

You Belong - July 30-August 6

Q #86. Since we have been delivered from our misery by grace through Christ without any merit of our own, why then should we do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed us by his blood, is also restoring us by his Spirit into his image, so that with our whole lives we may show that we are thankful to God for his benefits, so that he may be praised through us, so that we may be assured of our faith by its fruits, and so that by our godly living our neighbors may be won over to Christ.

Memory verse: "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."
1 Peter 2.5-10

Devotion 1: The writers of the catechism seem to be echoing the Apostle Paul from Romans 6: "Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?" It would be tempting to think that because the Christian is forgiven without any merit of his/her own that it technically wouldn't matter how one might live because forgiveness and grace will be waiting for them no matter what. And yes, that is true (thanks be to God!): No matter what, God meets us with his grace, showers us with his love, heal us with his forgiveness. But we do not go on sinning so that we can more and more grow closer to God and so God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can restore us into his image.

We are being restored! The old habits and patterns don't define who we are because we are being restored, like an old piece of furniture sanded and refinished after years of wear and tear and ready for a new season. We are being restored, not for ourselves, but for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We show our gratitude, we praise God, and we walk with confidence and assurance of God's love for us so that others might know that same love. "So that our neighbors may be won over to Christ," as the catechism puts it. That's quite the charge, but by God's grace and the faith that God gives us, we can live holy lives, godly lives.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, give me the strength to do good things in your name, and help me to live a holy life of thanksgiving for all the love and grace you have shown to me. Amen.

Devotion 2: Throughout its history, the church has taught something called Sanctification. Sanctification is the way that God, through Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, makes us his holy people. This is what the catechism is talking about when it says that Christ is "restoring us by his Spirit into his image." But really? Holy? Isn't Holiness is for those like St. Theresa of Calcutta or St. Frances of Assisi, those people whose lives of faith have echoed across the world and throughout the centuries?

We may be tempted to think of holiness as a certain spiritual and intellectual mark that we strive and strive for but only a few reach the summit. But this is not so. All of us through faith in Jesus are holy and are being made holy. It is a spiritual journey that God takes us on, but it is also a reality that forms who we are right now. As it says in 1 Peter, "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."

So be holy, y'all! Be holy because God has chosen us for holy lives. God has shown us his love and now is forming us, restoring us, more and more into his image.

Prayer: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, help me to be faithful and live a holy life, show me ways to grow in my faith and love of you, so that I can know you better and show others your love. Amen.