

# ROMAN CATHOLICISM

## In the Light of Scripture

by

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### CHAPTER FOURTEEN

#### WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION

(EXTRA MERIT)

ACCORDING TO ROMAN CATHOLIC TEACHING it is possible for devout souls not only to make full satisfaction in this life for all the venial sins they have committed, but also to expiate the temporal punishment of mortal sins, the guilt of which has been absolved by confession and absolution, but for which full satisfaction has to be made to the justice of God. This is done by means of acts of mortification, fastings, prayers, and deeds of merit. These deeds of merit may be either material or spiritual.

Material acts of merit include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and those in prison, providing lodging for wayfarers, redeeming captives, and burying the dead.

The spiritual acts are instructing the ignorant, exhorting those who have knowledge, comforting the sorrowful, rebuking those who do wrong, patiently enduring insult, forgiving human frailties, and praying for the living and the dead.

Deeds of merit not only benefit the recipients, but also benefit the givers, for by them they accumulate merit which serves to counterbalance and cover their faults and, if sufficient, give complete deliverance from the pains of purgatory hereafter.

More than this, having accomplished this much, the order of good may with zeal and perseverance go on to works of supererogation, to store merit beyond his own personal needs, which will be transferred to what is called the "Treasury of the Church" or the "Treasury of Merit."

This Treasury, in which also is stored the merits of Christ in the offering of the mass, and of Mary, the mother of our Lord, and the merit of the saints, is under the authority of the pope as the Vicar of Christ, who can dispense its wealth at his discretion for the benefit of souls yet on earth or already in purgatory. Masses and prayers for the dead can be said "with intention" for such and such a person who has already died, and avail to give him relief. Thus in Roman Catholic churches one constantly sees requests for prayer for the repose of so-and-so, or notices of masses to be said for such-and-such a one.

Without exception, all that has been thus set forth has no shadow of foundation in the Holy Scriptures, which are our one final authority. The doctrine of the Mass must be left for another chapter, but with regard to the "Treasury of the Church" and all that appertains to it, something must be said.

The merit of the Lord Jesus, by itself, is so full and abundant that it is amply sufficient to meet the needs of all men, past, present, and future.

**And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world** (I John 2:2).

**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world** (John 1:29).

The Lord's merit, in all its fullness, is directly available to every seeking soul, in response to faith, independently of anything either pope or priest can do.

**Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power** (Colossians 2:8-10).

The merits of Jesus, His fullness and redemption, being so abundantly sufficient and available to all seekers, it is quite unnecessary to ask for the prayers either of Mary or the saints, and to do so is to cast doubt on the willingness and sufficiency of Christ Himself.

**For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need** (Hebrews 4:15, 16).

Neither Mary, the mother of our Lord, nor any of the saints have any merit of their own, either for themselves or for us.

**We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away** (Isaiah 64:6).

If a man, after his salvation by faith in the Saviour, faithfully serves God, he will unfailingly receive a reward.

**Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward** (Matthew 10:42).

**God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister** (Hebrews 6:10).

**If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward** (I Corinthians 3:14).

**I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing** (II Timothy 4:7, 8).

The reward spoken of in these passages proceeds from the grace of God alone, for "**when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do**" (Luke 17:10).

There is no possibility of merit in our relationship with God, still less of added-merit. Our reward, even as our salvation, is all of grace. These rewards are received personally, and cannot be passed on to others. Still less are they at the disposal of pope or priest.

Jesus, the name to sinners dear,  
The name to sinners given;  
It scatters all my guilty fear,  
And turns my Hell to Heaven.

His only righteousness I show,  
His saving truth proclaim;  
'Tis all my business here below  
To cry, Behold the Lamb!

**~ end of chapter 14 ~**

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