

Means to Salvation

By Karl Knight

The Pope or the Vatican Council states that Christ established one church here on earth and basically other denominations do not have the "means to salvation". Whether this is rhetoric, a call for Catholics to feel better about their religion, or the beginning of a greater agenda is not what I am looking at but the "means to salvation" statement is very interesting.

Ref. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" Acts 4:12

The Catholic Church greatest claim is that of apostolic succession which of course goes back to Peter or St. Peter which is the foundation of Catholic legitimacy just as in the Old Testament where genealogies is of the utmost importance. However, anyway you look at the scriptures from the prophecies of the Old Testament to the Messiah, or from Revelation back to the Birth of Christ it leads to the verse stated above that there is no other name in which man can be saved. Therefore the Catholic Church can't claim the "means to salvation" just as the Protestant church can't claim it. Salvation is so great that it goes beyond religion or what we can envision here on earth. It is the means to relationship with Jesus and to the kingdom of heaven.

If we confine salvation by reducing it to mere religion then how does the world truly attain salvation? Are the Muslims beyond salvation? At the Billy Graham crusade I remember the speaker saying he prays for the salvation of Osama Bin Laden. I was shocked when he said it but it really made me think what would happen if Osama Bin Laden received Jesus Christ? We were told to pray for our enemies. What impact would that have on the Arab and Christian world? How do Arabs attain salvation? By joining the Catholic Church or the Protestant Church? Declaring itself a Christian nation? This is a very different approach from the early crusades. So just joining the Catholic Church or Protestant Church provides the "means to salvation"?

They are plenty of Christians (protestant, catholic, etc...) who are in the church themselves have not received salvation, therefore are going to the same destination as those their view as unsaved or beyond saving. Whether through family upbringing, community ties, through a marriage people say they are Christians but have not accepted the gift of salvation? Many people receive Christian burials from soldiers in battle to gangsters in the streets yet have not known the Lord, but were called Christian. Most politicians running for office declare themselves to be a Christian yet their views on morality are all different from Jesus' views. Of course this is a Christian nation so no candidate is going to say I am not a Christian.

This is why this verse in Acts is very powerful and goes straight to the heart of the matter which is that salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone who came for all sinners whether in the church, synagogue, mosque, temple, etc... Christ alone is the "means to salvation". It cuts through all religion and man-made

doctrine such as the statement from the Catholic Church debating about whom has the true “means of salvation”. It’s amazing that 2000 years ago Jesus contended with the Pharisees the religious establishment at the time concerning their interpretation of scripture and doctrines. It is the same today fortunately we don’t have to wonder what Jesus would say about this “means of salvation” statement today because He already said it in His Word and we are to speak it.

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Pope: Other denominations not true churches

Benedict issues statement asserting that Jesus established ‘only one church’

MSNBC News Services

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LORENZAGO DI CADORE, Italy - [Pope Benedict XVI](#) has reasserted the universal primacy of the Roman Catholic Church, approving a document released Tuesday that says Orthodox churches were defective and that other Christian denominations were not true churches.

Benedict approved a document from his old offices at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that restates church teaching on relations with other Christians. It was the second time in a week the pope has corrected what he says are erroneous interpretations of the Second Vatican Council, the 1962-65 meetings that modernized the church.

On Saturday, Benedict [revisited another key aspect of Vatican II by reviving the old Latin Mass](#). Traditional Catholics cheered the move, but more liberal ones called it a step back from Vatican II.

Benedict, who attended Vatican II as a young theologian, has long complained about what he considers the erroneous interpretation of the council by liberals, saying it was not a break from the past but rather a renewal of church tradition.

In the latest document — formulated as five questions and answers — [the Vatican](#) seeks to set the record straight on Vatican II’s ecumenical intent, saying some contemporary theological interpretation had been “erroneous or ambiguous” and had prompted confusion and doubt.

It restates key sections of a 2000 document the pope wrote when he was prefect of the congregation, "Dominus Iesus," which set off a firestorm of criticism among Protestant and other Christian denominations because it said they were not true churches but merely ecclesial communities and therefore did not have the "means of salvation."

In the new document and an accompanying commentary, which were released as the pope vacations here in Italy's Dolomite mountains, the Vatican repeated that position.

"Christ 'established here on earth' only one church," the document said. The other communities "cannot be called 'churches' in the proper sense" because they do not have apostolic succession — the ability to trace their bishops back to Christ's original apostles.

'Identity of the Catholic faith'

The Rev. Sara MacVane of the Anglican Centre in Rome, said there was nothing new in the document.

"I don't know what motivated it at this time," she said. "But it's important always to point out that there's the official position and there's the huge amount of friendship and fellowship and worshipping together that goes on at all levels, certainly between Anglican and Catholics and all the other groups and Catholics."

The document said Orthodox churches were indeed "churches" because they have apostolic succession and that they enjoyed "many elements of sanctification and of truth." But it said they lack something because they do not recognize the primacy of the pope — a defect, or a "wound" that harmed them, it said.

"This is obviously not compatible with the doctrine of primacy which, according to the Catholic faith, is an 'internal constitutive principle' of the very existence of a particular church," the commentary said.

Despite the harsh tone of the document, it stresses that Benedict remains committed to ecumenical dialogue.

"However, if such dialogue is to be truly constructive, it must involve not just the mutual openness of the participants but also fidelity to the identity of the Catholic faith," the commentary said.

'Not backtracking on ecumenical commitment'

The document, signed by the congregation prefect, U.S. Cardinal William Levada, was

approved by Benedict on June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul — a major ecumenical feast day.