

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto, CS 1/18/09

One World Religion?

There are many people, including Catholics, who believe in the undefined Ecumenism and Inter-faith philosophy. They believe that there are many paths to God and no one should be judgmental about anything. Even a cursory look at much literature used in Catholic schools, CCD classes or found in the pamphlet racks of churches, might convince us of the infiltration of *Immanentism* (God is in everything and everywhere in the same way), *Neo-Gnosticism* (truth is relative and therefore self-justifying), *Pelagianism* (man saves himself - no grace, no Sacraments, no Church), *New Age* (the world is in a dynamic tension toward self-fulfillment), etc. There may be beauty and wisdom in all religious traditions, but there is the fullness of truth in only one - the Catholic Church. One religion cannot be as good as another because different religions teach different, and even contradictory, things. No matter how sincere the adherents of various religions are, some of them are objectively wrong.

Either Jesus is God, or He is not God. Either Hell exists, or it does not exist. Either it is wrong to kill an unborn child or it is not wrong. Either one and one are two, or one and one are three. Those on both sides of these propositions cannot be equally correct, no matter how sincere they might be. Someone has to be wrong, so it does make a difference which side you are on, especially in matters of one's eternal salvation.

Writing in a 1959 encyclical entitled *Ad Petri Cathedram*, Blessed Pope John XXIII rejected this theory of religious indifferentism, calling it an "*absurd proposition*" and saying that such a theory "*is directed to the destruction of all religions, but particularly the Catholic faith, which cannot be placed on a level with other religions without serious injustice, since it alone is true.*"

"How, - Blessed John asked - *can God, who is truth, approve or tolerate the indifference, neglect, and sloth of those who attach no importance to matters on which our eternal salvation depends; who attach no importance to pursuit and attainment of necessary truths, or to the offering of that proper worship which is owed to God alone?*"

Forty years after the Council, Catholics find themselves divided by many religious appeals. This tendency to choose selectively in matters of religious beliefs and practices has been termed "cafeteria Catholicism" and has only been exacerbated by the growing relativism and individualism of a consumer-oriented society. Instead of being "leaven" and "salt" within society, Catholics too often run the risk of an indiscriminate accommodation to contemporary culture and nonchalance that weakens the Church's evangelical witness. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap. issued a blunt challenge to his fellow Catholics: "*As Catholics we need to take a much tougher and more self-critical look at ourselves as believers; at the issues underlying today's erosion of Catholic identity; and at the wholesale assimilation - absorption might be a better word - of Catholics by American culture.*" (Archbishop Charles J. Chaput, *Render Unto Caesar: Serving the Nations by Living Our Catholic Beliefs in Political Life*, 2008).