

BASIC TENETS OF THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

BASIS OF TEACHING

The Liberal Catholic Church draws the central inspiration of its work from an earnest faith in the living Christ. It holds that the vitality of a church gains in proportion as its members not only revere and worship a Christ who lived two thousand years ago, but also strive to affirm in their lives the eternal Christ of whom St. John (VIII,58) speaks: "Before Abraham was, I am." It is the Christ who ever lives as a mighty spiritual presence in the world, guiding and sustaining His people.

The Liberal Catholic Church accepts in the plain, and literal sense the marvelous promise of Christ when on earth: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age," (St. Matthew XXVIII,20).

Another promise he gave: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (St. Matthew XVIII,20). It regards these promises as validating all Christian worship, of whatever kind, so long as it be earnest and true. But it further holds that while the promise of the presence with individual believers is thus effective, our Lord also appointed certain rites or sacraments, called 'mysteries' in the Eastern Church, for the greater helping of his people, to be handed down in his Church as special channels of his power and blessing. Through these 'means of grace' he is ever present within His Church, giving to his people the wonderful privilege of fellowship and Communion with him, guiding and protecting them from birth to death

THE SACRAMENTS AND APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

The Liberal Catholic Church recognizes seven fundamental sacraments, which it enumerates as follows: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Absolution, Holy Unction, Holy Matrimony, Holy Orders. To ensure their efficacy to the worshipper, it guards with the greatest care the administration of all sacramental rites and has preserved an episcopal succession which is acknowledged as valid throughout the whole of those Churches of Christendom which maintain the Apostolic Succession of orders as a tenet of their faith.

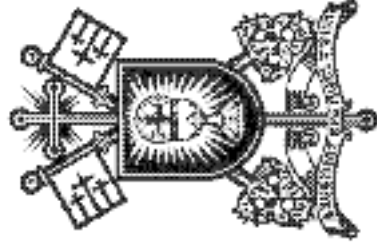
SCRIPTURES AND TRADITION

Besides perpetuating these sacramental rites, Christ's immediate followers gave forth to His Church a body of teachings and certain principles of ethics. Much of this original teaching of the Christ has no doubt been lost; some of it has been obscured by the accretions of the ages. What remains is a priceless heritage, to be guarded with loving care and reverence.

The Liberal Catholic Church regards the holy scriptures the creeds and the traditions of the church as the means by which the teachings of Christ have been handed down to his followers. It does not invest them with an idea of literal infallibility-nor in view of their contents and their historical career does it see how any other church can logically do so. It deduces from them certain principles of belief and conduct, which it regards as fundamental, true and, while not exhaustive, sufficient as a basis of right understanding and right conduct.

In the formulation of this body of teachings and ethics The Liberal Catholic Church takes what in some respects is a distinctive position among the churches of Christendom. The Christian church has always contained within itself different schools of thought. The medieval schoolmen who systematized theology in the Western church followed the method of Aristotle; but the earliest among the Church Fathers of philosophic bent were Platonists, and The Liberal Catholic Church, while not undervaluing the clarity and precision of the scholastic theory, has much in common with the Platonic and Neo-Platonic schools of Christian tradition. It holds that a theology can justify itself and be of permanent value only in so far as it partakes of the character of total divine wisdom. That is to say, that while certain of its higher teachings remain within the category of revelation, because they are far beyond our grasp and attainment, others less remote are capable of re-verification, and even of development, by those who have unfolded within themselves the necessary spiritual faculties. Man being in essence divine can ultimately know the Deity whose life he shares, and, by gradually unfolding through successive lives on earth the divine powers that are latent in him, can grow into knowledge and mastery of the universe, which is all the expression of that divine life. This method of approach to divine truth is of ancient usage. It finds complete justification in scripture and has constantly appeared in the religious thought of both East and West denoting that both mysticism and eclectic philosophy are essential ingredients of religion.

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Thus, truth is recognized in all and any universal religious experience, wherever it is to be found and under whatever outer form.

THE FEMININE ASPECT OF DIVINITY

The Liberal Catholic Church recognizes and pays deep homage to the maternal aspect of divinity, the mother-nature of God. The latter is looked upon as all-pervading, unfathomable, divine mystery. It brings forth and nourishes all created life. Its highest expression is the World Mother as represented by the Holy Lady Mary whose tender care for all women and children and for all who suffer supplements the divine ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. This divine principle is shown forth on earth in the sanctity of life and the mystery of birth and by the sacrifice and love of human motherhood which call forth our deepest reverence and respect.

ANCIENT TRUTHS

With men of old it is held that there are three truths which are absolute and which cannot be lost, for they are eternal in their divine message:

"The soul of man is immortal and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor have no limit.

"The principle which gives life dwells in us and -without us, is undying, and eternally beneficent, is not seen or heard or felt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception.

"Each man is his own absolute law giver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself, the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment.

"These truths, which are as great as life itself, are as simple as the simplest mind of men. Feed the hungry with them."

UNITY OF ALL RELIGIONS

The Liberal Catholic Church believes that there is a body of doctrine and mystical experience common to all the great religions of the world and which cannot be claimed as the exclusive possession of any. Moving within the orbit of Christianity and regarding itself as a distinctive Christian church it nevertheless holds that the other great religions of the world are also divinely inspired and that all proceed from a common source, though different religions stress different aspects of the various teachings and some aspects may even temporarily be ignored. These teachings, as facts in nature, rest on their own intrinsic merit. They form that true catholic faith which is catholic because it is the statement of universal principles. Well did St. Augustine say: "The identical thing that we now call the Christian religion existed among the ancients and has not been lacking from the beginnings of the human race until the coming of Christ in the flesh, from which moment on the true religion, which already existed, began to be called Christian." (Retract I. XIII,3). And the same principle was in reality involved in the well-known declaration of St. Vincent of Lerins: "That let us hold which everywhere, always and by all has been believed: for this is truly and rightly catholic." The Liberal Catholic Church, therefore, does not seek to convert people from one religion to another.