

Ep. 69, 3 ; St. Augustine, *Contra ep. Manichaei*, 4, 5 ; Ep. 53, 1, 2 (List of Roman Bishops).

St. Thomas teaches that the Apostles and their teachings are the secondary foundation of the Church, the primary foundation being Christ Himself. *Expos. symb. a. 9.*

Characteristics of the Church

The four properties of Unity, Sanctity, Catholicity and Apostolicity, since they appear externally and are easily recognisable, are not merely properties of being, but at the same time, outer marks of the true Church of Christ. The Holy Office, under Pius IX (1864), declared : "The true Church of Christ, by virtue of Divine authority, is constituted and is knowable by the four characteristics, which we confess in the Creed as an object of the Faith" (D 1686 ; cf. 1793). In Apologetics we show that of all the Christian confessions the Roman Catholic Church alone possesses at least pre-eminently these four characteristics.

CHAPTER 5

The Necessity of the Church

§ 19. Membership of the Church

1. Teaching of the Church

The members of the Church are those who have validly received the Sacrament of Baptism and who are not separated from the unity of the confession of the Faith, and from the unity of the lawful communion of the Church. (*Sent. certa.*)

In the Encyclical "Mystici Corporis," Pius XII declared : "Only those are to be accounted really members of the Church who have been regenerated in the waters of Baptism and profess the true faith, and have not cut themselves off from the structure of the Body by their own unhappy act or been severed therefrom, for very grave crimes, by the legitimate authority (D 2286).

According to this declaration three conditions are to be demanded for membership of the Church : a) The valid reception of the Sacrament of Baptism. b) The profession of the true Faith. c) Participation in the Communion of the Church. By the fulfilment of these three conditions one subjects oneself to the threefold office of the Church, the sacerdotal office (Baptism), the teaching office (Confession of Faith), and the pastoral office (obedience to the Church authority).

As the three powers perpetuated in these offices, the power of consecration, the power of teaching and the power of government, constitute the unity and the visibility of the Church, subjection to each and all of these powers is

a condition for membership of the Church. On reception of Baptism, the seal of Jesus Christ, the Character of Baptism, is imprinted. This effects the incorporation in the Body of Christ, and confers the capacity and right to participate in the Christian cult. Baptism is, therefore, the real cause of our incorporation into the Church. The Confession of the true Faith and the adherence to the communion of the Church are for adults subjective conditions for the achievement and the unhindered perpetuation of their membership of the Church which is initiated by Baptism. Those children validly baptised outside the Church are members of the Church unless and until after reaching the use of reason, they voluntarily separate themselves from the Confession of the Faith or from the communion of the Church.

The Decretum pro Armenis of Eugene IV (1439), says of Baptism: "Through it we are made members of Christ and compacted into the body of the Church" (per ipsum membra Christi ac de corpore effimur Ecclesiae). D 696. The Council of Trent declared: "The Church exercises jurisdiction over nobody who has not previously entered the Church through the gates of Baptism" (D 895). Cf. D 324, 869; CIC 87.

2. Proof

According to the teaching of Christ, the reception of Baptism is an indispensable condition for entry into the Kingdom of God (John 3, 5), and for the attaining of eternal salvation (Mk. 16, 16). St. Peter demands penance and Baptism from all who accept the message of Christ. Thus, from the very beginning, Baptism was the gate through which men entered the Church. Acts 2, 41: "They therefore that received His word were baptised: and there were added in that day about three thousand souls." Cf. Acts 8, 12 et seq. 38; 9, 18; 10, 48; 16, 15. 33; 18, 8; 19, 5. According to the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul, all Jews and pagans, freemen and slaves, are bound together in one body, namely the Body of Christ. 1 Cor. 12, 13; Gal. 3, 27 et seq. In the case of an adult, the acceptance of the message of Faith must precede the reception of Baptism. Mk. 16, 16: "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." The mandate of Baptism, Mt. 28, 19, indirectly demands subjection to the threefold apostolic office.

That those who dissociate themselves from the Faith and from the communion of the Church, cease to be members of the Church, is the general conviction of Tradition. Already St. Paul commands that "a heretic," after being corrected once or twice is to be avoided. (Tit. 3, 10). Tertullian comments: "The heretics have no share in our doctrine and the withdrawal from the communion testifies that in any case they are without" (De bapt. 15.) In his opinion they are no longer even Christians, as they have not received from Christ the teachings to which they at their own choice adhered (De praecsr. 37). According to St. Cyprian, only those remaining in the House of God form the Church, while heretics and schismatics are outside the Church (Ep. 59, 7). The controversy on the Baptism of heretics revolved itself into the question whether the heretics, as being outside the Church, could validly administer Baptism. St. Augustine compares the heretic to a limb "which has been cut off from the body" (Sermo 267, 4, 4). In the interpretation of the Creed, he says: "Neither heretics nor schismatics belong to the Catholic Church" (De fide et symbolo, 10, 21).

3. Inference

Among the members of the Church are not to be counted :

a) The unbaptised. Cf. 1 Cor. 5, 12 : " What have I to do to judge them that are without (*qui foris sunt*) ? " The so-called Baptism by blood and Baptism of desire, it is true, replace Sacramental Baptism in so far as the communication of grace is concerned, but do not effect incorporation into the Church, as they do not bestow the sacramental character by which a person becomes attached formally to the Church.

In spite of the opinion of Suarez, catechumens are not to be counted among the members of the Church. Even if they have the desire (*votum*) to belong to the Church, they are not really (*actu*) accepted into it. The Church claims no jurisdiction over them (D 895). The Fathers draw a sharp line of separation between catechumens and " the faithful." Cf. Tertullian, *De praescr.* 41 ; St. Augustine, *In Ioan. tr.* 44, 2.

b) Open apostates and heretics. Public heretics, even those who err in good faith (material heretics), do not belong to the body of the Church, that is to the legal commonwealth of the Church. However, this does not prevent them from belonging spiritually to the Church by their desire to belong to the Church (*votum Ecclesiae*) and through this, achieving justification and salvation.

According to the more probable opinion, represented by St. Bellarmine and most modern theologians (Palmieri, Billot, Straub, Pesch) against Suarez, Franzelin, and others, secret apostates and heretics remain members of the Church, because the loss of membership of the Church, just as much as its acquisition, on account of the visibility of the Church, can only result from external legally ascertainable facts.

c) Schismatics, as well as those who, in good faith, fundamentally reject the Church authority, or who dissociate themselves from the commonwealth of the faithful subject to her. Schismatics in good faith (material) like heretics in good faith, can, by a desire to belong to the Church (*votum Ecclesiae*), belong spiritually to the Church, and through this achieve justification and salvation.

d) *Excommunicati vitandi* (CIC 2258). *Excommunicati tolerati*, according to the opinion almost generally held today, which is confirmed by CIC 2266, remain members of the Church, even after the promulgation of the juridical judgment and even if they are deprived of many spiritual benefits. The view adopted by individual theologians (Suarez, Dieckmann) that *excommunicati vitandi* also remain members of the Church, is not compatible with the teaching of the Encyclical " *Mystici Corporis*," for the latter speaks expressly of such who, for very grave crimes, have been severed by the legitimate authority from the body of the Church. By these, in consonance with the almost universal teaching of the theologians, *excommunicati vitandi*, and only these, are to be understood.

Although public apostates and heretics, schismatics and *excommunicati vitandi* are outside the legal organisation of the Church, still their relationship to the Church is essentially different from that of the unbaptised.

As the baptismal character which effects incorporation in the Church is indestructible, the baptised person, in spite of his ceasing to be a member of the Church, cannot cut himself off so completely from the Church, that every bond with the Church is dissolved. The obligations arising from the reception of Baptism remain, even when the use of the rights connected with it are withdrawn by way of punishment. Thus the Church claims jurisdiction over baptised persons who are separated from her.