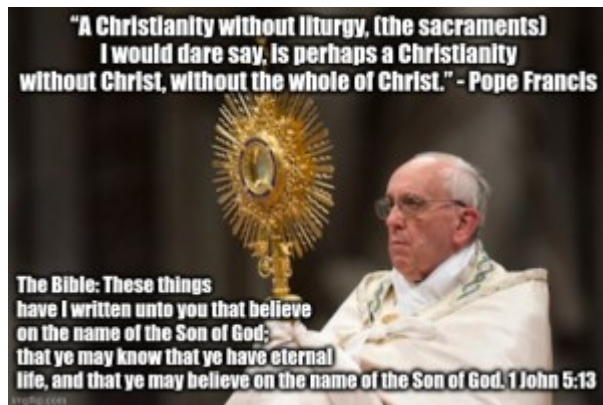


The Papal System – XXVII. Intention in the Priest Necessary to the Validity of a Sacrament



Continued from [XXVI. The Freedom of the Press.](#)

This is one of the most curious and dreadful doctrines ever proclaimed by human lips or written by the pen of man. In the seventh session of the Council of Trent, thirteen canons were enacted upon the sacraments generally, cursing those who shall say, that the sacraments of the new law were not appointed by the Saviour; that they do not differ unless in externals from the sacraments of the ancient law; that the sacraments of the new law are not necessary to salvation; and pronouncing curses upon all persons guilty of various crimes against the sacraments. Among these maledictions is the following:

“IF ONE SHALL SAY, THAT IN MINISTERS, WHILST THEY COMPLETE AND CONFER THE SACRAMENTS, THERE IS NOT REQUIRED THE INTENTION, AT LEAST OF DOING WHAT THE CHURCH DOES, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.”

This canon sows uncertainty broadcast over the Catholics of the world. Suppose that the priest who baptizes a child did not intend to “do as the Church does,” in granting the sacrament, then the child is not baptized, and no faith subsequently received, no works performed in the future can remove that original defect; according to the Catholic theory that man is not a Christian, and cannot be saved.

Suppose that when that man comes to be married, the same priest performs the ceremony with the usual rites, but: he does not intend to marry the couple, then it follows, that the sacrament of marriage has never been administered to this man and his wife, that their wedded relations are stained with the infamy of fornication, and that their children are branded before God with the crime of illegitimacy.

And suppose again, that this priest in consecrating the host does not intend to consecrate it, it follows, according to the papal theory, that it is not the real body and blood of Jesus, that it is only bread; and, therefore, when the people worship what they regard as the very Son of Mary, they are only

adoring a piece of paste, they are guilty of idolatry.

And suppose this priest in the confessional solemnly absolves a penitent man from his sins, but does not intend to release him from his guilt, on the Roman theory, the poor suppliant has no pardon, he rejoices in a delusion, he is the victim of sacerdotal imposition.

And suppose that this priest baptizes an infant boy without the intention of doing it, and as a consequence the child is not a Christian, and can never perform with true validity any act of a Christian; that in time the priest becomes a bishop, and the babe becomes a man, and a candidate for the service of the altar; that his old friend ordains him deacon and priest, but "does not intend to do as the Church does," in either case, it follows that all the children he baptizes are heathens outside of the Church, and with no title to heaven; that all his absolutions are null, and his penitents are still in their sins; that all his marriages are invalid, the parties being yet before God destitute of wedded sanctions; and that all his masses are impositions, the man himself being neither a priest nor a Christian; and hence all the people that worshipped the hosts which he consecrated were guilty of idolatry on every occasion in which they were in the church when he celebrated mass.

Now let us suppose farther, that this young man becomes pope in process of time, and he sits in Peter's chair for many years. He is not a Christian, he is not a priest, he can perform no religious act because he was never baptized; then all his masses are senseless mummeries, all his pontifical blessings are impositions; he has no right to send the Pallium to any bishop, so that the hundreds of bishops who have been consecrated during his long reign are destitute of authority to perform one episcopal act; all the priests and deacons they have ordained are laymen still, all the children they have baptized are yet in heathenism; all their absolutions are mockeries, and all their masses are but idolatries.

Since the heavens were stretched over the earth, since this globe's covering of waters was gathered up into seas, nothing so monstrous as this doctrine was ever invented. No Catholic, without omniscient knowledge of the priest's intention, can possibly tell whether he was baptized, absolved, married, ordained; or whether in the mass he was idolatrously worshipping unchanged bread, or reverently adoring the veritable God-man made out of flour. In this way the whole earthly and everlasting religious privileges of the Catholic depend, not on Christ, not on the man's own deeds or his priest's, but on the intentions of a minister whose purposes he has no possible way of learning.

And while Catholic priests have, no doubt, the ordinary honesty of motive common to men in general; yet, as Protestant communities have the deceitful, so unquestionably the Romish Church has the insincere and hypocritical, who, out of malice, or to gratify some caprice, or some skeptical opinion about the power of their sacraments, occasionally or frequently have no intention to "do as the Church does," and their masses, absolutions and other rites are all counterfeits.

Anthony Gavin, a Catholic priest of Saragossa, describes the confession of a brother priest on his deathbed, whose name he conceals, and who says:

"The necessary *intention* of a priest in the administration of baptism and consecration (of the wafer) without which the sacraments are of no effect, I confess I had it not on several occasions, as you may see in the parish books; and observe that the baptism was invalid of every person whose name is there marked with a star, for in such cases I had no intention. And for this I can give no other reason than my malice and wickedness, Many of them are dead, for which I am heartily sorry. As for the times I have consecrated (the wafer) without intention we must leave it to God's mercy, for the wrong done by it to the souls of my parishioners, and those in purgatory cannot be helped."

This disclosure is one of the most natural in the world. Unless Romish priests are made of different materials than other men, than the elements of which the Saviour's twelve apostles were composed, there must be such characters as this dying priest, whose intention was not always "to do as the Church does" in making sacraments.

Gavin, on examining the parish books, found one hundred and fifty-two names marked with a star, and of the persons enrolled in this ill-starred register eighty-six were dead. Gavin was greatly troubled about these persons, knowing that it is the decided opinion of the Church that "The intention of the priest is absolutely necessary to the validity of a sacrament, *without which there is no sacrament at all.*" By the advice of his brother priests he communicated the case to the bishop, who summoned the persons still living, who through the absence of intention in the defunct priest, were not baptized when they passed through all the forms of baptism, and bringing them into his own chamber separately, he baptized them; enjoining the strictest secrecy under the heaviest penalties upon each.

No Certainty about Salvation in the Catholic Church,

According to Cardinal Bellarmine, "It is not possible for any one to be sure with the certainty of faith that he has received a true sacrament, as a sacrament cannot be celebrated without the intention of the minister, and no one can see the intention of another." In the Romish Church, by the testimony of Bellarmine, and the Council of Trent, no one can tell whether he has ever received a true sacrament; nor has he any certainty whether he is not going headlong to the pit when he may have observed all the rites of the Church; and when he may have the assurance of all its clergy that he is going straight to heaven, There is ground here for dreadful uncertainty and apprehension.

Continued in [XXVIII. Secret Societies](#)

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