

## **Baptism & Salvation: The Uniqueness of the Catholic Position**

Source: J.A. DiNoia, OP, *The Diversity of Religions: A Christian Perspective*. (DC: CUA Press, 1992)

Gospel Q: "What do you seek?"

**A. Generic Salvation Answer:** the human need for a kind of liberation from states of insufficiency variously described as suffering, ignorance, bondage, sin

Q: Is this enough?

**B. Christian Answer to Q. of Salvation** - Tells us more about *who God is*

- 1) Creation in original holiness, image of God, & friendship with God
- 2) "Fall" and sin or the "original woundedness" of man
- 3) Q. of God's justice - "righting" the wrong done to God
- 4) Soteriology - how we are saved: Incarnation - For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son; Passion, Death & Resurrection of Christ

**C. Christian meaning of salvation:**

- complete well being in the life to come
- in eternal fellowship with the Blessed Trinity and with other human beings
- won for us by Jesus Christ
- through whom grace is given in our present life to nurture the beginnings of this fellowship and to overcome obstacles to its flourishing that arise from creaturely limitations and from sinful actions and dispositions.

**D. Christian way of salvation - "taking up the cross with Christ"**

- Christ's once and for all action which accomplished our salvation now transforms our lives in grace
- our appropriation of this action - our transformation - entails a personal conformation on the part of every disciple in following Christ (one finds one's true identity through Christ).
- the *imago dei* is brought to perfection in each disciple by the Holy Spirit who conforms us to perfect image of the Son. (in Eucharist preface we pray that the Father "might see and love in us what he sees and loves in Christ.")
- conformity to Christ is not an anonymous uniformity, but the unique realization of our personal identity - in resurrected state, we will have transfigured, but perduring personal identities as "named persons." As 2 Cor 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another."
- **Thus, Christian salvation entails becoming a certain kind of person - one who can enjoy the end of life the Christian community commends.**

**E. Inter-religious claims of salvation**

- Dialogue challenge: not to confuse what we hold with content of other's faith claims  
ex: Buddhist aim is the extinction of the personal self and elimination of all desire



The definitions below are taken from the Glossary of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (2nd ed.)

## **F. What we seek in salvation**

paradise: the symbolic description of the condition of our first parents before the Fall, who lived in a state of friendship with God in the happiness of original justice and holiness (CCC 374, 384). Paradise also signifies heaven, the state of those who live with Christ forever in the friendship and presence of God (CCC 1023, 1721).

happiness: joy and beatitude over receiving the fulfillment of our vocation as creatures: a sharing in the divine nature and the vision of God. God put us into the world to know, love, and serve him, and so come to the happiness of paradise (CCC 1720).

heaven: eternal life with God; communion of life and love with the Trinity and all the blessed. Heaven is the state of supreme and definitive happiness, the goal of the deepest longings of humanity (1023).

beatific vision: the contemplation of God in heavenly glory, a gift of God which is a constitutive element of the happiness (or beatitude) of heaven (CCC 1028, 1720).

## **G. How we attain this**

Baptism: The first of the 7 sacraments, and the “door” which gives access to the other sacraments. 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. Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the “sacraments of initiation” by which a believer receives the remission of original and personal sin, begins a new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ. The rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water, or pouring water on the head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (CCC 977, 1213ff, 1275, 1278).

salvation - the forgiveness of sins and restoration of friendship with God, which can be done by God alone (CCC 169)

grace: the free and undeserved gift that God gives us to respond to our vocation to become his adopted children. As *sanctifying grace*, God shares his divine life and friendship with us in a habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that enables the soul to live with God, to act by his love. As *actual grace*, God gives us the help to conform our lives to his will. *Sacramental grace and special graces* (charisms, the grace of one’s state of life) are gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us live out our Christian vocation (CCC 1996, 2000, 654).

sanctifying grace: the grace which heals our human nature wounded by sin by giving us a share in the divine life of the Trinity. It is a habitual, supernatural gift which continues the work of sanctifying us - of making us “perfect,” holy, and Christlike (CCC 1999).

satisfaction (for sin): an act whereby the sinner makes amends for sin, especially in reparation to God for offenses against him. The penance given by the confessor in the Sacrament of Penance constitutes such satisfaction. All true satisfaction for sin must be a participation in the satisfaction for sin made by Christ through his death on the cross (CCC 1459).

justification: the gracious action of God which frees us from sin and communicates “the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:22). Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man (1987-89).

merit: the reward which God promises and gives to those who love him and by his grace perform good works. One cannot “merit” justification or eternal life, which are the free gift of God; the source of any merit we have before God is due to the grace of Christ in us (CCC 2006).