

BEING CATHOLIC AND CHRISTIAN: Faith and Salvation

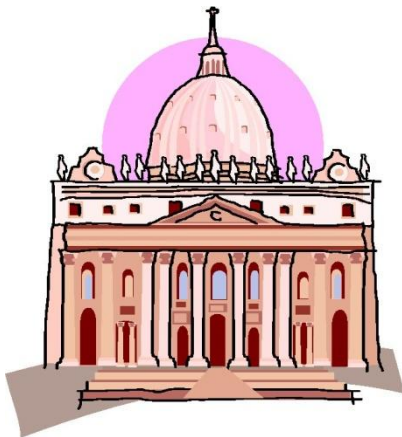


**Part 1c:
Faith and Works;
Process of Christian Initiation**

Faith and Works

There is perhaps no greater confusion among Catholic Christians and Evangelical Protestant and Pentecostal Christians than that held over the controversy of faith versus good works.

This controversy best warrants the balance of scriptures necessary in reading the Word of God to understand what God means for us to know.



Catholics

**Evangelical Protestant
and
Pentecostals**



The Bible is clear that faith holds a first and prominent role in the salvation of every person.



Hebrews 10:38

But my just one shall **live by faith** ...

Hebrews 11:6

But **without faith** it is impossible to please him (God)

...

The Bible is equally clear on the saving role of good works in the lives of the faithful.

1 Peter 2:12

Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that if they speak of you as evildoers, they may **observe your good works** and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Revelation 2:2

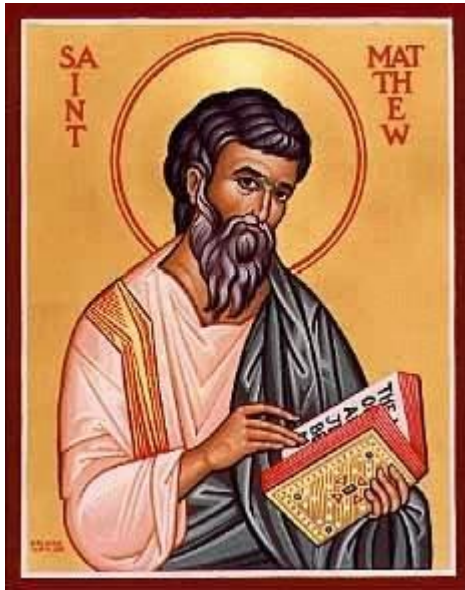
I know **your works**, your labor, and your endurance ...

Matthew 5:16

Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see **your good deeds** and glorify your heavenly Father.

Matthew 16:27

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone **according to his conduct.**



Matthew 25:34-36

Then the king will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”

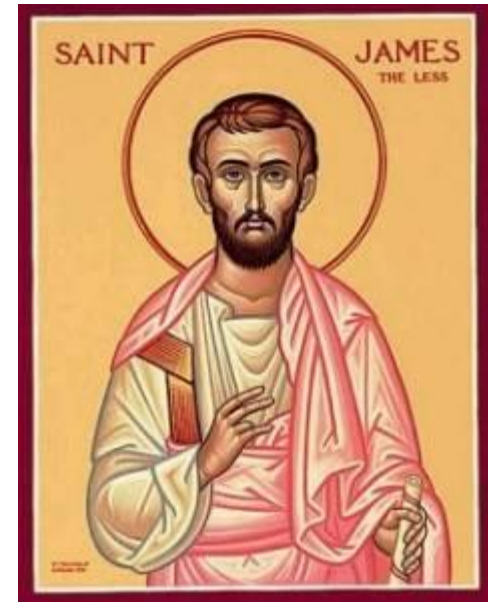
The Bible makes it clear that there must be a balanced relationship between our faith and its expression in good works.

James 2:14-18

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them,

“Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,” but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead. Indeed someone might say, “You have faith and I have works.” Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works.



1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be firm, steadfast, always fully devoted to the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name by having served and continuing to serve the holy ones.

James 2:20-22

Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works.

Matthew 16:27

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.

The Bible indicates that it is wrong to disturb the balance of works expressing a life of faith. Man is *not saved by faith alone*.

James 2:24

See how a person is justified **by works and not by faith alone**.

James 2:26

For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also **faith without works is dead**.

Nor is man ***saved by works alone.***

Romans 9:31-32

Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, did not attain to that law ... because they **did it not by faith**, but as if it could be done by works.

Galatians 3:11

And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for “the one who is **righteous by faith** will live.”

The Bible declares that salvation is a gift of God alone and constantly reaffirms that faith has a primary role in that salvation.

Ephesians 2:8-9

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is **the gift of God**; it is not from works, so no one may boast.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore, let us leave behind **the basic teaching about Christ and advance to maturity**, without laying the foundation all over again: repentance from dead works and faith in God.

Hebrews 9:14

... how much more will **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

Council of Trent, *On Justification*, Ch. VIII

When the Apostle says that man is justified by faith and freely, these words are to be understood in that sense in which ***the uninterrupted unanimity of the Catholic Church*** has held and expressed them, namely, that **we are** therefore said to be **justified by faith**, because faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification, “without which it is impossible to please God” and to come to the fellowship of His sons; and we are therefore said to be justified gratuitously, because **none of those things that precede justification, whether faith or works, merit the grace of justification**. For, “if by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise,” as the Apostle says, “grace is no more grace.”

The Council also reiterated the relationship of good works to man justified by faith.

Council of Trent, *On Justification*, Ch. XVI

Therefore, to men justified in this manner, whether they have preserved uninterruptedly the grace received or recovered it when lost, are to be pointed out the words of the Apostle:

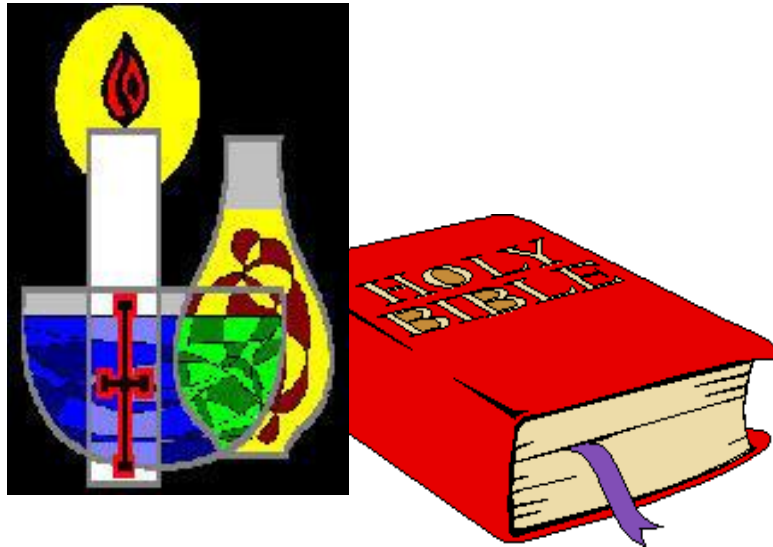
“Abound in every good work, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. For God is not unjust, that he should forget your work, and the love which you have shown in his name”; and “Do not lose confidence, which hath a great reward.”

Hence, **to those who work well “unto the end” and trust in God, eternal life is to be offered**, both as a grace mercifully promised to the sons of God through Christ Jesus, and as a reward promised by God himself, to be faithfully given to their good works and merits.

The Process of Christian Initiation

Christians base their **approach to Christian initiation**, that is, what is to be expected from a new Christian, on several scriptures.

The **first set of scriptures** which determines Christian initiation is from the Acts of the Apostles and from the Gospels according to Mark and John.



Acts 16:30-31

Then he brought them out and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you and your household will be saved.”

Mark 1:15

This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.

John 5:24

Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life.

In response to these scriptures, **Protestant and Evangelical Christians** profess belief and acceptance of all that Jesus taught as necessary to meet the requirement of Christian initiation. They exact that the Christian believe Jesus and in Jesus, that he is Lord, that he died, rose again, defeated death and sin, and that through him sins are forgiven.



Catholic Christians express their response to these scriptures by professing belief and acceptance in Jesus as Lord, and all that is contained in the Apostles Creed.

Catholic Christians must profess belief in

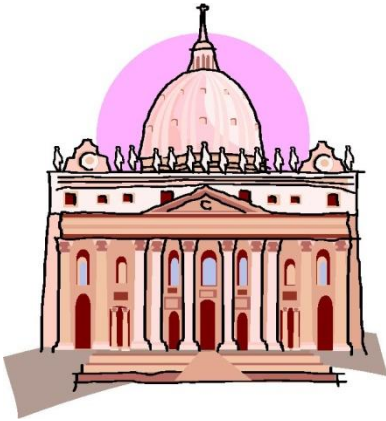
- ✓ God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
- ✓ They must believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.
- ✓ That Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried.
- ✓ That he also descended to the dead. On the third day that he rose again.
- ✓ That he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
- ✓ That he will come again to judge the living and the dead.
- ✓ Catholic Christians must believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting.

A second set of scriptures also indicates requirements for Christian initiation.

Romans 10:9-10

For, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

The Protestant and Evangelical Christian response to this scripture is to exact from the new Christian a confession on the lips.



Catholic Christians respond to the scripture by exacting the same detailed profession of faith as articulated in the Apostles Creed.

Another scripture in this second set is from Mark's Gospel:

Mark 1:15

Repent, and believe in the gospel.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians respond to this scripture by exacting from the new Christian the repentance of sinfulness.

Catholic Christians elicit a specific acknowledgment of the rejection of Satan, all his works and all his pomps.

Another scripture from the second set is found in the Acts of the Apostles:

Acts 4:12

There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians elicit the confession of Jesus by name.

Catholic Christians elicit the same as is clear from the Apostles Creed.

The third and final scripture set which determines the process of Christian initiation is from John's Gospel.

John 3:5

Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”

The Protestant and Evangelical Christian response is to put emphasis on a “born-again” experience on the part of the new Christian.

The Catholic Church has always taught that with Christian initiation, new divine life enters the Christian and transforms his/her life.

There is one remaining difference in emphasis in Christian initiation among Christians.

Protestant and Evangelical Christians place emphasis on the necessity of faith only, with baptism not rigidly connected to the Christian initiation.

Ephesians 2:8

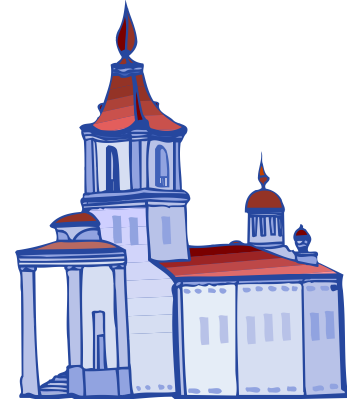
For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God

Catholic Christian emphasis is on the intimate connection between faith and baptism.

1 Peter 3:20-21

God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism, which saves you now.

For Protestant and Evangelical Christians, faith is a gift of God, unmerited, and Christian initiation is a ***one-time event***.



For Catholic Christians, faith is also a gift of God, unmerited, and in baptism, it is Christ who baptizes, and Christian initiation is, as the word implies, ***the beginning of a process***.

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