vation is preserved and communicated within this sacramental shell. The liturgy of Easter night is the sacred act wherein Christ the Highpriest, under visible signs, accomplishes in objective reality the work for which He was sent, wherein the mysten· of the new and eternal covenant is perfected, wherein God and mankind are bound together in the one Mediator, Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords.

(7'o *be continued)*

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A New Decree

After Fr. Weller's article, "Easter Eve," was already in print, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued a new decree, dated Jan. 11, 1952, extending for three years the faculty of celebrating the Easter vigil in place of the ordinary Holy Saturday liturgy, and containing a number of practical directives on this subject. Fr. Weller has been kind enough to bring together a translation of the decree and explanations of the various directions given in this new document but not in the previous decree. This "Supplement" to the second part of Fr. Weller's article has been sent to the printer, and will be incorporated into the April issue of *The American Ecclesiastical Review.*

I he April number will be in the hands of our subscribers early enough to be of use to them if they plan to celebrate the Vigil according to the prescriptions of the new decree.

J. C. F.

THE NEED OF KNOWLEDGE OF FAITH

That Catholics should have a knowledge of *the faith*—that is, of the teachings of the Church—is axiomatic; but the subject with which we are concerned in this article is the necessity of a knowledge of *faith itself,* the theological virtue mentioned by St. l'auh. when he said: "So there abide faith, hope and charity, these three , but the greatest of these is charity."[1] It is an unquestionable fact that the majority of Catholics are not sufficiently acquainted with the nature of divine faith, its excellence and necessity, and particularly some of the practical problems connected with the exercise and the manifestation of this virtue. This may be due to a misapplication of the revealed doctrine that charity is the greatest ofthe three theological virtues. It is possible that in centering their attention on charity, many Catholics neglect to give to faith the appreciation that it deserves. At any rate, it is vitally important that they be instructed by their spiritual shepherds in the nature of this virtue, in. its essential qualities and in the proper practice of faith in daily life. There is no dearth of material for such instructions in the official pronouncements of the Church and in the writings of Catholic theologians.

No more appropriate principle could serve as the starting-point for an instruction on faith than the statement of the Council of Trent in its Decree on Justification, that "faith is the beginning of man's salvation, the foundation and the root of all justification. Actually, the primary purpose of this chapter of the Decree was to condemn the Lutheran doctrine that man is justified by faith alone—a doctrine which the Reformers endeavored to prove from such scriptural texts as the assertion of St. Paul that justice comes "through faith in Jesus Christ upon all who believe."[3] T he purpose of this eighth chapter of the Decree was to explain that man is said to be justified by faith in the sense that faith is the *initial step* in the supernatural process toward the attainment of sanctifying grace. This same doctrine was proclaimed in the ninth canon approved at the same session : "If any one shall say that the sinner is justified by faith alone ... let him be anathema."[4] However, the pronouncement of the Council, though primarily intended to declare what faith cannot do, furnishes a valuable statement of the

[1] *Cor* 13:13. DDR, 801. [3] *Rom.* 3: 22. [4] DR, 819.

Catholic Church on the importance and the necessity of this virtue *as* the foundation of man's supernatural life, "without which it is impossible to please God."[5]

That the word "faith" is used in various senses in the New Testament cannot be denied. Indeed, we can readily admit that the idea of *confidence* is frequently connoted by this word, which is employed about 240 times in the New Testament. But the interpretation traditionally given by the Catholic Church of faith as *belief* is surely predominant.[6]

In other words, *faith* as Catholics understand it, and as Christian tradition proposes it, is a perfection of the intellect, a supernatural gift of God, enabling man to believe as true the doctrines of divine revelation, not because he perceives their truth through the light of reason but solely because of the wisdom and the truthfulness of God who has revealed them. Such was the definition of faith proposed by the Vatican Council—"the supernatural virtue by which, through the inspiration and aid of God's grace, we believe as true the things revealed by Him, not on account of the intrinsic truth of the subjects perceived by the natural light of reason, but on account of the authority of God Himself revealing, who can neither be deceived nor deceive."[7]

That faith is essentially an intellectual perfection cannot be emphasized too strongly for Catholics of the present day, because "faith" as generally proposed by non-Catholics is something that pertains, at least in great measure, to the will or even to the sensitive faculties. The view of Luther, that faith is nothing else than personal trust in the sin-forgiving grace of God has been modified in the course of time among the majority of Protestants to the extent of admitting a greater measure of intellectual activity in the exercise of faith,[8] yet in Protestant theology "faith" still includes the fiduciary factor ascribed to it by the Reformers. Thus, we have the statement of Theodore M. Greene of Princeton: "Faith may be defined as whole-hearted belief on the basis of evidence, but not wholly conclusive evidence, and of interpretation which is reasonable, but which falls short of absolute proof. On this view, faith is never wholly blind . . . nor is it ever completely enlightened."[9]

[5] *Heb.* 11:5. [6] Harent, S., "Foi," *DTC,* 6, 75. [7] *DB,* 1789.
[8] Cf. *Hastings' Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York, 1922), 5. 691 ff.
[9] *The Christian Answer* (New York, 1945), p. 76.

In other words, outside the Catholic Church the concept of faith includes, to a greater or less degree, the notion of trust inspired by religious feeling, an instinctive turning to God, even though this attitude is not preceded by an adequate logical process of reason.

In view of the prevalence of such ideas among non-Catholics, Catholics should realize that in discussing the subject of faith with those not of their creed there may be confusion and ambiguity unless there is explicit understanding as to what is meant by faith. Every Catholic capable of grasping the intellectual process involved in the making of an act of faith should have a knowledge of this process; and one need not be a trained theologian to possess a very satisfactory understanding of this process and to perceive how logical and reasonable an act of faith really is. In the making ol an act of faith as the Catholic Church explains it, the opposite extremes of fideism and rationalism are avoided. On the one hand, the preambles of faith and the motives of credibility (proofs from reason and history that God exists, that He is all-wise and all truthful, that He has spoken through Jesus Christ) give *certain* proot that the Christian revelation is the message of God to all men. The Church has emphatically condemned the opinion that mere *probability* of the fact of revelation suffices for the intellectual preparation for the act of faith.[10] On the other hand, in eliciting the act of faith the intellect does not base its assent on the motives of credibility; the sole motive of faith is the authority of God revealing. The judgment of credibility ("these doctrines are certainly revealed") and the judgment of credentity ("I am bound to believe these doctrines") are intrinsically natural acts; the assent of faith ("I believe these doctrines on the authority of God") is essentially supernatural. The transition from the former to the latter is explained in different ways by theologians,[11] but all explanations show that no violence is done to human reason, no unreasonable demand is made on man's intelligence in the eliciting of an act of faith. An act of the will is indeed necessary to command the intellect to accept the truths of revelation, since they arc not intrinsically evident; yet this act of the will is not a blind, sentimental urge or a religious sense based on the need of the divine, as the Modernists conceive it.[12] For this act of the will is itself guided by the intellect proposing the acceptance of divine revelation on

[10] *DB.* 1171, 1622-27, [11] Cf. *DTC, art. cit., 6,* 469-512. [12] *DB, 2074.*

account of God's authority as a *good.* That a person may elicit an act of faith, actual grace, aiding both the intellect and the will, is absolutely necessary, for it is an intrinsically supernatural act. However, the will is free to believe or not to believe, even after the motives of credibility have been adequately proposed and accepted; hence, a person may refuse to make an act of faith even though he has made the judgment of credibility. In the words of Garrigou-Lagrange: "Some persons, like the pharisees, when the preaching of the Gospel, confirmed by miracles, is proposed to them, resist internal grace, and do not sincerely desire salvation. Hence, on seeing the miracles, they can evidently judge of the credibility of the preaching, and even know of their obligation to believe, and yet through perversity be unwilling to believe."[13]

However, though grace is necessary in order that a person may elicit an act of faith, it would seem evident that anyone who arrives at the judgment of credibility and the judgment of credentity will receive sufficient grace to make an act of faith. For God will not refuse a person the grace to perform an action which his conscience tells him must be performed. This principle was enunciated by Pope Pius IX in his Encyclical *Qui pluribus* of Nov. 9, 1846: "Human reason, clearly and evidently recognizing by these most firm and lucid arguments that God is the author of the faith, can go no further, but, casting aside every difficulty and doubt *must* give full assent to the faith, since it recognizes as certain that whatever the faith proposes to be believed and done by men has been communicated by God."[14] The Sovereign Pontiff clearly implied that the supernatural grace to make an act of faith is given to all who arrive at the conviction that the Christian revelation is a divine message and must be accepted, inasmuch as he stated that all who come to this conviction *must* make the act of faith.

Not only is the Catholic meaning of "faith" different from that given to it by most non-Catholics, but even in Catholic literature and speech this word is accepted in various senses; and Catholics should be aw'are of this fact so that their concepts may be clear when they speak or read about faith. Thus, preachers and ascetical writers are inclined to include under the general term of "faith" those virtues which are essential to a good Christian life. In other

[13] Garrigou-Lagrange, *De revelatione* (Rome, 1932), p. 285.
[14] *DB,* 1639.

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words, by "faith" they sometimes mean a *living* faith. indeed in some of the passages of the New Testament in winch "faith" appears, it may be used in this sense.However, Catholics should realize, and Catholic preachers should emphasize, that faith in the proper sense is a speculative virtue, which can exist without charity. Even this faith is a gift of God, as the Vatican Council asserted.16 At the same time, in order to exist in a perfect state, faith must be joined with charity, so that it is a *living* or *formed* faith?1

To understand faith properly one must distinguish clearly between the act and the habit of this virtue. Both in Sacred Scripture and the decisions of the Church the same word is used for both aspects of faith, and one must sometimes examine the context in order to find out the particular sense intended. If the distinction is not observed, one might conclude that there is a contradiction in the Church's teaching. Thus, while the Council of Trent taught that "faith is the beginning of man's salvation,"18 Pope Clement XI condemned the teaching of Quesnel, that "faith is the first grace, and the font of all other graces."19 There was no contradiction because Trent referred primarily to the *act* of faith, whereas Quesnel was speaking of the *habit* of faith. In his condemnation of the Jansenistic Synod of Pistoia, Pope Pius VI clearly pointed out this erroneous interpretation of *faith* by denouncing the proposition that "faith from which the series of graces begins, and through which, as by the first voice we are called to salvation and to the Church, is the excellent virtue by which men are called and are the faithful," stating that it was already condemned in the teachings of Quesnel.20 The false conclusion which Quesnel and the Jansenists of Pistoia had drawn from their confusion between the act and the habit was that no one receives a supernatural grace unless he is already in possession of the habit of faith. Now, while it would seem that before the grace by which one is called to the *act* of faith, no intrinsically supernatural actual graces are given,21 undoubtedly in the process of the justification of an infidel, supernatural actual graces are given before he receives the *habit* of faith with the infusion of sanctifying grace.

« Cf. *DTC, art. cit.,* 74. *DB,* 1791 ; cf. 838.
17 Merkelbach, *Summa theologiae moralis* (Paris, 1938), 1, n. 717.
^*DB.* 801. *19 DB,* 1377. ™*DB,* 1522.
21 Cf. Van Noort, *De gratia Christi* (Hilversum, 1934), n. 131, note.

Hence, the infant receives in Baptism the habit of faith, although he is as yet unable to make an act of faith. On the other hand, the pagan to whom the Christian revelation is preached may and should elicit an act of faith; yet he does not receive the virtue itself until he is baptized or elicits an act of divine charity or perfect contrition.

Catholics should also be aware that there is a distinction between divine faith and what is called ecclesiastical faith. The latter is sometimes called mediately divine faith,[22] and signifies the act whereby we accept a doctrine not contained in the deposit of revelation, but in some way connected with it, such as the declaration of Pope Leo XIII that Anglican Orders are invalid[23] or an official decree of canonization. The formal object or motive of this latter type of assent is the divinely guaranteed infallibility of the Church, whereas the formal object of divine faith is always the authority of God Himself. The practical application of this distinction is that Catholics should be frequently reminded that in eliciting an act of divine faith they should base their acceptance on God's authority, not on the teaching of the Church. Perhaps, as Van Noort states, it does not make much difference in practice if the faithful say that they believe a certain doctrine because the Church teaches it, since they mean the right thing,[24] yet it is always better to instruct Catholics in the exact truth. The Church is, indeed, the infallible proponent of divine revelation; but the teaching authority of the Church is not the basic motive for the acceptance of the truths of revelation. That motive can be only the authority of God, who can neither be deceived nor deceive.

The possession of the virtue of faith is not necessarily connected with actual membership in the Catholic Church. A non-Catholic, sincerely desirous of doing God's will and believing in general all that God has revealed can have the virtue of divine faith, at least if he has explicit faith in the four fundamental truths—God's existence, divine retribution in the future life, the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation. Such a person actually has implicit faith in all that the Catholic Church teaches. However, he is not an actual member of the Catholic Church, though he is rightly said to be affiliated with the Catholic Church by implicit desire. This distinction is important in view of the common custom among Cath-

22 Cf. Van Noort, *De fontibus revelationis* (Bussum, 1920), nn. 247-50.
23 *DB,* 1966. 24 Van Noort, *De fontibus revelationis,* n. 190.

dies of saying of a person that he does not possess "the faith" because he is not actually a member of the true Church of Christ. It should be noted that we are here considering the case of one who was brought up from childhood in heresy or as an adult received instructions from an heretical source. Whether it is possible for a Catholic to renounce his allegiance to the Catholic Church without being guilty of a grave formal sin against the virtue of faith will be considered in a subsequent article.

Catholics should be able to distinguish between divine faith and divine-Catholic faith. The former must be given to any truth revealed by God, once a person has sufficient certainty of the fact of revelation. This would extend to private revelations, which must be accepted by those for whom they arc made, and may be accepted by other persons, though there is no obligation on the part of others to accept them.[25] Divine faith is also given to particular truths contained in the deposit of public revelation which an individual clearly perceives to be revealed, though they have not been proposed as such by the infallible magisterium of the Church.[26] Divine-Catholic faith is given to doctrines revealed by God and proposed as such by the Church, either by solemn definition or by the ordinary and universal magisterium.[27] Because some of the truths of divine revelation have come to the explicit consciousness of the Church only after the lapse of a considerable period of time, such as the doctrines of Mary's Immaculate Conception and her Assumption, an increase in the *explicit* object of divine-Catholic faith is possible, although the content of public revelation admits of no objective addition since the death of the last apostle. It is only by the pertinacious denial or doubt of a doctrine of divine-Catholic faith that one *becomes* guilty of the specific sin of heresy,[28] though the deliberate denial or doubt of any revealed doctrine, once a person has sufficient certainty that it is revealed, constitutes a grave sin of infidelity and ejects the infused virtue of faith from the soul, if it has been present.

In explaining the act of faith, some theologians make a fine distinction, which is helpful to emphasize the precise nature of this

25 Cf- Finlay. *Divine Faith* (New York, 1917), 55 ff.

26 Van Noort, *De fontibus revelationis,* η. 207, note; Herrmann, *Institutiones theol. dogmaticae* (Paris, 1926), 1, n. 31.

27 *DB,* 1792; Can. 1323. 28 Can. 1325, §2.

exalted virtue. They distinguish between faith in the broad sense *(fides late dicta)* and faith in the strict sense *(fides stride dicta).* The attitude of one who makes an act of the former is: "I believe the statement of the speaker because *it is evident to me* that he is neither deceived nor deceiving." The attitude of one who makes an act of faith in the strict sense is: "I believe the statement of the speaker because *he is neither deceived nor deceiving:"* The distinction is very important, especially in its application to divine faith. Only faith in the strict sense merits to be accounted as the theological virtue. One who would accept the doctrines of divine revelation merely because of the clear evidence that God is all-wise and all-truthful and has made a revelation would be making an intellectual act based on the motives of credibility—and that would not be an act of faith, save in the sense in which St. James says: "The devils also believe."[29] In the case of one who makes an act of faith in the strict sense, the motives of credibility are a necessary *condition* to lead him to the judgment of credibility; but in eliciting the act of faith the *motive* of his assent (with the aid of divine grace) is not the *evidence* that God is all-wise and all-truthful, but the *attributes* of God's wisdom and truthfulness themselves.[30]

Finally, Catholics should be aware of the difference between faith and the intellectual act known as religious assent. This latter term signifies the acceptance of a doctrine taught authoritatively by an official teacher or teaching body in the Church, but not with the use of the infallible magisterium. Such would be a doctrine proposed by the Holy Office or the Biblical Commission. The Pope himself can teach in this manner, and frequently does so in his Encyclical Letters. Merely because a doctrine of this kind is not infallibly proposed does not mean that Catholics may reject it or subject it to criticism as they might the teaching of a private theologian. For, as Pope Pius XII asserted in *Humani generis:* "Nor must it be thought that what is expounded in Encyclical Letters does not of itself demand consent, since in writing such Letters the Popes do not exercise the supreme power of their teaching authority. For these matters are taught with the ordinary teaching authority, of which it is true to say 'He who heareth you, heareth

29 James 2 : 19.

30 Van Noort, *De fontibus revelationis,* η. 300.

Me'."[31] An act of religious assent proceeds from the virtues of religion and obedience rather than from divine faith.[32]

Evidently, then, there is need for Catholics to have a clear and precise notion of what is meant by faith, in view of the various senses in which this word is understood, and of the many erroneous notions prevalent today about the nature of faith. In fact, it is not unusual to read vehement attacks on the very idea of admitting doctrines above the direct perception of the senses and natural reason. For example, at the dedication of the University of Rochester's psychiatric clinic on March 31, 1949, Homer W. Smith, professor of physiology at New York University made the statement: 'The unwarranted claim to knowledge of certain properties not available to empirical examination, such as God, transcendent good and evil, absolute values, future reward and punishment, and the like, has in practice, whatever it might have accomplished in theory, done more to retard man's intellectual and social development than any other misadventure that has ever befallen him."[33]

However, even those who admit the existence of God and revelation entertain very indefinite notions about faith, generally designating it by such terms as "inner experience," the "vision of spiritual values," "the active response of the whole man to things of the spirit," etc. Hence it is vitally important that Catholics clearly understand and be prepared to explain the concept of faith in the sense accepted by their Church. The obligation of instructing the laity in this matter rests on bishops and priests, to whom has been committed the responsibility of providing their flocks with the spiritual nourishment of Christ's doctrine. No more important subject can be chosen for the detailed instruction of the faithful in our own times than the nature of divine faith.

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31 *AAS,* 42 (1950), 468.

32 Cf. Bénard, E., "The Doctrinal Value of the Ordinary Teaching of the Holy Father." in *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* (New York, 1951), 78-107; and Fenton. Msgr. Joseph C., "The *Humani generis* and the Holy Father's Ordinary Magisterium," in *AER,* CXXV,'1 (July, 1951), 53-62; and also Msgr. Fenton's article, "The Doctrinal Authority of Papal Encyclicals," in *AER,* CXXI, 2, 3 (Aug. and Sept., 1949), 136-50; 210-20.

33 *Washington Post,* April 1, 1949, p. 6.