

Faith Crucial – I

October 7, 2017

The great lesson taught by Archbishop Lefebvre (1905–1991) to Catholics who had ears to hear was that the Faith is higher than obedience. The sad lesson we have learned since then is that obedience keeps on being rated higher than the Faith. These “Comments,” driven continually by today’s confusion to get back to basics, have often attempted to explain why the Faith must come first. One more attempt from a slightly different angle will not be one too many.

Every single human being alive on earth – and not just the Catholics! – has an immortal soul without which he would not be alive. This soul was not mass-produced but was created individually by God, out of nothing, for it to be happy with Him in Heaven for ever. It is the most important part of human nature, so it belongs to the natural order and is not by itself supernatural, but it will get to God’s supernatural Heaven if it makes the right use of its natural faculty of free-will to co-operate with God’s supernatural grace. His grace will not be lacking, in whatever form God chooses to offer it, because God wants every soul to get to Heaven (I Tim. II, 4). The question then becomes, what human co-operation is needed – and not just from Catholics – to get to Heaven?

Faith is undoubtedly the basis of that co-operation. The Council of Trent calls faith “the beginning of salvation,” and God’s own Word says that “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. XI, 6). Many times in the Gospels when Our Lord works a miracle, he says that it is the reward of the “faith” of those concerned, for example Mt. XV, 28 (cure of the Canaanite woman), Mk.X, 52 (sight for a blind man), Lk.VII, 50 (conversion of Mary Magdalene), and so on. In what does this “faith” consist, and why is it so precious to God, and therefore to souls?

Let us immediately distinguish two realities, different but connected: the subjective quality of faith in the soul, by which someone supernaturally believes, and the objective body of supernatural realities, objects of the Catholic Faith, in which a Catholic believes. To distinguish them, we might spell the first with a small "f" and the second with a capital "F." That they are distinct is obvious: a man can lose his (subjective) faith without the least change taking place in the (objective) Faith.

Two things then become clear. Firstly, the faith which saves a soul is that subjective quality of the person which Our Lord so praises and rewards in the Gospels. He is not praising or rewarding an objective body of truths. On the other hand, secondly, the subjective quality of faith is determined or specified by the objective Faith. I am not saved, I do not deserve to be praised or rewarded, by my believing in any silly nonsense. The Canaanite woman did not believe in any silliness, she certainly believed in the goodness and some divine power of Our Lord. What she believed in was both supernatural, or above the merely natural powers of her mind to grasp, and true. And most likely, as soon as the Apostles began to establish soon after Our Lord's ascension to Heaven the basic truths that a follower of Our Lord must believe in, she was happy to have her subjective faith focused and specified or determined by the then emerging objective Faith.

In other words the objective Faith focuses that subjective faith without which no soul is saved. Therefore churchmen who tamper with the objective Faith are placing in peril the eternal salvation of souls. If then subjective faith is priceless, so is the objective Faith. It must come first.

Kyrie eleison.