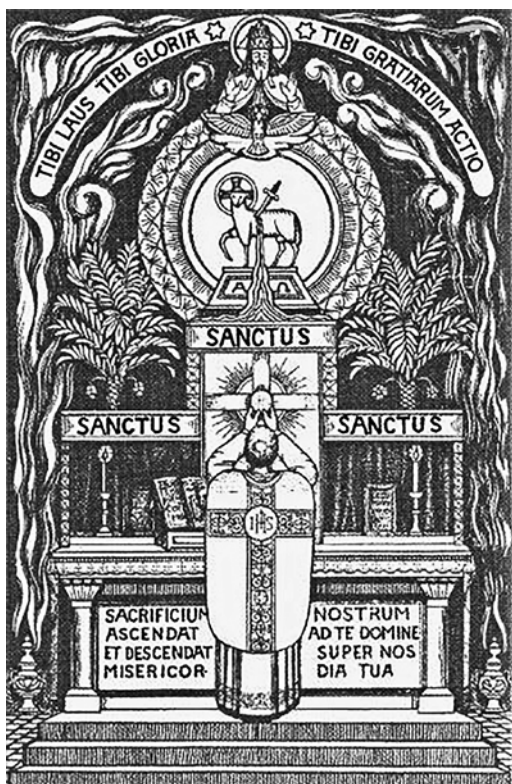


# WHY I AM STILL A CATHOLIC FROM BORN CATHOLIC TO COMMITTED CATHOLIC

by

Stephen D. Schwarz



*Why I Am Still a Catholic*  
*From Born Catholic to Committed Catholic*  
*by Stephen D. Schwarz*

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**ABOUT THE  
“WHY I AM STILL A CATHOLIC”  
SERIES OF BOOKLETS**

**by Ronda Chervin, Ph.D., Editor**



In the year 2016 I read somewhere that 60% of Catholics have left the Church or only attend occasionally!

I was shocked! Myself a convert from an atheist but Jewish background, Jesus, manifested and coming to me in the Catholic Church is the greatest joy in my life...from time into eternity!

How could it be that so many Catholics have lost faith in a church that offers so much?

I believe it was the Holy Spirit that suggested to me a remedy.

Suppose the parish racks had little booklets written by strong believers, such as myself, describing why we are still Catholics in spite of many of the same experiences which have alienated other Catholics! Such a series of booklets could attract wavering Catholics or be given by strong Catholics to family and friends who have left us. In this way our series was born.

So, now I address all wavering Catholics, and all those who have left the Catholic faith, and beg you to give us one more chance. Could it hurt to say a little prayer, such as this?

*Jesus, if you are really the Son of God, and you want me to receive fullness of grace through the Word and Sacraments in the Catholic Church, open me to the witness of the writers of these booklets. As they tell me why they are still Catholics, please tell me why I should still be a Catholic!*



# BIOGRAPHY



## **Stephen Schwarz**

was born in Germany just before Hitler seized power in January 1933. His life story, saved from the Nazis is recounted below, pages 39-42. A graduate of Fordham and Harvard, he was Professor of Philosophy, University of Rhode Island, 1963-2007.

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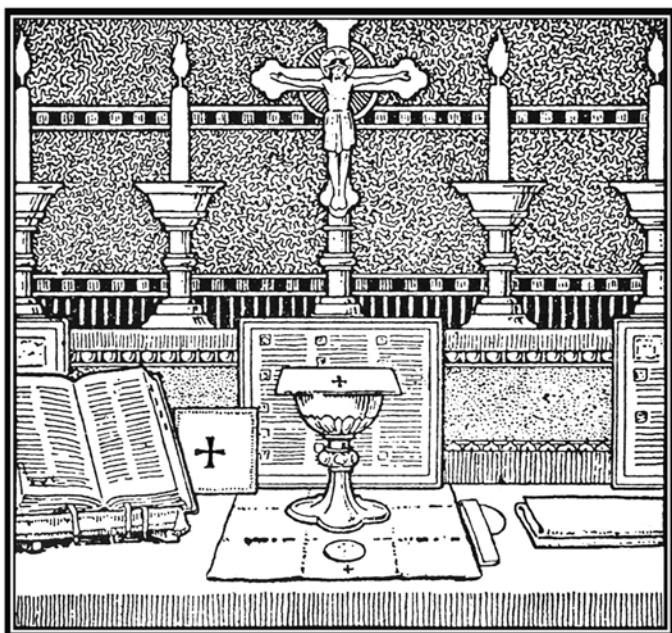
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# PART ONE: MAKING THE CATHOLIC FAITH MY OWN



## I Am a Catholic

**W***hy am I still a Catholic?* Because I *am* a Catholic; I made that commitment. Some background is helpful here. I was born into a deeply religious family, the only child of Leni and Balduin Schwarz (1897-1994 and 1902-1993). I was immersed in the Catholic Faith as a child. For my father and mother the love of Christ, following Christ, living their Catholic Faith was the center and the most important part of their lives. I naturally received the fruits of this family life at every moment of my early childhood. My parents were Oblates of the Benedictine Order and prayed Vespers every day. I joined them, and this practice became part of my life as well.



I had received my faith from my parents. But at a very early age, around 5, I came to the important realization that I had to make this faith my own. It was not the kind of thing I could simply take over from other persons, even such wonderful loving persons as my mother and my father. Faith is essentially a commitment, and a commitment is not a true commitment unless it is one's own commitment. Central to

this is the all-important truth question. Faith is or includes a commitment to certain propositions as true. “I believe in God the Father Almighty.” To believe something is to hold it as being true, as corresponding to reality, to what is really the case. Is it true? Is the content of the Catholic Faith true? Is this how it really is? My father and mother firmly believed it is the truth. But many other people, including many other wonderful loving people didn’t think it was true. Many other wonderful loving parents didn’t think it was true. What if I had been born into a non-catholic family? Would I have simply adopted their worldview? Surely I should not have done that; I should have made my own commitment. On questions as deeply important and basic to one’s worldview each person must make his or her own commitment. Or at least this is what I believed even if only vaguely and dimly as a small child. And it is what I now believe, far more explicitly and clearly as an adult.

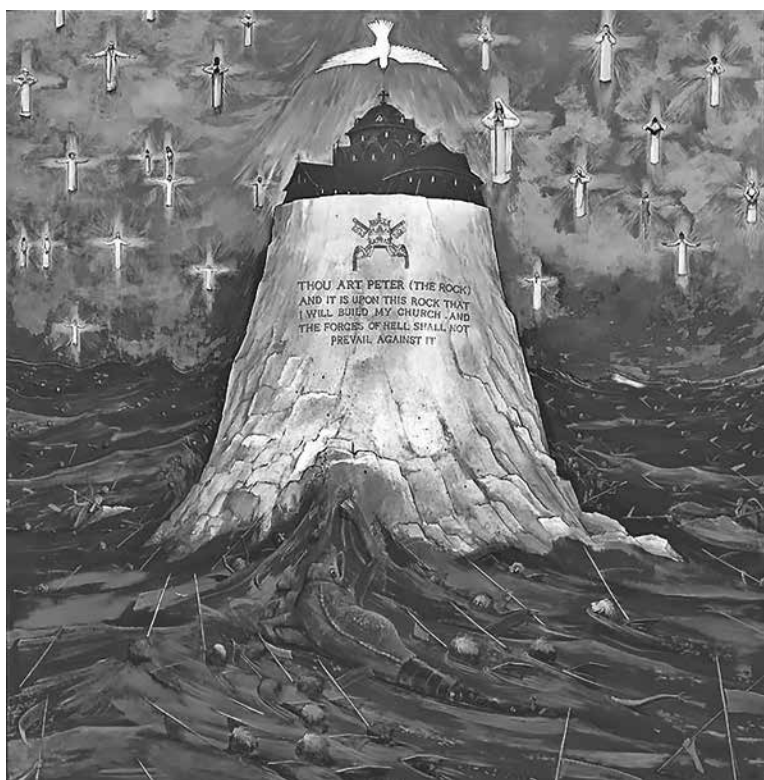
As a small child I realized I had to make my own decision about my faith; I had to make my own commitment. I also



realized that I was not in a position to do this as a small child. I had to wait, to grow up as a person, to mature, to acquire the intellectual tools necessary for this all-important decision. When I reached college age I decided the time had come. I attended Fordham College in New York City and majored in philosophy. I had all the standard arguments for the existence of God, the truth of Christianity and the truth of the Roman Catholic Faith at my fingertips. Intellectually I could say that I had them. But they didn’t fully convince me as a person. They always seemed to leave significant gaps. They reached into my intellect but they didn’t convert my heart. Perhaps my

experience was similar to what Pascal describes when he exclaims, “Not the God of the philosophers but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” That is, not the God of abstract proofs but a God who touches and converts my heart. I came to God not primarily through intellectual arguments to the head, but through love and beauty to the heart.

But I anticipate. For a while I was in a desperate situation. My old faith, received from my parents was on hold. I never abandoned it; I continued to practice it. But it was not a real faith, for it was not a true commitment; it was not truly my own. I still had to overcome a major challenge. I did so through Pascal’s Wager and Bach. This is the story to which I now turn.



PART TWO:  
THE CHALLENGE,  
PASCAL'S WAGER  
AND BACH



**The Challenge:  
A God of Love and the Terrible  
Evils in the World**

**I**s there an all-good and all-powerful God? Yes, of course. How else could the world have come into being? In particular how could I as a person and all other human persons have come into being? Perhaps evolution explains how our bodies came to be what they are now. It does not explain why there was an *original material* that evolved in the way evolution claims. Even more, evolution does not explain how and why *consciousness* came into existence. Above all, it does not explain how and why we as conscious *persons* came into existence. Think of the marvel of sperm and egg: two tiny biological organisms merge, and a short time later there is a little baby, a small person, a conscious being, who will soon be able to say “I,” think thoughts, understand things, wonder where it all came from, enjoy reading books and listening to music, talking to other persons and so much else.

But then I contemplated the enormous amount of evil and suffering in the world, all over the world and through all of history. War, torture, child abuse, killer storms, earthquakes; the list goes on and on. Particularly striking to me were a few events such as the Black Death that wiped out millions in Medieval Europe, a mudslide in Columbia that drowned several thousand people including small children, the Nazi Holocaust and Stalin's Gulag.



In the face of these terrible evils can one still reasonably believe that an all-powerful and all-good God created the world and is governing it in His wisdom? If He is a God of love, a God who is all-good, then He cares about his people. And if He is all-powerful that care will be totally effective, and His people will not be suffering as they do. Yet they do suffer. Where is God? As we look at the world with all its suffering and misery, do we really see the hand of God?

However, when we look elsewhere we *do* see the hand of God. We see the wonder of the human person, the wonder of the vast physical universe, beauty in nature, the beauty of sublime music, and so much else.



That was the challenge: how can there be both the good and the evil, the good that points to God and the evil that points away from God? I could not answer that question. *But I had to do something*: either believe in the good as pointing to God, or the evil as pointing away from God. There was no way to straddle the fence in my actions. Which was it to be? Believing in God was the path of theism; not believing was the path of atheism. They seemed in some way to be in a kind of balance, each focusing on one part of the picture and running with it, while not coming to grips with the other part.

But perhaps it is not so; perhaps there is really an imbalance, even a non-parallelism. Why is this so? Let's look more carefully at the atheist or non-believer and his world view.

Can a non-believer really be sure that his view is correct? He will claim that evil counts against God's existence; but does it *prove* it? Surely it doesn't. Couldn't there be some factor that explains how and why there is both evil and God? Surely no one can rule that out. No one can say

categorically that there could not be such a factor. Perhaps God does exist!

Doesn't the non-believer sometimes wonder: perhaps there is a God? Shouldn't he wonder whether there is a God? *Perhaps* it is really true: God does exist! Shouldn't this huge *perhaps* haunt him? If God does exist is he not taking a huge chance? If God exists and he meets God after he dies, what will he say to God if God asks him why he rejected God?

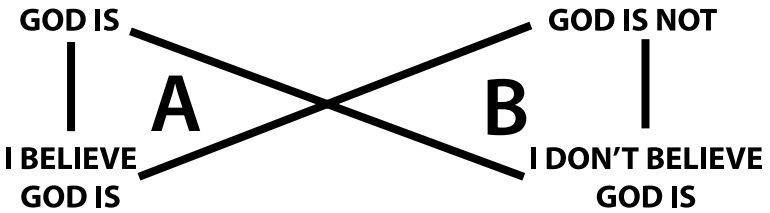
I wanted to know the truth about God. I wanted to give the right response to truth. I wanted to believe what is true. Where does the truth lie? Is it that God exists? Or is it that God does not exist? I didn't have a direct and immediate answer. But then I compared these two possible truths. If God does exist my life makes sense because it has an ultimate meaning, and I can live my life in response to God and receive this meaning. *This is a truth of enormous significance!* It makes all the difference in the world. But if God does not exist then my life doesn't make sense since it doesn't have an ultimate meaning and is threatened with an ultimate absurdity. Thus if God does not exist there can only be this one truth, that He doesn't exist, nothing else is of real significance. If He does exist, there is not only the truth that He exists but so much more, basically under the heading that my life has an ultimate meaning. This means that the two possible or potential truths are not at all parallel. And the two possible ways of going wrong in what one believes are also correspondingly not parallel. With this I come to Pascal's Wager.

## Pascal's Wager

Basically Pascal's Wager is a way of comparing two possible ways of going wrong in regard to God. We can go wrong by believing God exists when in reality He does



not exist. But we can also go wrong in the opposite way, by failing to believe in Him when He does in fact exist. The core point of Pascal's Wager is the claim that these two ways of going wrong are radically different, separated by an abyss. Let me first diagram the idea of Pascal's Wager and then pursue the question of why the two ways of going wrong are so radically different, why there is a basic non-parallelism between the two.



The vertical lines are clear. If God exist, I should believe in Him; if God does not exist, I should not believe in Him. It is the diagonal lines that are crucial; both are ways of going wrong. Which is worse?

- I *believe* God exists when in reality God *doesn't exist* (A). Or:
- I *don't believe* God exists when in reality God *does exist* (B).

The core point of Pascal's Wager is that Diagonal B is infinitely worse than Diagonal A.

Notice that there is no middle ground between the two possible approaches on the lower line of Pascal's Wager. To say "I don't believe God is" includes both the atheist who intends it as "I believe God is not," a direct denial of the upper level thesis "God is"; and the agnostic who intends it as "I don't believe one way or the other," neither affirming that God is nor denying that He is. It also includes others, especially people who don't care whether God exists and

people who rebel against God. In simple terms, there is no possibility of straddling the fence, trying to avoid any commitment. William James expresses it well when he says “for to say... ‘Do not decide, but leave the question open,’ is itself a passional decision — just like deciding yes or no — and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth (*The Will to Believe*, IV).

As noted, in Pascal’s Wager Diagonal B is infinitely worse than Diagonal A. But why is that? Many reasons can be given for this:

### **One: Giving the right response to Love.**

The God of Pascal’s Wager that I was concerned with was not primarily God as Creator of the world but God as Supreme Love, a God of Love. It was God as Jesus Christ, revealed to me in the Catholic Church. It was Jesus Christ saying to Saint Margaret Mary: “*My Divine Heart is so passionately full of love for all human beings and for you in particular, that It can no longer contain within Itself the flames of Its ardent love, but must pour it out to all people; and must do so by your means, so that all are enriched by Its sacred treasures.*” These words moved me in the depth of my heart. They touched me in my inmost being. If that is God turning to me in love, I must respond to Him; I must give Him the right response or at least try to give Him the right response. Failure to do this if God as Jesus Christ, the God of infinite love does exist, is infinitely worse than believing this and responding accordingly when it is an intellectual illusion. Such an illusion is unfortunate, but any evil it might represent pales in comparison to the horrible evil of not responding to such love!

### **Two: Avoiding the worst deception.**

I was struck by the words of Kierkegaard, the great 19th century Danish philosopher and religious personality,

who speaks to the non-parallelism of the diagonals in Pascal's Wager when he points out in his wonderful book, *Works of Love*: "If it were true...that one should believe nothing which one cannot see by means of his physical eyes, then first and foremost one ought



to give up believing in love. If one did this and did it out of fear of being deceived, would one not then be deceived?" What applies to seeing by one's eyes applies equally to seeing by one's heart and mind in turning to God as Supreme Love. Kierkegaard concludes: "To cheat oneself out of love is the most terrible deception; it is an eternal loss for which there is no reparation, either in time or in eternity." Diagonal B represents this terrible ultimate deception. The deception in diagonal A pales in comparison.

### **Three: Giving the right response of gratitude.**

I have been so blessed! That I exist, that I was given such loving parents, my wife, my children, my many close friends, a good education, the beautiful music of Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and others, my good health, meaningful and deeply enjoyable work teaching college philosophy, and so much more. For these I must give the right response of gratitude. They are the gifts of God, and I must give Him my response of gratitude. Or, it is infinitely better to *believe this* when *it is not so*, than *not to believe this* and thus fail to respond adequately if *it is so*. God was after all the Giver of these good gifts, and I didn't respond! What a terrible evil! I could not risk that. The non-parallelism of the two diagonals comes out again.

### **Four: Preparing for the Final Judgment.**

What happens at death? If there is no God we will probably just cease to exist; then it wouldn't matter all that

much how we responded to the God-question. But if God does exist, and I come before Him to be judged by Him, what will I say if I have ignored Him in this life? Why did I not at least seek Him? Whatever the details of a final judgment, and however serious its consequences, not seeking God if He does exist is a situation I must at all costs avoid. Better to seek God even if He doesn't exist than not to seek God if He does after all exist. The believer who dies in a universe without God is not in a painful situation. He loses his existence as we all do. But the atheist who dies in a universe with God: isn't he probably in a very painful and dreadful situation?

#### **Five: Preparing for immortality.**

If God exists and is the giver of a life after death, an immortal life of happiness and fulfillment in union with Him, I must be the kind of person who can truly receive such a gift. It may seem shocking to say it: I must be holy



to be the kind of person who can truly receive the gift of eternal happiness with God. This is the point made by John Henry Newman in his sermon, "Holiness Necessary for Future Blessedness" (*Parochial Sermons*, Number 1, 1825-1843). God is holy, He is infinitely holy; He is Absolute Holiness. It follows that

only those who are holy in their own measure can stand to be with God, can bear to see God and can receive God's love and His gifts. "We see, then, that holiness...is necessary to our admission into heaven, because heaven is not heaven, is not a place of happiness except to the holy." Newman goes so far as to say "that if we wished to imagine a punishment for an unholy, reprobate soul, we perhaps could not fancy a greater than to summon it to heaven. Heaven would be hell to an irreligious man." What we experience depends not

only on what is given to us but also on what we are. If we must be holy to receive God's gift of happiness then surely the first step is to turn to God, to seek Him and to believe in Him; and thus to avoid the path of unbelief. Better to seek him when He is not than not to seek Him if He is. In the first I lose very little. In the second I lose infinitely! I lose eternally, for I lose my chance to attain the holiness necessary for future blessedness.

**Six: Being on the side of good as ultimately triumphing over evil.**

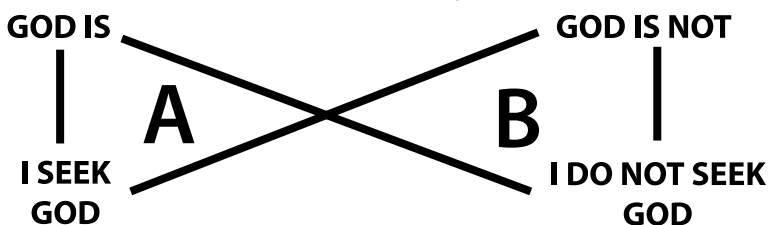
The world presents us with many high and sublime goods but also many horrible evils. Which will triumph in the end? If God is, He is the ultimate triumph of good over evil; if He is not how could good ultimately triumph? This is again the matter of the truth about ultimate reality. Committing to God means committing to the hope that the ultimate truth is the triumph of good over evil. That truth, if it is the truth, is infinitely more significant and important both in itself and for me, than the opposite truth, if that is the truth, namely that evil ultimately triumphs over good. If the hope in this ultimate truth that good will defeat evil carries the risk of being mistaken, the opposite stand also carries a risk. And Pascal's Wager is the thesis that these two risks, these two possible ways of going wrong are not parallel. Going wrong by not believing in God as the ultimate triumph of good over evil if He in fact exists is infinitely worse than the opposite way of going wrong, believing in God when in fact He does not exist.

## **Believing in God and Seeking God**

The logic of Pascal's Wager is that it is better to believe in God even on the chance that He does not exist than not

to believe in Him if He does after all exist. But I cannot command belief; it is not in my direct control. I may wish to believe; I may see that believing is better than not believing, but these do not constitute belief. Very well: I can seek God. And so Pascal's Wager can be recast with *seeking God* and *not seeking God* in the lower left corner and the lower right corner, respectively. We may call this the second level of Pascal's Wager, with belief as the first level.

The second level of Pascal's Wager looks like this:



Again, the vertical lines are clear. If God exists I should seek Him; if God does not exist there is no point in seeking Him. It is the diagonal lines that are crucial; both are ways of going wrong. Which is worse?

- I seek God when in reality He doesn't exist (A). Or:
- I don't seek God when in reality He does exist (B).

Again, Diagonal B is infinitely worse than Diagonal A.

I call this the second level of Pascal's Wager because it follows the first, the one in terms of belief. It is actually primary, and in this sense first, because we first seek to believe and then hopefully find what we seek and actually do believe. The original Pascal's Wager is in terms of belief, the first level. The second level is actually based on Pascal who lays the greatest stress on seeking God if we do not know Him. My favorite passage from Pascal on this score is this: *"My heart inclines wholly to know where is the true good, in order to follow it; nothing would be too dear to me for eternity."*

# Some Passages from Pascal leading to and including his Wager

Pascal was one of the primary influences and models for my own faith journey through these challenges. I saw in him a reflection of my own heart and mind; my own difficulties and longings; and then light for my way forward through his Wager. Let me share some of the more important passages where this is expressed. These passages are from his *Pensées* (Thoughts), published after his death. The work is a series of sketches for grand Christian Apologetics, a carefully constructed defense of the Christian Faith. He died of ill health at the young age of 39 before he could complete it. The passage above, that my heart inclines wholly to know the true good, is from #229. Let me now turn to other passages that provide a context for the Wager and that are a reflection of my own faith journey.

1. When I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space which I fill and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I am ignorant and which know me not, I am frightened and am astonished at being here rather than there; for there is no reason why here rather than there, why now rather than then. Who has put me here? By whose order and direction have this place and time been allotted to me? (#205)

2. This is what I see and what troubles me. I look on all sides, and I see only darkness everywhere. Nature presents to me nothing which is not matter of doubt and concern. If I saw nothing there which revealed a Divinity, I would come to a negative conclusion; if I saw everywhere the signs of a Creator, I would remain peacefully in faith.

But, seeing too much to deny and too little to be sure, I am in a state to be pitied. (#229)

3. Wherefore I have a hundred times wished that if a God maintains Nature, she should testify to Him unequivocally, and that, if the signs she gives are deceptive, she should suppress them altogether; that she should say everything or nothing, that I might see which cause I ought to follow. Whereas in my present state, ignorant of what I am or of what I ought to do, I know neither my condition nor my duty. (#229)

4. It is incomprehensible that God should exist, and it is incomprehensible that He should not exist; that the soul should be joined to the body, and that we should have no soul. (#230)

5. Atheists. What reason have they for saying that we cannot rise from the dead? What is more difficult, to be born or to rise again; that what has never been should be, or that what has been should be again? Is it more difficult to come into existence than to return to it? Habit makes the one appear easy to us; want of habit makes the other impossible. A popular way of thinking! (#222)

6. I would have far more fear of being mistaken and then finding that the Christian religion is true, than of being mistaken in believing it true when it is not true. (#241) [The error of the atheist would be far worse than the error of the theist.]

7. There are only two kinds of people one can call reasonable; those who serve God with all their heart because they know Him, and those who seek Him with all their heart because they do not know Him. (#194)

Passages #1-4 express the basic challenge: ignorance, darkness and doubt. Passage #5 is a first move away from unbelief to belief in God. Passage #6 is essentially Pascal's



Wager; #7 is the core of Pascal's way, which inspired and guided me in my way: seek God with all your heart.

## The Role of Ignorance, Darkness and Doubt in the Journey of Faith

These passages from Pascal expressing ignorance, darkness and doubt might strike some people as indicating that Pascal was not a believer. What must be remembered is that the whole project of the *Pensées* was a *defense* of belief in God and the Christian faith. Pascal is eminently to be included among the great Christian believers of history, along with Kierkegaard, Newman, G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis.



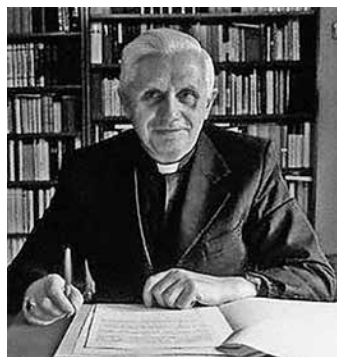
The ignorance-darkness-doubt passages reveal the intense inner struggles of a man who takes the truth question seriously, who courageously faces up to the realities of the world, “warts and all.” For many people – perhaps for all of us at some level – there *are* difficulties. The world reveals not only the light of the presence of God but also the darkness of His absence. One of the great merits of Pascal is that he so clearly articulates this darkness, and thereby gives us the green light to acknowledge our own experiences of this darkness.

Perhaps we can even go so far as to say this: darkness is our actual condition until we receive the gift of faith. For

without faith, isn't the world just as Pascal describes it? By presenting the world as dark without faith, or before faith, Pascal is thus laying the groundwork for faith. That faith is a gift of God is explicitly affirmed by Pascal: "Faith is a gift of God, not a gift of reasoning." (#279)

Put another way, faith is the answer to a question. The ignorance-darkness-doubt passages are expressions of the question; Christian faith is the answer. Many of us are taught the Christian faith as little children; we grow up with the answer. But what is the question to which this is an answer? Read Pascal. Answers always make more sense when we have the question clearly before us. Answers are always appreciated more deeply when we know and feel the question. This was my faith journey, modeled on Pascal.

A modern statement echoing Pascal's faith journey



as involving both doubt and faith is found in Joseph Ratzinger's book, *Introduction to Christianity* (1968). Near the beginning, in a section titled "Doubt and belief – Man's situation before the question of God" (15-21), he says "If on the one hand the believer can only perfect his faith on the ocean

of nihilism, temptation and doubt, if he has been assigned the ocean of uncertainty as the only possible site for his faith, on the other the unbeliever is not to be understood undialectically as a mere man without faith" (19). I found this very reassuring. A renowned archbishop and cardinal of the Catholic Church, a future pope, is telling us that doubt is part of our faith journey, thus confirming and validating my own experience. This is a wonderfully positive and encouraging message, opposed to what we sometimes hear

as “the sin of doubt and unbelief.” That, it seems to me, can only mean the refusal to believe once the grace of faith has been granted. It does not refer to our situation of doubt as searching for the truth and not finding it immediately. And that Ratzinger puts believer and unbeliever together on something like the same playing field was also encouraging to me, as opposed to relegating each side to its own camp with a chasm separating them.

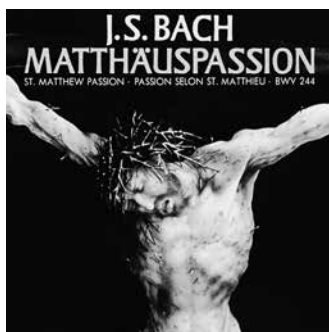
## Finding God through Bach



For a while I was following the Pascalian path of seeking: *My heart inclines wholly to know where is the true good, in order to follow it; nothing would be too dear to me for eternity.* I was calling out “God, if you exist answer my call!” “I want to know the truth; I want to know God. Are they perhaps one and the same: *God is the Truth?*” I was

open to the truth, but I didn’t want to come down on the one side or the other (belief or unbelief) before I was given some kind of evidence for reasonably accepting something as the truth.

Then I had an experience which was the answer to my prayer of seeking, an experience that shook me to the very core of my being. It was Bach’s *St. Matthew Passion*, a three-hour musical rendering of the Passion of Christ. What it conveyed to me was one central thing: *reality.*



Christ is real. It is impossible to do this justice through words, which necessarily speak primarily to the intellect. This was a message to the heart. The power of the music made real for me the truth of Christ. Here was the answer to my longing. Here was what I would live for; here was the basis for my life commitment. The sense of truth given to me by this music was so real, so powerful that I felt, "If this is not true then nothing is true"; or, "If this is not meaningful then nothing is."



What is Truth?





PART THREE:  
THE BLESSINGS I  
RECEIVED FROM BEING  
A CATHOLIC



**The Richness of the Catholic  
Faith**

**C***hrist is the truth.* But where do I find Christ? I searched. God's Grace guided me and led me to the Catholic Church. Why did I come to the belief that it is the Catholic Church that is the truth I found in the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*? The Church embodies the same spiritual reality that I found in Bach. The Church and it alone traces its existence back to Christ and to the actual historical Passion that is expressed in Bach. The Church in its saints, in its teachings and in the examples it gives us has the splendor that mirrors what is given by Bach. In a word, only in the Church does the deep, inexpressible reality that the Bach *St. Matthew Passion* conveys find its concrete fulfillment. Only in the Church can faithfulness to the Bach message find its place.

As I now look back on my childhood and the tremendous love that my father and mother gave me, I ask myself: where did this love come from? It all fits together. The Catholic faith that my parents gave me was credible because their love for me could only be explained by something supernatural, what was revealed to me in the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*.

# Coming to the Truth through the Heart

Someone may ask: can one really come to the truth through the heart? Must it not be through the intellect? Must it not be by evidence seen through reasoning? I do not for a moment deny the importance of the intellect; I only claim it is not by itself sufficient. There is also a reasoning and an evidence of the heart. “The heart has its reasons which the reason does not know.” Long before I knew these words of Pascal I lived by an implicit awareness of them. All deep and important commitments that a person makes must come from the heart. Do you fall in love by intellectual reasoning? Or is it your heart that is moved? Certainly the heart can go wrong; it can lead one into error and evil. So can the intellect and the will. Nothing can give us a guarantee that we will always get everything right. At the deepest level we can only make our commitment to seek the truth with all our capacities, especially our heart. Pascal says it best: “My heart inclines wholly to know where is the truth, the true good, in order to follow it; nothing would be too dear for me for eternity.” These are words that I try to live by. My seeking the truth started early in childhood and has continued for all my life. I have found it in the Roman Catholic Church through the Bach *St. Matthew Passion*. This is why I am and remain a Catholic.

## Many Blessings: My Parents and Edith Stein

I am still a Catholic and will always remain a Catholic for the reasons sketched above and because of the great blessings of being a Catholic; because of the many graces of Catholic life that have filled my soul from the beginning





My parents Balduin and Leni Schwarz





My one holy father with two Holy Fathers



of my life. My parents were deeply Catholic; their Catholic faith filled their lives and so my early home life was the grace of a rich and deep Catholic spirit. In addition to the continuing blessings of what my parents were giving me, there was a series of blessings that I received in the spring semester of 1933, just after my birth on November 8, 1932. At that time we lived in Münster, in northern Germany. My father taught at the University of Münster. One of his



colleagues on the faculty was Edith Stein (1891-1942), now Saint Edith Stein. She was invited to come for regular visits to our home for serious discussions with my father. But before starting on these discussions, at the beginning of each visit, she would make it a point to go to the baby room to see the little baby and hold him in her arms — hold me in her arms! This is surely one of the greatest blessings of my life.

## **Many Blessings: Dietrich von Hildebrand**

Another person who was a great blessing of my life was the prominent philosopher and Catholic religious thinker, Dietrich von Hildebrand (1889-1977). His deep and far-reaching influence on my life began even before I was born. My mother grew up as an agnostic in Munich, Germany, in an ethnically Jewish family. Von Hildebrand was a major influence in helping her find her way to Christ and His Church; and this was an event of major significance in her



journey towards her marriage to my father, a life-long Roman Catholic. Von Hildebrand was also instrumental in making this marriage possible at all, for he helped persuade my anti-Semitic grandfather to overcome his strong opposition to letting his son marry a Jewish woman.

And it was through von Hildebrand that my father found what he was looking for as his way in philosophy. As a student at the University of Munich, Germany, before he met von Hildebrand, my father found, in his classes, only historical philosophy; that is, philosophy in the manner of, “Kant says..., Hegel says...” but never a word about what is really true. Then he attended one of von Hildebrand’s lectures. A new day dawned for him. Here was a man who dared to say what he saw as really true. Here was truth, not just what so-and-so said. “This is the way it is; this is the nature of love, of justice, of the human person.” In the first five minutes of the first lecture, my father realized he had found what he was looking for. This is the true philosophy! This is what I want to pursue! This is my philosophical home! And, this is the person I want to work under! A deep, life-long friendship ensued. My father formed me in my philosophy; but he was able to do so only because von Hildebrand had first formed him. Von Hildebrand was my philosophical grandfather.

But he was also my philosophical father. It was above all from him that I learned the art of philosophizing: wonder at the greatness of reality, wonder at the mysteries of reality, careful analysis of the essence of fundamental realities, such as time, knowledge, beauty and so many others, openness to the rich data of reality as presented to us in immediate experience. It was not only the content of his words, in his lectures, in his writings and in the talks we had, that formed me. It was also, and perhaps even more, the spirit of his philosophizing, his love of truth, his deep reverence before

truth, and the passion with which he pursued truth, that has made me what I am as a philosopher. I took almost all his courses at Fordham, namely, Ethics, Theory of Knowledge, Philosophy of Community and Philosophy of Beauty and Art. After each class it was my great privilege to accompany him home, a 15-20 minute walk through the campus and then up Fordham Road, and then about a half hour on the subway. I was able to discuss with him the lecture he had just given, to ask him questions and to pursue the topics further. What I gained from these many conversations is an immeasurable treasure for which I am deeply grateful, more than I can ever express.

I accompanied him home, for he lived in the apartment just above ours, at 448 Central Park West, in New York City, right across from Central Park. He had arrived in New York in 1940, after a long and harrowing flight from the Nazis, a series of events masterfully detailed by Alice von Hildebrand, his widow, in her wonderful biography, *The Soul of a Lion*. He secured the vacant apartment on the fourth floor in the center of the building and had it saved for us, my father, my mother and me; we also fled from the Nazis, a story recounted below.



His primary influence on me was during those years at 448 Central Park West, from 1941 to 1963, when I moved to Rhode Island to take up my full-time position in the philosophy department at the University of Rhode Island. His presence was always there, whether he was in our apartment with us or we were upstairs in his. The radiance of his personality shone wherever he went. He had a happiness that was both natural to his personality and

supernatural in its root in his love of Christ and His Church. He truly lived his faith at every moment. And he lived his philosophy, a philosophy focused on value and our response to value, especially love and responses to moral values and the values in beauty and art. He had received much, and he was always eager to share it with others; to herald the good news, not only of the supernatural world of Christ, but also the world of natural beauty and truth. He loved music; he lived his love of music, especially Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert. And this love formed and deepened my own love of music, which has always been at the core of my being.

He formed me as much as my own parents, whose formation of my personality was far greater than that of most children. He formed me on all levels of my being. He taught me by his word and example the importance of always giving the right response to reality: seeking the truth, conforming my beliefs and attitudes to the truth, respecting and loving other persons, and much more. He formed me in my philosophy; when I philosophize his presence is always there with me, so that inwardly I philosophize “before” him, profoundly aware that whatever is good and valid in my thinking is due to what he gave me by his teaching and his example. He formed me in my being as a Catholic by what he gave me by his being as a Catholic. He was Catholic in every fiber of his being; it radiated from him at every moment. He lived his faith as few people do, and the radiance that emanated from him nourished and strengthened my faith. I count his presence in my life as one of the greatest blessings I received in and for my life of faith.

His influence on me continued until his death, January 26, 1977. After I moved to Rhode Island, I would often visit him at his home in New Rochelle, NY. We discussed philosophy, our Catholic faith and many other things. We listened to music together. But his influence on me started

much earlier, at the very beginning of my life on this earth. He was my godfather, and he held me as I was baptized on November 12th, 1932, a few days after my birth on the 8th. I was named after him; my middle name is Dietrich. He read from his philosophy to my mother. His love and influence have been with me ever since and will remain in me for the rest of my life. He was and is a blessing gift for me for which I cannot thank God enough.

## Many Blessings: Saved from Nazi Germany and brought to America

My birth November 8, 1932 was just before Hitler came to power January 30, 1933. My parents were among the very few people at that time to see the intrinsic evil of Nazism. They renounced their German citizenship in protest against Nazism and soon left Germany. We fled the Nazis through several countries beginning with Austria. Then it was on to Switzerland where we stayed until forced to leave because of our anti-Nazi status in neutral Switzerland. The only country we could now go to was France. Soon after arriving there my father volunteered to join the French army. He saw the war between France and Germany not as a contest between two



Give Me 4 Years

nations, but as a life-and-death struggle between the forces of inhumanity and evil and those of humanity and goodness. We were in Limoges, in central France. My father was sent to northern France, near the Benedictine monastery of Solesmes. His unit and most of the rest of the French army offered little resistance to the powerful German forces marching down towards them. At the critical moment when the German army was about to reach them my father's commanding officer abandoned his men and fled in



his car. My father was totally alone. What could he do? He could not outrun the German army, fully mechanized while he was on foot. There seemed to be only one way to safety: go to Solesmes and ask to be sheltered by the monks. He was on his way to do that when he saw a French officer about to head in the direction of the German forces. He tried to warn him but instead was arrested by the ungrateful officer and accused of being a German spy and nearly shot to death by him on the spot. He managed to stave off the fatal shot and appealed to see the Company Commander, who immediately realized he was not a German spy but a harmless philosophy professor. The Commander offered my father a ride down to more southerly parts of France, and of course my father gratefully accepted this kind offer. After a while he was reunited with his family. But that is only half the story. Had my father actually gone to Solesmes to seek shelter from the Nazis he would instead have run right



into them, for they had already occupied the monastery, situated in a tiny village of strategic importance. He would have been shot to death on the spot, seen as a traitor to his homeland, for his ID card listed his birth as German. Our story would have ended there. What could my mother do without my father? She would not have survived nor, of course, would I have survived.

On the natural level, this story is of such immense improbability that it defies any natural explanation. My father came upon the French officer just at the right moment, not a few seconds earlier or a few seconds later. He spoke up, not the wisest thing to do for someone in his position but, as it turned out, an essential step in his rescue. I can see these events only as God's Loving Hand at work, another immense blessing of my life.

While in France we were literally saved by one person,



Edmond Michelet (1899-1970). He first put us up in his own home, in Brive, just south of Limoges. Then he found a farm for us where we would be safe from the Nazis. He saved thousands

of refugees from Holland, Belgium and northern France. He personally saved Dietrich von Hildebrand from the Nazis by driving from Brive to Toulouse in southern France to rescue him from imminent danger and bring him to safety. Von Hildebrand was on the Nazi's most-wanted list for his outspoken opposition to Nazism. After the fall of France, Michelet joined the French Resistance, was captured by the Nazis and sent to the Nazi camp Dachau. There he ministered



to the other prisoners in every way possible. As the war was ending there was a typhoid epidemic in the camp. The camp was liberated by Allied troops and Michelet could have gone home. But he stayed to nurse the sick prisoners until every one of them was well enough to go home. He was a saintly man, a devout Catholic, and his presence in my life is another of God's great blessings for me.

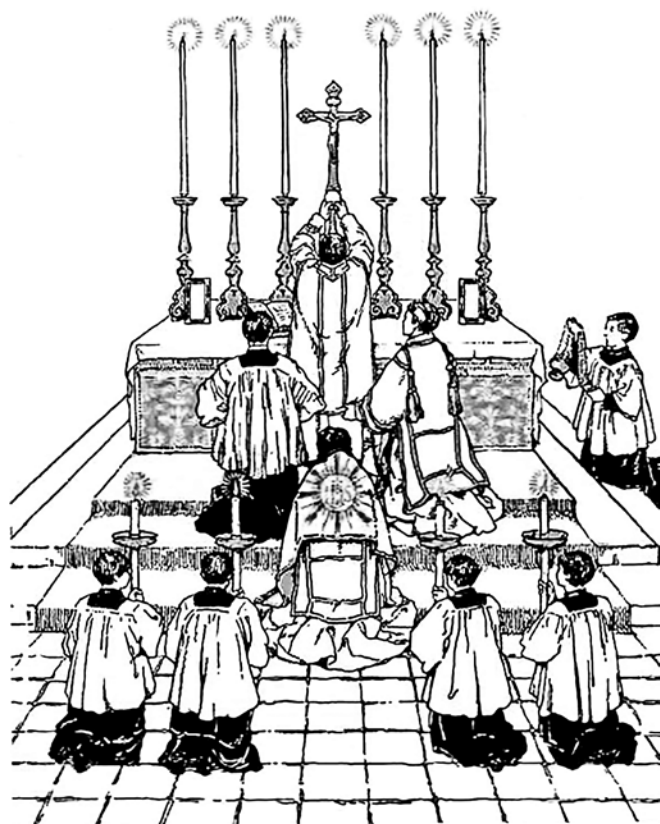
After some more adventures our family finally arrived in New York City June 27, 1941. I feel strongly that it was God's help and protection that saved us on this journey fleeing from Nazi Germany and brought to America, another great blessing of my life. I would later attend college, marry Sherry Byrne, and have four children and three grandchildren.



## A brief recapitulation and a brief look ahead

So far, in One-Three I have sketched my own faith journey, why I am and remain a Catholic. In Four-Six I will offer reasons why anyone who is Catholic should remain so, why the Catholic Church is for everyone. Two of these parts speak about the blessings of being a Catholic. Three is my personal story, the blessings I received. Six speaks of the blessings that are there for everyone; blessings that *exist objectively* in the Church, that belong to its very nature as God's Church, the Church as the Body of Christ, the Community of His followers.





PART FOUR:  
BASIC REASONS FOR  
BEING A CATHOLIC



*Why be a Catholic?* Why remain a Catholic? Why hold on to the Catholic faith? Let me suggest four basic reasons for being a Catholic and holding on to the Catholic faith:

**First, the Catholic Church is God's church,** His appointed way for us to serve Him and prepare for our union with Him in our life after death. Being a Catholic means accepting His gift for us, doing His holy will. The Catholic Church is His appointed way, the way He has chosen for us to prepare for heaven. God loves each of us with an infinite love; this love comes to us not only as individuals standing before Him but also as members of the Church He has given us.

**Second, the Catholic Church is our community as children of God.** We are not only individuals and unique persons; we are also, in our basic nature as persons, social beings. We need to belong to communities, of different kinds and on different levels. Our families are prime examples. And our life before God, our way to God is no exception to this. We are social beings, community persons, before God and on our faith journey to God. We can't go it alone; it is an illusion to think we can. We need each other, we need to belong to God's people, and that is the Catholic Church.

**Third, the Catholic Church gives us the sacraments,** God's great gift for us to receive His grace for our way before

Him and to Him. Baptism is our entry into His community. In the Eucharist we receive God Himself. It is the Body and Blood of Jesus, God Who became a human person. In the sacrament of reconciliation I receive God's love and mercy in His forgiving my sins. In the sacrament of matrimony God joins husband and wife together in a sacred union filled with graces and blessings for a life together before Him and to Him.



**Fourth, there are the blessings of being a Catholic, the richness of the Catholic Church.** This will be our theme in Part Six. Before turning to this let me address some common objections to being and remaining a Catholic; and thereby provide replies to typical reasons people give for leaving the Catholic Church.

PART FIVE:  
REPLIES TO COMMON  
OBJECTIONS



**Six Common Objections**

**First:**

**S***ome people leave the Catholic Church* because of various abuses. In reply, do abuses constitute a valid reason for you to leave an organization that you belong to? We must distinguish two very different kinds of abuses. First, there are those that attack the very core and meaning and essence of what an organization stands for. Imagine a Woman Support Group that starts out with a solid Pro-Life commitment. You join it to help further its good work. But then the leadership gradually changes, and the new leaders transform it into one that supports Pro-Abortion causes. Abuses of this kind nullify the very reasons for an organization's existence. We may call these *nullifying* abuses. They are indeed valid reasons for leaving an organization that you belong to.

Besides these nullifying abuses, there are the abuses which represent human failures to live up to the norms and ideals of what the organization stands for and why it was founded. America's sins against many of its minorities constitute abuses of this kind. America stands for equal justice for all persons. Slavery, lynching and discrimination all represent terrible failures to live up to this. We may call such abuses *human failure* abuses. However horrific the abuses have been of late in the Church, they are not valid

reasons to leave the Church. In general, human failure abuses are not valid reasons for leaving an organization that you belong to. On the contrary, they are reasons to stay in and work to combat them.

Abuses in the Catholic Church are all of the second type: not valid reasons for leaving. Such abuses are part of human nature and are not specific to the Catholic Church. One might even turn the abuse argument on its head: the survival of the Church for all these many years shows its strength and confirms its validity. How could the Church have survived for so long through so many serious abuses unless it came from God? Abuses do not touch the core meaning and validity of the Church, and so do not constitute a reason for leaving the Church.

### **Second:**

Some people leave the Church because they don't like certain things about being a Catholic. They object to dogmas, to rules and authority; and to organized religion in general.

In reply, dogmas are simply the formulations of God's revelation to us, telling us about Himself and His plans for us, His love for us and the way for us to do His will and be united to Him. Our culture has given "dogmas" a bad name, tying it to the vice of being "dogmatic" as being narrow-minded and stubborn in our beliefs. We should not be taken in and fooled by this. Dogmas in the true sense are a gift of God. If you love another person wouldn't you want to know about him? Wouldn't you want him to tell you about himself? If you love God the same thing applies. And God has told us about Himself, in the form of the dogmas of the Catholic Church.

Rules and authority are part of any community. Where would it be without them? The Catholic Church is no



exception.

How is the idea of “organized religion” to be properly understood? I suggest it should be seen as God’s Church, as God’s community, in the ways spelled out above in Part Four. Our culture views “organized religion” as something negative. Again, we should not be taken in and fooled by this. We should see our Church positively as our true home, or fellowship with others who want to love and serve God, to be His people and to receive His gifts.

### Third:

Some people leave the Church because they see no good reason to stay in. “I can pray and worship God at the beach.”

In reply: fine, do so; go to the beach and find God there. But you can also go to Mass where God is waiting for you, ready



to shower you with the great blessings of the Mass, and where you can receive Him in the Eucharist. The Mass is such a great gift of God. Should we not accept it in gratitude? More on this in Part Six.



### **Fourth:**

Some people say “I don’t get anything out of going to Mass; and the homilies are boring.” In reply, first, you may be getting more than you realize. Not all that happens in us happens on the conscious level. Second, it is not only a question of getting but also, and even primarily, of giving. We go to Mass to give God our worship, our thanksgiving and the other responses that are due to Him because He is God and we are His beloved creatures. Third, the Mass is far more than the homily and its blessings infinitely outweigh anything else. Fourth, perhaps a more attentive hearing of homilies, and also of the readings of the Mass, will give us something that we would otherwise miss. And if we reflect more deeply on what we hear, and the themes these point to, we will receive great spiritual nourishment.

### **Fifth:**

Some people leave the Church because they feel they are poorly treated by priests and others. “The pastor is aloof and unkind.” They feel undervalued and not taken seriously. “If I left the parish no one would care; no one would bother to call me and ask me why I left, and ask me to come back.” In reply, these things are most unfortunate; and it cannot be stressed enough that they should never occur. But if they do? Are they reasons for leaving the Church? Why am I in the Catholic Church in the first place? It is to give God the right response; it is to accept His gift of Himself in the Church in gratitude; it is to belong to the community of those who love God and want to serve Him, and to receive the spiritual nourishment He offers in the Church. All these great realities remain in place whether priests and others are kind and loving or not.

Priests and others we meet in the Catholic Church are not always kind and loving? Yes, the Church is a Church

of sinners; we are all sinners. That is precisely a reason for being a Catholic, for staying in, to receive the help we need. That applies to all of us, priests and laity.



### **Sixth:**

Some people leave the Church because they just drift away. They go to Mass less and less frequently and finally not at all. They give up on being Catholic. In reply, shouldn't the question of staying in or leaving be a matter of a careful, well-thought-out decision rather than something one just drifts into or away from? The reasons for staying in, as suggested here, are surely of great significance. They deserve an explicit, conscious decision one way or the other.

The Catholic Church is our true home. It is not a question of whether or not we like all of its practices, or how good or bad its members are or other such factors. It is a question of God's Will, what He gives us, what He expects of us and whether we respond adequately to Him.

In particular, it is a question of our gratitude: do we see God's Church as the truly great gift it is for us and respond accordingly, in grateful acceptance?

Finally, it is a question of our salvation; the Church is God's way for us to come to Him.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of everlasting life."

## Don't be a Fallen-Away Catholic!

It is one thing never to have been a Catholic. It is quite another to have received the gift of being invited to be in God's Church and then turned away. What will I say to God at my judgment after my death when He asks me why I rejected His great gift of the Catholic Church? Why I rejected Him by turning away from what He had offered me? Isn't this something we should take seriously? Perhaps things will not turn out as just described; but perhaps they will. Isn't it reasonable to suppose that they probably will? Can we risk this? Again we can invoke Pascal's Wager. Which is worse?

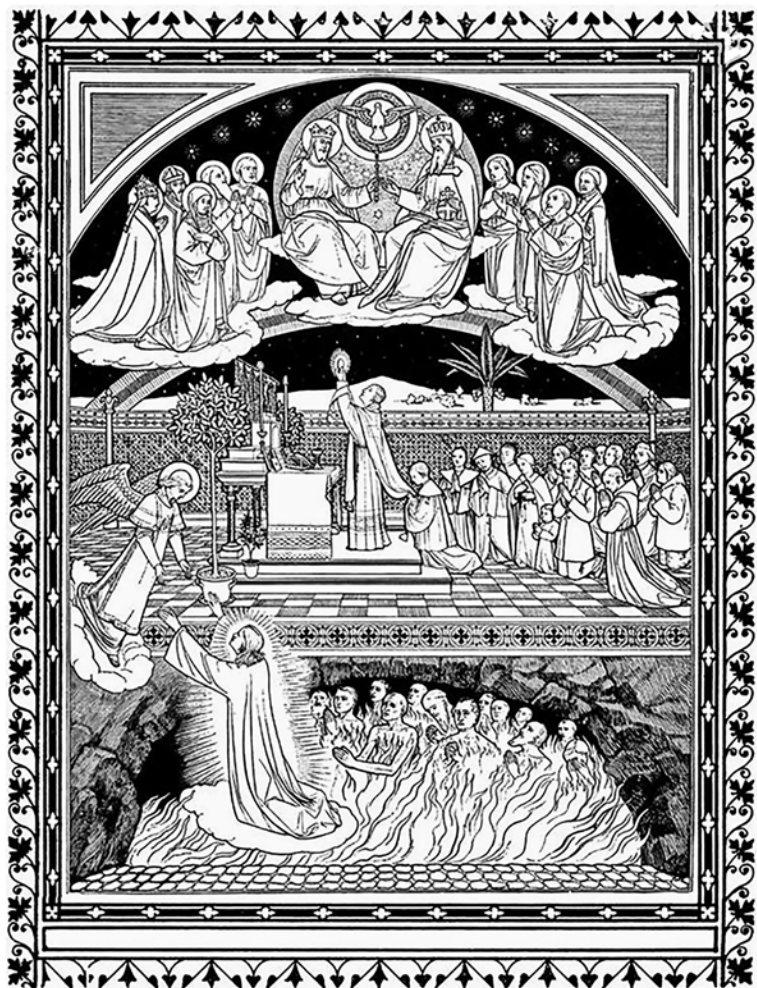
(A) I stay in the Church but I didn't really have to. Staying in or leaving actually made no difference for me for my salvation, my happiness or lack of it in my life after death.

(B) I leave the Church that God gave me and meant for me to stay in; and then I must answer to God why I did this, why I rejected His gift.

Isn't going wrong as B is infinitely worse than going wrong as A? Who knows what the consequences of going wrong as B are? Isn't it possible that they are very serious? If the good for me *on the positive side*, the good of being with God, trying earnestly to do His will, to respond adequately to Him are infinitely great, isn't it reasonable to suppose that the evil for me *on the negative side* of cutting myself off from God are also very great?

When our eternal destiny is at stake do we want to run such great risks? And for what gain? As Pascal so often stresses, the possible gains and losses in our eternal destiny infinitely outweigh even great temporal goods in this life. And simply not bothering with being a Catholic, how great a gain could that be even under the best of conditions?

But there is not only the risk of the *great loss* in not being in the Catholic Church. There is also the *great gain* of being in the Church, for it contains incredible richness and blessings.





**PART SIX:**

**THE RICHNESS AND  
BLESSINGS  
OF BEING A CATHOLIC**



**M***any things can be said on this topic*, the richness and blessings of being in the Catholic Church, being a member of this community, being a living part of it. Let me point to four: Holy Mass, receiving Jesus in the Eucharist, miracles and the lives of the saints.

## **Holy Mass and the Holy Eucharist**

The Mass is the re-presentation of the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. He died on the Cross for me, out of love for me! “My Divine Heart is so passionately full of love for all human beings and for you in particular, that It can no longer contain within Itself the flames of Its ardent love, but must pour it out to all people.” He poured it out for me. He proved His love for me by dying a most cruel death on the Cross! Do I grasp this sufficiently? Do I think of it often enough? Do I give Him an adequate response for such love? Surely I fail here! May He have mercy on me! But there is something I can do as a small way towards a worthy response: I can receive the gift of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I can attend Mass; I can pray the Mass, where this supreme deed of love is made present. And I can do this only in the Catholic Church.

At Mass I can receive Jesus in the Eucharist, Holy Communion. What a gift, to receive Jesus Himself! Do I grasp this sufficiently? Do I give Him an adequate response for coming into my very being? Surely I do not! But let me at least try. And let me continue to receive this incredible gift, part of the gift of being a Catholic, of remaining in the Catholic Church.



## Miracles

Miracles are another part of the richness and blessings of being in the Catholic Church. A miracle is not a violation of the laws of nature but represents, so to speak, the Hand of God reaching down into our world to change the course of events, thereby adding a new factor to existing natural causes; for example, a healing beyond the power of natural science to explain. Let me mention just two of the countless miracles that have been verified and recorded.

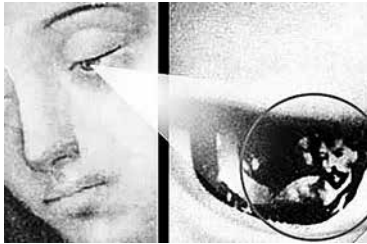
First, there is the miracle of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1531, in Mexico, Mary mother of Jesus appeared several times to a simple man, Juan Diego. She talked with him, gave him various instructions. He was wearing a coat, a *tilma*,



and on this coat there was imprinted an image of Mary. A *tilma* is a frail coat which lasts typically 20 years and then disintegrates. Yet Juan Diego's *tilma* still exists intact, after 480+ years in a Church in Mexico City, where it has been subjected to



damp air, noxious fumes and the handling of countless pilgrims, all of which should naturally have caused its demise much earlier. In addition, a close examination of the eyes of Mary reveals the face of a man, the exact likeness of Juan Diego. (Francis Johnston, *The Wonder of Guadalupe*, Tan Books, 1981, 24-49)



Second, Saint John Bosco healed a young girl, Maria Stardero afflicted with a severe eye disease that left her completely blind. She had no pupils and where her eyes should have been there was only a stretch of white skin. She was seen by many doctors but none could provide a cure. On May 16, 1869, in Turin, Italy, John Bosco healed her. He had a religious medal in his hand, which dropped to the floor. Suddenly the girl picked it up. She could see! She cried out in joy and ran quickly to tell her friends. Many people

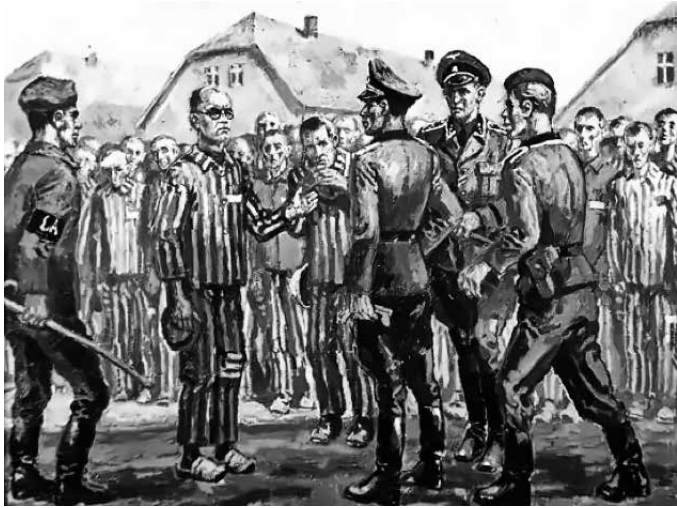
witnessed this extraordinary change. God reached down in His love to cure her. He did so through His instrument, a Catholic priest, a Catholic saint; another of many instances of the richness and blessings of the Catholic Church. (Wilhelm Schamoni, *Wunder sind Tatsachen* [Miracles are facts], Würzburg: Joahann Wilhelm Naumann, 1976, 39-42. (Further references for miracles are given on page 63.)

## Saints



**Saint Maximilian Kolbe** (1894-1941) was a Polish priest. Living in Nazi occupied Poland he was arrested by the Gestapo for his works of love and for his refusal to cooperate with the Nazi powers. He was sent to the death camp Auschwitz. One day one of the prisoners escaped from the dreaded camp. The penalty

for this was severe and fell on remaining prisoners. If the escapee was not captured ten prisoners were executed in his place. The commandant of the camp pointed to one prisoner after another until the fatal number was reached. One of the men picked, Francis Gajowniczek, started screaming. "My poor wife, my poor children, what will happen to them!" Moved with pity for the poor man, Maximilian Kolbe stepped forward to address the commandant. Pointing to Francis, Maximilian Kolbe said to the commandant, "I am a Catholic priest. I would like to take the place of this man because he has a wife and children." The commandant was stunned and at first was unable to speak. Then he gave his approval and Maximilian Kolbe was led away to his horrific fate: death in the starvation bunker, no food, no water,



none of the necessities of life, abandoned until death comes. In this place of unimaginable suffering Maximilian Kolbe remained peaceful, encouraging and comforting the others. After two weeks in this living hell the end came, by a lethal injection, on August 14. In death his face was clear and peaceful. (References for saints are given on page 63.)



**Saint John Bosco** (1815-1888) was an Italian priest living in the neighborhood of Turin, in northern Italy. He devoted his life to taking care of homeless and abandoned boys. Later he founded a religious society to take care of girls in similar circumstances. Such was John Bosco's shining love and the trust he inspired that the civil authorities allowed him to take

300 convicts from the local prison, many of them hardened criminals, for a day's excursion in the countryside. There were no guards; John Bosco was the only person in charge. He asked for their cooperation not to attempt an escape,

which would have been very easy for them. None of them tried, such was the power of his sanctity, which radiated from his face and his demeanor.



***Saint Mother Teresa*** (1910-1997) was born in Macedonia to parents of Albanian descent. She is one of the greatest humanitarians of the 20th Century, devoting her life to caring for the sick and the poor. She is the founder of the Order of the Missionaries of Charity, Catholic nuns dedicated to helping the poor. Her order established a hospice, centers for the blind, aged and disabled and a home for lepers. She spent most of her life in the slums of Calcutta ministering to its poorest and sickest people. She showered her love and her works of mercy on “the unwanted, the unloved, the uncared for.” She received the Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian work in 1979. Mother Teresa was canonized as a saint on September 4, 2016 by Pope Francis. He spoke about her life of service in



his homily. “Mother Teresa, in all aspects of her life, was a generous dispenser of divine mercy, making herself available for everyone through her welcome and defense of human life, those unborn and those abandoned and discarded. She bowed down before those who were spent, left to die on the side of the road, seeing in them their God-given dignity.” Pope Francis urged the faithful to follow her example and to practice compassion. “Mercy was the salt which gave flavor to her work. May she be your model of holiness.” As a help for this we may want to contemplate some of her sayings:

Keep the joy of loving God in your heart and share this joy with all you meet, especially your family.



Before you speak, it is necessary for you to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart.



Little things are indeed little, but to be faithful in little things is a great thing.



If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.



Speak tenderly to them. Let there be kindness in your face, in your eyes, in your smile, in the warmth of your greeting. Don't only give your care, but give your heart as well.



# **The Significance of Miracles and Saints**

Miracles are strong evidence for the truth of the Roman Catholic Church as truly the Church of God, the Church He founded, the Church He intends us to belong to, the Church in which He will lead us to our salvation, our life in heaven with Him. Miracles are God at work in His Church, God with us in our spiritual home. They are a testimony of His love and care for us.

Saints are also evidence and testimony of God's real presence in His Church. The lives of the saints show a love and devotion to others that is so extraordinary that it cannot be explained by natural factors; only by the supernatural. God is at work in His Church; it is God who raises up saints in His Church. In the saints we see persons who really lived their Catholic faith. In this they can be models for us, showing us how we can live that faith, what it is like to really be a Catholic.

In these ways miracles and saints are part of the richness and blessings of being a Catholic, more reasons to see the Church as the great gift of God that it is, and to be grateful to Him for His leading us into His Church. And of course, more reasons to stay in His Church.

## Further references for miracles

For an exceptionally clear, thorough and illuminating analysis of what a miracle is, what it is not, how miracles fit naturally into the Divine Plan, answers to objections and an overview of the role of miracles in Christianity, see C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*, HarperSanFrancisco, 2001, originally published 1947.

To the best of my knowledge, Wilhelm Schamoni, *Wunder sind Tatsachen* [Miracles are Facts], has not been translated into English.

## References for saints

Saint Maximilian Kolbe: Maria Winowska, *The Hero of Auschwitz*, Kenosha, WI: Prow Books (n.d.), Part III, Martyrdom and Death, 27-45.

Saint John Bosco: Wilhelm Schamoni, Tr. Anne Freemantle, *The Face of the Saints*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1946, 270-72.

Saint Mother Teresa: Google search accessed November 29, 2017.

For more on the saints see Ronda De Sola Chervin, *Treasury of Women Saints*, Cincinnati: Servant Books, 1991 and *Quotable Saints*, Oak Lawn, IL: CMJ Marian Publishers, 1992.

## Concluding personal note

Stephen Schwarz is the author of *The Moral Question of Abortion* (Loyola Press, 1990) and (with Kiki Latimer) *Understanding Abortion: from Mixed Feelings to Rational Thought* (Lexington Books, 2012).

See [www.mixedfeelingsaboutabortion.com](http://www.mixedfeelingsaboutabortion.com).

Stephen has been active in the pro-life movement and discussed the issue in his ethics classes. The web site explains why the book is helpful to both pro-lifers and pro-choicers, has a link to an EWTN interview of the authors and to a lecture series on the topic by Kiki Latimer.



Stephen's father Balduin was one of the professors whom Ronda Chervin met when she went to Fordham University in the 1950's; he was one of the main guiding influences for her conversion and became her godfather. At that time she also met Stephen, the start of a life-long friendship. For a detailed account of this, see Ronda De Sola Chervin, *En Route to Eternity: The Story of my Life*, New York: The Miriam Press, 1994, 49-62, especially 53.



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