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***EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS* IN THE
THEOLOGY OF HENRI DE LUBAC**

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INTRODUCTION

In the Nicene-Constantinople Creed, the Church professes that “for us men and for our salvation, He (Christ) came down from heaven”. Thus, the Church affirms the fundamental purpose of the Incarnation. The *Cur Deus Homo* as St. Anselm puts it is for the restoration of man to that lost glory in which and for which he was created. Christ came that humanity may be reconciled to divinity; that we may have life and have it in abundance (Jn 10:10). Throughout the period of his earthly mission, the salvation of man was seen to be at the centre of Christ's mission. A call to repentance which initiated his mission (Mk 1:15) became a call for an acceptance of salvation. This call to salvation was for all men: first for sinners, and then for the righteous; both for the Jews and for the gentiles (Rom 2:10-11).

In order to see that this work of salvation continues after him and is extended throughout the whole world, Jesus selected some men whom he was to teach and send out. These apostles gave in everything for the sake of the gospel and saw in Jesus, the only means to man's liberation and salvation. Before he gave himself to be crucified, Christ, willing to constitute a new people with the apostles as the foundation, after he had said to Peter, “Upon you I will build my Church” (Matt 16:18) he said to him again “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). And before he ascended, Jesus commanded his disciples “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit...” (Matt 28:19). This became a command to make all men in all nations participate in this salvation wrought by Christ. Through teaching and baptism by the apostles, the people are to become the disciples of Christ by becoming believers. And salvation is for those who believe because “to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” (Jn 1:12).

Therefore, in order to be saved, one must believe, and the believers are called Christians. Christ himself, instituted the Church on the apostles as the foundation, and deposited in her, all that will enable men to attain this salvation. The Church becomes an ark that carries men unto salvation. Just as there was only one Ark, the one made by Noah, with which God saved the righteous Noah and his household (Gen 7) so also is the Church instituted by Christ for the salvation of all men who form one household of Christ. And just like those who were outside this Ark of Noah got perished, so the Church teaches that outside her, the ark of salvation, there is no

salvation. Speaking on this, Pope Pius IX says: “There is only one true, holy, Catholic Church, which is the Apostolic Roman Church. There is only one See founded in Peter by the word of the Lord, outside of which we cannot find either true faith or eternal salvation....”¹

Speaking on the unicity of the Church, the apostle Paul affirms: “there is only one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:4-6). This Church has as her leader, Christ Jesus himself.² And as Christ speaks of himself as the Good shepherd and the only gate to salvation (Jn 10:1) so also he constituted the Church to be the only sheepfold.³ From the time of the apostles to this day, the Church continues to bring all men into this one sheepfold of Christ so that they may attain salvation. So great is the success which the Church has made in this mission but as Pope John Paul II affirms, “the number of those who do not know Christ and do not belong to the Church is constantly on the increase....”⁴ If Christ died for all and the Church was instituted by him as the gateway for the attainment of the riches of Paschal mystery, what then would be the fate of those who live outside the Church? Dying outside the Church, is it an absolute condemnation for one? Must one be physically a member of this Church before he could attain salvation?

In the course of the years, so many books and articles have been written both by the Church's Magisterium and by the theologians in a bit to explain the expression “*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*”. The French theologian, Henri de Lubac, in his book *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, dwells greatly on this topic. In his theology, de Lubac sees the entire human race as one single family stemming from Adam. He believes that we all have Adam in us and that it is this one human race of which all of us are part, which was distorted by Adam's sin, which Christ redeemed and united through his death and resurrection. Hence, he believes that there is unity of human race. Basing primarily on this, de Lubac gives his theological positions on the role of the Church in uniting all men into that one New people of

¹ PIUS IX, Encyclical Letter, *Singulari Quadam*, December 9, 1854.

² Cf. SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1984, 7

³ “the Church is a sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ It is a flock of which God Himself foretold He would be the shepherd....” Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 6

⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, December 7, 1990, 3

God. In his view, Henri de Lubac not only affirms strongly that the Church remains the only means to salvation, but also explains how the “unbelievers” are saved through the same Church. Already we can see that there are two divergent points here. The first is maintaining that the Church is the only sacrament of salvation for all men, and the second is showing how men who are outside of this Church can be saved.

Therefore, in this work, we shall see how Henri de Lubac harmonizes the fact that outside the Church there is no salvation, and the fact “that the Son from the very beginning and in every part of the world, gives a more or less obscure revelation of the Father to every creature, and that he can be the ‘Salvation of those who are born outside the Way’,⁵ thereby believing with St. Augustine “that divine mercy was always at work among all peoples and that even the pagans have had their hidden saints and prophets.”⁶

This work is therefore divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, we will see how humanity was created in Adam, sinned in Adam and redeemed by Christ. Then we shall also see the universality of the Church both in her essence and by her mission. This universality or catholicity of the Church will help us to understand the role which the Church plays in bringing all men to form one body of Christ and her catholicity in ensuring their salvation. Then the second chapter will dwell on salvation of man in and by the Church.

⁵ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988, 218.

⁶ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 219.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 THE UNITY OF HUMAN RACE AND THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH

In discussing about the role of the Church in the salvation of man, de Lubac first clearly states “that the unity of the Mystical Body of Christ (the Church), a supernatural unity, supposes a previous natural unity, the unity of the human race.”⁷ Just as the Church is one both in her essence and in her mission, so also is her catholicity. In her essence, she is catholic in that she is for everybody, for the entire human race at all times. In her mission, she is catholic in that she is to bring this salvation to everybody, to the entire human race. The link between the unity of human race and the unity and catholicity of the Church is found in the salvation of men through the Church. If all men have the same root in Adam, and Christ came to save this humanity which Adam distorted through his sin, and in order to extend this salvific message to all people of all time, Christ established the Church, then, it behoves us to believe that “it is the Church's mission to reveal all men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it”⁸ through the Paschal mysteries of her bridegroom, Christ.

1.1.1 THE UNITY OF HUMAN RACE IN ADAM

God, after having created heaven and earth and the things in them, finally, on the sixth day, He said “let us create man in our own image and likeness”. (Gen 1:26). Thus, God created our first parents, Adam and Even. And in Adam, God created humanity. According to the Angelic Doctor, “all human beings are biologically related to their original ancestors.”⁹ We all have our human nature from our first parents who were the first human beings created by God. Commenting on the positions of the Fathers of the Church on this, de Lubac says that “the Fathers of the Church...in dealing with the creation were not content only to mention the formation of individuals, the first man and the first woman, but delighted to contemplate God creating humanity as a whole.”¹⁰ All men are therefore made in the one image of the same God. This unity of all human race is clearly seen in the

⁷ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 25.

⁸ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 53.

⁹ P. A. MACDONALD, (ed.) «Original Justice, Original Sin, and the Free-Will Defense» in *The Thomist – A Speculative Quarterly Review*, 74 (2010) 132

¹⁰ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 25.

entire ministry of Christ. In teaching his disciples how to pray, Jesus told them “When you want to pray, say, “Our Father....”(Matt 6:9) This is because, He wants to teach us that we all have one Father who is in heaven; because we all share in the same one and only human nature with Adam as our first parent and God as our one and only Creator and Father.

God having created man in his own image and likeness, put him in the garden of joy. Furthermore, there was this original justice by which the spiritual and corporal aspects of man were moderated by the supreme original law of justice. Man could not sin at this state because, with the original justice, man's 'inferior' bodily nature was placed under the control of his superior spiritual nature. Hence, this original justice was God's gift to man for the sole purpose of perfecting the human being as a body-soul composite endowed with the requisite attending powers.¹¹ The original sin, which denied man this original justice, does not just consist in the fact that man ate the forbidden fruit, it is greatly in that man refused the authority and governorship of God. Man wanted to be for himself, his own creator, lord and god.¹² Thus, “by freely ceasing to serve God with his entire being, the first human being not only was deprived of his own 'proper and personal good – namely, grace and the due order of the parts of the soul; he was deprived as well of a good related to the common nature.”¹³ Because we share the same human nature with our first parents, therefore, “all human beings share in the Fall (original sin), then, to the extent that they lack original justice, with which the first human beings and human nature more generally were generously endowed.”¹⁴ Hence, “because of the Fall, the soul of every human being, as immediately created by God and united to a body, is deprived of the gift of original justice.”¹⁵ We share in Adam's sin in that “with the first sin, it was this being (human being), whole and entire, which fell away, which was driven out of Paradise and sentenced to a bitter exile until the time of its redemption.”¹⁶ Hence, the misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death become clear when understood in their connection with Adam's sin and our inheriting it through our birth.¹⁷

¹¹ P. A. MACDONALD, (ed) «Original Justice,...Defense»...., 116.

¹² Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 398

¹³ P. A. MACDONALD, (ed) «Original Justice,...Defense»....117

¹⁴ P. A. MACDONALD, (ed) «Original Justice,...Defense».... 138.

¹⁵ P. A. MACDONALD, (ed) «Original Justice,...Defense»...., 138.

¹⁶ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*...., 26-27.

¹⁷ Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 403

1.1.2 THE REDEMPTION OF HUMAN RACE IN CHRIST

In the third chapter of Genesis, we see the height of God's love for the humanity in that at the same moment that God pronounced man's punishment for his disobedience, He immediately made him a promise of salvation when speaking to the serpent God said, "...I will make you enemies of each other: you and the woman, your offspring and her offspring. It will crush your head and you will strike its heel" (Gen 3:14-15). Furthermore, some Church's Fathers see the lost sheep of the Gospel that the Good Shepherd brings back to the fold to be the whole of human nature.¹⁸ The reason for the incarnation, was to save the entire human race. Thus, "when Christ at last appeared, coming as the "one bridegroom", his bride, once again, was the whole human race."¹⁹ Adam is seen to be "within us all" and by the sacrifice of Christ the first man was saved, that man who is in us all."²⁰ Through the original sin, Adam damaged the supernatural unity of man with God, and also the unity of men between themselves. However, thanks to the Paschal mystery of Christ, the "Divine Mercy gathered up the fragments from every side, forged them in the fire of love, and welded into one what had been broken...."²¹ Through this, Christ became the new Adam because "he acquires for the common nature all that pertains to happiness and glory, just as the old Adam acquired what pertains to its corruption and shame."²² In the letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom 5:18), the universality of sin and death is contrasted with the universality of salvation in Christ.²³ In summary, the universality of Christ's Paschal mysteries lies in that "the redemption event brings salvation to all, for each one is included in the mystery of the redemption and with each one Christ has united himself forever through this mystery."²⁴

1.2. THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH IN HER ESSENCE AND MISSION

In order to bring to all men this good news of salvation, Christ instituted the Church, making it catholic both in her essence and in her mission. The catholicity of the Church is not just a conventional term that is applied to the Church in order

¹⁸ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 26-27.

¹⁹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 27.

²⁰ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 28.

²¹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 36.

²² H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 40.

²³ Cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 402

²⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*..., 4.

to distinguish it from other religious and secular movements, rather, it shows all that the Church is, and all that she does. It is both her essence and the mission for which she was instituted. She knows “that she was born for nothing else than the propagation everywhere of the Reign of Christ so also to bring all men to take part in his saving redemption.”²⁵ In order to do this, the Church has to be herself catholic, and has to be unto others, catholic also.

In her being, the Church is catholic in that only in her is found the totality, the *pleroma* (fullness) of the mysteries of our salvation. Thus, the catholicity of the Church as her being is her orthodoxy as a custodian and mother. In her, is found the complete truth of Revelation of Christ and the full means of entering into a relationship with the Trinity through Christ. It is in this sense of the catholicity of the Church that the Second Vatican Council holds that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church.²⁶ The subsistence here means the “perduring, historical continuity and the permanence of all the elements instituted by Christ in the Catholic Church, in which the Church of Christ is concretely found on this earth.”²⁷

Furthermore, the catholicity of the Church in her essence is followed by her catholicity in her mission. The Church is not an institution for a particular people because the command given to her by Christ, her founder, is to make disciples of all nation. By her fullness, and as a custodian of the whole truth of revelation, the Church provides to all men at all times, the means to enter into salvation, becoming herself, the only Ark that brings men to salvation. On the day of Pentecost, through the power of the Holy Spirit, this catholicity of the Church was manifested as the disciples spoke in different tongues and their audience each heard them speaking his own language (Acts 2: 4-6).²⁸ In other words, “humanity is one, organically one by its divine structure; it is the Church's mission to reveal to men that pristine unity that they have lost, to restore and complete it.”²⁹ This mission of the Church is very important in that “so long as the Church does not extend and penetrate to the whole of humanity, so as to give it the form of Christ, she cannot rest”.³⁰

²⁵ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 229.

²⁶ “...This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him....” Cf, *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

²⁷ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church*, Gracewing, Herefordshire, 2007, 80.

²⁸ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church*..., 125

²⁹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 53.

³⁰ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*.... 230.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. THE CHURCH AND SALVATION

2.1 THE CHURCH AS THE SACRAMENT OF SALVATION

“Christ, having been lifted up from the earth, is drawing all men to himself (Jn 12:32). Rising from the dead, he sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through this Spirit has established his body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation”³¹ This statement by the Second Vatican Council introduces us into the theme of the relationship between the Church and salvation. In its being and mission, the Church has only one intention, namely:

...that God's kingdom may come, and that the salvation of the whole human race come to pass. For every benefit which the People of God during its earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is 'the universal salvation sacrament of salvation' simultaneously manifesting and exercising the mystery of God's love for man.³²

Hence, from the moment of her institution, the Church has been intended by Christ as the sacrament of salvation for all mankind. In sending her to preach to all nations, “the Church has been divinely sent to all nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation.’”³³ As a divinely instituted universal sacrament of salvation, it becomes necessary “that all grace of salvation is not only ordered *toward* the Church, but in some way comes *from* and *through* the Church.”³⁴ Therefore, “by divine intention and Christ's institution, the Church is the only normal way of salvation.”³⁵ All men constitute one body and

...the salvation for this body, for humanity, consists in its receiving the form of Christ, and that is possible only through the Catholic Church....Thus this Church, which as the invisible Body of Christ is identified with final salvation, as a visible and historical institution is the providential means of this salvation. In her alone mankind is refashioned and recreated.³⁶

The redemptive work of Christ is for all men, and he made the Church the instrument for their attainment of salvation. Hence, redemption is fully realized in

³¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Lumen Gentium*..., 48

³² SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Pastoral Constitution On the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, 45

³³ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree On the Mission Activity of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, 1

³⁴ F. A. SULLIVAN, *The church We Believe in: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic*, Paulist Press, New York, 1988, 110.

³⁵ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 222.

³⁶ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 223.

the salvation as revealed by Christ. As a matter of fact, “revelation and redemption are bound up together, and the Church is their only Tabernacle.”³⁷

2.2. *EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS*

If the Church is instituted as the universal sacrament of salvation, and this Church subsists in the one Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, it means that outside this Church, there is no salvation. The origin of the expression, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, is traced back to the patristic periods. During this period, the expression “...was often used with reference to Christians who have separated themselves from the 'great Church', the *Catholica*, by joining some heretical or schismatic sect.”³⁸ Studies show that it was first introduced by St. Cyprian while St. Augustine used it to caution the heretics that “there was no hope for salvation for them as long as they persisted in their adherence to their sect”.³⁹ How does Henri de Lubac understand and apply this doctrine of the Church in relation to the universal salvation of all men?

2.2.1. *POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?*

De Lubac begins by reaffirming the Church’s position that “outside Christianity, all is not necessarily corrupt.”⁴⁰ God wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Quoting St. John Chrysostom, de Lubac asserts that “grace is diffused everywhere and that there is no soul that cannot feel its attraction.”⁴¹ Furthermore, he asserts, following the principles of St. Thomas, “that the grace of Christ is of universal application, and that no soul of good will lacks the concrete means of salvation, in the fullest sense of the word.”⁴² The above quotations show that de Lubac believes that there is salvation for those who do not form external part of the Church, especially for the people he termed “unbelievers”. However, previously, we saw de Lubac's strong affirmation that the Church is established by Christ for the work of salvation and that outside this Church, there is no salvation. How then was de Lubac able to harmonize these positions?

Henri de Lubac does not see the exterior members of the Church as her only

³⁷ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 226

³⁸ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 111

³⁹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 112.

⁴⁰ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 224

⁴¹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 224

⁴² H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 224

members. Hence, when he is interpreting the statement “outside the Church there is no salvation”, he has a global view of the Church. Just as all men belong to one human race, he sees the Church as all-encompassing. For him, “since the God of creation and the God of redemption are one and the same, since mankind as created forms a unity as well, God's intention in the redemption of the world in Christ can once again intend mankind only as a whole.”⁴³ However, not all men are exteriorly members of this Church. But we know that the relationship between salvation and man lies in grace and righteousness. Therefore, for one to be saved, either as a Christian or as a non-Christian, he must have lived a righteous life. An analogy of what we are discussing can be found in the gospel according to St. Luke (Lk 9:38-41). The gospel says:

John said to him, 'Teacher we saw someone casting out demons in your name, we tried to stop him because he was not following us' But Jesus said, 'Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us.

This is the sense with which we can understand de Lubac's position. In order to perform miracle, the person caught by the disciples did not need to belong exteriorly to the college of the disciples of Christ. But for the fact that he was able to cast demons with His name, he was his disciple because he could not have done that if not that he believed in Him and had a share of the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the case with the salvation outside the Church. De Lubac believes that there is no salvation outside the Church, but his understanding of membership of the Church goes beyond the exterior membership. In the letter addressed to the Archbishop of Boston because of the wrong interpretation of the doctrine that there is no salvation outside the Church by Father Leonard Feeney,⁴⁴ the Holy Office under Pope Pius XII refers to the implicit members of the Church as those who “are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain unconscious yearning and desire.”⁴⁵ And in order to reaffirm and explain what the

⁴³ H. BALTHASAR, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1991, 36.

⁴⁴ Father Leonard Feeney, SJ, was teaching a rigorist interpretation of the doctrine of no salvation outside the Church to the point that he held many views contrary to the Church's teachings. For instance, he denounced the doctrine of baptism of blood and desire. He also believed that unbaptized persons including unbaptized babies would be damned. After series of attempt to call him to order by the Church, he was excommunicated in 1953 by the Holy Office under the papacy of Pius XII. However, “in 1972, Fr. Leonard Feeney was reconciled and absolved from excommunication by Pope Paul VI and Vatican delegates”. Cf. Cf. P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church...*, 209.

⁴⁵ THE HOLY OFFICE, *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston*, August 8, 1949, cited in H. DENZINGER, P. HUNERMANN (ed.), *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, 43rd edition, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2012, no. 3872

Church teaches by the doctrine of 'no salvation outside the Church', the Holy Office, in the just cited letter holds that:

In his infinite mercy God has willed that the effects, necessary for one to be saved, of those helps to salvation that are directed toward man's final end, not by intrinsic necessity, but only by divine institution, can also be obtained in certain circumstances when (those helps) are employed only through desire and longing.⁴⁶

De Lubac expresses this teaching of the Church thus: "And so it is that God, desiring that all men should be saved, but not allowing in practice that all men should be visibly in the Church, wills nevertheless that all those who answer his call should in the last resort be saved through his Church."⁴⁷ To answer God's call is automatically belonging to his Mystical Body which is the Catholic Church because "...it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is the all-embracing means of salvation, that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation."⁴⁸ Speaking of the interpretations of the statement⁴⁹ which suggests an explicit belonging to the Church de Lubac says:

Obviously it cannot mean that no one is ever saved who does not belong exteriorly to the Church, and it is significant that the texts in which it occurs, when they are not addressed simply to schismatics, contain also the immediate qualifying statement which we should expect, excepting the case of invincible ignorance in pagans of good will".⁵⁰

With this interpretation, de Lubac believes that it is the way that the Church can "be merciful to paganism without diminishing her proper character of being the only vehicle of salvation of souls."⁵¹ Therefore, instead of seeing the "outside the Church there is no salvation" to mean that "outside the Church one is damned", he sees it to mean that "it is by the Church and by the Church alone that you are saved. For it is through the Church that salvation will come, that it is already coming to mankind."⁵² Hence, the salvation is always the character of the Church. The means of attaining the salvation does not change. It remains always the Church. What

⁴⁶ THE HOLY OFFICE, *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston...*, DZH no. 3869.

⁴⁷ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 234

⁴⁸ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL II, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3.

⁴⁹ In order to protect the faith of her members in the early centuries when heresies and schisms arose, many of the Church's writers, especially the fathers of the Church used the expression "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*" to emphasize the need to belong to the Catholic Church which is the true church and remain submissive to her teachings and to the ecclesial hierarchies. Cf. P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church...*, 193.

⁵⁰ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 234-235

⁵¹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 236.

⁵² H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 236

differs is only the method, that is, whether the person is exteriorly member of the Church or implicitly part of the Church. However, an unbeliever would not have been saved if not by the Catholic Church. As a matter of fact, “the only condition on which his salvation is possible is that he should be already a Catholic as it were by **anticipation** since the Church is the natural place to which a soul amenable to the suggestions of grace spontaneously tends.”⁵³ Hence, one is not only a member of this Church by physical presence, but also implicitly and by anticipation. Furthermore, the teaching of Pope John Paul II goes in line with the position of de Lubac when he says that:

The universality of salvation means that it is granted not only to those who explicitly believe in Christ and have entered the Church. Since salvation is offered to all, it must be made concretely available to all. But it is clear that today, as in the past, many people do not have an opportunity to come to know or accept the gospel revelation or to enter the Church. The social and cultural conditions in which they live do not permit this, and frequently they have been brought up in other religious traditions. For such people salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the Church but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation....⁵⁴

Therefore, the doctrine on salvation is not only for those who explicitly show their desire for and belong to the Church. As a matter of fact, the Church teaches that “...this desire need not always be explicit, as it is in catechumens; but when a person suffers from invincible ignorance, God accepts also an implicit desire so called because it is included in that good disposition of soul whereby a person he will be conformed to the will of God.”⁵⁵

These explanations concern both the Christians outside the Catholic Church and the non-Christians. While we strongly affirm that the Church subsists in the Catholic Church, we do not deny the existence of some sanctifying elements and truth that can be found in other ecclesial communities that do not belong to the Catholic Church. Regarding this, Pope John Paul II asserts that:

The Council states that the Church of Christ "subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him", and at the same time acknowledges that "many

⁵³ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 236 (emphasis mine)

⁵⁴ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio...*, 10

⁵⁵ THE HOLY OFFICE, *Letter of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston...*, DZH no. 3870.

elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside her visible structure. These elements, however, as gifts properly belonging to the Church of Christ, possess an inner dynamism towards Catholic unity.⁵⁶

Therefore, “It is not that beyond the boundaries of the Catholic community there is an ecclesial vacuum”, continues Pope John Paul II, “many elements of great value (*eximia*), which in the Catholic Church are part of the fullness of the means of salvation..., are also found in the other Christian Communities.”⁵⁷

The unbelievers, being themselves human beings, are part of the one human race redeemed by Christ. Though not belonging to the Church, which is the body of Christ, the unbelievers are still “in the design of Providence, indispensable for building the Body of Christ.”⁵⁸ Consequently “by an extension of the dogma of the communion of saints, it seems right to think that though they themselves are not in the normal way of salvation, they will be able nevertheless to obtain this salvation by virtue of those mysterious bonds which unite them to the faithful.”⁵⁹ Pope John Paul II says that salvation

...applies not only to Christians but to all people of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly at work. Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the Holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this Paschal Mystery in a manner known to God.⁶⁰

Therefore, the unbelievers, for de Lubac “can be saved because they are an integral part of that humanity which is to be saved.”⁶¹ However, their salvation is still an action of God through the Church. They, though not being explicitly part of the Church, by their implicit desire and yearning which makes them part of the Church, share in that one salvation for which the Church has been instituted and which has been made the mission of the Church. H. Kung expresses it thus:

Nor is God himself far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and every other gift (cf. Acts 17:25-28), and who as Saviour wills that all men be saved (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). those who can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deeds to do his will

⁵⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter, *Ut Unum Sint*, May 25, 1995, 10.

⁵⁷ JOHN PAUL II, *Ut Unum Sint*..., 13

⁵⁸ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 233

⁵⁹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 233

⁶⁰ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*..., 10

⁶¹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 233

as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does divine Providence deny the help necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, but who strive to live a good life, thanks to His grace.⁶²

Finally, the salvation of men is still the mission of the Church which she does not share with any other agent. For there to be a salvation, there must be the presence of the Church. The individual, must be either an explicit member of the Church who lives out in faith, hope and charity, the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, or someone, who by invincible ignorance, does not explicitly form part of the Church but implicitly belongs to her by his desire and yearning for righteousness.⁶³ Many times in the gospel, we see Jesus praising pagans who manifested great faith in Him while in certain places, he rebukes the “children of the kingdom”, for their faithlessness.⁶⁴ In the words of de Lubac, therefore,

As Jews or Gentiles, although they lived before the visible coming of Christ, must be described as saved by Christ and not merely by the Word, so, though they lived before the appearance of the visible Church among them, they are saved not by belonging in a purely spiritual, in temporal manner to the soul of the Church, but by means of a very real though indirect and more often hidden bond with her body.⁶⁵

2.2.2. WHAT IS THE NEED OF BEING EXPLICIT MEMBER OF THE CHURCH IF ONE CAN BE SAVED BY IMPLICITLY LIVING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST?

The discussions we have seen above necessarily leads to the question “...if every man can be saved, in principle at least and at whatever hazard, what reason is there for this Church?”⁶⁶ Hence, “Since salvation is made accessible to those who are called (no longer with good reason) 'unbelievers', is not the necessity for their belonging to the visible Church diminished to such an extent that it vanishes altogether?”⁶⁷

To all these questions, de Lubac believes that the best response lies in recognizing and affirming always that the Church “...is by divine intention and Christ's institution the only normal way of salvation.”⁶⁸ Pope John Paul II, warning on this danger, says:

⁶² H. KUNG, *The Church*, Image Books, New York, 1976, 407

⁶³ Robert Bellarmine, in the second chapter of his book, *De Ecclesia Militante*, following St. Augustine, uses the analogy of body and soul (of the Church) to refer to the explicit and implicit members of the Church. Cf. P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church*..., 203

⁶⁴ Having seen the faith of the Centurion, Jesus responded, “Truly I tell you in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven....” Cf. Matt 8:5-13

⁶⁵ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 240

⁶⁶ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 220

⁶⁷ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 220-221

⁶⁸ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*..., 222.

the fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people." Indeed, Christ himself "while expressly insisting on the need for faith and baptism, at the same time confirmed *the need for the Church*, into which people enter through Baptism as through a door."⁶⁹

Everybody who comes to the knowledge of the Church, has the obligation of being a visible member of it. Therefore, the salvation outside the Church is for men who, without the knowledge of the Church, and by invincible ignorance, live a holy life, the life preached by and lived by and in the Church, thereby becoming members of the Church without being able to belong to her externally. On the other hand, "no one who knows that the Church has been divinely established by Christ and, nevertheless, refuses to be a subject of the Church, or refuses to obey the Roman Pontiff, the vicar of Christ on earth will be saved."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*..., 55

⁷⁰ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church*..., 210.

3.0. CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of this work, we can see that Henri de Lubac believes that the Church has been constituted as the sacrament of salvation for all men. In interpreting the expression *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, he primarily and totally believes the Church to be “an absolute necessity, and a necessary means to which there can be no exception.”⁷¹ But outside this Church, constituted as necessary for salvation, God can grant salvation to other men, firstly, because the salvation achieved by Christ is for the entire human race and these people outside the Church also share part in the one human race and in the common destiny of man. Secondly, because by their good life, they belong in a mysterious and implicit mode to that one body of Christ, the Church, because living a good life is already living the Good news of Christ and bearing testimony to Him which are the actual works committed to the Church by Christ. And living a good life is believing in Christ and just as the apostle Paul said, “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’, unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3), the same Holy Spirit whom Christ sent to his Church and who continues to dwell and direct the Church. Therefore, these men who are “unbelievers” but who can attain salvation, are implicitly part of the Church and that their salvation is still in a general sense, the work of the Church. Hence, we still affirm that “*the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation.*”⁷²

Salvation demands living a life of faith for the letter to the Hebrews says, “without faith, it is impossible to please God, since anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and rewards those who try to find him.”(Heb 11:6). When those outside the Church live this life of faith, listening and living according to the truth and the pure voice of conscience, living according to the will of God, “...God may accept their fidelity to His will as an implicit desire to become Catholics, and they are saved accordingly.”⁷³ In his teaching on the last judgment, Jesus said “....Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you’...?” And the King will answer, “...in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.” (Matt 25:37-40). In the same way, a person can be a member of the Church without being aware of it, and he receives

⁷¹ H. de LUBAC, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man...*, 235-236

⁷² JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio...*, 55.

⁷³ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church...*, 214.

justification because he is connected to the Church by his desire demonstrated by his life of charity and faith. For instance, “a non-Catholic is not aware of his generosity; ontologically God sees the implications and credits the soul accordingly.”⁷⁴

Finally, the fact that the Church still gives room for the salvation of men who ignorantly live outside her, does not in any way remove the fact of the necessity of belonging physically to the Church. As P. Haffner puts it, “there is a difference between receiving what is a merciful gift from the Lord and receiving the fullness of His treasury.”⁷⁵ Therefore, the Church is necessary for the salvation of man and all men are called to enter into this spouse of Christ and form one body of Christ, the Church, outside which there is no salvation.

⁷⁴ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church...*, 217

⁷⁵ P. HAFFNER, *Mystery of the Church...*, 224

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CONTENT

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE	4
1.1 THE UNITY OF HUMAN RACE AND THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH	4
1.1.1 THE UNITY OF HUMAN RACE IN ADAM.....	4
1.1.2 THE REDEMPTION OF HUMAN RACE IN CHRIST	6
1.2. THE CATHOLICITY OF THE CHURCH IN HER ESSENCE AND MISSION.....	6
CHAPTER TWO	8
2.0. THE CHURCH AND SALVATION.....	8
2.1 THE CHURCH AS THE SACRAMENT OF SALVATION	8
2.2. EXTRA ECCLESIAM NULLA SALUS	9
2.2.1. POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?	9
2.2.2. WHAT IS THE NEED OF BEING EXPLICIT MEMBER OF THE CHURCH IF ONE CAN BE SAVED BY IMPLICITLY LIVING THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST?	14
3.0. CONCLUSION.....	16
BIBLIOGRAPHY	18