

Doctrine on Grace and Justification

What is Justification?

Justification is a biblio-ecclesiastical term; which denotes the transforming of the sinner from the state of unrighteousness to the state of holiness and sonship of God. Considered as an act (*actus justificationis*), justification is the work of God alone, presupposing, however, on the part of the adult the process of justification and the cooperation of his free will with God's preventing and helping grace (*gratia praeveniens et cooperans*). Considered as a state or habit (*habitus justificationis*), it denotes the continued possession of a quality inherent in the soul, which theologians aptly term sanctifying grace. Since the sixteenth century great differences have existed between Protestants and Catholics regarding the true nature of justification.

Doctrine on Grace and Justification

What is Justification according to Catholic Teaching?

Justification means the reception of sanctifying grace for the first time, changing us and makes us sharer in the Divine Nature (2 Peter 2:1.4). The Catholic Church teaches justification means the reception of sanctifying grace and gives man the basic ability to take part in the face to face vision of God in the next life. There is an initial justification (through the waters of baptism), but then, there too is an on-going justification (also known as sanctification) that transpires in us through the movement of the Holy Spirit to which by grace we cooperate. To achieve justification, one must first have faith in the Divine.

Doctrine on Grace and Justification

What is Justification according to Catholic Teaching?

God's graciousness merited for us this gift of justification. We did not merit it. However, just like everything that has been given to us, if we do not take good care of it (like good stewards), then we are bound to lose it, the grace that we have received. Justification is at same time an assent to faith in God, in Christ and in a firm belief in all the revealed truths. As Catholics, we believe that we are justified by faith through good works and so we live our lives in cooperation and obedience to the will of God, growing in charity, faith and hope.

What Does the Catechism Say?

Justification

1987 The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ" and through Baptism.

1988 - Through the power of the Holy Spirit we take part in Christ's Passion by dying to sin, and in his Resurrection by being born to a new life; we are members of his Body which is the Church, branches grafted onto the vine which is himself: God gave himself through his Spirit. By the participation of the Spirit we become communicants in the divine nature.

1989 The first work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is *conversion*, effecting justification in accordance with Jesus' proclamation at the beginning of the Gospel: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."³⁸ Moved by grace, man turns toward God and away from sin, thus accepting forgiveness and righteousness from on high. "Justification is not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.

What Does the Catechism Say? Justification

1990 Justification detaches man from sin which contradicts the love of God and purifies his heart of sin. Justification follows upon God's merciful initiative of offering forgiveness and righteousness from high. "JUSTIFICATION IS NOT ONLY FROM THE REMISSION OF SINS, BUT ALSO THE SANCTIFICATION AND RENEWAL OF THE INTERIOR MAN

1991 Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through FAITH in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or justice) here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope and love are poured into our hearts and obedience to the divine will is granted to us.

1992 Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is conferred in Baptism, the sacrament of faith. It conforms us to the righteousness of God, who makes us inwardly just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life.

What Does the Catechism Say? Justification

1993 Justification establishes cooperation between God's grace and man's freedom. On man's part it is expressed by the assent of faith to the Word of God, which invites him to conversion, and in the cooperation of charity with the prompting of the Holy Spirit who precedes and preserves his assent: *When God touches man's heart through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, man himself is not inactive while receiving that inspiration, since he could reject it; and yet, without God's grace, he cannot by his own free will move himself toward justice in God's sight*

1994 Justification is the most excellent work of God's love made manifest in Christ Jesus and granted by the Holy Spirit. It is the opinion of St. Augustine that "the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth," because "heaven and earth will pass away but the salvation and justification of the elect . . . will not pass away."⁴³ He holds also that the justification of sinners surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy. Justification is at the same time the acceptance of God's righteousness through FAITH in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or justice) here means the rectitude of divine love. With justification, faith, hope and love are poured into our hearts and obedience to the divine will is granted to us.

What Does the Catechism Say? On Grace

1996 Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is *favor*, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life.

1997 Grace is a *participation in the life of God*. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body. As an "adopted son" he can henceforth call God "Father," in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church.

1998 This vocation to eternal life is *supernatural*. It depends entirely on God's gratuitous initiative, for he alone can reveal and give himself. It surpasses the power of human intellect and will, as that of every other creature.

1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:

What Does the Catechism Say? On Grace

2000 Sanctifying grace is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. Habitual grace, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification.

2001 The preparation of man for the reception of grace is already a work of grace. This latter is needed to arouse and sustain our collaboration in justification through faith, and in sanctification through charity. God brings to completion in us what he has begun, "since he who completes his work by cooperating with our will began by working so that we might will it: "Indeed we also work, but we are only collaborating with God who works, for his mercy has gone before us. It has gone before us so that we may be healed, and follows us so that once healed, we may be given life; it goes before us so that we may be called, and follows us so that we may be glorified; it goes before us so that we may live devoutly, and follows us so that we may always live with God: for without him we can do nothing.

What Does the Catechism Say? On Grace

2002 God's free initiative demands man's free response, for God has created man in his image by conferring on him, along with freedom, the power to know him and love him. The soul only enters freely into the communion of love. God immediately touches and directly moves the heart of man. He has placed in man a longing for truth and goodness that only he can satisfy. The promises of "eternal life" respond, beyond all hope, to this desire: If at the end of your very good works . . ., you rested on the seventh day, it was to foretell by the voice of your book that at the end of our works, which are indeed "very good" since you have given them to us, we shall also rest in you on the sabbath of eternal life.

Protestant Position on Justification and Faith

According to Luther (and Calvin also), the faith that justifies is not, as the Catholic Church teaches, a firm belief in God's revealed truths and promises (*fides theoretica, dogmatica*), but is the infallible conviction (*fides fiducialis, fiducia*) that God for the sake of Christ will no longer impute to us our sins, but will consider and treat us, as if we were really just and holy, although in our inner selves we remain the same sinners as before. Cf. Solid. Declar. III, sec. 15: "Through the obedience of Christ by faith the just are so declared and reputed, although by reason of their corrupt nature they still are and remain, sinners as long as they bear this mortal body."

1 Protestant Position on Justification and Faith

For Luther, there exists in man side by side two hostile brothers as it were - the one just, the other unjust; the one saint, the other a sinner, the one a child of God, the other a slave of Satan - and this without prospect of a conciliation between the two. For God by his merely judicial absolution from sin does not take away sin itself but spread over it as an outward mantle His own righteousness. Thus as long as the sinner with the 'arm of faith' firmly clings to Christ, he is and will ever remain regenerated, the child of God and heir to heaven. Neither repentance, nor penance, neither love of God nor Good works, nor any other virtue is required.

Canons of the Council of Trent on Justification

Canon 1. If anyone says that man can be justified before God by his own works, whether done by his own natural powers or through the teaching of the law, without divine grace through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

Canon 2. If anyone says that divine grace through Christ Jesus is given for this only, that man may be able more easily to live justly and to merit eternal life, as if by free will without grace he is able to do both, though with hardship and difficulty, let him be anathema.

Council of Trent on Justification

Canon 3. If anyone says that without the predisposing inspiration of the Holy Ghost and without His help, man can believe, hope, love or be repentant as he ought, so that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema.

Canon 4. If anyone says that man's free will moved and aroused by God, by assenting to God's call and action, in no way cooperates toward disposing and preparing itself to obtain the grace of justification, that it cannot refuse its assent if it wishes, but that, as something inanimate, it does nothing whatever and is merely passive, let him be anathema.

Council of Trent on Justification

Canon 5. If anyone says that after the sin of Adam man's free will was lost and destroyed, or that it is a thing only in name, indeed a name without a reality, a fiction introduced into the Church by Satan, let him be anathema.

Canon 6. If anyone says that it is not in man's power to make his ways evil, but that the works that are evil as well as those that are good God produces, not permissively only but also propria et per se, so that the treason of Judas is no less His own proper work than the vocation of St. Paul, let him be anathema.

Council of Trent on Justification

Canon 7. If anyone says that all works done before justification, in whatever manner they may be done, are truly sins, or merit the hatred of God; that the more earnestly one strives to dispose himself for grace, the more grievously he sins, let him be anathema.

Canon 8. If anyone says that the fear of hell, whereby, by grieving for sins, we flee to the mercy of God or abstain from sinning, is a sin or makes sinners worse, let him be anathema.

Canon 9. If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, let him be anathema.

Council of Trent on Justification

Canon 10. If anyone says that men are justified without the justice of Christ, whereby He merited for us, or by that justice are formally just, let him be anathema.

Canon 11. If anyone says that men are justified either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and remains in them, or also that the grace by which we are justified is only the good will of God, let him be anathema.

Canon 12. If anyone says that justifying faith is nothing else than confidence in divine mercy, which remits sins for Christ's sake, or that it is this confidence alone that justifies us, let him be anathema.

Protestant

1, Our justification is by God's grace alone. The Protestant doctrine on justification is mostly similar to the Catholic belief regarding initial justification.

2. Faith alone.

3. A momentary act.

Catholic

1. Our justification is due to God's grace. Our initial justification is without any types of works. (CCC 1996, 1998, 2003 and 2010)

2. After initial justification, faith works through love, plus Baptism (gifts of grace - CCC 1814, 1987, 1991-92, 1997, 2017, 2020)

An on going transformation, yet with distinct beginning (CCC 1987, 1988-80, 199-, 2000) Only the initial justification is a momentary act. Afterward the friends of God are able to increase the justice received (Trent 6, 10. Canon 24)

Protestant	Catholic
4, No works (connected to justification)	4. After initial justification, (by the power of the Holy Spirit are necessary. (CCC 1813-15, 1991))
5, Justification is a legal declaration of 'not guilty' (with no inward change).	5. Justification makes us righteous (not just declared righteous). There is a momentous inward change produced by grace. (CCC 1989-90, 1992, 1999, 2023)
6. Sanctification is distinct from and subsequent to justification.	An on going transformation, yet with distinct beginning (CCC 1987, 1988-80, 199-, 2000) Only the initial justification is a momentary act. Afterward the friends of God are able to increase the justice received (Trent 6, 10. Canon 24)