

THE CHURCH AND THE FAULTS OF THE PAST

Fr Justin Ford, Theology at the Pub, European Bier Café, 2nd September 2019

‘Upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’

In two thousand years of the papacy, there have been just a very few abdications. One of these was in the year 1045, Pope Benedict IX. His reason for abdicating? Well, he wanted to get married. Now, his abdication was probably a good thing, because his pontificate had been fairly appalling. Actually, the century-and-a-half before him had been the worst time for the papacy, dominated by the local nobility getting their own favourites on the papal throne. So, some quite unworthy men became pope.

There was John XII, who became pope as a teenager in the year 955. And Benedict IX, who became pope in 1032 aged about 20, followed John’s example of violence and immorality. Maybe no worse than some of the secular rulers over the centuries – but not what we expect of a pope. Finally, as I said, he abdicated in order to marry. And, he sold the papacy to his successor, taking a large sum of money from the man who would be pope after him. So: while it’s good to remember the large number of *saints* in papal history, there have also been times when the forces of evil infiltrated – though very importantly, evil could never take control of the very essence of the Church, the truth of her teachings, the holiness of the Mass and the Sacraments.

As Catholics, we always remember the words of Jesus to St Peter, ‘You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’ (*Mt 16:18*) Those words, linked as well with other promises of Christ, give us the certainty that the Catholic Church, founded by Jesus on Peter as the first Pope, will be upheld in truth and grace until Jesus returns in glory at the end of time. But they also warn us that the gates of hell – the spiritual forces of evil – will battle with great fury until the end of time to *try* to tear down his Church. So it’s always good to remember: the life of the Church isn’t a tea party. It’s a spiritual war. And when the forces of evil do infiltrate, and even seem to get the upper hand – that doesn’t lead good people to desert the army. It leads them to fight all the harder.

The great convert Blessed John Henry Newman, who’ll be canonised next month, gave a powerful image. The Catholic Church, he said, ‘inherits the promise made to the disciples, that they should take up serpents, and, if they drank any deadly thing, it should not hurt them. When evil has clung to her, and the barbarian people have looked on with curiosity or in malice, till she should have swollen or fallen down suddenly, she has shaken the venomous beast into the fire, and felt no harm.’ (*Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*)

He’s drawing there on the incident near the end of the *Acts of the Apostles*, (28:1-7) when St Paul, shipwrecked on Malta, gets bitten by a viper, but to the amazement of the natives, he’s unaffected by it. So maybe Newman was thinking of times in the history of the Church like the tenth and early eleventh centuries, when evil *had* clung to her. And in his image, we can imagine the serpent, insane with hatred, spying out the figure of the Church, then striking, and injecting its venom. But then suddenly, the superior power of divine grace shines forth, and she casts away the evil, as something alien to her true nature. Because shortly after Benedict IX, the pope who abdicated to marry, comes the great reform of the papacy and the clergy under St Leo IX and St Gregory VII, and the Church is slowly led towards the glory of the High Middle Ages – still not a perfect time, but a great improvement.

So, those times of corruption in the papacy: one of a number of examples of evil in the 2000 year history of the Catholic Church. These are things that non-Catholics might raise in discussions with us; and things that maybe raise questions in our own minds. Because in the Creed, we do profess our belief in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Faith tells us the Church *is* holy. So the question arises: how does that fit in with the various evils scattered across history?

‘The Church and the Faults of the Past’ – divine and human aspects

I’ll refer here to a document published by the International Theological Commission in the year 2000: *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past* (which is also the title of my talk this evening). The International Theological Commission is a body of theologians set up by Pope Paul VI in 1969 as an advisory body to the Magisterium. And in the lead-up to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, celebrating 2000 years since the birth of Christ, one of the themes Pope John Paul II had for the Jubilee was what he called the *purification of memory*, reflecting on some of the shadows of the past, and asking forgiveness. So the Theological Commission was asked to explore that theme.

At the opening of its document the Commission quoted Pope John Paul’s words, ‘As the Successor of Peter, I ask that in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she received from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters.’ So: the distinction between the *holiness* the Church receives from *the Lord*, and the sins of the Church’s *members*, her leaders included.

Now, the Commission made an important clarification: we can’t divide the *visible* Church, or what some call the ‘institutional’ Church, from a supposedly *invisible*, spiritual Church. The Second Vatican Council taught that one and the same Church is both spiritual and visible. (*Lumen Gentium* 8) That means we can’t simply say, ‘Oh, these bad things were done by the *visible institutional* Church, but our commitment is to the *hidden spiritual* Church.’

However, where we *can* make a distinction is between what comes from Christ – meaning things like her teachings, her sacraments, her visible hierarchical structure; and on the other hand, what *merely* comes from human beings. And that brings in human free will. We can misuse what God has given us. And what comes from Christ is all that we’re really ultimately committed to, because that’s where we get the divine aspect. So the merely human aspect – well, sometimes that’s still *compatible* with what comes from Christ: for example, different human customs. But sometimes, the human element is actually *in conflict* with what comes from Christ: sin and error in the Church.

So: the divine element and the human element. Pope Francis, speaking to journalists a while back, expressed the same duality. After saying how the Church should apologise for various wrongs, he added, ‘when I say “the Church”, I mean Christians; the Church is holy, we are sinners!’

Back in 1968, Pope St Paul VI expressed something similar in the *Credo of the People of God*, (which I strongly recommend to your reading). So he proclaimed, ‘[The Church] is holy though she has sinners in her bosom, because she herself has no other life but that of grace: it is by living by her life that her members are sanctified; it is by removing themselves from her life that they fall into sins and disorders that prevent the radiation of her sanctity. This is why she

suffers and does penance for these offences, of which she has the power to free her children through the Blood of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit.’

So: the Church ‘suffers and does penance for these offences’. The Document of the Theological Commission says this: ‘...the Church *is* touched by the sinfulness of her children. She is holy in being made so by the Father through the sacrifice of the Son and the gift of the Spirit. She is also *in a certain sense* sinner, in really taking upon herself the sin of those whom she has generated in Baptism. This is analogous to the way Christ Jesus took on the sin of the world.’ (italics added)

We might know the words of St Paul in his *Letter to the Ephesians* about the perfect holiness of the Church, the Bride of Christ: ‘Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.’ (5:25-27)

In relation to this, the Theological Commission quotes St Thomas Aquinas: ‘To be a glorious Church, with neither spot nor wrinkle, is the *ultimate* end to which we are brought by the Passion of Christ. Hence, this will be the case *only* in the heavenly homeland, not here on the way of pilgrimage, where “if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves”’. (*Summa Theologiae* III, 8, 3, ad 2; italics added) So: a bit of complexity in how we describe the holiness of the Church, our Holy Mother, who embraces her sinful children.

Various evils in Church history

So, what are these evils in the Church that we’re talking about? I gave the example at the start of papal corruption. Of course, every pope in history has been a sinner to one degree or another, like all of us. But a few of them stand out for iniquity – like John XII and Benedict IX; or in the Renaissance, Alexander VI, the Borgia pope. But we can get some broader categories of evils in the Church from a Mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in St Peter’s Basilica on the First Sunday of Lent in the Year of Great Jubilee. After the Homily, a number of cardinals read a series of prayers for forgiveness, looking back over the Church’s history.

So after a general confession of sins, there was the confession of sins committed *in the service of truth* – meaning intolerance and persecution, like the Inquisition. Then, sins that harmed *the unity of the Church*, when Catholics have contributed to division among Christians. Sins against *the people of Israel*: so, the different forms of persecution of the Jews in particular. Then it named sins against *love, peace, the rights of peoples, respect for cultures and religions* – so, referring to the different times Catholics, whether popes or monarchs, have instigated unjust wars, or referring to some of the oppression that took place at the time of European colonisation. Next they mentioned sins against *the dignity of women and the unity of the human race*. We know that despite the great contribution that Christian faith *has* made to position of women, it’s taken a long time for all the consequences of that to permeate the Church’s understanding. Then, the unity of the human race – the reference there is to racial and ethnic discrimination. And finally, it named sins against *the fundamental rights of the person*.

This was shortly before the abuse scandals really exploded in the Church’s consciousness in 2002. And obviously, when we think of this whole topic of evils in the history of the Church, one of the things in our minds is inevitably the abuse crisis. I’m not going to focus on that,

because for one thing, with all its different aspects it would easily take up the whole session; and because it's an ongoing issue, it brings in lots of elements beyond the theological. But a lot of the things I'll say will obviously be of application to *any* evils in the history of the Church, so to the abuse crisis in particular.

So: faced with various scandals from Church history across two thousand years, how should we respond? Well first, the Theological Commission tells us, we need to have an accurate picture of the real history. Mixed in with valid charges are all sorts of legends and generalisations and false accusations. Often, too, *perspective* is missing. So, there can be a very selective view of history, that sidelines all the huge *benefits* the Church has brought – obviously from a spiritual viewpoint, so much goodness, and truth, and holiness; but even in secular terms, the advance of knowledge and civilisation and human dignity. And, a selective view can also downplay that the very same evils we find in Church history, like wars or persecutions, have obviously also been present *outside* the Church – and often enough, even more strongly. In other words the problem isn't with the Faith as such, but with the human race!

We should also distinguish between sins committed in full knowledge and guilt, and mistakes made in good faith in cases where the implications of the Gospel haven't yet fully permeated people's thinking. The Holy Spirit works gently and gradually with the whole human race, and that includes Catholics. The Gospel comes to a person, to a society, already influenced in all sorts of ways, positive and negative, by their culture and history, and that has an impact on how completely they receive the Gospel. And that includes not just the laity, but the hierarchy: they're not magically immune from their culture. So it's only step-by-step that the Church has fully applied Gospel principles to matters like, for example, slavery or religious freedom. No false teachings on such matters have ever been, or will ever be, proclaimed as dogmas of faith, and yet on the other hand the full truth doesn't get understood and proclaimed all at once either. This is what we call the development of doctrine: the Holy Spirit keeps leading us deeper and deeper in our understanding of the fullness of truth that Christ revealed.

The document of the Theological Commission speaks about the need to assess the past within the context and understandings of the time, and the different paradigm when Church and society were totally intertwined; and yet, without totally relativising moral principles to the historical situation. So the document stated, 'Both an apologetics that seeks to justify everything and an unwarranted laying of blame...must be avoided.'

Now, it's when we've cleared away all these matters that we're faced with the real sinfulness of Catholics. And it's then we can say – leaving final judgment of individuals, of course, to God himself – 'Guilty as charged!' Christ has promised us the truth of the Church's teachings, and the grace of the Sacraments, but these don't guarantee that we'll live accordingly. Free will can always reject grace and truth. A lot of leaders in the Church have been saints, but others have been unworthy – even as one of the Twelve Apostles was himself a traitor.

Sin in the Church is actually what Christ prophesied

And Jesus actually warned that the 'kingdom of heaven', in the form it takes in this present world as the Church on earth, would be like a net, containing good fish and bad (*Mt* 13:47-50), or a field where the enemy has sown weeds among the wheat (*Mt* 13:24-30). So how could the actual *fulfilment* of his prophecies that we see over the course of history invalidate his promises? Jesus also speaks of the unfaithful steward, a parable applying very naturally to unfaithful

Church leaders: ‘If that servant says to himself, “My master is delayed in coming,” and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him.’ (Lk 12:42, 45-46, 48)

And Jesus said to the disciples about the Jewish religious leaders, ‘The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach.’ (Mt 23:2-3) In the same way, we always trust Church *teachings*, guided by the Holy Spirit, even if transmitted through sinful leaders; but, we don’t follow the *example* of the sinful leaders themselves.

The Sacraments aren’t magic

Now, an important point to note is that a lot of those categories of sins that were included in the request for forgiveness at the liturgy in St Peter’s I mentioned were sins of *lay* Catholics – for example, in the history of colonialism. And sometimes as well, it was the clergy who stood up for the rights of the oppressed against what some of the laity were doing.

Often, when people discuss the evils present in Church history, they typically *just* mean, sins of the popes, of the hierarchy, of the clerics. But that’s actually a very *clericalist* approach. Because the Church *isn’t* identified with the hierarchy: it includes *all* her baptised members. And obviously, the Sacrament of Holy Orders doesn’t magically completely immunise someone from sin any more than Baptism or Confirmation do. And yet – people still typically have this feeling that the sins of priests challenge their faith in a way that the sins of the laity *don’t* challenge faith: as though, from the promises of Christ, we would have expected the ordained to all be saints. Well, quite mistaken of course. Now, whether this makes the theological problem better or worse, I’m not sure, because it means when we think of sin in the Church, we need to include all the sins of the laity as well! Maybe we should be nearly as shocked by the sins of the laity who violate their *Baptism*, as the clergy who violate their *Ordination* – or maybe, not be especially surprised by either. We all have free will.

This point – that the Sacraments aren’t magic – also applies to the Eucharist. So if someone receives Communion while deliberately remaining in a state of grave sin, that actually makes them spiritually worse off, not better, since it’s then the grave sin of sacrilege. So, we can easily see how even those who are often receiving the Sacraments, wouldn’t necessarily become holy – for example, the corrupt popes when they celebrated Mass. Again, it’s not any lack in the power of the Sacraments. It’s the misuse of the Sacraments by free will.

If our faith depends on the goodness of the clergy, that’s clericalism

It’s also actually a form of clericalism to have our faith influenced by deficiencies in the hierarchy. If we thought that the truth of Church teachings was *because* this or that pope or bishop was so wise or so holy, then the discovery that they actually *weren’t* wise or holy *would* logically undermine our faith in the Church teachings. Or, if we thought that the grace of the Sacraments was because of the holiness of the *minister*, then the discovery that the minister *wasn’t* holy would undermine our trust in the grace of that particular sacrament.

But actually, no mere human being, no matter how holy, could produce the grace of the Sacraments. And no mere human being is wise enough for us to put faith in their teachings as

infallible. (And really, it's almost idolatry to suppose that they were.) It's only because *God* guides Church teachings, according to Christ's promises, that we put faith in them. It's only because *Christ* acts in the Sacraments that we believe they confer grace. The wisdom or the holiness of the human instrument God uses – well, it's an enhancement. But it's not central. Christ is central, not the priest.

Reason, not emotion

Another thing to keep in mind is that, in these questions of evils in the Church, people often form their opinions just by emotion. For example, when people think about how heretics were burnt at the stake in some periods in the past, strong emotions can naturally enough arise against that. And that's a *good* thing. We *should* have negative emotions when we hear about evils. And actually, as Catholics, we should have a *deeper* sense of the evil of sin. So when someone attacking the Church denounces something genuinely evil from Church history, then we should denounce the evil even more strongly than them. It's a good strategy, for one thing! But also, it's what *should* be the case, if we love good and hate evil. And the more we love the Church, the more we hate the evil that hides her true face.

The trouble is when someone lets those emotions substitute for reason. So they make a simple transfer of their negative emotions about the evil that was done *by Catholics*, across to the Catholic *Faith*. But that transfer has no rational basis. It's done simply by emotional association.

For our responses to be in line with truth and genuine morality, we have to be guided by reason, not blind emotion. Emotions *guided by reason* are good, but without this guidance, our negative emotions can irrationally overflow, from sinful actions *contrary* to Catholic teachings, to those teachings themselves.

Reason and logic obviously follow certain laws, and we can analyse whether someone's thinking follows those laws or not. I'll give an example of the logical form called the syllogism: two statements, the premises, leading to a third statement, the conclusion.

1. Christ promised that the leaders in the Church would never commit great sins.
2. But leaders in the Church *have* committed great sins.
3. Therefore, what Christ promised was false.

Now, that's valid logical *form*; if the two premises are both true, then the conclusion would logically follow. But obviously, Premise 1 is false. Christ never even hinted at such a promise, and that's why the *conclusion* doesn't follow either. (And actually, as we saw, he even indicated the opposite – that some Church leaders would be unworthy.) And so, the existence of sin in the Church doesn't invalidate his promises even slightly.

But now an example of two true premises, yet where there's no logical connection to the conclusion – a total *lack* of logical form. It's a transfer simply by association.

1. Some bad popes did evil things, against Catholic teachings.
2. Those bad popes were the leaders of the Catholic Church.
3. Therefore, the Catholic Church and her teachings are evil.

Now here, Premises 1 and 2 *are* both true. But the supposed logical conclusion actually has no logical connection whatsoever, by the laws of logic, with the two premises. Search as you will, you won't find a valid logical link. It's a complete *leap* of logic, so it doesn't help anyone get in touch with the truth even one little bit. And often enough, some irrational transfer of emotions might come in here: the negative emotions we would *rightly* have in connection with the evil actions of some pope, irrationally get transferred across to the *divine* aspects of the Church coming from Christ.

There is no such thing as 'collective guilt'

An important point here is that sin, even by leaders, is always in the end the choice of specific individuals. The Theological Commission emphasised that subjective blame and guilt lies only with any person who knowingly consents to a sin. And even if there were *lots* of individuals making personal sinful choices in how they lived out their role in the Church, there's no such thing as 'collective guilt' that would supposedly fall on all the *other* individuals who *didn't* make those sinful choices, or on the group as a whole.

This is a universal principle. Individuals who in no way consent don't take on the *blame and guilt* of wrongs done by other people – for example, by their country's leaders, or by some fellow citizens, or by a family member. In the same way, when a pope sins, or a lot of bishops sin, or a lot of Catholics sin, this doesn't make it that somehow 'the Church as a whole', with all her members, is guilty of the sin.

To be and remain a Catholic means choosing to be in moral and spiritual union with Christ, the Son of God, and with the good things he established – as we're obliged. But to the precise extent that someone else sins, they *reject and depart* from their moral union with Christ, and with the rest of us. So our being in union with Christ in no way places us in moral union with their sin.

In all this, we have to be alert to another possible logical fallacy. Often what happens is there's a switch between different layers of meaning of the word 'Church'. In logic, if you change the meaning of a word midstream, it invalidates the logic.

So, people *can* use the word 'Church' as a sort of sociological shorthand, meaning, 'what lots of individual Church leaders, or Church members, are in fact doing'. So someone might say: 'During the Renaissance, the Church was mainly interested in wealth and power' – meaning, a lot of popes and bishops were mainly interested in wealth and power.

Or, we can use the word 'Church' in a more theological way, meaning, for example, those aspects of the Church coming from Christ, and bringing us his grace and his truth. So using *that* meaning, we might say, for example: 'The Church teaches that Christ is really present in the Eucharist.'

Now, if we're not alert to the different meanings of 'Church', we can incorrectly transfer the meanings. So someone at the Renaissance might have said, 'Why should I care what the Church teaches? The Church is only interested in wealth and power.' The word 'Church' has been used there in two different ways. They've put down the aspects of the Church coming from Christ, on the basis of the things *contrary* to Christ's teachings some popes and bishops were doing.

The good remains the good

Logically, arguments like that have *zero* impact on whether the Catholic Faith is true. That means that evils in the Church, that actually go *contrary* to Christ's teachings, don't weigh even one little bit against Christ himself, or against his teachings and grace that come to us in the Church.

So it's important we don't give evil the false victory of imagining that it somehow at least *diminishes* the goodness of good things, with which the evil might have become associated. Now, evil damages or destroys the good *directly opposed* to it. So, a sin damages or destroys the moral goodness of the person committing the sin. But let's suppose, for example, the sinner is a great musician – their sin doesn't damage the goodness of *music*, as though music itself is now somehow tainted. So: the good coming forth from God's hand remains the good. All the good things in the Church remain what they were, to the glory of God.

Pope John Paul gave a great image. When sunlight shines through a stained glass window, it produces beautiful colours within. Now, if the window has a lot of dirt on it, that affects how well those within can see the sunlight, and the stained glass. But the sunlight itself is totally untarnished. And underneath the dirt, the stained glass still has the same beauty. We just need to clean the dirt away. So: the sunlight – the truth and grace, coming from Christ – shining through the stained glass – his holy Catholic Church.

Evil is always a twisting of something good

And it doesn't astound us when even good things that God has established (whether in creating the world or redeeming it) get twisted to evil. Actually, when you reflect on it, that's the way that evil always works: to take something good, even something holy, and to distort it. St Thomas Aquinas explains that evil can't exist all by itself – it's always parasitic on the good. For example, that Christ established only one Church with the fullness of the means of salvation: that's a good thing, it's part of his plan to reunite the human race into *one family* of faith. But – that uniqueness of the Church can get twisted into intolerance, even persecution, of those outside. This sort of thing happens when *one truth* loses the balance provided by *another truth*: in this case, the truth of the dignity of the human person, that got lost in the persecutions. And so it is that sometimes, cultures of sin arise in the Church. One aspect of the truth might go into the shade. But again, never so as to *contradict* the truth of Church teachings or the grace of the Sacraments.

Now, apart from the teachings and the Sacraments, which we can always trust, there is an intermediate level, where a Church authority might order something wrong to take place. So: the authority structures get twisted to bad ends. And then it *might* seem, the Church *as such* is then involved in the evil, not just the individual giving the command.

But really, that still doesn't discredit the divine aspects of the Church that we're concerned about. Because if any human authority, including Church authority, gives a sinful command, against God's law, then, scripture and theology tell us, we may not obey that order. 'We must obey God rather than men', we read in the *Acts of the Apostles* (5:29). So the *principle* of Church authority, authorised by Christ, still remains intact: just not that particular wrong command, *not* authorised by Christ, and not derived from him. (Just like, the general principle of the authority of the *State* remains intact, even if a government makes unjust laws in this or that instance.)

Summary

So summarising the points I've been making:

1. Our faith is always in Christ's promises, summed up in his words to Peter: 'Upon this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it'. But that also implies, the gates of hell will be trying very hard to prevail, until the end of time.
2. The Holy Church has divine and human aspects. It's the divine aspects – such as the truth of her teachings and the grace of the Sacraments – that never fail in holiness. But we, her members (leaders included), have free will, and so sin enters.
3. When assessing the evils in Church history: we need to make an accurate historical judgement, rejecting legends; keeping perspective of all the *good* things the Church has brought, and of the evils *outside* the Church; when judging people's actions keeping in mind the knowledge and conditions of that time and culture; and remembering God's *gradual* formation of his People, and the world.
4. Sin in the Church is actually what Christ prophesied: the weeds and the wheat, the unfaithful stewards.
5. The Sacraments aren't magic. So Baptism, Ordination, the Eucharist: they don't force anyone to be holy.
6. If someone's faith depends, and bases itself, on the goodness of the clergy, that's clericalism.
7. We need to be guided by reason and the laws of logic, not blind emotion and association.
8. There's no such thing as collective guilt: sin is always the responsibility of individuals.
9. The good remains the good, which evil can't take away – like the sunlight shining through dirty stained glass.
10. Evil is always a twisting of something good coming from God. So it doesn't surprise us that any good thing in this world can be twisted, even in the Church.

The true holiness of the Church shines forth in the saints

So the truth of the Catholic Church as the Church established and upheld by Jesus, the Son of God, remains untouched by all the different evils of history. The Church is still the family into which God calls and invites all people.

The Australian Catholic writer and theologian Frank Sheed made the point that we don't judge a medicine by those who buy it but never use it, but by those who actually take it. So, the power of the Church to produce holiness has to be judged by looking at those who actually believe and obey her teachings, who pray, and who make prayerful use of her Sacraments; not by looking at those members of the Church through history who have neglected these things. And then we see how the holiness of the Church's teachings and Sacraments doesn't just remain invisible, it shines forth in the lives of all the holy people who radiate Christ.

So: the Church and the faults of the past. In the end, it's exactly what Christ predicted – a mix of weeds and wheat. But when we look at the lives of those who fully devote themselves to following the way of life set forth by the Church's faith, then we receive a vision not just of the universality of sin, but of the universality of grace, which is far more powerful and abundant, and through which Christ will keep bringing forth saints in his Church until the end of the world.

Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.

(Rom 5:20)

Jesus Christ – the same, yesterday, today and forever.

(Heb 13:8)

I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.

(Mt 28:20)