

# The Failure of Interfaith

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Many Catholics are beginning to wonder if inter-faith meetings are good things. Once upon a time we were prepared to believe they were.

For years a great many Catholics have had the well-meaning but mistaken notion that they helped the Church and made her better known when they were liked by, and were socially sought by, Protestants, particularly Protestants who felt there "was no difference" between themselves and Catholics.

Association of Catholics with Protestants as people, has unquestionably made for pleasant intercourse among the participants. But it is not of this I speak. I speak, rather, of those religious common-denominator meetings in which Protestants and Catholics, and even Jews, take part, by way, so they hope, of letting their religious agreements dissolve their differences. The habit of vague religious values engendered by such gatherings has been a hardship for the Church. Out of such practice has come altogether too much compromise – compromise of a Revelation once so zealously guarded by the Church, and so precious preserved by the deaths of her martyrs and sufferings of her saints.

There *is* a difference between Catholics and Protestants. There is most certainly a doctrinal difference, and this cannot long escape manifesting itself in any except the most superficial intercourse between the two groups. And if there is not an intransigent difference manifested at a religious group-meeting,

then somebody is giving ground — a transaction in which a Protestant has nothing, and a Catholic everything to lose.

It would undoubtedly seem that inter-faith meetings imply a dishonesty. People who know they have fundamental differences in religion agree to get on a platform and make believe that these differences do not exist irreconcilably. It was distressing to hear, recently, a graduate student from a nearby college define an inter-faith meeting as: "A place where a Jewish Rabbi, who does not believe in the Divinity of Christ, and a Protestant Minister, who doubts it, get together with a Catholic Priest, who agrees to forget it for the evening."

If there is not a vast difference between the Catholic who receives the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion and the Protestant who does not, why did Christ institute the Blessed Sacrament at the Last Supper at all? Why did He say to His followers, "Unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood you shall not have life in you?" And when they said, "It is a hard saying, Lord, and we cannot take it," why did He permit them to go, and why did he walk with them no more? Is there not all the difference in the world between those who have LIFE in them, and those who have not?

One of the purposes of inter-faith meetings is that people may come to know what other people believe. Why, one asks? So that such knowledge may help them to decide which is the one, true Faith? No, one is told, but rather that possessing this knowledge they may live in more perfect harmony with each other.

That platform alone is enough to make the Twelve Apostles, and the early Fathers, and the Doctors of the Church, and all the Saints and Martyrs turn in their graves. One vainly endeavors to picture the Apostles after the coming of the Holy Spirit rushing from the Upper Room and crying to the people: "Please tell us what you believe so that we may better understand you, so that we may all live more pleasantly together!" One tries to visualize *that* as the cause of their cruel martyrdom later, or *that* as the reason why the first twenty-eight Popes of the Church were also martyred, one after the other.

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However, is it not the hope of inter-faith meetings, that as a result of them, people might live together more happily? And is this not a false hope? Christ said, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as We also are." The Catholic knows there can be but one Truth. He knows that real love of his neighbor must therefore consist not in making him comfortable in the half or the quarter of the truth which he possesses, but in giving to his neighbor the full truth. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Lasting peace in the world, can come only from the possession of the whole Truth of Christ, which is contained in the teaching of the Holy Roman Catholic Church alone. That is the *one* hope the Catholic can hold out to his neighbor.

Grave as the foregoing considerations are, they are but the surface difficulties we find with the idea of inter-faith meetings. There is a much more fundamental difficulty than either of these, amounting to a

danger-sign that inter-faith meetings may not be pleasing to God. A very important credential is missing, the first credential a Catholic looks for in any work which purports to be of God. Or is that the trouble? Maybe inter-faith meetings are not meant to be of God, but only of Man, like everything else in this Humanitarian Age. If the worship of God by the Jew, the Protestant, and the Catholic has been found to be a source of strife in the community, and men are getting together merely to decide how to tolerate one another in spite of this God who demands to be worshipped three ways, then the principle of inter-faith meetings is decidedly a bad one, and no further reflection is necessary.

There are many inter-faith advocates, however, who have supported inter-faith gatherings in the belief that they were advancing the cause of God first and man second, and for them I would offer the following thought. There has never been any question about the sovereignty of Our Lady at inter-faith meetings. Both in spirit and in name, the Queen of Heaven has been disregarded by these conclaves.

Catholicism is not a religion that teaches simply that God exists. All religions do that. Catholicism teaches that God exists AND that He *became man*. Catholicism is an Incarnational Religion. Its uncompromising doctrine stands on that central mystery: God became man.

One of our creatures was elevated

to the august privilege of providing flesh and blood for God. Mary, a little Jewish girl, the daughter of Joachim and Anna, was chosen by God to be the mother of His Son. In the hearts of Catholics from the first century to the present day, devotion to Jesus has gone hand in hand with devotion to Mary. A Catholic knows that where Jesus is, there Mary is also. This is the doctrinal order. The devotional order is likely to be the other way. For where Mary is, there is Jesus also. One seeks the mother so as to find the child.

It is the great credential of the Christian, the presence of Mary. Without Mary, there would be no Christmas. Without Christmas, there would be no Jesus. Without Jesus, there would be no Christianity. Every Catholic child knows that. Every Catholic man continues all his life to be a little Catholic child, spiritually.

The Catholic "man-in-the-street" is not found at inter-faith gatherings. Intellectuals or semi-intellectuals make up inter-faith groups. To the Catholic "man-in-the-street" they do not make "sense." They do not make sense to him because he is simple of heart, and the simple of heart often arrive at the truth of things more directly than their academic brothers, who depend upon their own discursive powers for their conclusions. The simple man knows that it would be impossible to get all the members of an inter-faith gathering to say together *one* "Hail Mary." That alone is enough for him.

Christianity began with the Angelic Salvation:

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." (Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen.)

The refusal of the Jews to acknowledge Mary is consistent with their refusal to accept Christ. Both refusals are the tragedy of the Christian era. The Protestants, on the other hand, believe they have rejected Mary, whereas the opposite is true. Our Lady has withdrawn from them. She is where her Son is, and Jesus is not present on the altars of the Protestant churches. The Protestants do not believe in the Blessed Sacrament. They

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do not believe in or offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass — indeed they do not have a sacrificing priesthood. The Christ they have given to their

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people for almost four hundred years is not the full Christ.

Mention of Mary, warm recourse to Mary, hymns and litanies to Mary, all are absent from Protestant services. The Protestant looks upon the Catholic's deep devotion to the Mother of God as "Mariolatry." The Catholic knows that love for Our Lady is a gift, a pure gift from her, who is the gateway to Jesus.

"Nothing is as it seems." The world is full of those who having eyes to see, see not, and ears to hear, hear not, and to them it seems that Christianity is failing. They do not see the *blaze* of light around the world as candles are lighted for the Masses said every minute of the day and night, from pole to pole. They do not see God offered to God on the altars by His people every minute of time, in perfect adoration and praise and thanksgiving and petition. They do not hear the song that is constantly ris-

ing to God from the lips of men and women consecrated to Him in religion. Nor do they hear the countless millions upon millions of Hail Marys said to the Mother of God, nor see the burning devotion for her of the saints and martyrs, of priests and nuns, of Catholic men and women and children.

Mary, the Queen of Angels and of Men, of the Church Triumphant and Militant and Suffering, in whose name cathedrals have been built, brave armies have marched, great ships have been launched, to whom noble men and women have dedicated their lives, has chosen to answer heresy by withdrawal from it.

If Catholics withdrew from interfaith meetings, what might happen? If Catholics again spoke with the fire of the First Apostles and the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, for the love of God and of their fellow man, what might they expect?

They might be driven to the catacombs. The blood of martyrs might again flow in the streets. And when the persecution was over, the pure word of God would again be preached. The world would be saved from its own destruction. Peace would come. Mary would come. She would celestially rule our land, America, which is hers under the title of the Immaculate Conception. The road to Christ would again be sure.

We are bound to be certain that there is no other way. ✠

## Mary, God's Masterpiece

*By a Claretian Priest*



f all the feast days in the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church, only three birthdays are observed: the Nativity of our Divine Savior, Who is Holiness Itself; St. John the Baptist, who was sanctified in his mother's womb; and Mary, the ever-virgin Mother of God, whose birthday is celebrated on the eighth of September.

But Our Lady was eternally present in the mind of God. *The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.* (Proverbs 8: 22-23). God preordained from all eternity that Mary should exist. And, by a positive act of the Divine Will, God predestined Mary to be entrusted with the sublime mission of being the Mother of His only-begotten Son Who was to come in the flesh. This was an absolutely free act on the part of God. Because she was to be the Mother of God incarnate, God would accord to her all the gifts and prerogatives commensurate with that dignity, including the grace to merit a singular degree of sanctity and purity in order to render her worthy to be the Mother of God.

Now, the whole reason for Mary's existence is Jesus. In fact, Jesus and Mary were predestined together. This is the teaching of two popes: Pope Pius IX, in his Apostolic Constitution, *Ineffabilis Deus*, defining the Immaculate Conception as a dogma of the Faith, and Pius XII, in *Munificentissimus Deus*, in which he issued the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Both say that Jesus and Mary were predestined by God "in one and the same decree." There is a hierarchical order here. Christ, because He is God, was willed initially, and Mary second. As St. Paul said, *He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature; for in Him all things were created in heaven and on earth. . .* (Colossians 1:15-16). This order, however, does not imply chronology. Because of our creaturely limitations, we must speak as though God willed this order sequentially. But we know that in God there is neither past nor future. Time does not elapse in the mind of God; there is only the "Eternal Now."

### *The Immaculate Conception*

In his decree for Our Lady, God willed to grant her certain unique and wonderful gifts. The first of these was the Immaculate Conception. Since all men have Adam for their father and representative, each person is born into the state of Original Sin. But Mary would be free from this stain in view of the foreseen merits of Christ. In other words, Mary would be redeemed beforehand,