

Doctrine of Justification

The Catholic View

1. The term justification, means that act by which God declares sinners to be just in His sight.
2. The English word justification comes from the Latin Vulgate, justificara, to make righteous.
3. The Catholic Church defined justification on the basis of the Latin term, and not on the Greek term for justification, which is, dikaiosune, to declare righteous.
4. The problem which arose, as early as the time of Augustine, was that justificara was understood to mean, "to make righteous."
5. This understanding allowed for a system of penance to be introduced to the church, leading to a belief in salvation by good works.
6. For Rome, justification came after sanctification. A person had to become righteous in the sight of God in order to be made righteous, so he could be declared justified. Good works were exalted in this process.
7. Eventually, seven sacraments were established, which included baptism, taking of the Eucharist, penance, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick.

The Seven Catholic Sacraments

The Latin word sacramentum means "a sign of the sacred." The seven sacraments are ceremonies that point to what is sacred, significant, and important for Christians. They are special occasions for experiencing God's saving presence. That's what theologians mean when they say that sacraments are at the same time signs, and instruments of God's grace.

Baptism

For Catholics, the Sacrament of Baptism is the first step in a lifelong journey of commitment, and discipleship. Whether we are baptized as infants, or adults, Baptism is the Church's way of celebrating, and enacting the embrace of God.

Eucharist

Catholics believe the Eucharist, or Communion, is both a sacrifice, and a meal. We believe in the real presence of Jesus, who died for our sins. As we receive Christ's Body and Blood, we also are nourished spiritually, and brought closer to God.

Reconciliation

The Catholic Sacrament of Reconciliation (also known as Penance, or Penance and Reconciliation) has three elements: conversion, confession and celebration. In it we find God's unconditional forgiveness; as a result we are called to forgive others.

Confirmation

Confirmation is a Catholic Sacrament of mature Christian commitment, and a deepening of baptismal gifts. It is one of the three Sacraments of Initiation for Catholics. It is most often associated with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Marriage

For Catholics, the Sacrament of Marriage, or Holy Matrimony, is a public sign that one gives oneself totally to this other person. It is also a public statement about God: the loving union of husband and wife speaks of family values, and also God's values.

Holy Orders

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, or Ordination, the priest being ordained vows to lead other Catholics by bringing them the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), by proclaiming the Gospel, and by providing other means to holiness.

Anointing of the Sick

The Catholic Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, formerly known as Last Rites, or Extreme Unction, is a ritual of healing appropriate not only for physical, but also for mental, and spiritual sickness.

8. By observing the rituals of the church, people were taught they could be made righteous in the sight of God.
9. The idea emerged that God would never declare someone to be righteous, who was not in fact righteous. God would first make a person righteous in some manner, before declaring them justified.
10. The Greek word, *dikaiosisune*, has the idea of accounting, or deeming, a person justified, or righteous, in the eyes of the Law, before they become righteous.
11. Part of the debate over justification, focused on how a person is justified. The biblical answer, and the answer of the Reformers, was, "by faith, alone, apart from the works of the Law."

- *Galatians 2:16* Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.
- *Ephesians 2:8* For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *9* Not of works, lest any man should boast.

12. Rome disagreed. Rome said that how a person is justified in the sight of God is by faith, and good works.

- *James 2:20* But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

13. To speak of justification by faith, is to speak of the means by which a person is declared righteous.

14. Faith is the instrument God uses to cause justification.

15. In Roman Catholic theology, justification is caused by the instrument of baptism.

16. In the sacrament of baptism, grace is infused into the soul.

Special Note.

Ex opera operato, which means, “through the working of the work,” is the Latin phrase Rome depends on for the salvation of the soul in baptism. This means that if a person is baptized, they are immediately placed in a state of grace. This state of grace must not be resisted when grace is infused.

17. The infusion, or the pouring into the soul of grace, is saving grace.

18. As a person receives this infusion of grace, they are placed in a state of grace.

19. They are kept in that state of grace, unless, or until, the person commits a sin that is so grievous it is called a mortal sin.

20. Such a transgression is called a mortal sin, in opposition to a venial sin, because it kills the grace that was infused in the soul through the sacrament of baptism. Grace is removed entirely from the soul. There was no consensus as to what constituted a mortal sin.

21. As a person grows to adulthood, they may still have faith, but, because of being in a state of mortal sin, they are no longer justified. They have made shipwreck of their soul.

- *1 Timothy 1:19* Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck.

22. In order for such a person to be justified, they have to come through, what the Council of Trent called, “the second plank of justification”, which is the sacrament of penance.

23. The sacrament of penance became the focal point of the Reformation, reflected in the sale of indulgences, or papal forgiveness of sin, for a price.
24. There were several elements to the sacrament of penance in order for a person to be restored to a state of grace and receive justification.
- A reaffirmation of faith.
 - Sacramental confession.
 - Priestly absolution.
 - Performance of works of satisfaction.
25. The Catholic Church was careful to say that the works of satisfaction did not provide condign merit, meaning, merit that is so virtuous, merit that is so authentic, that a just God would be obligated to reward the person.
26. The works of satisfaction were a lesser kind of merit that was defined as congruous merit, meaning, merit that was real merit, but it depended upon prior reception of grace. It is merit that is less than condign merit, but it is merit that is congruous to restore a person to justification.
27. The means by which a justification took place is sacramentally.
28. The Reformers said that the instrumental cause of justification was faith. That was the tool, or instrument, God uses, is faith. Faith is the means by which the righteousness of Christ is given to a sinner.
29. This concept raised another facet of the debate concerning grace that comes through infusion, and grace that comes through imputation.
30. The Catholic Church insisted that grace is infused through the instrument, through the sacrament of baptism.
31. Rome believed that grace was poured into the soul, and thus, the righteousness of Christ is poured into the soul of every person who receives the sacrament of baptism.
32. Without that infusion of grace, and the righteousness of Christ, there is no justification.

Special Note.

The Roman Catholic Church has always taught that the work of Christ is essential for our justification. The question is how does the work of Christ, and the merit of Christ, become appropriated to a sinner? How does the righteousness of Christ benefit a sinner? Rome answered by saying that the righteousness of Christ is infused into the soul through the sacrament of baptism. Then, the person must assent to, and co-operate with, the infused grace to such a degree that they become actually righteous. True righteousness inheres in them. Then, when they become righteous, they are justified, or declared righteous. This is why there is the need for purgatory.

33. The Reformers insisted that grace is imputed through the instrument of faith.

- *Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*
- *Romans 4:20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; 21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. 22 And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. 23 Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; 24 But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;*
- *James 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*

34. With respect to justification, the Reformers believed that God justifies by imputation.

35. Imputation involves a transfer from one person's account to another. The righteousness of Jesus is transferred to the believer's account.

36. When God looks at the sinner's account, He sees the balance is paid in full. His account is settled. He is justified in the eyes of the law.

37. This view of imputation has two facets to it.

38. When Jesus died at Calvary as the sin bearer, God transferred the sins of the elect to Him.

39. The drama of the Old Testament Day of Atonement illustrated this concept. The priest would lay his hands on the scape goat, signifying a symbolic transfer of the guilt of the people to the victim which was driven out.

40. Then, the priest would slaughter the other animal, and offer it as a sacrifice, a substitute for the sins of the people.

41. God is the Suffering Servant. He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. God punished our sins when He punished Christ.

42. God did more. He transferred sin to the Savior. Jesus is a worthy Savior because He obeyed all the righteousness of the Law. Christ was actively obedient. He achieved righteousness.

43. Christ not only died for us, He lived a perfect life for us as well.

44. When a person believes in Christ, God transfers the active righteousness of Christ to him. We are in Christ by faith.

- *Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*
45. There is a double imputation that takes place. The unrighteousness of a sinner is transferred to Christ. The righteousness of Christ, is transferred to the believer.
 46. This righteousness of Christ is a foreign, or alien righteousness. It is something outside the sinner. It is something imputed to him. It is, extra nos, outside of the sinner.
 47. If a person has to wait until perfect righteousness is inside of him in order to be justified, he will have to wait forever. An eternity in purgatory cannot cleanse the soul of sin.
 48. The good news of the gospel, is that God justifies the ungodly by giving to the unrighteous, a righteousness that is not their own. It is someone else's righteousness that alone meets the standard of God's perfect righteousness.