in Adam’s sin, as St. Paul affirms: “By one man’s disobedience many (that is, all men) were made sinners”: “sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread

¹ Heb 11:1.

² Rom 4:3; cf. Gen 15:6.

³ Rom 4:11,18; 4:20; cf. Gen 15:5.

⁴ Rom 4:18.

⁵ LG 58; John Paul II, RMat 18.

⁶ Heb 12:1-2.

⁷ Cf. Ps 51:12.

⁸ Rom 4:17.

⁹ Cf. Gen 1:3; 2 Cor 4:6.

to all men because all men sinned.” The Apostle contrasts the universality of sin and death with the universality of salvation in Christ. “Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.”

404 How did the sin of Adam become the sin of all his descendants? The whole human race is in Adam “as one body of one man”. By this “unity of the human race” all men are implicated in Adam’s sin, as all are implicated in Christ’s justice. Still, the transmission of original sin is a mystery that we cannot fully understand. But we do know by Revelation that Adam had received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin, but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen state. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of a human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called “sin” only in an analogical sense: it is a sin “contracted” and not “committed” - a state and not an act.

411 The Christian tradition sees in this passage an announcement of the “New Adam” who, because he “became obedient unto death, even death on a cross”, makes amends superabundantly for the disobedience, of Adam. Furthermore many Fathers and Doctors of the Church have seen the woman announced in the Protoevangelium as Mary, the mother of Christ, the “new Eve”. Mary benefited first of all and uniquely from Christ’s victory over sin: she was preserved from all stain of original sin and by a special grace of God committed no sin of any kind during her whole earthly life.

517 Christ’s whole life is a mystery of redemption. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross,¹ but this mystery is at work throughout Christ’s entire life:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty;²
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience;³
- in his word which purifies its hearers;⁴
- in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases”;⁵
- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us.⁶

519 All Christ’s riches “are for every individual and are everybody’s property.”⁷ Christ did not live his life for himself but for us, from his Incarnation “for us men and for our salvation” to his death “for our sins” and Resurrection “for our justification”.⁸ He is still “our advocate with the Father”, who “always lives to make intercession” for us.⁹ He remains ever “in the presence of God on our behalf, bringing before him all that he lived and suffered for us.”¹⁰

532 Jesus’ obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: “Not my will. . .” The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.

605 At the end of the parable of the lost sheep Jesus recalled that God’s love excludes no one: “So it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” He affirms that he came “to give his life as a ransom for many”; this last term is not restrictive, but contrasts the whole of humanity with the

¹ Cf. Eph 1:7; Col 1:13-14; 1 Pt 1:18-19.

² Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

³ Cf. Lk 2:51.

⁴ Cf. Jn 15:3.

⁵ Mt 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4.

⁶ Cf. Rom 4:25.

⁷ John Paul II, RH 11.

⁸ 1 Cor 15:3; Rom 4:25.

⁹ 1 Jn 2:1 Heb 7:25.

¹⁰ Heb 9:24.

unique person of the redeemer who hands himself over to save us. The Church, following the apostles, teaches that Christ died for all men without exception: "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer."

615 "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous." By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who "makes himself an offering for sin", when "he bore the sin of many", and who "shall make many to be accounted righteous", for "he shall bear their iniquities". Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father.

616 It is love "to the end" that confers on Christ's sacrifice its value as redemption and reparation, as atonement and satisfaction. He knew and loved us all when he offered his life. Now "the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died." No man, not even the holiest, was ever able to take on himself the sins of all men and offer himself as a sacrifice for all. The existence in Christ of the divine person of the Son, who at once surpasses and embraces all human persons, and constitutes himself as the Head of all mankind, makes possible his redemptive sacrifice for all.

623 By his loving obedience to the Father, "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8), Jesus fulfills the atoning mission (cf. Is 53:10) of the suffering Servant, who will "make many righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Is 53:11; cf. Rom 5:19).

654 The Paschal mystery has two aspects: by his death, Christ liberates us from sin; by his Resurrection, he opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace, "so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." Justification consists in both victory over the death caused by sin and a new participation in grace.¹ It brings about filial adoption so that men become Christ's brethren, as Jesus himself called his disciples after his Resurrection: "Go and tell my brethren."² We are brethren not by nature, but by the gift of grace, because that adoptive filiation gains us a real share in the life of the only Son, which was fully revealed in his Resurrection.

658 Christ, "the first-born from the dead" (Col 1:18), is the principle of our own resurrection, even now by the justification of our souls (cf. Rom 6:4), and one day by the new life he will impart to our bodies (cf. Rom 8:11).

706 Against all human hope, God promises descendants to Abraham, as the fruit of faith and of the power of the Holy Spirit.³ In Abraham's progeny all the nations of the earth will be blessed. This progeny will be Christ himself,⁴ in whom the outpouring of the Holy Spirit will "gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."⁵ God commits himself by his own solemn oath to giving his beloved Son and "the promised Holy Spirit . . . [who is] the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it."⁶

708 This divine pedagogy appears especially in the gift of the Law. God gave the Law as a "pedagogue" to lead his people towards Christ. But the Law's powerlessness to save man deprived of the divine "likeness," along with the growing awareness of sin that it imparts, enkindles a desire for the Holy Spirit. The lamentations of the Psalms bear witness to this.

723 In Mary, the Holy Spirit fulfills the plan of the Father's loving goodness. Through the Holy Spirit, the Virgin conceives and gives birth to the Son of God. By the Holy Spirit's power and her faith, her virginity became uniquely fruitful.⁷

¹ Cf. Eph 2:4-5; 1Pet 1:3.

² Mat 28:10; Joh 20:17.

³ Cf. Gen 18:1-15; Lk 1:26-38. 54-55; Jn 1:12-13; Rom 4:16-21.

⁴ Cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:16.

⁵ Cf. Jn 11:52.

⁶ Eph 1:13-14; cf. Gen 22:17-19; Lk 1:73; Jn 3:16; Rom 8:32; Gal 3:14.

⁷ Cf. Lk 1:26-38; Rom 4:18-21; Gal 4:26-28.

847 This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church:

Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.

977 Our Lord tied the forgiveness of sins to faith and Baptism: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”¹ Baptism is the first and chief sacrament of forgiveness of sins because it unites us with Christ, who died for our sins and rose for our justification, so that “we too might walk in newness of life.”²

1009 Death is transformed by Christ. Jesus, the Son of God, also himself suffered the death that is part of the human condition. Yet, despite his anguish as he faced death, he accepted it in an act of complete and free submission to his Father’s will. The obedience of Jesus has transformed the curse of death into a blessing.

1271 Baptism constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: “For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church. Justified by faith in Baptism, [they] are incorporated into Christ; they therefore have a right to be called Christians, and with good reason are accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.” “Baptism therefore constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all who through it are reborn.”

1434 The interior penance of the Christian can be expressed in many and various ways. Scripture and the Fathers insist above all on three forms, fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others. Alongside the radical purification brought about by Baptism or martyrdom they cite as means of obtaining forgiveness of sins: effort at reconciliation with one’s neighbor, tears of repentance, concern for the salvation of one’s neighbor, the intercession of the saints, and the practice of charity “which covers a multitude of sins.”

1437 Reading Sacred Scripture, praying the Liturgy of the Hours and the Our Father - every sincere act of worship or devotion revives the spirit of conversion and repentance within us and contributes to the forgiveness of our sins.

1446 Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification. The Fathers of the Church present this sacrament as “the second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck which is the loss of grace.”

1459 Many sins wrong our neighbor. One must do what is possible in order to repair the harm (e.g., return stolen goods, restore the reputation of someone slandered, pay compensation for injuries). Simple justice requires as much. But sin also injures and weakens the sinner himself, as well as his relationships with God and neighbor. Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must “make satisfaction for” or “expiate” his sins. This satisfaction is also called “penance.”

1460 The penance the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent’s personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, “provided we suffer with him.”

The satisfaction that we make for our sins, however, is not so much ours as though it were not done through Jesus Christ. We who can do nothing ourselves, as if just by ourselves, can do all things with the cooperation of “him who strengthens” us. Thus man has nothing of which to boast, but all our boasting is in Christ ... in whom we make satisfaction by bringing forth “fruits that befit repentance.”

¹ Mk 16:15-16.

² Rom 6:4; Cf. 4:25.

These fruits have their efficacy from him, by him they are offered to the Father, and through him they are accepted by the Father.

1804 Human virtues are firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct according to reason and faith. They make possible ease, self-mastery, and joy in leading a morally good life. The virtuous man is he who freely practices the good.

1810 Human virtues acquired by education, by deliberate acts and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace. With God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them. The moral virtues are acquired by human effort. They are the fruit and seed of morally good acts; they dispose all the powers of the human being for communion with divine love.

1815 The gift of faith remains in one who has not sinned against it. But "faith apart from works is dead": when it is deprived of hope and love, faith does not fully unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body.

1816 The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it: "All however must be prepared to confess Christ before men and to follow him along the way of the Cross, amidst the persecutions which the Church never lacks." Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation: "So every one who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

1819 Christian hope takes up and fulfills the hope of the chosen people which has its origin and model in the hope of Abraham, who was blessed abundantly by the promises of God fulfilled in Isaac, and who was purified by the test of the sacrifice.¹ "Hoping against hope, he believed, and thus became the father of many nations."²

1821 We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the Church prays for "all men to be saved." She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven:

Hope, O my soul, hope. You know neither the day nor the hour. Watch carefully, for everything passes quickly, even though your impatience makes doubtful what is certain, and turns a very short time into a long one. Dream that the more you struggle, the more you prove the love that you bear your God, and the more you will rejoice one day with your Beloved, in a happiness and rapture that can never end.

1987 The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism: But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. For we know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

1988 Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself:

[God] gave himself to us through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit, we become communicants in the divine nature... . For this reason, those in whom the Spirit dwells are divinized.

1989 The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is conversion, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

¹ Cf. Gen 17:4-8; 22:1-18.

² Rom 4:18.

1990 Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God, and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness. It reconciles man with God. It frees from the enslavement to sin, and it heals.

1991 Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or "justice") here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope, and charity are poured into our hearts, and obedience to the divine will is granted us.

1992 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life:

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus.¹

1993 Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent:

When God touches man's heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God's sight.

1994 Justification is the most excellent work of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit. It is the opinion of St. Augustine that "the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth," because "heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect ... will not pass away." He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy.

1995 The Holy Spirit is the master of the interior life. By giving birth to the "inner man," justification entails the sanctification of his whole being:

Just as you once yielded your members to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now yield your members to righteousness for sanctification... . But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life.

1996 Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

1997 Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.

1998 This vocation to eternal life is supernatural. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.

¹ Rom 3:21-26.

1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the sanctifying or deifying grace received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.

2000 Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

2001 The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity. God brings to completion in us what he has begun, "since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it:"

Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follows us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.

2002 God's free initiative demands man's free response, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy. The promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire:

If at the end of your very good works ..., you rested on the seventh day, it was to foretell by the voice of your book that at the end of our works, which are indeed "very good" since you have given them to us, we shall also rest in you on the sabbath of eternal life.

2003 Grace is first and foremost the gift of the Spirit who justifies and sanctifies us. But grace also includes the gifts that the Spirit grants us to associate us with his work, to enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church. There are sacramental graces, gifts proper to the different sacraments. There are furthermore special graces, also called charisms after the Greek term used by St. Paul and meaning "favor," "gratuitous gift," "benefit." Whatever their character - sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues - charisms are oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. They are at the service of charity which builds up the Church.

2004 Among the special graces ought to be mentioned the graces of state that accompany the exercise of the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church:

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; he who teaches, in his teaching; he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who contributes, in liberality; he who gives aid, with zeal; he who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

2005 Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace escapes our experience and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. However, according to the Lord's words "Thus you will know them by their fruits"- reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty.

A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges: "Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there.'"

2006 The term "merit" refers in general to the recompense owed by a community or a society for the action of one of its members, experienced either as beneficial or harmful, deserving reward or punishment. Merit is relative to the virtue of justice, in conformity with the principle of equality which governs it.

2007 With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality, for we have received everything from him, our Creator.

2008 The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit.

2009 Filial adoption, in making us partakers by grace in the divine nature, can bestow true merit on us as a result of God's gratuitous justice. This is our right by grace, the full right of love, making us "coheirs" with Christ and worthy of obtaining "the promised inheritance of eternal life." The merits of our good works are gifts of the divine goodness. "Grace has gone before us; now we are given what is due... . Our merits are God's gifts."

2010 Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life. Even temporal goods like health and friendship can be merited in accordance with God's wisdom. These graces and goods are the object of Christian prayer. Prayer attends to the grace we need for meritorious actions.

2011 The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men. The saints have always had a lively awareness that their merits were pure grace.

After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not want to lay up merits for heaven. I want to work for your love alone... . In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own justice and to receive from your love the eternal possession of yourself.

2012 "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him ... For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified."

2013 "All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity." All are called to holiness: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that ... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor. Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints.

2014 Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. This union is called "mystical" because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments - "the holy mysteries" - and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity. God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given to all.

2015 The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:

He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end.
He never stops desiring what he already knows.

2016 The children of our holy mother the Church rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance and the recompense of God their Father for the good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus.⁷⁰ Keeping the same rule of life, believers share the “blessed hope” of those whom the divine mercy gathers into the “holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

2017 The grace of the Holy Spirit confers upon us the righteousness of God. Uniting us by faith and Baptism to the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, the Spirit makes us sharers in his life.

2018 Like conversion, justification has two aspects. Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, and so accepts forgiveness and righteousness from on high.

2019 Justification includes the remission of sins, sanctification, and the renewal of the inner man.

2020 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ. It is granted us through Baptism. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who justifies us. It has for its goal the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life. It is the most excellent work of God’s mercy.

2021 Grace is the help God gives us to respond to our vocation of becoming his adopted sons. It introduces us into the intimacy of the Trinitarian life.

2022 The divine initiative in the work of grace precedes, prepares, and elicits the free response of man. Grace responds to the deepest yearnings of human freedom, calls freedom to cooperate with it, and perfects freedom.

2023 Sanctifying grace is the gratuitous gift of his life that God makes to us; it is infused by the Holy Spirit into the soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it.

2024 Sanctifying grace makes us “pleasing to God.” Charisms, special graces of the Holy Spirit, are oriented to sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good of the Church. God also acts through many actual graces, to be distinguished from habitual grace which is permanent in us.

2025 We can have merit in God’s sight only because of God’s free plan to associate man with the work of his grace. Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man’s collaboration. Man’s merit is due to God.

2026 The grace of the Holy Spirit can confer true merit on us, by virtue of our adoptive filiation, and in accordance with God’s gratuitous justice. Charity is the principal source of merit in us before God.

2027 No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods.

2028 “All Christians ... are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity” (LG 40 § 2). “Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none” (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Mos.*:PG 44, 300D).

2029 “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24).

2572 As a final stage in the purification of his faith, Abraham, “who had received the promises,” is asked to sacrifice the son God had given him. Abraham’s faith does not weaken (“God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering.”), for he “considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead.” and so the father of believers is conformed to the likeness of the Father who will not spare his own Son but will deliver him up for us all. Prayer restores man to God’s likeness and enables him to share in the power of God’s love that saves the multitude.