

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

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Traditionally Speaking by S. Casarotto 8/16/09

GOD, Yes – CHURCH, No

In his 1968 book *Introduction to Christianity*, Pope Benedict XVI takes up a question which he describes as a “stumbling block” to the Christian faith. He puts the issue this way: “It irritates us that God should have to be passed on to us through outward forms: through Church, sacraments, dogmas... Does God dwell in institutions, events or words? As the eternal Being, does He not contact us from within? God does not need any intermediary channels by which to enter the soul of the individual...nothing can reach intimately and deeply into man than He.” This thinking is rooted in the notion that God cannot enter into the sinful human world. It is a thought embraced by Pelagius and later by Martin Luther: human nature is unredeemable and is always a hindrance to the grace of God. The visible Church and the Sacraments it administers are therefore only human inventions. Man has direct access to God.

In his book *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict wrote: “It is in the Church that the Word of God is always in the present.” Answering his own question in another book, “*Why I still believe in the Church?*”, the Pope also said “Because it is the only boat of salvation there is.” Msgr. Joseph Murphy, author of *Christ Our Joy: The Theological Vision of Pope Benedict XVI* and an official of the Vatican Secretariat of State, puts it this way: “To speak or act as a Christian means that one is never simply an isolated self. To become a Christian entails accepting the Church in its entirety into oneself, or, more precisely, it means allowing oneself to be interiorly accepted into her.”

PS - Last week’s blurb “*No Blessing*” at Communion overheated the Internet. It received an overwhelming number of supportive comments. You may check the following sites:

Comments: <http://wdtprs.com/blog/2009/08/why-a-priest-wont-give-communion-blessings/>

Vatican Position: http://www.adoremus.org/0209CDW_Blessing.html