

OUR CATHOLIC CATECHISM: PART II

Authentic Apostolic Teaching on Faith and Truth

The following is Part II of a speech given by Father Phillipson at the Our Lady's Army of Advocates conference in Boston, Massachusetts. He gives us an in-depth explanation of the importance of a sound Catholic catechism which is consistent and true to the unchanging Apostolic teachings of the Church. His full speech is available on CD and DVD from The Fatima Center. See [page 63](#) to order

by Father David Phillipson

A lot of people are trying to attempt to form their moral Catholic life without being rooted in the truth. That is an error in and of itself! First, the truth is needed. First, the mind needs to be converted to the truth and then a person will begin to act in the truth. Many people are trying to act somewhat in a Catholic way without first changing their minds. That's the first place that change needs to occur.

The Catechism is the first recourse to conversion and to acting properly in a moral and Catholic way. The devil is doing everything he can to separate the faithful from the Shepherd, the Shepherd of Truth. However, the Creed, as a Symbol, is the solution to what the devil is trying to do. The Creed does not

separate us from Christ, it brings together the faithful and Christ, because they both have the half of the coin that goes together in the original meaning of what a symbol is.

Not only does the Symbol of the Creed attach us to God, it also brings us in communion with one another. We all hold the same half coin because we all hold the same Faith. Our Faith should be one, Catholic, apostolic and holy. That's a Catechism question, by the way – “What are the four marks of the Church?”

The four marks of the Church are: the Church is “one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic.” These marks should characterize our Faith as well. It needs to be apostolic; it needs to come from the Apostles. Therefore, when we

read a catechism and meditate and reflect on a good catechism, we are reflecting on the apostolic teaching. This apostolic teaching is one, and the same. Whether it was taught two thousand years ago, or whether it's authentically taught today, *it's the same*.

So, as Catholics, we are all holding the same coin. Because our faith is Catholic, it is universal – we all believe the same thing throughout the world and throughout time. We recognize each other as Catholic because we are all holding the same symbol. That's important: we should be united in Faith.

Diversity in the Faith Is Not Catholic.

The idea that Catholics can believe different things is a novelty! Diversity in the Faith is not Catholic. It's not apostolic. There is an insistence in the Creed that we all believe the same thing; we all hold the same coin by adhering to the Creed and understanding it the way the Church teaches – not the way we *“think”* it should be understood, not the way you *“feel”* it should be understood: “Well, I feel this way about that Article of the Faith.” You know, that doesn't cut the mustard.

It's how the Church teaches it; how the Church understands this Article of Faith, that we should receive it as coming from God – as the Church teaches.

Therefore, our Faith should be one – it should be the same. This is primarily what unites us to one another, and to God. And because it truly unites us to God, the faith is holy.

Before I get into the Creed itself, I'd like to dovetail a little bit regarding something that John Vennari said this morning, about a definition of Faith. This is a very similar definition, that is from the *Summa Theologicae* of Saint Thomas Aquinas.

I just want to read this to bring out one or two particular points about what is entailed in the faith. This comes from the *Catholic Encyclopedia* of 1913; the old Catholic encyclopedia. This is a definition quoted from the *Summa Theologicae* of Saint Thomas Aquinas. A definition of Faith: “The act of the intellect assenting to a Divine Truth owing to the movement of the will, which is itself moved by the grace of God.”

That's quite a lot, and I'm only going to touch upon a couple of things here. First of all, it's an act of the intellect – assenting to Divine Truth – owing to the



Father David Phillipson, giving his Apostolic teaching on Faith and Truth.

movement of the will – which is itself moved by the grace of God. Clearly, when we’re making an act of faith, a *supernatural* act of faith, grace is required.

We might be able to reason – I would imagine most adults would be able to figure this out – that there is one God. The proofs of St. Thomas Aquinas bear this out. Reason alone can attain to the *fact*: there is one God. That is not an act of faith: believing it on rational grounds is not an act of faith.

When I believe there is one God, because God revealed there is only one God, as the Church teaches, then I am making an

act of faith in the God who has revealed it. That requires grace to elevate my intellect and my will to assent or consent to that Truth, for the reason that God revealed it: not because I can figure it out.

For example, if I think it makes sense that Christ founded a Church and we’d all come together occasionally for social purposes and have a good time, on Sundays and so forth. That is a rational approach to the understanding of the Church. But understanding the Catholic Church as a *Divine institution* – *because God has revealed it to be such* – requires the assistance of

grace. A supernatural act will always require grace. It's not an act based merely on reason alone.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* also mentions, in discussing what an act of faith is, that it has an objective and subjective mode. I've been speaking about the faith mostly in an objective mode – that is a body of Truths that anybody can take up in a book and read. These are the objective body of Truths, a deposit of Faith. That's the object.

There is a subjective dimension to Faith as well. It was the subjective side of the faith which generally used to be the only problem before the Council – because what used to happen is pretty much all the priests, bishops, and popes were already on the same page with the deposit of Faith.

The only problem they may have had is how clear they were in explaining this or that point of the faith. Usually the only problem back then was the fact that some people might have had a difficult time assenting: because they couldn't understand the faith, or they had a hard time getting motivated to make an act of faith.

The difficulty then would have been on the subjective side: on

our side. Having a problem on the subjective side might sound like: "I have a hard time believing that, I need help. I need assistance. I need grace." Prayer would be needed in order to arrive at an act of faith in the truths that the Church teaches.

Unfortunately, what's happened today is that there has been so much emphasis on the subjective dimension – or the difficulties of coming to an act of faith – that the objective bodies of Truth have completely been obliterated.

Today you might find people in the hierarchy saying: "Well, you know, it doesn't really matter *what* you believe, so long as you believe it sincerely. So long as you believe with all your heart, that's what's really important. It doesn't really matter what you believe, it's just whether what you do believe is believed from your heart, if you really feel it."

There are legitimately two poles, and they both have to come together. We want to make sure that when we read the Catechism and accept the faith, it's not just merely a head-game. It's not just: "Oh yeah, God exists somewhere out there. Yes, I can figure out that there is a God." No, that is not an act of faith.

That's not the will *assenting* to the Truth because God has revealed it.

Rather, when I believe in God – and this is bringing us right back to the first article of the Creed – when I believe in God, I don't just believe that God *exists*, I believe through Him and with Him because I'm being assisted by grace. And in order to be assisted by grace, I need to be in Him.

Remember St. Paul said, we can't say that Jesus is Lord except *in* the Holy Spirit. We can't really say, "Jesus is Lord" and mean it with our minds and our hearts – obviously we can say that verbally off the top of our heads – but we can't say that and mean it without the assistance of the grace of the Holy Ghost.

There Are Two Sides Subjective and Objective

So there are the two sides: the subjective and the objective sides. We need both.

First and foremost, when we're talking about the Faith, we need to make sure that we're talking about a body of truths that the Church has always and everywhere taught.

Secondly, the faith requires that we make our own personal act of assenting to those truths

which the Church teaches. That's part of what an act of faith is, right? A catechism question: "What is an act of faith?" "**I believe** these and all the truths which the Catholic Church teaches because Thou hast taught them: You who can neither deceive nor be deceived." These truths are the truths found in the Catechism. These truths God has revealed. These truths are to be believed by us because the God who reveals them can't lie and can't be deceived.

Now I'm going to take a look at the Apostles Creed. Note again that there are twelve Articles, and we will maybe finish the first Article.

Just to provide a way of introduction, I will read the twelve Articles, so you can hear them, Article by Article for the sake of knowing there are twelve, and what those twelve are. Also, for knowing that each of these Articles need to be adhered to with a divine act of faith.

The first Article is the only Article about God the Father. The twelve Articles are divided into three: Father, Son and Holy Ghost. God the Father only gets one Article. Most of the Articles are about the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

Article 1: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth.

Article 2: regards the Son – and [I believe] in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord.

Article 3: Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary.

Article 4: suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell.

Article 5: On the third day He rose again from the dead.

Article 6: He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

Article 7: From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.

So we've just heard Articles 2 to 7 – all about the Son. The remaining 5 Articles will be about the Holy Ghost.

Article 8: I believe in the Holy Ghost.

Article 9: [I believe in] the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints – because the Holy Ghost is the soul of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is a Divine institution, regardless of how badly her Ministers perform their duties: in what they say, and how they act. It is nevertheless a Divine

institution. The Holy Ghost is the life-force of the Catholic Church.

Article 10: the forgiveness of sins.

Article 11: The resurrection of the body.

Article 12: and life everlasting, Amen.

Those are the Twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed. Now we're going to look at the First Article of the Apostles Creed. This is the teaching of the Catholic Church. First of all, it's *I believe*. I. I'm going to spend a bit of time on just that first word, "I".

In the beginning, when the Church was compiling her Creeds, most of the time the Creed began with the way that most of you are probably familiar with – the Creed beginning with "We". "We believe." Both are true.

It's a personal act – I believe – and that must be the case, for it to be salvific. I cannot just be part of the amorphous blob or mass of people who go along just to get along. No, I must make a personal act in my own mind, in my heart and in my will. I must assent to these truths myself.

But – I like this quote, I know it has bad connotations, nevertheless – "it takes a village



Matt Gaspers, speaking about Our Lady and Islam.

to raise a child”, and it takes a Church to bring forth the faith in an individual. It takes a *body of people*. Therefore, my personal act of belief when I say ‘I believe’ – we’re not Protestants, we’re not independent faith units here. We are a ‘body’. That ‘*body*’ is the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ: we belong as members to a head.

So when I say “I believe”, it is joined with other I’s, so it’s very proper to say “we believe”. Because ‘I’ didn’t make this Faith up. I didn’t come up with these truths on my own; they were given to me. I received them. I made them my own, but I didn’t get them from my own self. I didn’t get them welling-

up from the depths of my own being – as a modernist would have it – rather I got it from the public Divine revelation of the Catholic Church.

Therefore, it is just as true to say “we believe” as it is to say “I believe”; because we believe the same thing as Catholics. In the current form of the Apostles Creed we say “I” believe, but again in the beginning of the Church’s formulations of the Creed, very often they began with “We” believe: both are true.

So we’ve just covered the word “I”.

The word “believe” will be covered in Part III, next issue. **FC**