

The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith rarely publishes a document. However, two modern mindsets make the true salvation offered by the Catholic Church "difficult to understand" and necessitate a critique. A new letter aims to counter these mindsets and deepen our grasp of salvation.

When the Pope speaks about creation or mercy, people cheer. However, he is concerned that the actual responses to his calls are few and often shallow. As a result, the Holy Father asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to study more substantially some of his preaching. The Congregation recently released the letter "On Certain Aspects of Christian Salvation." The letter outlines Christian teaching on how to find happiness and peace and stay on the way to ultimate flourishing, which is eternal salvation.

These teachings are strikingly different from what many people embrace today. Especially in Western societies, most people believe that the individual person, the autonomous and free subject, is responsible for self-management and self-improvement to achieve happiness.

The prevailing current philosophy is that you can do it all by yourself, or you can seek help to get there with modern science, technocratic structures, governments, education, and health professionals. It's all up to you, or at least, it's up to us.

The letter explains that these mindsets reflect a return of two ancient heresies. Pelagianism is a heresy that denies original sin and supposes that with grace you can save yourself. Gnosticism is a heresy

that sees Jesus as one of several beings in a divine hierarchy and proposes that you can achieve salvation by enlightenment.

Against the new Pelagians, the Vatican emphasizes that, indeed, Jesus Christ is our great teacher and example—but He is more than that. His forgiveness goes before all our efforts. God the Son loved us while we were still sinners.

Against the new Gnostics, the Pope insists that salvation is not just a spiritual, interior experience. Salvation is not liberation from your body or your history. Instead, it means that divine grace touches the real you, body and soul, with all your history. Not only is your soul immortal, and made happy by coming to know this, but also your body is raised from the tomb, and soul and body together produce the fruits of redemption, acts of mercy and charity.

Yes, salvation is also about others. Self-redemption is not the solution. It cannot liberate you.

Health and wealth, contrary to popular belief, are not the most important things. If they were, you would not have absolute dignity, because your value would depend on your health and wealth, neither of which is lasting even if you possess them now.

Faith knows that God Himself loves you, unconditionally and personally. Faith liberates you from radical individualism: you are not alone, because God not only exists, but He is also there for you. You are essentially connected to others, whether you know it and act accordingly or not.

Faith also protects from technocratic and therapeutic illusions. Paradise awaits us, but in this world, we cannot create it. Any time people have tried to create paradise, they have created an earthly hell.

For Christians, the entire world is God's good creation, but sin and evil affect—even pervert—it. What human sin has broken, only divine redemption can fix. Through the seven sacraments, we confess our imperfection and accept God's grace.

Faith is not only about understanding evil and fighting against it. It starts with realizing that God is stronger. Faith in God the Creator *and* the Redeemer is at the heart of what Pope Francis teaches and does.