

Know Your Faith

Session 2 – Sola Fide?

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.
V. Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.

R. And You shall renew the face of the earth.

Let us pray.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations. Through Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

I. **Sola Fide**

a. Meaning

- i. Faith Works Salvation
- ii. The act of **faith alone** is the necessary and sufficient response to be justified before God. Good works are the fruit of one in the state of salvation, rather than a cause of salvation.

b. Importance

- i. It's the question of how we please God and how we attain eternal life
- ii. The "material principle" (the "stuff") of the Reformation
- iii. Along with *Sola Scriptura*, the basis for rejecting truths such as: Purgatory, the sacrificial nature of the mass, the priesthood, sacramental confession, indulgences, prayers for the dead, and the intercession of the saints.

II. **Faith Alone?**

a. Scriptures

- i. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."
- ii. Rom. 5:1, "therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"
- iii. Rom. 10:9-10, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; ¹⁰for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation."
- iv. Rom. 3:28-30, "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. ²⁹**Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also,** ³⁰**since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one."**

- v. Rom. 4:5, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness,"
 - vi. Rom. 11:6, "But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."
 - vii. Gal. 2:16, "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified."
 - viii. Gal. 2:21, "I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."
 - ix. Eph. 2:8, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."
- b. A word from the council of Trent – "But 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" (Session VI, Chapter VIII).
- c. To be justified by faith does not equal justification by faith **alone**
- i. Stressing one reality, even repeatedly and strenuously, does not necessarily negate a complementary reality.
 - ii. A parent says, "To get your allowance, you must clean your room and mow the lawn." For three weeks, the lawn is mowed but the room is a mess. If therefore the parent stresses numerous times, "You must clean your room to get your allowance," does this parent then teach *sola* room cleaning? Is **ONLY** room cleaning needed?
 - iii. Hence, the importance of paying attention to the unity and content of the whole of scripture. We read these texts *along with* and not *over and against* texts that speak of the necessity of good works.
- d. What *kind* of "works?"
- i. Acts 15 – "Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." ²This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question... ⁵Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses." ⁶The apostles and elders met to consider this question."

- ii. “Works of the law” = The Law of Moses. Specifically circumcision as a means to entering the covenant people of God. Not referring to the moral law, the natural law written on the heart.
- iii. See the whole context of Galatians, especially Galatians 5 as a summary

III. Faith Plus Works

a. Misunderstandings

i. Catholics believe in “works-righteousness”

1. “If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema” (Cannon 1 of the Council of Trent’s Decree of Justification).
2. “Since the initiative belongs to God in the order of grace, *no one can merit the initial grace* of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion” (CCC 2010).
3. “It is furthermore declared that in adults the beginning of that justification must proceed from the predisposing grace of God through Jesus Christ, that is, from His vocation, whereby, without any merits on their part, they are called; that they who by sin had been cut off from God, may be disposed through His quickening and helping grace to convert themselves to their own justification by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace; so that, while God touches the heart of man through the illumination of the Holy Ghost, man himself neither does absolutely nothing while receiving that inspiration, since he can also reject it, nor yet is he able by his own free will and without the grace of God to move himself to justice in His sight” (Council of Trent, Session VI, Chapter V).

ii. Catholics do not believe in the sufficiency of Christ’s work – we are trying to add something to the work of Christ

1. “*The charity of Christ is the source in us of all our merits* before God. Grace, by uniting us to Christ in active love, ensures the supernatural quality of our acts and consequently their merit before God and before men” (CCC 2011).
2. Distinguish between the sufficiency of a reality, and the means by which that reality is appropriated. There may be a sufficient amount of electricity in a circuit, but I still need to plug my blender into it for it to work.

b. The nature of Faith - "The obedience of faith" (Rom. 13:26; see 1:5; 2 Cor 10:5-6) "is to be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man commits **his whole self** freely to God, offering **the full submission of intellect and will to God** who reveals," and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him. To make this act of faith, the grace of God and the interior help of the Holy Spirit must precede and assist, moving the heart and turning

it to God, opening the eyes of the mind and giving "joy and ease to everyone in assenting to the truth and believing it." (*Dei Verbum*, 5)

c. Merit (CCC 2006-2011)

- i. Meaning – “The term "merit" refers in general to the *recompense owed* by a community or a society for the action of one of its members, experienced either as beneficial or harmful, deserving **reward** or punishment...” (CCC 2006).
- ii. Strict merit – “With regard to God, there is no strict right to any merit on the part of man. Between God and us there is an immeasurable inequality, for we have received everything from him, our Creator” (CCC 2007).
- iii. Condign Merit
 1. “The merit of man before God in the Christian life arises from the fact that *God has freely chosen to associate man with the work of his grace*. The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit” (CCC 2008).
 2. “We can have merit in God's sight only because of God's free plan to associate man with the work of his grace. Merit is to be ascribed in the first place to the grace of God, and secondly to man's collaboration. Man's merit is due to God” (CCC 2025).
 3. Romans 2:5-8 – “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”
 4. Colossians 3:24-25 – “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism.”
 5. Matthew 25:31-46

d. Scriptures to know

- i. James 2:14-26 – “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by

itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. ¹⁹You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder. ²⁰You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? ²¹Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? ²²You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. ²³And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. ²⁴**You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.** ²⁵In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? ²⁶As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

- ii. Matthew 25:31-46 – The judgment of the nations; upon what is this judgment based?
 - iii. Gal 5:6 – “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is **faith expressing itself through love.**”
 - iv. Matthew 7:21- "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who **does the will of my Father** who is in heaven.”
 - v. Mt 19:16-17 – “Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" ¹⁷"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. **If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.**”
 - vi. 1 Corinthians 13:2 – “If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”
 - vii. Philippians 2:12-13 – “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to **work out your salvation with fear and trembling,** ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”
- e. The Church Fathers
- i. "[Paul], an able wrestler, urges us on in the struggle for immortality, so that we may receive a crown and so that we may regard as a precious crown that which we acquire by our own struggle and which does not grow upon us spontaneously. . . . Those things which come to us spontaneously are not loved as much as those which are obtained by anxious care" (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:37:7 [A.D. 189]).
 - ii. "Standing before [Christ's] judgment, all of them, men, angels, and demons, crying out in one voice, shall say: 'Just is your judgment,' and the justice of that cry will be apparent in the recompense made to each. To those who have done well, everlasting enjoyment shall be

given; while to lovers of evil shall be given eternal punishment" (Hippolytus, *Against the Greeks* 3 [A.D. 212]).

- iii. "The Lord denounces [Christian evildoers], and says, 'Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name have cast out devils, and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you who work iniquity' [Matt. 7:21–23]. There is need of righteousness, that one may deserve well of God the Judge; we must obey his precepts and warnings, that our merits may receive their reward" (Cyprian of Carthage, *The Unity of the Catholic Church* 15, 1st ed. [A.D. 251]).
- iv. "The root of every good work is the hope of the resurrection, for the expectation of a reward nerves the soul to good work. Every laborer is prepared to endure the toils if he looks forward to the reward of these toils" (Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 18:1 [A.D. 350]).
- f. Conclusion – Based upon scriptural witness, and the constant teaching of the Church, it appears that the 16th century doctrine of *sola fide* is forcing an unnecessary dichotomy, a false "either-or" decision. Faith is not *opposed* to good works. The initial grace of justification, God's initial call, is completely gratuitous, and cannot be merited by anything we do, faith or works. All our works, apart from Christ, have no supernatural merit. Without Christ, we can do nothing. Having been justified through a faith animated by charity, being "in Christ," our works are meritorious insofar as God is pleased to reward them, and they are done in union with the merits of Christ.

IV. **"Are you saved?"**

- a. Past Event
 - i. Romans 8:24 – "For in this hope we were saved..."
 - ii. Ephesians 2:5,8 – "God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved... ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..."
 - iii. 2 Tim 1:9 – "But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace."
- b. Present Event
 - i. Philippians 2:12 – "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."
 - ii. 1 Peter 1:9 – "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."
- c. Future Event

- i. Matthew 10:22 – “All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”
- ii. Matthew 24:13 – “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”
- iii. Romans 13:11 – “And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.”
- d. Summary – “If you are Catholic and someone asks you if you have been "saved," you should say, "I am redeemed by the blood of Christ, I trust in him alone for my salvation, and, as the Bible teaches, I am 'working out my salvation in fear and trembling' (Phil. 2:12), knowing that it is God's gift of grace that is working in me."” (Catholic Answer's Booklet “Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth”)

V. **Can you lose salvation?**

- a. Assurance of salvation – “Once saved always saved?”
 - i. 1 John 5:13 – “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that **you may know** that you have eternal life.”
 - 1. Not absolute, metaphysical certainty.
 - 2. Rather, confidence. “I **know** that I will ace that exam tomorrow!”
 - 3. The letter of John also shows that our salvation is **contingent** on some things: “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If** we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:8-9).
- b. The necessity of perseverance
 - i. Matthew 24:13 - “Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”
 - ii. Romans 11:22 – “Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.”
 - iii. Philippians 2:12 - “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling...”
 - iv. 1 Corinthians 9:27 – “No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.”
 - v. 1 Corinthians 10:11-12 – “These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. ¹²So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!”

VI. Are You Born Again?

- a. "Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior?"
- b. Scripture
 - i. "John 3:3-5 - In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." ⁴"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" ⁵Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (NIV).
 1. Born again? Or "from above?"
 2. Context of John 3 - After our Lord's teaching that it is necessary for salvation to be born from above by water and the Spirit (John 3:1-21), "Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them and baptized" (John 3:22).
 - ii. Titus 3:4-5 "But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit..."
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 6:11 - "And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."
 - iv. 1 Peter 3:21 - "...in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also..."
- c. Church Fathers
 - i. "As many as are persuaded and believe that what we [Christians] teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, and instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we pray and fast with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father . . . and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit [Matt. 28:19], they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, 'Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:3]" (Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61 [A.D. 151]).
 - ii. "'And [Naaman] dipped himself . . . seven times in the Jordan' [2 Kgs. 5:14]. It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven'" (Irenaeus, *Fragment* 34 [A.D. 190]).

- iii. "[N]o one can attain salvation without baptism, especially in view of the declaration of the Lord, who says, 'Unless a man shall be born of water, he shall not have life'" (Tertullian, *Baptism* 12:1 [A.D. 203]).
- iv. "The Father of immortality sent the immortal Son and Word into the world, who came to man in order to wash him with water and the Spirit; and he, begetting us again to incorruption of soul and body, breathed into us the Spirit of life, and endued us with an incorruptible panoply. If, therefore, man has become immortal, he will also be God. And if he is made God by water and the Holy Spirit after the regeneration of the laver he is found to be also joint-heir with Christ after the resurrection from the dead. Wherefore I preach to this effect: Come, all ye kindreds of the nations, to the immortality of the baptism" (Hippolytus, *Discourse on the Holy Theophany* 8 [A.D. 217]).
- v. "[When] they receive also the baptism of the Church . . . then finally can they be fully sanctified and be the sons of God . . . since it is written, 'Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'" (Cyprian of Carthage, *Letters* 71[72]:1 [A.D. 253]).
- d. "Yes, I have accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and savior. But I have been born again the Bible way, through water and the Spirit, at my baptism."

Conclusions

1. Where in the Bible is the phrase "faith alone" used? (James 2)
2. What did Jesus say was necessary to enter eternal life? (Matthew 19:16-17)
3. The scene of the judgment of the nations (Matthew 25)
4. Know the difference between "works of the law" (Acts 15) and the moral law.
5. Distinguish between strict merit (which we cannot do) and condign merit (which we can do as children of God, in Christ).
6. Know that we can do NOTHING to merit the initial grace of conversion.
7. Stress the Catholic/Protestant agreement in *Sola Gratia* – we are saved by grace alone. Now, how is that grace made active in us?
8. Can you lose salvation? Paul thought he could (1 Corinthians 9:27).
9. Philippians 2:12 - "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."

Know Your Faith Revised Calendar

- February 22nd – The Eucharist (Social Hall)
- March 1st – No Session; Join us For Dr. McNamara's Presentation in the MC Chapel
- March 8th – Confession (Social Hall)
- March 15th – No Session; Parish Mission
- March 22nd – Purgatory (Zuker Hall)
- March 29th – The Papacy (Zuker Hall)
- April 5th – No Session; Easter Monday
- April 12th – Mary (Zuker Hall)