

After the Heart of Jesus ...

*For there is no distinction;
all have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God.
They are justified freely by his grace
through the redemption in Christ Jesus,
whom God set forth as an expiation,
through faith, by his blood.
For we consider that a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law.
- Romans 3:22-25,28*



Sometimes our protestant friends will point to this section of Paul's letter to the Romans as evidence that we are saved by faith alone. This was a key issue during the Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s. A familiar term regarding salvation was "sola fide," Latin for "by faith alone." The reformers, at that time, accused the Catholic Church of departing from the "simple purity of the Gospel" of Jesus Christ. They stated it was faith alone, without works of any kind, that brought a believer to eternal life.

This remains a key issue for some today because it strikes at the very heart of our belief in eternal life. Roman Catholicism teaches that we are not saved by faith alone. The Catholic Church also teaches that we do not "earn" our salvation through works. So how do we reconcile these two realities – faith and works?

All who claim the title "Christian" will be able to agree on the following two truths: salvation is by grace alone and salvation is through Christ alone. These biblical facts are the foundation of the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding salvation. The Bible tells us we must have faith in order to be saved. Yet is faith nothing more than believing and trusting? Faith also involves assent to God's truth, obedience to Him, and it must be working in love. Further, Paul speaks of faith as a life-long process, never as a one-time experience. He tells us our faith is living and can go through many stages. It never stays permanently fixed after a single conversion experience no matter how genuine or sincere.

Do our works mean anything? According to Jesus they do. In the parable of the Last Judgment, the people rewarded and punished are done so by their actions. His greatest commands are about loving, not believing. In addition, the apostle James writes in his epistle: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,' but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:14-17)

Salvation is an inheritance, freely given to anyone who becomes a child of God, so long as they remain that way. One cannot earn it but one can lose the free gift given from the Father. Our actions may both issue forth from a life of faith and open us further to grow in grace and faith.

I am very excited that the Faith Network will begin its regular presence in the Narthex next week. The Faith Network is one of the wonderful results of the Living Faith Core Team and will help us grow in our understanding of faith and in putting our faith into action through parish ministries. Look for helpful resources around the Faith Network desk beginning next week. **Mike Butz, Don Kaberline, Donna Burke, Maureen Terrazas, and Judy McGuire** have been instrumental in seeing this new ministry start. I am also grateful that **JoAnne McElroy** has agreed to chair the steering committee to review and renew our initiatives for Adult Faith Formation.

The following groups are currently looking for volunteers or new members: the Stewardship Committee, Parish Web-site Team, and the Faith Network. Please see articles in this week's bulletin or call the parish office for more details.

Please make the following notes to yourself this summer:

Slow down and enjoy the opportunities to experience God in nature and through recreation.

Don't take a vacation from God. (God never takes a vacation from us.)

Make sure offerings for weekends away are included in collections either before leaving or upon return. (Your parish counts on the regularly weekly generosity of all parishioners. E-contributions make this very easy!)

As we put our faith into action, may we know that we live ...

After the Heart of Jesus!

Father John