

The Unchanging Truth of Salvation



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Recently, there has been a great deal of press regarding the document “Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the Doctrine of the Church” which defines the true Church as the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict’s stamp of approval on this document seems to have raised the ire of many non-Catholic Christians. Now, I can’t really fault these individuals as they trust what they hear in the media. However, I am very disappointed that so many in the media are doing such a poor job of conveying what was actually written, particularly since it has created significant anti-Catholic sentiment. Now, I am not a theologian. However, as a Catholic musician who works as much with Protestants as with Catholics, this kind of press really impacts my ministry. I am sure the majority of Catholic musicians are in a similar situation. Thus, I have a need to respond to these claims.

First, the document in question was directed to those WITHIN the Church, whom the popular

press refer to as “liberal Catholics,” who refer to Vatican II as a turning point to modernization of the Church. The Pope, I believe, approved this document to tell those WITHIN the Church that, as with EVERY other Church council, truths were not changed (as truth must be unchanging) in Vatican II but merely expanded upon and clarified.

Second, there are certain historical facts that cannot be refuted. First, Christ came and established the Catholic Church. Contrary to what many may believe, he did not leave a Bible. The writings of

the Bible did not come together as a finalized sacred document until the Council of Hippo in AD 393. By the time of this council, most of the elements that we would recognize as being Catholic were already firmly in place.

Now, since the beginning of the Church, it

has always been taught that there is no salvation outside the Church. Vatican II did not contradict this belief. Instead, it was clarified - salvation comes THROUGH the Catholic Church. Just as one can get wet from a sprinkler by standing outside of the direct flow of water, this salvation also spills over into the other Christian denominations, in that they have elements of the truths of the Catholic Church. As stated in the document, these separated churches are **“deprived neither of the significance nor importance in the mystery of salvation. In fact, the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as instruments of salvation.”** The document does not say that the Pope declares that non-Catholics are not Christians, that non-Catholics are not saved and that non-Catholic Christian churches do not have the power to bring Christ to the world.

Now I know this column isn’t dealing explicitly with Catholic music. However, given the nature of our ministries, it is the duty of every musician to be fully informed about these types of issues within the Church. Like it or not, Catholic artists have the additional burden of having to study and understand their faith. Unlike secular musicians who merely need to focus on music, our duty is to be fully informed so that we can defend the Church from those who attack it, and to teach those who have a viewpoint that come from ignorance rather than malice. †

