



Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem ©  
\* Knights of Malta \*

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## Chancellor's Update

### Mission Statement

Before Jesus ascended into heaven He told His Apostles how He wanted them to spread His kingdom. *You shall be witnesses for me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and even to the very ends of the earth* (Acts 1 v. 8). Saint Matthew reports the same conversation as *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you* (Matthew 28 v. 19-20). On the same topic Saint Mark writes, *Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned* (Mark 16 v. 15-16). Saint Luke reports, *Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. And you yourselves are witnesses of these things* (Luke 24 v. 47-48).

Looking back over the almost two thousand years since Jesus commissioned His Apostles to spread the Gospel, it is obvious that, theoretically at least and due to the technology of the last century, the Gospel and the name of Jesus have been spread to the very ends of the earth. Yet, the question remains, how successful have these efforts been in making disciples in all nations and converting the creatures (Creature means "man" per St. Gregory)? Of the more than six billion people on earth today fairly reliable estimates are that 32% are Christian, 21% are Muslim, 13% are Hindu, 6% are Buddhist, 12% are tribal or Chinese ethnic, and 16% are either agnostic, non-religious, atheist or anti-religious. Based on Jesus' own words, how are the earth's inhabitants faring in regard to their eternal salvation?

**He who believes and is baptized** shall be saved. Saint Gregory the Great admonishes us, "On the day of our baptism we promised to renounce all the works and pomps of our ancient enemy. So then let each one of you turn the eyes of his mind to the examination of himself; and should he find that he observes after his baptism what he promised before baptism he may rejoice in the certainty that he truly believes."

Saint James advises the believers, *Religion pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to give aid to orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world* (James 1 v. 27).

Father Bainvel writes, "Faith by itself and alone cannot and does not suffice; it must, to be effective, be accompanied by sorrow for sin together with charity and good works." He continues that the Apostles and the early Christians stressed the new society of salvation, the Church, based on faith in Jesus Christ. Saint Peter and the early Christians likened themselves in the Church to Noe and his family safely in the ark, while the rest of the human race was doomed in the great cataclysm (J. Bainvel, *Is There Salvation Outside the Catholic Church?*, B. Herder Book Company, 1920, St. Louis, pp. 9-11).

**He who believes and is not baptized?** St. Thomas Aquinas writes, "No man obtains eternal life unless he be free from all guilt and debt of punishment." If a man suffers martyrdom before receiving Baptism he receives all the sacramental virtue of Baptism because of his desire to receive the sacrament (Summa Theologica, Part III, Q. 68, Art. 2). He also writes, "Children while in the mother's womb have not yet come forth into the world to live among other men. Consequently they cannot be subject to the action of man, so as to receive the sacrament, at the hands of man, unto salvation. They can, however, be subject to the action of God, in whose sight they live, so as, by a kind of privilege, to receive the

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grace of sanctification; as was the case with those who were sanctified in the womb (Summa Theologica, Part III, Q. 68, Art. 11).”

In an encyclical, *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, written in 1863 Pope Pius IX advises, “We all know that those who are afflicted with invincible ignorance with regard to our holy religion, if they carefully keep the precepts of the **natural law** that have been written by God in the hearts of all men, if they are prepared to obey God, and if they lead a virtuous and dutiful life, can attain eternal life by the power of divine light and grace. For God who reads comprehensively in every detail the minds and souls, the thoughts and habits of all men, will not permit, in accordance with his infinite goodness and mercy, anyone who is not guilty of a voluntary fault to suffer eternal punishment.”

Although God ordained that the Church should be the unique society of salvation, there are some who are in union with the Church, not in act (by baptism), but in desire. If actual union with the Church is impossible, under the divine influence the soul unites its will to the divine will. It desires all that God wills and earnestly seeks to fulfill all that He has ordained by salvation. So, such souls have an invisible affiliation with the Church. What counts most with God is the moral and religious order. Although it may be said that there have been souls who have gained salvation without being members of the visible Church, these are not saved except by the Church and in so far as they are her members (Bainvel, *ibid.*, pp.55-62).

**He who does not believe, but is baptized**, shall be condemned. Again Saint Gregory the Great speaks. “If he is far from fulfilling what he promised, if he has fallen back into evil doing, returned to seeking the delights of this world, let us then see whether he knows how to grieve that he has wandered from the right path.” Saint Paul says, *They profess that they know God; but in their works they deny him* (Tit. 1 v. 16). Saint John says, *He who saith that he knoweth God, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him* (1 John 2 v.4). Saint James in his Epistle admonishes, *If anyone thinks himself to be religious, not restraining his tongue but deceiving his own heart, that man’s religion is vain* (James 1 v. 26).

“The Church has never ceased to profess that no one is damned except through his own fault and that God includes among His children...souls who belong to Him and live His life, without any visible affiliation with her and without any reception of the divine life through the ordinary channels of the Gospel preaching and the sacraments (Bainvel, *ibid.*, p. 66).”

**He who does not believe and is not baptized** shall be condemned. “No one is saved who dies in enmity with God; no one is saved who dies in unrepented personal sin; no one is saved without faith (Bainvel, *ibid.*, p. 6).”

## Conclusion

In his allocution, *Singulari Quadam*, of Dec. 9, 1854, Pope Pius IX urges us, “As charity demands, let us pray continually for the conversion to Christ of all nations everywhere. Let us devote ourselves to the salvation of all men, as far as we can, for the hand of the Lord is not shortened. The gifts of heavenly grace will assuredly not be denied to those who sincerely want and pray for refreshment by the divine light.”

Let us pray further that the Holy Spirit, who brought life to the early Church, inspire people to become aware of the **natural law**, so that the unbaptized may more easily attain eternal salvation, and that the baptized may more easily practice the will of God.

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