

Spirit. The Catholic Church is the holy brotherhood of Christ, and perpetuates the work of Jesus through His blessed Sacraments, manifested through His ever-abiding Paraclete.

To begin the conversion of a Protestant is to remove the delusion that our religion is wholly or mainly a matter of observances and rituals, hierarchies, and uniformity. If they knew the interior side of our religion, and the hope and faith that we enjoy; the witness of the Spirit, the nearness of Christ, and the strength against sin, — if they knew these divine gifts, if they knew the Catholic Church as we know it, how many more of them would gladly give up everything to become Catholics.

Teach this: the Catholic Church is the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men, begun and perpetuated by Jesus Christ through the ministry and ordinances of the Church. “Why I am a Catholic,” is a topic, which discloses in a detailed way, this inner work of Catholicity. All discourses and all answers to questions should demonstrate the deep meaning of the Church. As the actual life of a true Catholic is the union of the interior and the external life of God among men, so should be the presentation of the Church to our separated brethren.

The perpetuity of the Church, her apostolic identity, is indeed a glorious theme. All history bears witness to the splendid fact that this is the same society that our Lord founded when He choose the twelve as the first bishops for His one and only society. But for what purpose? Dwell upon that question and give it a full answer. What was Christ’s prophetic purpose in regard to your audience? Show that the Church is the mediation of Christ between heaven and earth. Let your thoughts of the Church and your thoughts of Christ blend inseparably together, and then proclaim it.

As this is the mind of the missionary, he will teach the common doctrine of the Church in all things. He should quote from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, from the various councils, from the decrees of pontiffs, and especially from the

New Testament of Holy Scripture. Add nothing and omit nothing.

There must be no minimizing. There is nothing worst than winning converts under false pretenses. It should be borne in mind that one may minimize by failing to mention certain doctrines as well as by denigrating the importance of others. The missionary must stand for an integral Catholicity, doctrinal and devotional.

The secret of a Catholic missionary’s success is the kind of person he is. The missionary must win respect for himself, before he can win conviction for his religion. You must advance your cause by personal holiness; by a love of Jesus Christ too profound and pervading to be hidden by the most ingenious humility; by a love of souls that never knows fatigue in their witness to Christ and His Church. All this is not too much to purchase the pearl of great price.

We are at the opening of a divine movement for America’s conversion. We can fail only by our failure to be true Catholics and true missionaries. We might fail by trusting in human aids rather than God and to God alone. Anchor our hopes in God’s blessed favor and trust in Him alone. God grant us the grace to realize our high ideal!

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The Key to Missionary Success

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Any patient study of existing religious conditions in America should convince one that the population is famished for the truth that the Catholic Church alone can teach.

The many different denominations and sects, which sprang for the Protestant Revolt, are ample evidence that mocks the search for absolute truth. The American people crave to know, and as there are a myriad of denominations, each teaching some shade of the truth, too often skepticism is the inevitable result.

The time for the “New Evangelization” is long overdue. We must realize that as yet, the vast majority of people in America belong to the world and not to Christ, and need to be saved, with the same urgency, as a person in a burning house needs to be saved.

Today, as never before, the conversion of America is realistically possible. Seldom does a kind invitation fail to attract an audience of earnest seekers after Christ and His salvation. There is no part of America, which does not have converts for the asking—men and women sincerely on a quest for truth. This opportunity should fire the hearts of each and every evangelist or missionary, clergy and laity alike.

Win America for Christ, and the world will be renewed. The question in the mind of the missionary should be, “How can I best reach these souls and share with them God’s offer of salvation?” An apologist defends Catholic doctrine, the missionary makes converts.

Practically viewed, the most important topic in apologetics or missionary work is that of the authority of the Church. Authority, the main obstacle of our listeners, must be the main topic of conversation. Non-Catholics, as a rule, accept doctrines more easily when they accept the great

dogma that all of Christ's doctrines are committed to the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Prove that this is so — prove the Church's claims that it is necessary that the Catholic Church is divine in its origin; and you remove the main obstacle in making converts. That must be done; whatever else is proved must help to prove this essential doctrine and fact. Prove any truth you please and it will help, as long as you prove that it is linked to the dogmatic and disciplinary supremacy of the Church. Any argument on any theme is effective for making converts in proportion to its leading the listener to finally accept the Church as his spiritual guide.

It is essential that the listener come to the understanding and acceptance that Christ is divine and teaches through His Church. The divine life of man is his real life, but this can only truly be found and lived, in and through the Church, which is the Living body of Christ, the Holy Spirit's bride. The practice of virtue is God's life on earth, but it must be realized within the Church. The Church offers pardon of sin; the perfection of union with God through Christ is to be had only in the Eucharist, and in the Church, which has the priesthood and the altar of Christ; communication with the angels of God and with our glorified dead, and with our departed, but still suffering brothers and sisters, all this is our privilege only because we are of the Church.

Keeping this missionary pole star ever in view, one can treat any topic of natural or revealed religion, and thereby retain a due sense of proportion in doctrinal matters. For example, in the topic of confession, we should show how the sacrament reveals to the penitent the hatefulness of sin, involves the necessity of heartfelt repentance, and imparts the mercies of God, not confining ourselves to the standard arguments for the divine institution of the sacrament. In treating the blessed Eucharist, besides showing its divine institution, we should dwell on the fervent desire of Jesus for union with us, and the constant yearning of souls for union with him. The incalculable worth of the

certain truth, as against the agony of doubt, should be carefully explained while expounding papal infallibility.

One of the advantages is that we are able to begin this dialogue on common ground. By explaining the interior worth of the Catholic religion, we arouse the interests of our audience.

Common sense dictates that one go to the heart of the matter at hand. The most eager longing of the honest soul is the longing for God, and it is to this that we must appeal. Learn how to speak well of God and of divine things, and even if the men and women you address have hearts of stone, you will sooner or later melt them into fervent desire to learn more about our glorious religion.

If an appeal for God is made with candor, intelligence, and especially with genuine enthusiasm, it cannot fail to convince the listener of the positive side of religion, and also its most spiritual side associated with the appeal for God's Church. Furthermore, this would seem to be the easiest method, as it is the most direct. Appealing to the spiritual motives awakens the most widespread interest, and it goes to the root of all religious questions—God, and Jesus Christ His Son and the Holy Spirit in His Church.

But to many of us the temptation to confine ourselves to attacking error, to proving that Protestantism is absurd, unscriptural, and self-destructive is compelling. In a word the temptation to attack and rout the enemy is almost irresistible. This is the instinctive way. It is more natural to defeat the enemy than to make him a friend. But as making a friend is our ultimate purpose, it should be made, if possible, our immediate and continual goal.

Remember that there are few who will accept the authority of the Church because you prove that she founded modern civilization, that she is the only enduring institution among society, and that the Catholic life conditions one to ideal citizenship. I do not say that there is not room for all this, but I insist that such topics are not the best convert makers. They have their uses as they

prepare the way, and they should not be entirely omitted, but they should not be the primary focus of the missionary.

Everything helps the truth, but to awaken a deep longing for union with the Divine and a profound sorrow for sin must be the final motives for entering the Church. And they are often the very beginnings of the convert's approach to the Church. They must be made to long for the certitude of "the Church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth." They must hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ in Holy Communion as people famished for food and drink in a parched desert.

When they begin to listen to us, non-Catholics, as a rule, are convinced that the Church stands as an obstacle between souls and God, and our task is to show that the Church brings souls nearer to God. They want God, but they would rather have Him without any church. Our purpose is to show that such is not the will of God. We must realize that the very things we hold so dear, the unity, universality, and perpetuity of the Catholic Church are the very topics that are calculated to arouse distrust. Proof of the divine origin of our religion, having first been fully proved, must then be shown in their spiritual aspect, in reference to the most personal of the Church's marks, her holiness.

A powerful organization is not attractive to the religious souls around us, unless it can be proven that it is powerful means of personal sanctification. Earnest souls may admire a church with a splendid hierarchy of a glorious history, but they long for God—God leading their minds out of the babel of Protestantism into the tranquil fellowship of the saints. God saying to them through the ministry of the Church, "Be of good heart son and daughter, your sins are forgiven." This is a message vastly different from the Protestant assurance of a subjective, gloomy, fanatical, election. They long for God in the sweet joy of Holy Communion in the Catholic interior life and love of the Holy