

Catholic Candle

October 2024 catholiccandle.org catholiccandle@gmail.com

Words to Live by – from Catholic Tradition

The Importance of Controlling Ourselves

The great Mystical Doctor teaches:

Conquering the tongue is better than fasting on bread and water.

St. John of the Cross, minor work entitled *Other Counsels*, #12.



Do Not Celebrate the Pagan “Holiday” of Halloween

Halloween is un-Catholic, which is why so many traditional Catholic priests have taught over the years, that Catholics should not observe this pagan holiday. For a further analysis of why Catholics should not celebrate Halloween, read this article:

<https://catholiccandle.org/2015/11/01/reasons-not-to-celebrate-halloween/>



The Church Militant Must Pray for the Church Suffering

Out of charity, let us pray collectively for all of our dearly departed.

<https://catholiccandle.org/2023/09/27/the-church-militant-must-pray-for-the-church-suffering/>



Catholic Candle's 2025 Catholic Calendar

The *Catholic Candle's* 2025 Traditional Catholic calendar is coming soon. It will be free to download and freely distributable.



Our Duty to Vote for the Least-Bad Political Candidate

Q. Should I vote in the up-coming election even though none of the candidates are good?

A. We live in a great apostasy which includes civil society (which is former Christendom) rejecting its King, Who is Christ, and rejecting His laws.

Before considering the obligation to vote, let us first note that there are many errors and flaws related to the election systems of former Christendom.

All Power is from God; the People Can Merely Choose the Ruler to Exercise this Power

For example, elections give the appearance that authority comes from the people, whereas all authority really comes from God, regardless of the method by which a ruler is chosen to wield civil or religious power. Here is how St. Paul teaches this truth:

[T]here is no power but from God: and those [powers] that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist, purchase to themselves damnation. ... For [the ruler] is God's minister. ... Wherefore, be subject of necessity, not only for [the ruler's] wrath, but also for conscience's sake.

Romans, ch.13, vv. 1-2 & 4-5 (emphasis added).

God also declares: "By Me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things; by Me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice." *Proverbs*, 8:15-16.

We Live in a Republic; It is our Duty to Vote

The enemies of Christ pretend that “democracy” and the right to vote are unalienable rights and are a matter of justice. This is false. In fact, kingship is the best form of government¹ and kingship is the form of government that God chose for His Church. In fact, universal suffrage is a very bad idea.²

However, in the world we live in, as Pope Pius XII noted, “The people are called on to take an always larger part in the public life of the nation”.³ Thus, because we have this delegation of responsibility to select our nation’s rulers, and as Pope Pius XII also noted, “the exercise of the right to vote is an act of grave moral responsibility”⁴, it is our moral obligation to vote as part of doing the best we are able to cause the least-bad candidate to get into office.

¹ See the explanation of St. Thomas Aquinas, greatest Doctor of the Catholic Church, in his treatise *On Kingship*. See also the teaching of Pope Pius VI:

In fact, after having abolished the *monarchy, the best of all governments*, [the French Revolution] had transferred all the public power to the people — the people... ever easy to deceive and to lead into every excess

Pope Pius VI, *Pourquoi Notre Voix*, June 17, 1793 (emphasis added).

² Here are the strong words given in an address of Pope Pius IX on universal suffrage May 5, 1874:

I bless all those who cooperate in the resurrection of France. I bless them in the hope that they will take up a difficult but necessary task, that of eliminating or reducing a *horrible plague afflicting contemporary society, known as universal suffrage*. To leave the decision of the most serious questions to the necessarily unintelligent and passionate multitudes, is it not to surrender oneself to random chance and to run voluntarily into the abyss? Yes, universal suffrage would be more deserving of the name of “universal madness”; and when secret societies get hold of it, as happens all too often, that of “universal lie”.

Emphasis added.

³ Pope Pius XII in his April 20, 1946, discourse to Italian Catholic Action. In this quote the word “is” was changed to “are” for clarity. The pope was apparently using the noun “people” to refer to a single body.

⁴ Pope Pius XII in his March 16, 1946 discourse to the parish priests of Rome.

Voting Requires Preparation and Deliberation, because Almost Never are There “Perfect Candidates” Available.

Some of us on the *Catholic Candle* Team have been voting-age for many decades. We have always voted because it is our duty. But we hold that none of the candidates in any of the elections in which we voted have ever been excellent and correct on every important issue. The candidates have usually been very far from excellent.

In fact, we think it is highly likely that even in Pope Pius XII’s time, there were no candidates for major, national offices whose positions across the board matched Catholic teachings. In other words, it has probably been the case for many decades that most Catholics worldwide have been in the position of choosing between the greater and the lesser evil.

Here in the United States, none of us at *Catholic Candle* have ever seen a candidate who was fully good in every important way. But on the other hand, we also have never seen a major, national election in which all of the candidates were “equally bad”. Every candidate is a different mixture of good and bad.

This is true in the 2024 elections. For example, Kamala Harris is clearly more evil in countless ways, than is Donald Trump. Whereas Trump has weakened greatly on abortion and now favors permitting abortion in various circumstances, nonetheless Harris is far more pro-abortion than Trump is.

Similarly, Trump promotes unnatural vices against the holy virtue of purity. But Harris not only does this but also promotes compelling the rest of us to cooperate with these evils (such as compelling a wedding cake decorator in Colorado to promote that type of vice).

Patriotism and the Fourth Commandment Apply

Patriotism is a moral virtue which is a “sub-virtue” falling under the virtue of piety.⁵ Further, patriotism is a duty falling under the Fourth Commandment.⁶ Obviously, patriotism and our duty to love our country does not mean that we must love the evil committed by our country’s rulers. This is like our duty to love our parents does not mean that we should love any sins they commit.

⁵ *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.101, a.1.

⁶ *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.122, a.5.

The General Principle: *Do Good and Prevent Evil*

The most basic principle of the Natural Law, which God has implanted in the heart of every man, is to do good and to avoid evil. We must live by this in our hearts, in our dealings with our neighbor, and especially with the Church and our nation. Therefore, ***we must do what we can to make our country better (or less-bad) just like we have a duty to make our parents better (or less-bad)*** when we have the opportunity. How can we have piety and suppose that we love our country or our parents if we don't do what we can for their improvement?

Further, we belong to our parents and our family, in a way. Similarly, we belong to our country, in a way, as our big national family. Would it not be a sin of imprudence to not do what we can to prevent greater harm to ourselves and others through our allowing a more-evil candidate to be elected because of our own indolence and weakness in failing to do what we can to prevent this?

The Above General Principle as Applied to Voting: What do Church Authorities say?

The above general principle applies directly to voting. We have a grave duty to do all that we can *via* our voting power to make our country better, or at least to prevent more damage from occurring – on the federal, state, and local levels. The sin of omission becomes graver when we fail to vote in elections for higher offices, because the damage done affects more people.

Here is how Pope Pius XII taught that we have a duty to vote for the candidates who give us sufficient assurances which cause us to think that they will be better or less-bad than the alternative candidates:

In the present circumstances, it is a strict obligation for all those who have the right to vote, men and women, to take part in the elections. Whoever abstains from doing so, in particular by indolence or weakness, commits a sin grave in itself, a mortal fault. Each one must follow the dictate of his own conscience. However, it is obvious that the voice of conscience imposes on every Catholic to give his vote to the candidates who offer truly sufficient guarantees for the protection of the rights of God and of souls, for the true good of individuals, families and of society, according to the love of God and Catholic moral teaching.⁷

⁷ Address of Pope Pius XII To Parish Priests, given on March 10, 1948 (emphasis added). This address is available here: http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1948/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19480310_intima-gioia.html

Objection: “I cannot in good conscience vote because all the candidates support at least some serious evils. I will not take any part in their evil.”

This objection is, unfortunately, very common amongst Catholics, especially those who consider themselves “Traditional Catholics” – who are striving to live with a clean conscience – that one cannot vote except for a candidate whose positions on all major issues – especially moral issues – are in line with Church teachings. This is a sufficiently common opinion that the remainder of this article will deal with this scruple.

Cardinal Griffin of Westminster England stated that some people excuse themselves from voting on the grounds that all of the politicians are corrupt. He calls this excuse a “boast” because these persons are boasting that their standards are so high that their standards do not allow them to vote for one of the available candidates. Cardinal Griffin condemned this position as follows:

There are some who **boast** that because of the **corruption of politicians** they refuse to vote. It is my duty to tell you that **the Catholic citizen has an obligation to vote**. The Holy Father himself recently declared that when grave issues are at stake to neglect to vote may be a serious sin of omission.⁸

Notice Cardinal Griffin does deny that the politicians are corrupt, but rather, he tells us that we have a duty to vote regardless. So, obviously, this vote must be for the best alternative among the available candidates, even if they are all corrupt in one way or another.

Archbishop John McNicholas of Cincinnati, wrote at least three pastoral letters on the obligation of using the franchise [*i.e.*, the right to vote]. In 1929, 1935, and 1939 he sent out messages to be read in all the churches on the importance of voting and the obligation binding upon us all. He asked that both men and women “**vote in all elections**” and “to make a sacrifice to discharge this important civic duty.”⁹

⁸ Quoted in *The Catholic Mind*, issue #46 1028 (August 1948), 534, as quoted in *Catholic Principles, On the Obligation of Voting*, by Rev. Titus Cranny, S.A., M.A., S.T.L., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1952, Section 4. *Conditions Under Which One May Vote For Unworthy Candidates* (emphasis added).

⁹ Quoted in *The Catholic Mind*, issue #26 (August 1948), p.254, as quoted in *Catholic Principles, On the Obligation of Voting*, by Rev. Titus Cranny, S.A., M.A., S.T.L., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1952, Section 4. *Conditions Under Which One May Vote For Unworthy Candidates* (emphasis added).

Cardinal Ruffini, Archbishop of Palermo, and the hierarchy of Sicily declared that: ***“No one should abstain from voting for any reason whatsoever”***.¹⁰

In his 1952 book on the duty to vote, Fr. Titus Cranny explicitly sets forth our obligation to vote even in the situation where it is necessary to choose between candidates who are both bad. Fr. Cranny explains,

It might even be ***necessary*** to vote for such an unworthy candidate (if the voting were limited to such personalities) and even for one who would render harm to the Church, ***provided the election were only a choice from among unworthy men and the voting for the less unworthy would prevent the election of another more unworthy***.¹¹

Two Further Objections

Certain Catholics might make one of the following objections to the clear teaching of Pope Pius XII. These two objections focus on the pope’s use of the phrase “In the present circumstances” (where we quote him above).

Objection #1:

If there arises an election in which every candidate available is wrong on at least one very grave moral issue such as murder (abortion, euthanasia, *etc.*) or an issue involving the 6th / 9th Commandments (unnatural vice, *etc.*) then one is no longer obligated to vote. In fact – according to this objection – this is why Pope Pius XII, in the above quote, qualified his assertion that Catholics are obligated to vote, with the words, “In the present circumstances ...” By those words – according to this objection – the pope was referencing the state of things in his time, which were nowhere near as bad, morally speaking, as our times. But if – according to this objection – Pope Pius XII lived in 2024, seeing that every candidate in the U.S. presidential election takes at least one great evil position on morals, he would

¹⁰ *The Tablet* (London), 191: 5624 (Mar. 6, 1948), 154, as quoted in *Catholic Principles, Oo the Obligation of Voting*, by Rev. Titus Cranny, S.A., M.A., S.T.L., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1952, Section 4. *Conditions Under Which One May Vote For Unworthy Candidates* (emphasis added).

¹¹ Quoted in *Catholic Principles, Oo the Obligation of Voting*, by Rev. Titus Cranny, S.A., M.A., S.T.L., The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 1952, Section 4. *Conditions Under Which One May Vote For Unworthy Candidates* (emphasis added).

advise Catholics that they are no longer obligated to vote.

Response to Objection #1:

The first problem with this objection is its overly-rosy view of history. Again, historically speaking, it is highly unlikely that even in Pope Pius XII's time, there existed any candidates for major offices who took the correct Catholic position "across the board" on all serious moral issues.¹² Pope Pius XII's phrase, "In the present time" should *not* be interpreted as if he were saying:

In my time, there is still always available at least one candidate in every major election who takes all the Catholic positions on every major moral issue, although I recognize that such candidate might well have wrong positions on less-serious matters. Thus, Catholics are obliged to vote.

Rather, the pope meant this:

In my time [just as in 2024], there exists no candidates who are correct on all serious moral positions, but there are some candidates who have more such positions correct than other candidates.

His words "In the present circumstances..." allude to the fact that, *in his time just as in our time*, things had not yet become so bad that all candidates were virtually indistinguishable because they were all equally evil. Rather, there were still candidates who were better than others.

The second problem with this objection is that it is a "perfectionist" position, and sacrifices the *good which can be done*, for the sake of the hypothetical and always fleeting "best". Such a position fails to take into account a man's grave duty to do what he can to help his nation in whatever circumstances he finds himself.

The third problem with this objection is that, at the bottom of this position is also a misunderstanding of material vs. formal cooperation in evil. When we vote for less-evil candidates, we are *not* saying, "I think it is a good thing absolutely speaking that this lesser-evil candidate gets into office, and I wish for the evil that he will do alongside of the good he will do." Rather, our intention in voting is (and should be), "I think it is a good thing relatively speaking that this candidate gets into office. His winning the

¹² Again, by "moral issues" in this article, we are not speaking of lesser-moral issues such as unjust (excessive) taxation, or the government forcibly taking land from certain landowners, *etc.* Rather, we are focusing on the biggest moral issues: matters of human life/abortion/euthanasia/unjust wars and genocide, 6th / 9th issues, or – if this were the case – matters directly relating to God, such as blasphemy, sacrilege, *etc.*

election is good only relative to the greater evil which would come about if I did not vote and the worse candidate is elected. I do not will the evil things he does, but I will only the good things and also the prevention of evil that would otherwise occur.”¹³

Also, notice that no Church authority ever says “don’t vote for the least bad candidate.” Instead, they say “vote for the candidate who gives assurances he will do good”. In fact, less-bad candidates do this too. For example, Trump assures us that he will fight to criminalize “gender transitioning” which occurs without parental consent.¹⁴ Although this position certainly does not make him a perfect candidate, it does make him better than Harris on this important issue.

Direct vs. Indirect Control over the Issues at Stake

Here is another way to see the error in this objection to voting: During an election in which all candidates hold at least some evil positions, we **cannot directly control** whether those evils happen. That is, we are not voting on whether that candidate should hold those evil ideas and goals, whether those positions are good or evil, or whether we support those positions.

Rather, when voting we are merely choosing between two (or more) candidates. We are voting on **candidates**, not issues. We are **not** answering the question, “Do you approve in any way, and desire in any way, these evil positions of the candidate you are voting for?”

Instead, we are merely saying this: “I have done the best I can to judge which candidate is better (or less-bad) for my nation, and I am choosing that **candidate** over the others.” As with most elections, including this 2024 presidential election, we have little or no control over the candidates’ ideas and goals; we can merely do our best to limit the damage and do whatever good that we can.

This is very different from a **direct-control situation**. For example, sometimes in state or local elections, there are referenda issues in which we voters can directly control an outcome, *via* a “yes/no” type answer to a proposed question. In fact, sometimes these

¹³ Just as losing something good is regarded as evil, so also the removal or avoidance of an evil is correctly regarded as good. *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.36, a.1, ad.1. In this case, avoiding the election of a more evil candidate is correctly regarded as a good.

¹⁴ <https://cbs12.com/news/nation-world/trump-will-charge-doctors-for-sexual-mutilation-of-children-campaign-says-donald-trump-politics-2024-election-lgbt-transgender-minors-surgeries-surgery-felony-charge>

questions are very important such as, “Do you approve an amendment to your state’s constitution which says [such-and-such] about abortion?”

These referenda situations are very different from choosing between candidates who hold some evil positions, because *whether or not we cast a vote for one of the candidates, we cannot prevent a candidate from being elected to the office anyway*. The evil he will do is out of our control; we can only try to limit the damage. By contrast, in a referendum, we bear some **direct responsibility** for a particular evil (or good) coming about by our choice. Because of this, additional moral principles are involved in our choice there – principles such as that of material cooperation with evil, the principle of double-effect, and so on. (Perhaps a future *Catholic Candle* article will address such situations.)

Objection #2: A variation on the above objection is even more extreme and more evil:

If there arises an election in which every candidate available is wrong on at least one very grave moral issue such as murder (abortion, euthanasia, *etc.*) or a 6th / 9th issues (unnatural vice, *etc.*), then not only is one no longer obligated to vote, but it is actually a sin for a Catholic to vote in such elections, since to vote would mean we are formally cooperating with evil.

Response to Objection #2:

This position suffers from all the deficiencies of the immediately-preceding objection. But it is even more evil because it masquerades under the false character of virtue and righteousness. It is based on the scruple that helping a man to get into office even though he holds some evil positions, is effectively equal to formally cooperating with that candidate’s sins when in office. But again, if our intentions when voting do not include any desires for objectively evil things, and if we desire only the good which results from the candidate being a lesser evil, then we are doing the most good that we can by choosing the better (least-bad) candidate.¹⁵

Further, convincing other Catholics to take such an unreasonably extreme and dangerous position not only prevents otherwise good Catholics from doing their best to prevent evil in the current election, but also instills in them false principles which will, practically speaking, prevent them from probably ever voting again. This is because doing nothing to prevent a very-evil candidate from taking power (as is clearly the case with Kamala

¹⁵ Again, as explained in footnote 9, just as losing something good is regarded as evil, so also the removal or avoidance of an evil is regarded as good. *Summa*, Ia, IIae, Q.36, a.1, ad.1. In this case, avoiding the election of a more evil candidate is correctly regarded as a good.

Harris), allows the foothold of evil to become stronger, making it more likely there will never be a good candidate in an honest (non-fraudulent) future election.

Confused Catholics who take such false and scrupulous positions would do well to remember Pope St. Felix's maxim:

Not to oppose error is to approve it, and not to defend truth is to suppress it, and **indeed to neglect to confound evil men when we can do it, is no less a sin than to encourage them.**¹⁶

Another way to see that such a "perfectionist" and scrupulous position is mistaken is to merely look back through history. There has never been a presidential election in the United States in which there was a major candidate who took "all the right positions" on all serious moral issues. Catholics who claim it is moral to refuse to vote when all the candidates have at least one serious moral issue, would have been forced to not vote in any U.S. presidential election in our history because all of the candidates in every one of those elections took bad positions on important moral issues.

We suspect confused Catholics take this dangerous position because Trump has lately weakened on his stance on abortion. But abortion has never been the only serious moral evil he promoted. For example, even back in 2016 when Trump campaigning for president, he was already soft on, and supportive of, unnatural vice.¹⁷ What did those

¹⁶ Pope Saint Felix III (reigned 483-492).

¹⁷ For example, see:

- ❖ *Donald Trump presidential campaign, 2016/LGBTQ rights*, [https://ballotpedia.org/Donald Trump presidential campaign, 2016/LGBTQ rights](https://ballotpedia.org/Donald_Trump_presidential_campaign,_2016/LGBTQ_rights) He disagreed with a North Carolina law which forced people to use the bathroom which matched the gender on their birth certificate. <https://youtu.be/NAOcfy5J2qw>
- ❖ Also, he gave a 2016 speech lamenting an attack on a gay Orlando nightclub as "an assault on the ability of free people to live their lives, love who they want, and express their identity." <https://time.com/4367120/orlando-shooting-donald-trump-transcript/>
- ❖ In a 2016 tweet, he stated, "Thank you to the LGBT community. I will fight for you while Hilary brings in more people who will threaten your freedom and beliefs." <https://youtu.be/NAOcfy5J2qw?t=48>
- ❖ He stated in 2016, "As your president, I will do everything in my power to protect our LGBTQ citizens from the violence and oppression of a hateful foreign ideology. Believe me." <https://youtu.be/NAOcfy5J2qw?t=77>

Catholics do in 2016 who now hold the position that Catholics cannot vote in 2024?

A Few Scenarios

Finally, here are a few scenarios which might make it easier for a Catholic to discern the right thing to do in various political circumstances.

Scenario 1:

Suppose that, in an election, there is one candidate who has all the correct positions on major moral issues. Then all Catholics would be clearly bound to vote for that candidate, even if he were wrong on lesser issues, such as economic issues.

Scenario 2: [Our situation in 2024]

Suppose that in a major election both candidates have some serious moral issues wrong, but there is one candidate who has more-correct (less bad) positions than the other. Then all Catholics would be bound to vote for that candidate, even if he were wrong on lesser issues, such as economic issues as long as the country/state would be better (or less-bad) with such candidate in office, compared to the worse candidate.

Scenario 3: [As the world becomes darker – the future]

Suppose (for the sake of a hypothetical example) that in a major election there are 100 extremely serious moral issues at stake – issues on par with abortion and other forms of murder, unnatural vice, and so on.¹⁸ Suppose one candidate is wrong on all 100, and the other is wrong on 99, but has the correct position on one important moral issue. Then all Catholics would be bound to vote for that candidate, even if he were also wrong on the other 99 important moral issues and on lesser matters, as long as the country/state would be better (or less-bad) with such candidate in office, compared to the worse candidate. This is because we have the duty to do what we can to help our country be better (or less bad).

Scenario 4: [Near the end of time?]

Suppose (for the sake of a hypothetical example) that in a major election there are 100 extremely serious moral issues at stake – issues on par in importance with abortion and

¹⁸ Again, to keep this hypothetical example simple, let us exclude all lesser issues and imagine that there were somehow 100 very large moral issues at hand.

other forms of murder, unnatural vice, and so on.¹⁹ Suppose both candidates are wrong on all 100, but one candidate takes some correct positions on significant, although lesser-important issues (such as fighting corruption in government). Then all Catholics would be bound to vote for that candidate who is the lesser of two evils as long as the country/state would be better (or less-bad) with such candidate in office, compared to the worse candidate.

Conclusion

Given that:

- ❖ Issues of morality in society have the most weight;
- ❖ But other issues (*e.g.*, fighting corruption in government) have some but lesser weight than those moral issues in society; and
- ❖ After careful comparison of the candidate, if there is any basis, large or small, because of which one candidate would be better (less bad) for the nation,

Then, we are bound to vote because we are bound to help our nation become better or less bad.

The only time we would not be bound to vote is the extremely unlikely scenario in which there is no discernible greater good or lesser-evil between the candidates. We at *Catholic Candle* have never seen anything even remotely close to that situation in our many years of voting, and this is why we have always held that we have a duty to vote in all federal, state, and local elections.



¹⁹ Again, to keep this hypothetical example simple, let us exclude all lesser issues and imagine that there were somehow 100 very large moral issues at hand.

To Receive Our Lord's Help on Earth and for Your Salvation, Read On²⁰

If you want daily help in your state of life, whether you are married, a consecrated religious, or single, develop a devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In the 17th Century, Our Lord appeared to St. Margaret Mary and revealed to her His 12 Promises to those who have a devotion to His Sacred Heart and who promote this devotion.

Devotion to the Sacred Heart is a very certain way of becoming holy; Our Lord Himself gave us this devotion as a supreme means to gain our love.

To practice this devotion, it is very helpful to read, from time to time, the 12 wonderful Promises that Our Lord made to everyone who practices devotion to His Sacred Heart. These Promises reveal in the clearest possible way the immense personal and tender love Our Lord has for us.

Therefore, we should read them, slowly and carefully, at least on the First Friday of every month. They will awaken in our hearts boundless confidence in Our Lord.

All the 12 Promises are most important, but we call attention very especially to the 11th Promise:

Those who spread this devotion will have their names written on My Sacred Heart, never to be effaced!

We must repeat frequently the ejaculation:

Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have confidence in Thee, boundless confidence for everything.


This ejaculation is so powerful and efficacious that it has been called "The miraculous ejaculation."

We ought to have a picture of the Sacred Heart, not only in our homes but in every room and on our writing table, just as we have the photograph of our dear mother. We can say frequently, "Jesus, I love You."

No mother, no father, no brother or friend loves us so tenderly as Jesus does.

²⁰ The following is taken from *An Easy Way to Become a Saint*. Tan Books and Publishers, Rockford, Ill., 1990, pp. 60-61.

Those who practice devotion to the Sacred Heart in this simple and easy way have a guarantee of receiving the wonderful favors promised by Our Lord.



The Promises of Our Lord
to St. Margaret Mary for Souls Devoted to His Sacred Heart

1. **I** will give them all the graces necessary for their state in life. ❦
2. **I** will establish peace in their families. ❦
3. **I** will console them in all their difficulties. ❦
4. **I** will be their secure refuge during life, and more especially at the hour of death. ❦
5. **I** will shower down abundant blessings on all their undertakings. ❦
6. **S**inners shall find in **M**y Heart a **S**ource and boundless **O**cean of **M**ercy.
7. **T**epid souls shall become fervent. ❦
8. **F**ervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection. ❦
9. **I** will bless every place in which the picture of my **S**acred **H**eart shall be exposed and honored. ❦
10. **I** will give to priests the power of touching the most hardened hearts. ❦
11. **P**ersons who propagate this devotion shall have their names written in **M**y Heart, and they shall never be effaced therefrom. ❦
12. **I** will grant the grace of final repentance to all those who shall communicate on the first **F**riday nine months consecutively. They shall not die in mortal sin, nor without having received the last **S**acraments, for **M**y **D**ivine **H**eart will become their secure refuge at that last moment. ❦

This Devotion to the Sacred Heart should be part of all religious instruction from early childhood to the time of death.

Well, that's it: an easy way to become holy, with Our Lord's promised help for our state of life on earth, and much help for our salvation.





Mary's School of Sanctity

Lesson #38 – About the Temperaments – Continuing our Study of the Choleric Temperament – Their Spiritual Combat

Note: When referring to a person with a choleric temperament in this article we simply will call him “a choleric”.

In our last lesson we briefly described the general weaknesses of a choleric who wasn't guarding himself and trying to love God. Thus, he has bad will. We touched upon the fact that if a person with a choleric temperament doesn't guard himself and strive to love God, he can easily slip into the weaknesses of his temperament. Here we list again for reference the weaknesses we listed previously:

Weaknesses of the Choleric Temperament:²¹

- Hardness
- Nurtured hatred and desire for revenge
- Obstinacy
- Insensibility
- Anger
- Pride (includes over-confidence; criticizing others; excessive competitiveness)
- Ambition
- Violence, cruelty, and arrogance upon meeting with resistance
- Lack of delicacy of feeling, insensitive to the feelings of others
- Coldness
- Indifference
- Impetuosity

Each temperament has its own unique struggles and challenges in trying to live a virtuous life. As Catholics it is important for us to understand ourselves and others better in order to appreciate the reality that we are indeed in the Church Militant with a formidable enemy, Satan, who has been practicing his evil on the human race ever since Adam's Fall. We must get to know our own inclinations and those of our neighbor so we can learn to love our neighbor more perfectly. This analysis of the spiritual combat of the choleric temperament is meant to foster such knowledge which will benefit those with the choleric temperament as well as those who do not have this temperament. We want to increase in charity and be able to help our loved ones and our neighbor in general.

²¹ These weaknesses will be bolded later as they appear in the text for easy reference back to this list.

Therefore, it is crucial to gain as much comprehension as possible of the pitfalls each temperament has.

With this in mind let us see how these weaknesses of the choleric are closely linked together and how Satan spurs the choleric on by trying to make of the choleric a bundle of uncontrollable passions and emotions.

Every Temperament has its own Form of Pride. Let's Examine the Particular Struggle the Choleric has with Pride.

We must face the reality that Satan hates Christ and wants all humans to be trapped in pride as a preparation for damnation. "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its beginning." *Tobias*, 4:14. It is a fact that every temperament has a particular form of pride and such pride comes in varying degrees.

Since pride is the root of all evil, it is important to start our further investigation of the weaknesses of the choleric by probing deeper into his typical form of pride. As we mentioned earlier in these lessons concerning the temperaments, not all persons of a particular temperament are exactly alike.

Although no two people are exactly alike, there are some tendencies to pride that show up especially in the choleric temperament. Satan certainly takes advantage of these inclinations in order to make a choleric into a slave of pride. Satan knows that when a choleric is caught up in his pride, all the other weaknesses seem to follow along as if they were attached to this pride. The choleric's pride shows up in his overconfidence and ambition for fame or power. He appears to be extremely set upon getting everyone's attention and keeping it.

Because all pride is blinding, the choleric can be the type of person who is self-centered and he doesn't even realize it.

He doesn't see that he has any failings. [If he does see any, he makes light of them.] He gets upset if anyone should point out any defect in him. On the other hand, he is apt to find faults in everyone else. He is constantly criticizing others, whether in his thoughts or words.

He tends to bully others and thereby force them to do his bidding. Because he is successful in pressuring others and getting his way, he tends to oppress anyone who dares to go against him.

His bullying tends to be in sharp words, insults, threats and even trying to pressure others into feeling guilty for opposing him. He can be very vindictive to those he views as his enemy. He can go so far as to take revenge on others and destroy their property and their good name.

He can bully all those around him and get them to join him in putting pressure on the one who is trying to oppose him (otherwise known as ganging up on his “oppressor” and putting him in the “doghouse”), thereby ostracizing his opponent.

A choleric with unchecked pride can easily be despotic. In human history there are countless examples of tyrants, and men set on taking control of as much of the world as they could. Many famous dictators were of the choleric temperament.

Because the choleric is so focused on wanting to be esteemed by others, he tends to be excessively competitive. He is often considered to be a perfectionist and this attribute ties in with his wanting to be viewed as if he is the best in everything. Cholerics are apt to be in sports and other contests. Competition in itself is not bad. But a choleric trapped in pride is so intent on winning that he makes a very sore loser. He doesn't take defeat well at all.

The reader may think we are painting the worst-case scenario; yet, our intention is to inform the choleric that he really needs to be on high alert for his pride so he does not become an overbearing and domineering person. In other words, if a choleric does not have self-knowledge, he will not be aware of his own tendencies and hence will not fight diligently against them.

In consequence of his lack of concern about his spiritual progress, his pride remains unchecked, and the other weaknesses of his temperament easily latch onto his pride. He gets impatient when things do not go his way and this naturally leads to **anger**. His pride readily harbors grudges and nurses **hatred** in his heart which can readily turn into forms of **violence**, **cruelty**, and **revenge**. When he doubles-down in his pride, he is like a stubborn bull and forms an **obstinate hardness** in his heart. His heart is **cold**, **insensible**, and **indifferent** to the needs and/or feelings of his neighbor.

He is likely, then, to not stop and consider what he is doing and the many consequences of his actions. Remember, we said that this type of choleric, who has bad will, is not on the right path. He has become habituated to being **impetuous** in his *one-track mind* which is so focused on only himself.

So, What should a Choleric do to keep the Enemy (Pride), at Bay?

In this section we wish to make suggestions for the choleric in a general way. In upcoming lessons, we will get into more details of how a choleric can curb his pride and subsequent anger as well as his other weaknesses. Likewise, we will address how choleric men can best help themselves and in turn, how choleric women can guard themselves against their dangerous inclinations, too.

Self-knowledge is a gift from God and we must pray to acquire this gift.

- 1) ***Pray for self-knowledge.*** Pray hard for humility and to be receptive to the insights and observations of others, especially when they point out your failings/defects.
- 2) ***Mistrust yourself.*** Seek advice from others often! Do not presume that you are right in your thinking or opinions. Remind yourself that you have so much to learn.
- 3) ***Try to put yourself in other people's shoes.*** This is so helpful in order to draw yourself away from inordinate self-love and self-centeredness.
- 4) ***Work hard on meekness.*** Endeavor to study Our Lord Jesus Christ and the way He acted in the Gospels. Meditating on the life of Christ is so very crucial for a choleric. Search to see how gentle and selfless Christ was during His whole earthly life. Ask yourself constantly, "How would He handle this situation?"
- 5) ***Work hard on becoming selfless.*** This is not impossible and you must keep Our Meek and Humble Lord and Shepherd of souls in your mind. Remember, He is the model for us Catholics to follow, including choleric, who tend to be rather high-strung, fast-moving leaders. Choleric must learn to be followers of Our Lord who is their Shepherd and Leader.
- 6) ***Work especially on becoming a deeper thinker.*** Look at life as a means to know God better, and this includes diligently thinking things through to be sure you are doing God's Will and not your own.

What can Non-Choleric People do to help a Choleric with Bad Will to Master Himself and to Fight Pride?

Again, our attempt in this section of our current lesson is to list some general suggestions of how to help the choleric. We will get into more specifics in future lessons when we are setting out more details of how the choleric can help himself (with God's assistance, of course!).

- 1) ***Pray for him.*** A choleric of bad will can be heavy-handed and difficult to bear; however, as we pray for the necessary patience in dealing with him, we must not forget to pray for the choleric himself.
- 2). ***Offer up the cross of bearing with the bad-willed choleric.*** In addition to prayer for the conversion of this type of choleric, it is God's Will that we offer up the suffering caused by the choleric for the choleric's salvation. In this way, we can not only bear the cross better, but also we can gain merit from this God-sent cross.
- 3) ***Do not give in to him.*** Choleric pressure can be intense but it is **so** important not to let him get his way when he is trying to bully people.

4) ***Be meek to him.*** Again, as difficult as this may seem to be, it is highly important for him to see Christ in you so he can learn to be more Christ-like.

5) ***Help him when circumstances allow.*** [That is when the bad-willed choleric becomes more receptive.] This is an additional way to show him Christ-like charity by helping the bad-willed choleric to become reasonable. Help him to see his false reasoning.

6) ***Remind yourself that you have to save your own soul.*** As Our Lord tells us to be careful to remove the beam in our own eyes before attempting to remove the mote in our neighbor's eye, we must remain calm and have peace of soul while we work diligently on our salvation. We must remember that helping other souls is primarily God's work, and we are simply His instruments when He allows us to benefit others. Watch and pray for the circumstances to be favorable to help the choleric, for example, when he becomes more receptive.

A Preview ...

In our next lesson we will discuss more ways a choleric can be on the alert for his pride and how to master his pride. In addition to this, we will begin to discuss the associated weaknesses, such as, anger and how a choleric can better understand how this passion works in him. In this way he can use this passion properly and avoid further harm to his soul.



Catholic Candle note: Sedevacantism is wrong and is (material or formal) schism. *Catholic Candle* is not sedevacantist. We recommend a small book explaining the errors of sedevacantism. It is available:

- ❖ Here, for free: <https://catholiccandle.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/sedevacantism-material-or-formal-schism.pdf>
- ❖ Here, at cost (\$4): https://www.amazon.com/Sedevacantism-Material-Quanta-Cura-Press/dp/B08FP5NQR6/ref=sr_1_1

Below is the second of a series of articles which cover specific aspects of the error of sedevacantism. The first article of this series can be found here: *If a pope publicly preaches heresy, does he cease to be pope?*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/09/26/cc-in-brief-sedevacantist-questions/>

Are We Allowed to Decide that Pope Francis Knows He Does Not Qualify as a Catholic?

We previously saw²² that a pope does not cease to be pope simply because he plainly (manifestly²³) and publicly preaches heresy unless he also *knows* that what he teaches is *incompatible with being Catholic* – that is, unless he is a *formal heretic*. But I have a follow-up question:

Q. Don't Pope Francis's words and actions show that he *knows* that what he is teaching is incompatible with being a Catholic?

A. No. Pope Francis's words and actions do not conclusively show that, nor has he ever *told* us that he knows that his beliefs are incompatible with being a Catholic. It is the sin of rash judgment to conclude that he knows of such incompatibility without our having *proof* which allows *no doubt whatsoever*. Let us explain more fully.

If we were to judge someone to be a formal heretic, we would be judging him to have mortal sin on his soul, since formal heresy always brings interior culpability for mortal

²² See the first article of this series, which can be found here: *If a pope publicly preaches heresy, does he cease to be pope?*: <https://catholiccandle.org/2024/09/26/cc-in-brief-sedevacantist-questions/>

²³ Rather than using this traditional Thomistic distinction (as they should), some writers speak of knowing the pope has lost his papal office when his heresy is “manifest”.

The word “manifest” means “readily perceived by the senses and especially by the sense of sight”. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manifest>

Taking those writers' statements to mean that we know a pope has lost his office when his formal heresy is manifest, the statement is true. So, for example, we would know that a pope is not Catholic (and so he is not the head of the Church) if he tells us that he no longer believes what a Catholic must believe presently in order to be Catholic.

But taking those writers' statements to mean that we know a pope has lost his office when his material heresy is manifest, such statements are false, since a pope has not lost his office by ignorantly teaching a material heresy which he believes to be part of the Catholic Faith, *regardless of how public the pope's false opinion (material heresy) is and how widely it has spread*.

Thus, for example, Pope John XXII ignorantly denied part of the Deposit of the Catholic Faith and caused an international uproar by his widely spread, manifest teaching of material heresy. Pope John XXII was a manifest material heretic but remained pope because he was not a formal heretic.

sin. If someone says he is Catholic and we were to judge him to be a formal heretic, we would be concluding that such a person “really knows” that he denies what the Church (God) teaches us that we must believe, but that he won’t admit the “fact”. Making this judgment is the sin of rash judgment. But in order to explain this, we must first see that God made our intellects to be perfected by universal truth and we must distinguish this truth from opinions about individual matters.

Unchangeable Truth, the Good of the Intellect

God wills men to know the unchanging truth. There are innumerable such truths. To take two simple examples: 1) the whole is greater than its own part; and 2) $4 + 4 = 8$.

The truths of our Holy Catholic Faith are unchangeable truths and are especially perfecting for our intellects. Two quick examples of this are: 1) God has no body; and 2) The Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed into heaven body and soul.

Unchangeable truths, most of all the Holy Catholic Faith, perfect our intellects. In other words, such truths make our intellects good. In seeking the truth, we should strive to be completely objective in knowing things exactly as they are.²⁴ For this reason, when determining whether a particular statement is against the Catholic Faith, we should judge the statement with complete objectivity.

By contrast, when we judge the motives or culpability of persons, we must judge in the best possible light, *not* with complete “even-handed objectivity”. This is true even if we were usually wrong about such a person’s culpability.²⁵ Judgments about the culpability

²⁴ Here is how St. Thomas explains this principle:

[W]hen we judge of *things* ... there is question of the good of the person who judges [*viz.*, the good of his intellect], if he judges truly, and of his evil [*viz.*, of his intellect] if he judges falsely, because “the true is the good of the intellect, and the false is its evil”, as stated in [Aristotle’s] *Ethics*, bk.6, ch.2. Wherefore, everyone should strive to make his judgment accord with *things* as they are.

Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 2 (emphasis and bracketed words added).

²⁵ Here is how St. Thomas explains this important point:

It is one thing to judge of things and another to judge of men. ... [W]hen we judge of men, the good and evil in our judgment is considered chiefly on the part of the person about whom judgment is being formed. For he is deemed worthy of honor from the very fact that he is judged to be good, and deserving of contempt if he is judged to be evil. For this reason, we ought, in this kind of judgment, to aim at judging a man good, unless the contrary is *proven*. ... **[We] may happen to be deceived more often than not. Yet it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err**

of our neighbor are singular, contingent facts (in contrast to eternal, unchangeable truth) and such singular facts do not perfect our intellect. It is better to be usually wrong making too-favorable a judgment about a person's culpability than to be wrong *even occasionally*, making too negative a judgment.²⁶ Such an *unproven*, negative judgment about a person's culpability is called "rash judgment".²⁷

For this reason, when determining whether a person is *blamable* for holding an objectively heretical opinion, we should not judge his interior culpability with complete objectivity but rather, in the best possible light (if we judge at all). For, as St. Thomas explains, following St. Augustine: "Our Lord forbids rash judgment, which is about the inward intention or other uncertain things".

If a man says he is a Catholic and says that he believes that a Catholic is permitted to hold the opinions that he does, we should judge him in the best possible light and not assume he "knows" his position is contrary to the Catholic Faith, but that he won't admit the "fact". Nor should we assume that, just because we are unsuccessful in changing his opinion, that this means the man "knows" his position is contrary to what he must believe in order to be Catholic.

Thus, it is good to judge objectively the errors themselves, taught by Pope Francis (or others), because the truth of statements should be judged "evenhandedly" and objectively. But it is rash to judge Pope Francis's culpability with objective "even-handedness" and

less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man, because in the latter case an injury is inflicted, but not in the former. ... And **though we may judge falsely, our judgment in thinking well of another pertains to our goodwill toward him and not to the evil of the intellect, even as neither does it pertain to the intellect's perfection to know the truth of contingent, singular facts in themselves.**

Summa, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1-2 (emphasis added).

²⁶ St. Thomas Aquinas teaches the same thing in his *Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel*. He explains that, when Our Lord says "Judge not", this applies:

insofar as regard those things which are not committed to our judgment. Judgment is the Lord's; **He has committed to us the judgment about exterior things, but He has retained to Himself judgment about interior things.** Do not therefore judge concerning these; For **no one ought to judge about another that he is a bad man: for doubtful things are to be interpreted according to the better part.**

St. Thomas Aquinas, *Lectures on St. Matthew's Gospel*, lectures on chapter 7, §1.

²⁷ *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.2, *Respondeo*.

assume he certainly “knows” that he holds heresy and thus, is not “really” Catholic (and pope).

To the extent we judge Pope Francis’s interior culpability at all, we must judge in the best possible light. Thus, we would judge him to be a material heretic (not a formal heretic) and judge him to still be Catholic (as he professes to be) and to still be the pope (as he professes to be).

Similarly, whatever objective heresies are held by the 1.2 billion people who profess to be Catholic, we should judge their interior culpability in the best possible light (if we judge at all). We should not conclude they are formal heretics and are not “real” Catholics (as the sedevacantists judge them).

It is Rash Judgment to Judge a Person’s Interior Culpability

When **can** we conclude someone is a Formal Heretic?

We could conclude Pope Francis were a formal heretic if he announced that he did not believe what the Church (God) teaches that a Catholic must believe now. We would not be judging him rashly because we would merely believe what he tells us about himself.

Let us take the example of a man committing an objective sin of theft as he leaves a restaurant, taking an umbrella that does not belong to him. This objective theft is a “material theft” only, when he believes that this umbrella belongs to him. Further, in order to avoid rashly judging him, we should not rashly assume that he knew better and so committed the subjective, interior sin of theft. But if this man **tells** us that he took the umbrella **knowing** that it does not belong to him, then our believing him (that he is a thief) is not rash judgment any more than our believing that a man is a formal heretic when he tells us that he knows that what he believes is incompatible with being Catholic.

However, it is rash to judge the interior culpability of Pope Francis (or anyone else) and conclude he is a formal heretic simply because he is a material heretic, *i.e.*, has heretical opinions and refuses to be corrected by traditional Catholics.

Protecting Ourselves from Evil Without Judging Interior Culpability

Of course, even giving the benefit of the doubt and judging that someone is not a formal heretic (if we judge him at all), does not mean we should accept him as our child’s catechism teacher. For our child would be harmed by his errors, however interiorly blameless the man might (hypothetically) be in professing heresy.

Without judging someone’s interior culpability, we should take into account the person’s wrong-doing (which we must judge objectively). For when a man is prone to take other

people’s umbrellas, we should keep a close eye on our own umbrella (when he is present) even if every umbrella that he has ever taken in the past was taken innocently.

Likewise, we should warn people not to read a particular book which contains heresy even if the author of that book teaches these errors innocently. We should be wary and warn others, simply based on the book teaching error, whether the author is interiorly culpable or not.

Judging any person to be interiorly culpable for his sinful act only results in concluding his soul is lower with regards to our own soul, than would be true if he were not culpable. But our rashly judging his interior culpability in this way does not allow us to protect ourselves any better than if we didn’t rashly judge him.

But isn’t it “Obvious” that Pope Francis is a Formal Heretic?

But “rash judgers” would exclaim that it is “obvious” that the man (in the example above) knows he is taking someone else’s umbrella (and is therefore interiorly culpable), because his own umbrella is a different color or because he did not bring his own umbrella with him today. Notice the hidden assumptions within the “rash-judger’s” conclusion. He assumes that the “umbrella thief” remembers which umbrella he brought today. St. Thomas replies about such rash judgment:

*It is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man.*²⁸

Similarly, “rash judgers” say the pope is “obviously” a formal heretic. They say he “must” know he denies Church teaching because he was trained in the Catholic Faith before Vatican II or that his errors have been pointed out to him. Notice the hidden assumptions in the “rash judger’s” conclusion. He assumes that the “heretic” had a good (or at least an average) Catholic education, or that if he had a good education but later fell into heresy, that he knew it was heresy. St. Thomas replies to these “rash judgers” that we must not judge based on such probabilities and assumptions.²⁹

We are not obliged to search for an explanation of how the pope (or anyone else) might not be blamable for whatever objective heresy he holds. The members of the post-Vatican II hierarchy are not stupid, but they received an extremely bad *philosophical* formation, including the principle (which is at the root of modernism) that all truth evolves. By

²⁸ *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

²⁹ *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

contrast, all correct reasoning (and the Catholic Faith) relies on the philosophical principle that there is eternal, unchanging truth.

In his masterful treatment of modernism, Pope St. Pius X explained that modernists profess that all truth changes:

[T]hey have reached that pitch of folly at which they pervert the eternal concept of truth [They say] dogma is not only able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. ... Thus far, Venerable Brethren, We have considered the *Modernist as a philosopher*.³⁰

Thus, because of bad philosophy, modernists think a dogma used to be true (and used to be taught by the Church) but is no longer true or taught by the Church. This explains why the present hierarchy treats the Church's past teaching, not as false at the previous time, but as "obsolete" or no longer binding. For example, Pope Benedict XVI treated the (truly infallible) teachings in the syllabi of Pope Pius IX and Pope St. Pius X as if they were now-outdated and no longer true. He says that:

[T]here are decisions of the Magisterium that cannot be a last word on the matter as such, but are, in a substantial fixation of the problem, above all an expression of pastoral prudence, a kind of provisional disposition. Its nucleus remains valid, but the particulars, which the circumstances of the times have influenced, may need further ramifications. In this regard, one may think of the **declarations of popes in the last century about religious liberty, as well as the anti-Modernist decisions at the beginning of this century, above all, the decisions of the Biblical Commission of the time**. As a cry of alarm in the face of hasty and superficial adaptations, they will remain fully justified. A personage such as Johann Baptist Metz said, for example, that the Church's anti-Modernist decisions render the great service of preserving her from immersion in the liberal-bourgeois world. But in the details of the determinations they contain, they become *obsolete* after having fulfilled their pastoral mission at the proper moment.³¹

Again, we are not obliged to search for an explanation of how post-Vatican II Catholics (including the pope) avoid being formal heretics. It suffices that we judge them (if at all) in the most favorable light. Even if a modernist were absolutely clear in denying a dogma (such as our Lady's Assumption), it would not necessarily mean he was a formal heretic and that he ceased to be Catholic. This is true even assuming that he knows the Church defined the Assumption as a dogma. For a modernist could think the particular dogma had previously been true and Catholics used to be required to believe it, but that

³⁰ *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Pope St. Pius X, September 8, 1907, §§ 13-14 (emphasis added).

³¹ Cardinal Ratzinger, June 27 1990 *L'Osservatore Romano*, p.6 (emphasis added).

this particular truth has changed.

Such changeability of truth is a philosophical error underlying modernism.

However, the unchangeability of truth is not itself a dogma of the Faith although this philosophical principle underlies Church dogma as well as every natural truth. A person who holds a (materially) heretical position does not become a formal heretic unless he knows that the Catholic Church not only used to teach a particular dogma, ***but still teaches it and that we must believe it now***, in order to be Catholic now.

A modernist could think that Catholics of a past age would have been required to be martyred rather than deny a particular dogma even though that same modernist thinks that the “former” dogma is now no longer even true. The false philosophy underlying modernism corrodes the mind but can be one of many reasons why various modernists are material heretics but not formal heretics. For us, though, “it is better to err frequently through thinking well of a wicked man, than to err less frequently through having an evil opinion of a good man”.³²

Summary of this present article

A person could profess heresy but still be Catholic, if he were a material heretic only. We must not judge a man’s interior culpability. Therefore, we must not judge a man to be a formal heretic if he professes to be Catholic and says he believes what a Catholic must believe now, in order to be Catholic now.

If we judge them at all, we must judge in the most favorable light the interior culpability of the pope and the 1.2 billion people who profess to be Catholic. We must not judge they are not “real” Catholics.

Thus, we must judge Pope Francis to be a material heretic, not a formal heretic, and that he is the pope. If the world’s 1.2 billion self-described Catholics hold heresy, we judge them to be material heretics only unless they themselves tell us that they know they don’t believe what is necessary for them to be Catholic.

Further Objection

But how can rash judgment be forbidden when the hierarchy of the Church has excommunicated heretics throughout the history of the Church? That question raises the

³² *Summa*, IIa IIae, Q.60, a.4, ad 1.

important topic of excommunications and judgments made in the “external forum” (as it is called). But that topic must wait for another “day” and a different article.



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