The Church and our Hope of Salvation

Summary of Catholic Apologetics by Fr. John Laux, Section III, Chapter 6. The chapter addresses the difficult question of the possibility of salvation outside of the Catholic Church

Outside the Church there is no Salvation

- **The Church is the Body of Christ**
  - It is the mission of the Church to incorporate men of all time and all places into the Body of Christ.
  - If the Church is universal, world-wide, and all-embracing, she must be exclusive.
  - Because the Church is the kingdom of God on earth, she cannot admit that men can be saved outside of her.

- **One God, One Christ, One Baptism, One Church:**
  - Either the Church is the Body of Christ on Earth, and the Kingdom of God, or she is nothing.
  - Just a there can be no second Christ, there can be no second Church. Mohammed and John Smith are false prophets and their churches are false religions.

- **Early teachers of Christ's doctrines always taught salvation was through the Church.**
  - Christ himself taught "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican." (Matthew 18:17)
  - St. Cyprian said "extra ecclesiam nulla salus", "Outside the Church there is no salvation."
  - St. Augustine: "No man can find salvation save in the Catholic Church".

- **Are not all non-Catholics doomed to hell by this doctrine?**
  - The Catholic Dogma "Outside the Church there is no salvation" must be understood in context of entire teaching of the Church.
  - It was directed against Heretical sects, not individuals. Its purpose was to defend Orthodoxy and safeguard the truths of faith maintained by Catholic Church
  - No Church set up by men against Christs Church can be a means of salvation
  - Churches that are anti-Catholic and cannot bestow supernatural life.

- **Some Churches are not anti-Catholic. When they separated they took a considerable body of Catholic truth with them, and some means of grace.**
  - The Church has always recognized the validity of Baptism by heretical Christian sects.
  - The Catholic Church recognizes valid Holy Orders (and therefore sacraments) in schismatic (but not heretical) churches.
    - Eastern Orthodox, Jansenist, and "Old Catholic" churches in Europe are recognized as schismatic, not heretical.
    - It is the "Catholic" element in these churches that allow them to impart grace and be means of salvation.
  - Lutheran, Anglican, and all "Reformed" Churches are considered heretical and sacraments are not valid.

- **Baptism of Desire can be a means of Grace for those pious souls outside the Christian Church.**
  - Baptism of Desire is an act of prefect contrition, combined with an ardent desire to be a member of the true Church of God.
  - Pagans who do not know of the necessity of Baptism, but wish to do all that is required for salvation (good intent) may have an implicit desire of Baptism.
  - Everyone that Loveth is born of God, (1 John 4:7)
  - Since Christ appeared on earth there is no longer purely natural morality. . . the grace of Christ puts the germ of supernatural life into all souls, even pagans.

- **God does not refuse grace to anyone in good faith who is outside the Church through invincible ignorance.**
  - Whoever "without his fault" is not a Catholic, but sincerely seeks the truth and keeps the commandments belongs to the invisible soul of the Church and can be saved.
  - He is not saved without the Church of Christ or against her, but through her.
  - There is no invisible Church, but there is a spiritual (Invisible) component of the visible Church.
  - Pius IX: "Those who labor under invincible ignorance . . yet keep the precepts of the Law of nature, who are prepared to obey God and lead an honorable life are, by the workings of God's light and grace, to attain eternal life.

- **Those outside the Church through no fault of their own can be saved, but they are deprived of the benefits enjoyed by Catholics.**
  - The spirit of Christ and graces bestowed by the Spirt are found in their original purity, fullness, and power in the Catholic Church, and in her alone.

- **Catholic Church is the Only True Church**
  - Augustine: "She is the Holy Church, the One Church, the True Church, the Catholic Church . . . which strives against all heresies."
  - Cyprian: "God is One and Christ is One, His Church is One, his See is One, founded by the voice of the Lord on Peter. No other altar can be set up or other priesthood instituted. . . Who so gathers elsewhere scatters."