**EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS - NO SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?**

**Council of Florence (1442):** “It firmly believes, professes and preaches, that none who are outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, can partake of eternal life, but they will go into eternal fire… unless before the end of life they will have been joined to [the Church] and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body has such force that only for those who remain in it are the sacraments of the Church profitable for salvation; and fastings, alms, and other works of piety and exercises of the Christian soldiery bring forth eternal rewards [only] for them. ‘No one, howsoever much almsgiving he has done, even if he sheds his blood for Christ, can be saved, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church.’”

**THE FEENEYITE CONTROVERSY**
- In the 1940’s, Fr. Leonard Feeney, SJ, (mis)understood the Church’s teaching to mean that only formal Catholics may be saved.
- Following from that, he taught that unbaptised babies are damned to hell.
- Under Pope Pius XII, the Holy Office condemned Fr. Feeney’s error in a letter to the Archbishop of Boston (9 August 1949).
- Recently, there has been theological development on the possibility of salvation for unbaptised babies.

**DOGMA OF THE CHURCH**
- Lateran Council IV (1215): “There is one universal Church of the faithful, outside of which no one at all is saved.” (It does NOT mean that ALL Catholics are saved!)
- How do we understand this dogma? Does it mean that ALL non-Catholics are infallibly damned to hell - even if they did not have a chance to hear the Gospel? Is God unjust???
- Solution: A broader concept of (1) Church and (2) Membership.

**PRE-HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**
- Second Clement 14:2 (c. 150 AD): “The books of the prophets and the apostles [say] that the Church is not [only] now, but from the beginning. She was spiritual, like also our Jesus. She was manifested in the last days to save us.” cf. Shepherd of Hermas, Vision, 2:4:1 (c. 140-55 AD)
- Pope St. Gregory the Great, Homilies on Ezekiel, 2:3 (540-604 AD): “The passion of the Church began already with Abel, and there is one Church of the elect, of those who precede, and of those who follow… They were, then, outside, but yet not divided from the holy Church, because in mind, in work, in preaching, they already held the sacraments of faith, and saw that loftiness of Holy Church.”
PRE-HISTORY OF THE CHURCH - cont’d

- Pope St. Clement I, Epistle to Corinth 7:5-7 (c. 95 AD): “Let us go through all generations, and learn that in generation and generation the Master has given a place of repentance to those willing to turn to Him. Noah preached repentance, and those who heard him were saved. Jonah preached repentance to the Ninevites; those who repented for their sins appeased God in praying, and received salvation, even though they were aliens of God.”

- St. Justin Martyr, Apology 1:46 (c. 150 AD): “Christ is the Logos of whom the whole race of men partake. Those who lived according to Logos are Christians, even if they were considered atheists, such as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus.”

- St. Irenaeus, Against Heresies 4:22:2 (c. 140-202 AD): “Christ came not only for those who believed from the time of Tiberius Caesar, nor did the Father provide only for those who are now, but for absolutely all men from the beginning, who, according to their ability, feared and loved God and lived justly… and desired to see Christ and to hear His voice.”

Considerations drawn from the above texts:
(1) God wills all to be saved (1 Tim 2:4) without exception.
The Chosen People were not the sole beneficiaries of God’s love and goodness.
(2) Even the elect before the coming of Christ are saved by Him through His Church, which is His Body (Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18).

CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

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<th>FORMAL</th>
<th>INFORMAL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Baptism &amp; Profession of the True Faith</td>
<td>(1) Baptism of Desire</td>
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<td>(Matt 28:18-19; Mark 16:16)</td>
<td>(2) Baptism of Blood</td>
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<td>(3) Implicit Desire</td>
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“BROAD” TEXTS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

- Council of Trent, Decree on Justification, 6th Session: “After the promulgation of the Gospel, this transition [from sin to justice] cannot take place without the bath of regeneration or the desire for it as it is written: ‘Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, one cannot enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:5)’.”

- Pope Pius IX, Singulari Quadam (1854): “It must, of course, be held as a matter of faith that outside the apostolic Roman Church no one can be saved, that the Church is the only ark of salvation, and that whoever does not enter it, will perish in the flood. On the other hand, it must likewise be held as certain that those who live in ignorance of the true religion, if such ignorance be invincible, are not subject to any guilt in this matter before the eyes of the Lord.”

- Pope Pius IX, Quanto Conficiamur Moerore (1863): “God… in His supreme goodness and clemency, by no means allows anyone to be punished with eternal punishments who do not have the guilt of voluntary fault. But it is also a Catholic dogma, that no one outside the Catholic Church can be saved, and that those who are contumacious against the authority of the same Church [and] definitions and who are obstinately separated from the unity of this Church and from the Roman Pontiff, successor of Peter, to whom the custody of the vineyard was entrusted by the Saviour, cannot obtain eternal salvation.”
“BROAD” TEXTS OF THE MAGISTERIUM - cont’d

➢ Pope Pius XII, Mystici Corporis (1943): “They who do not belong to the visible bond of the Catholic Church… [we ask them to] strive to take themselves from that state in which they cannot be sure of their own eternal salvation; for even though they are ordered to the mystical body of the Redeemer by a certain desire and wish of which they are not aware, yet they lack so many and so great heavenly gifts and helps which can be enjoyed only in the Catholic Church.”

➢ Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston (1949): “To gain eternal salvation, it is not always required that a person be incorporated in reality (reapse) as a member of the Church, but it is necessary that one belong to it at least in desire and longing (sotto et desiderio). It is not always necessary that this desire be explicit as it is with catechumens. When one is invincibly ignorant God also accepts an implicit desire, so called because it is contained in the good disposition of soul by which a person wants his or her will to be conformed to God’s will.”

➢ Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 16 (1964): “For they who without their own fault do not know of the Gospel of Christ and His Church, but yet seek God with sincere heart, and try, under the influence of grace, to carry out His will in practice, known to them through the dictate of conscience, can attain eternal salvation.” (cf. Rom 2:13-14)

➢ Pope John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio, 10 (1990): “The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the Gospel revelation or to enter the church… For such people, salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the church, does not make them formally a part of the church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit. It enables each person to attain salvation through his or her free cooperation.”

WHAT ABOUT THE FATE OF UNBAPTISED INFANTS?

Explicit teaching from Scripture and Tradition is non-existent.

Against Pelagius, St. Augustine taught that they were damned - although they suffer only “mitissima poena” (the lightest punishment of all).

This teaching influenced the Western Fathers like Sts. Jerome, Fulgentius and Gregory the Great (but not the Eastern Fathers, who believed otherwise).

Medieval theologians (like Peter Lombard) taught that their punishment was the privation of the vision of God without any additional penalties (but they were still in hell).

Other theologians (like St. Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus) taught that unbaptised infants, in fact, enjoy a full natural happiness through their union with God in all natural goods.

The expression “Limbo of infants” was forged around the turn of the 12th-13th century.

There was a revival of Augustinian thought in the 16th century - Jansenists and Catholic theologians of the Augustinian school opposed the theory of Limbo.
No consensus on this issue was reached as the Popes of the time defended the rights of both schools to teach their particular doctrine (not unlike papal treatment of the Thomist and Molinist teachings on predestination).

The Central Preparatory Committee of Vatican II opposed the move to affirm the “common doctrine” that unbaptised infants cannot attain the Beatific Vision.

The **Roman Missal of 1970** introduced a Funeral Mass for unbaptised infants whose parents intended to present them for baptism.

In its **1980 Instruction on Children’s Baptism**, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith taught as follows: “[W]ith regard to children who die without having received Baptism, the Church can only entrust them to the mercy of God, as indeed she does in the funeral rite established for them.”

The **Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992), 1261** adds that “the great mercy of God who desires that all men should be saved [1 Tim 2:4], and Jesus’ tenderness toward children which caused him to say: ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them’ (Mk 10:14), allow us to hope that there is a way of salvation for children who have died without Baptism.”

On 19 January 2007, the Holy Father approved the publication of the text “The Hope of Salvation for Infants who Die Without Being Baptised” prepared by the International Theological Commission.

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**SUMMARY**

- The Catholic teaching on salvation may be summarised thus: *Sanctifying grace saves; mortal sin damns*.
- The current theological trend appears to exclude the possibility of a person in “the natural state” (i.e. original sin but no mortal sin) at the point of death and Judgment.
- The “rigoristic” (older) texts of the Magisterium, the Fathers, the Saints, etc. can be reconciled with the “optimistic” (newer) texts.
- Basically, the theology is the same but the slant is different because of differing views of the extent of God’s salvific will and the culpability of man - we cannot know for certain who has “deprived themselves of life through evil opinions and wicked working” (St. Irenaeus, **Against Heresies. 3:24:1, 140-202 AD**) since we cannot judge anybody’s intentions (cf. Matt 7:1).
- The possibility of salvation for people who are not formal Catholics is **NOT** an excuse to refrain from evangelisation, cf. **Pope Pius XII, Mystici Corporis (1943)**.