

Fr. Perozich comments —

Among 16th century reformers and some contemporary Christians from non Catholic ecclesial communities still comes their conviction of the ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE of salvation, meaning just claiming Jesus as savior guarantees entry into heaven. The implication is that nothing that man does affects this in any way.

David Bonagura adds clarity to the Catholic teaching of the MORAL ASSURANCE of salvation which requires man's cooperation with God's initiative of Grace, not some thing, rather with the person of Jesus without whom salvation is impossible.

Salvation begs the question of saved FROM what FOR what?

Salvation firstly is FROM sin FOR the same good works that Jesus did. That is the work of man cooperating with God in THIS life.

Salvation secondly is FROM eternal death FOR eternal life with the Holy and Immortal Trinity in heaven.

Salvation thirdly is FROM isolation in the self FOR full communion with God, the angels and the saints.

Salvation is lived out in Word, Sacrament, and Charity

- *we Catholic pilgrims are all working out our salvation “with fear and trembling.” (Phil 2:12) And this salvation is, for each of us, not guaranteed.*

- *If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged. (LG 14)*

- *“It is not enough to be a member of the Church or be related to it by desire; it is further required that a person die in the state of grace, united with God by faith, hope, and charity.”*

- *The Catholic faith is the greatest gift a person can receive in this life, for it is the certain path to eternal life. But Lumen Gentium twice cautions these blessed recipients. **First, Catholics do not earn this gift**, so we ought not boast of ourselves, as if we are superior achievers. Second, every one of us who has received this gift will have to reckon it upon our death. “Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:48)*

- Concerning salvation, we should be attentive but not terrified. We follow the exhortation of St. Peter to “[b]e sober, be watchful” because our “adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” (1 Pt 5:8)
- if we want treasure in heaven, we must respond to the grace we have been given – not just the minimum of grace, but to whatever we have been called.
- Each chorister needs, at minimum, Confession, the Eucharist, and stirring preaching if he is to not only remain in the choir, but to reach his full potential. Without holy priests dedicated to the salvation of souls – even the souls that seem well on their way – the task of cooperating with grace becomes that much more difficult even for the most pious.
- We Catholics have been given tremendous graces, and we will be held accountable for them. There is no time to waste. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor 6:2)



Vatican II’s Most Harrowing Line

By [David G Bonagura, Jr.](#) APRIL 11, 2022

Tucked at the end of a hotly debated passage in *Lumen Gentium* about the Church’s role in salvation comes one sentence that has not received as much attention. What follows the statement that “all the Church’s children” have received their holy Catholic faith not from merit, but from “the special grace of Christ,” is the most harrowing line of Vatican II:

If they fail moreover to respond to that grace in thought, word and deed, not only shall they not be saved but they will be the more severely judged. (LG 14)

These words are worth pondering deeply as we approach Good Friday and Easter this week.

Given that we begin each Mass acknowledging that we have greatly sinned “in my thoughts and in my words, in what I have done, and what I have failed to do” – those words “not saved. . .more severely judged” – cut to the heart. They soberly remind us that we Catholic pilgrims are all working out our salvation “with fear and trembling.” (Phil 2:12) And this salvation is, for each of us, not guaranteed.

Lumen Gentium 14 has been criticized for softening the Church’s language concerning the salvation of non-Catholics. That issue aside – and contrary to the widespread impression that the Council made salvation seem easy for almost everyone – the same paragraph turns up the heat on the Church’s own children.

The preliminary schema known as *de Ecclesia*, from which *Lumen Gentium* was hammered out, stated the same truth, but without the same bite: “It is not enough to be a member of the Church or be related to it by desire; it is further required that a person die in the state of grace, united with God by faith, hope, and charity.”

The Catholic faith is the greatest gift a person can receive in this life, for it is the certain path to eternal life. But *Lumen Gentium* twice cautions these blessed recipients. **First, Catholics do not earn this gift**, so we ought not boast of ourselves, as if we are superior achievers. Second, every one of us who has received this gift will have to reckon it upon our death. “Everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.” (Luke 12:48)

By spelling out more fervently the perils on the way to salvation, Vatican II put a new wrinkle into the parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), in which three servants were entrusted with five, two, and one talent (a sum of money), “each according to his ability.” Analogously, the Catholic receives five talents; those of other religions receive a lesser sum. Were the Catholic to bury his five, he would squander far more than the man who received only one.



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If we recall the master's punishment of the man who received one, Catholics whose faith does not yield a return on God's investment ought to be very worried indeed: "[C]ast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth."

This teaching of *Lumen Gentium*, like the teachings of Jesus Himself on salvation, is not intended to cause panic, as if we are sinners in the hands of an angry God. No. **Concerning salvation, we should be attentive but not terrified. We follow the exhortation of St. Peter to "[b]e sober, be watchful" because our "adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."** (1 Pt 5:8) Each Catholic, no matter how many talents he has received from God, is not beyond temptation. At any point, he can bury his talents out of sloth or gloom, or, worse, squander them by yielding to sin.

The rich young man of the Gospel received five talents. He asked what good he had to do to receive eternal life. Our Lord instructed that keeping the commandments will do. But then He added that, given that the young man already kept them, he should do more with the abundance of grace he had received: “You *lack* one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and *you will have treasure in heaven*; and come, follow me.” (Mark 10:21)

God continually provides His grace to invite us into a deeper relationship with Him. *Lumen Gentium’s* formulation cautions us that **if we want treasure in heaven, we must respond to the grace we have been given – not just the minimum of grace, but to whatever we have been called.**

Spiritual complacency, then, may have eternal consequences. Catholics must continually work to grow in faith, hope, and love. Additionally, priests should not despair of preaching to the choir week after week, year after year. **Each chorister needs, at minimum, Confession, the Eucharist, and stirring preaching if he is to not only remain in the choir, but to reach his full potential. Without holy priests dedicated to the salvation of souls – even the souls that seem well on their way – the task of cooperating with grace becomes that much more difficult even for the most pious.**

“And someone said to him, ‘Lord, will those who are saved be few?’ And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’” (Luke 13:24)

Vatican II’s interpretation of our Lord’s statement (the real one, not the one people think it provided) should prick our ears and send us to action. **We Catholics have been given tremendous graces, and we will be held accountable for them. There is no time to waste. “Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor 6:2)**

Image: *The Parable of the Sower* by Rembrandt, 1652 [Louvre, Paris]