

PART TWO, SECTION TWO, CHAPTER FOUR, ARTICLE 2, PARAGRAPH 1680

FAITH: Catholicism | TEXT: Catechism of the Catholic Church | VOLUME: 1997 Volume | AUTHOR: John Paul II

OVERVIEW

Paragraph 1680 serves as the theological introduction to the section on Christian Funerals within the Catechism. It establishes a teleological link between the beginning of the Christian life ('Christian initiation') and its earthly conclusion. The text asserts that the sacraments are not merely isolated rituals but possess a cumulative trajectory aimed at a specific goal: the believer's death, reinterpreted as the 'last Passover.' By invoking the Nicene Creed ('I look for the resurrection of the dead...'), the text grounds the funeral liturgy in the hope of the eschaton. However, crucially, it posits the sacraments as the vehicle that leads the child of God toward this transition, reinforcing the Roman Catholic view of salvation as a process of sacramental sanctification rather than a singular event of forensic justification.

KEY FIGURES

The Child of God (The Believer), God (Implicit destination of the Kingdom)

DOCTRINES ANALYZED

1. SACRAMENTAL TELEOLOGY

Assertion: The sacraments, particularly Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist (initiation), are designed to lead the believer specifically toward a holy death and entry into the Kingdom.

"All the sacraments, and principally those of Christian initiation, have as their goal the last Passover of the child of God"

Evangelical Comparison: In Catholic theology, as expressed here, the sacraments are instrumental causes that propel the believer toward the beatific vision. The 'goal' of baptism and the Eucharist is the successful navigation of death into life. In contrast, Evangelical theology asserts that the believer is already 'seated with Christ in heavenly places' (Ephesians 2:6) upon the moment of justification by faith. While Evangelicals value the Lord's Supper and Baptism, they do not view them as the functional bridge to the afterlife; rather, Christ's finished work is the sole bridge, crossed by faith alone.

2. DEATH AS THE LAST PASSOVER

Assertion: Death is not a termination but a liturgical and spiritual transition ('Passover') for the child of God.

"leads him into the life of the Kingdom... the last Passover of the child of God"

Evangelical Comparison: The term 'Passover' is rich with meaning. For Catholics, this connects the believer's death to the Paschal Mystery re-presented in the Mass. For Evangelicals, 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us' (1 Corinthians 5:7), meaning the judgment has already passed over the believer at the cross. The Evangelical views death as the realization of a status already possessed (citizenship in heaven), whereas this text implies a final sacramental fulfillment is occurring.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Divergence Status: Yes

Theological Gap: The fundamental divergence lies in the mechanism of salvation and assurance. The Catechism presents a system where grace is mediated through sacraments, which 'have as their goal' the believer's entry into the Kingdom. This suggests a progressive justification dependent on ritual participation. Evangelicalism holds to Sola Fide (Faith Alone), asserting that the believer passes from death to life at the moment of salvation (John 5:24), and that sacraments are responses of obedience, not prerequisites for the 'last Passover.' The text makes the Church and its rites the bridge; the Bible makes Christ the bridge.

Shared Values:

Belief in the resurrection of the dead; Belief in the life of the world to come; View of death as a transition to the Kingdom; Importance of faith and hope

Friction Points:

1. [Major] Sola Fide / Sola Gratia – Suggests that entry into the Kingdom is the 'goal' of sacraments, implying salvation is contingent upon ritual observance rather than faith alone.
2. [Moderate] Christology (Sufficiency of Christ) – By focusing on sacraments as the means to the end, the text obscures the sufficiency of Christ's direct mediation.

Semantic Warnings:

"Passover"

In Text: The believer's transition through death into the Kingdom, mirroring Christ's death and resurrection, facilitated by sacraments.

Evangelical: The historical event in Exodus and its fulfillment in Christ's sacrificial death (1 Cor 5:7), which delivers from judgment once for all.

Example: *In this text, the believer undergoes a 'last Passover' at death. In Evangelicalism, the believer benefits from Christ's Passover which occurred 2,000 years ago.*

"Christian Initiation"

In Text: The sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist.

Evangelical: Generally refers to conversion/regeneration by the Holy Spirit and subsequent discipleship.

Example: *The text says 'Christian initiation' leads to the Kingdom; Evangelicals would say 'Regeneration' leads to the Kingdom.*

SOTERIOLOGY

Salvation Defined: Entry into the life of the Kingdom and the resurrection of the dead.

How Attained: Through the process of sacraments (principally initiation) culminating in the 'last Passover' of death.

Basis of Assurance: Confession of the Creed ('faith and hope') and participation in the sacramental system.

Comparison to Sola Fide: The text links the fulfillment of hope to the goal of sacraments. Sola Fide links the fulfillment of hope to the trustworthiness of Christ's promise, independent of ritual performance (Romans 4:5).

MANDATES & REQUIREMENTS

Explicit Commands:

1. Confess faith and hope in the resurrection (derived from the Creedal citation)

Implicit Obligations:

1. Participate in the sacraments of initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) to prepare for death
2. View one's life and death through a liturgical/sacramental lens

Ritual Requirements:

1. Reception of Sacraments of Initiation
2. Christian Funeral (implied by context of the article)

EVANGELISM TOOLKIT

Discovery Questions:

1. The text calls death the 'last Passover.' When you think about passing over from this life to the next, what gives you the confidence that you will enter the Kingdom?
2. It mentions that the sacraments have the Kingdom as their goal. Do you feel that your participation in the sacraments has secured that goal for you, or is there still uncertainty?
3. How does the phrase 'I look for the resurrection of the dead' impact how you view your daily life?

Redemptive Analogies:

1. The Last Passover – Just as the Israelites were safe only because of the blood of the lamb on the doorpost, we are safe in death only because of the blood of Jesus. [1 Corinthians 5:7 ('For Christ, our Passover lamb,

has been sacrificed.')]

2. Looking for the Resurrection – This shared hope is the anchor of the soul. The certainty of this hope comes not from our religious performance, but from Christ's historical resurrection. [1 Peter 1:3 ('He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.')]

Spiritual Weight:

1. Uncertainty/Performance [Moderate] – By tying the entry into the Kingdom to the efficacy of sacraments, the believer may carry the burden of wondering if they have participated 'enough' or 'correctly' to ensure their Passover is successful. It shifts reliance from the Savior to the System.

EPISTEMOLOGY

Knowledge Source: Liturgical Tradition and Dogmatic Confession

Verification Method: Adherence to the Creed and participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

Evangelical Contrast: Evangelical epistemology relies on the self-attesting authority of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). Assurance comes from the promises of God in the Bible, not the completion of a sacramental cycle.

TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Dating: 1997 (Latin Typical Edition)

Authorship: Promulgated by Pope John Paul II; drafted by a commission led by Joseph Ratzinger.

Textual Issues: No significant textual variants; this is a modern dogmatic text.