

One, Holy, Catholic. . .

"Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God, . . . And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ~ Revelation 21:9-10, 14

WE PROFESS IN THE CREED, "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church." Traditionally these four characteristics are called the *four marks* of the Church. The first three marks are discussed below. Although the last mark, apostolicity, is discussed in a separate handout (see *The Church is Apostolic*), it must be understood that it is the *sure foundation* of the Church which ensures her unity, holiness, and catholicity; it is the mark that links them all. The Church is one, holy, and catholic *because she is founded by Jesus Christ on the apostles, and he supernaturally guarantees that the apostolic ministry will perpetually continue in her bishops.*

The name "Church" is a derivative of the Greek *Kyriake*, meaning "what belongs to the Lord." The Church is the moon to the sun of Christ; she reflects his brilliance but does not create it. For this reason, when we profess our faith in the marks of the Church, we are not professing our faith in the Church herself, but in the Triune God who created, established, and continually sanctifies her.

The relationship of the Church to God is so rich and so diverse that numerous symbolic images have been used in an effort to communicate this wonderful reality. The Greek word *ekklesia* (derived from "to call out of"), was the preferred word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) to designate the assembly of the Israelites, the Chosen People, before God. The Church sees herself as the heir to that assembly, in the threefold sense of the

liturgical assembly, convened to pray and worship; the local community of believers; and the universal Church that is the People of God gathering in the entire world. In all these senses, she is the Body of Christ (see Col 1:18).

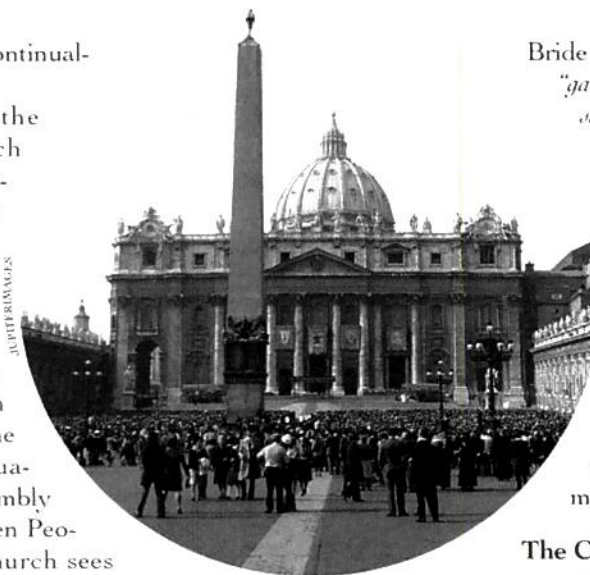
St. Peter and his successors were commissioned by Christ with the task of feeding and tending his sheep (see Jn 21:15-17). Jesus himself is the door to the sheepfold (see Jn 10:7), and the Church is his sheepfold. The Church, in another image, is a cultivated field, specifically a vineyard (see Mt 21:33-43) of which Jesus is the true vine and we the faithful are the branches who bear fruit if we abide in him (see Jn 15:1-8). The Church is also symbolized as a building; the house of God (see Heb 10:21), the household of God (see 1 Tm 3:15), the dwelling-place of God among us (see Rv 21:3), the holy temple

(see Eph 2:21), and the new Jerusalem (see beginning verses above). The faithful are the living stones of this building (see 1 Pt 2:5).

Finally, and most beautifully, the Church is the Bride of Christ whom he loved 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 splendor; without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:25-27).

This is the glorious Bride of the book of Revelation, the Bride of the Lamb (see, for example, Rv 19:7; beginning verses above), and she is our mother (see Gal 4:26).

"While unity subsists in the Catholic Church, this unity has been profoundly wounded."



The largest church in the world, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, constructed from 1506 to 1615

The Church is One

The Church is one because of Christ. He founded his Church

on St. Peter (see Mt 16:18) and the rest of the apostles and ensured that through them and their successors gathered around the successor of St. Peter, the Gospel would continue to be preached and his Kingdom would spread throughout the whole world. The one Church continues his saving presence on earth and unites the People of God in "love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). Although charity is the most important sign of the Church's unity, there are also three other visible bonds of her communion: 1) the profession of the one faith received from the apostles; 2) the common celebration of the sacraments; and 3) the apostolic succession which ensures that the authority of our present pope and bishops is the same as that received by the apostles from Christ.

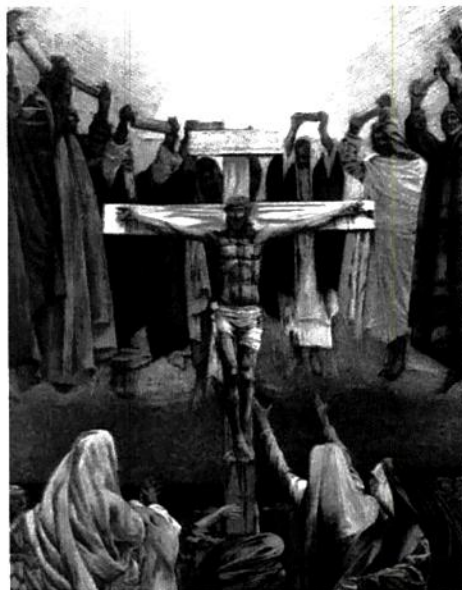
We cannot fail to recognize that, while unity subsists in the Catholic Church, this unity has been profoundly wounded by divisions caused at least in part by the sins and pride of her own sons and daughters. The Church prays constantly for Christian unity in its work of ecumenism and strives to heal these wounds and reunite all Christians into the one Church of Christ.

The Church is Holy

Jesus taught us to "be perfect as [our] Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48) and so the Church offers to its members every spiritual gift and grace toward this end of perfection and sanctity. Viewed from above, the Church is that divine institution created by the Father, established by the Son, and animated by the Holy Spirit. She is the Bride of Christ and the new Jerusalem shown to St. John in his Heavenly vision: "And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rv 21:2). Viewed from here below, the holiness of the Church is imperfect. As the Kingdom of God on earth, the Church is made up of saints *on the way* who have not yet attained the perfection which awaits them in Heaven.

This of course does not fully explain the weak-

"The Church is meant to draw people from every corner of the world into her fold."



It is Finished, by James Tissot, 1856-1902

nesses and moral failings of some of her children in past and present centuries. For that, our Lord offers the parable of the wheat and the weeds (see Mt 13:24-30, 36-43). Like the master of the field who allows the weeds to grow up with the wheat until harvest lest in uprooting them the wheat is destroyed, the Church is patient with all her children and holds out to them, even the most hardened sinners, the mercy and love of God. When Christ returns to judge the living and the dead, only then will he "gather out of his Kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire" (Mt 13:41-42). It should also be noted that, during the Church's more difficult times, the Lord has been gracious in sending her great models of sanctity and charity.

The Church is Catholic

The word "catholic" means universal, which is applied to the Church in two ways. First, the Church is catholic in the sense of being "whole" or "total" because in her, according to the merits of Christ, subsists the fullness of Revelation and means of universal salvation. Only the Church has the fullness of the deposit of faith because only she is linked to the apostles who were entrusted with it and given the great commission from the Lord: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20).

Second, the Church is catholic in the sense of "universal" because she is meant to draw people from every corner of the world into her fold. Thus, evangelization is both a sign and a requirement of the Church's catholicity. God desires all people to be drawn into the Church and form the one People of God as one family. Her missionary effort respects cultural differences from around the world when they do not conflict with Gospel values, and the Church herself is made more beautiful by the diversity of gifts poured out by the Holy Spirit and by the diversity of cultures in which she finds herself.

(CCC 748-757, 811-856)

The Church is Apostolic

You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. ~ Ephesians 2:19-22

THE SALVATION of the human race is bound up with the apostles. In his own mysterious and

loving plan, the Son of God called and appointed twelve men to enter a relationship with him that was altogether unique (see Mk 3:13-19). He lived and ate with them, listened to and consoled them, taught

and admonished them. He trusted them with his very life and gave them a share in his own miraculous power. In this, he raised them to a level of intimacy with God that was not only unsurpassed, but could hardly be expressed or imagined. They found themselves lifted to the heights of divine friendship (see Jn 15:15) and became “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pt 1:4). It was only fitting, therefore, that after accomplishing our salvation, Jesus entrusted to these men his own saving mission (see Mk 16:15) and granted them, for

“Apostolicity is essential to its authenticity.”

the sake of us all, a firm pledge of his own divine authority (see Mt 28:18-20; Jn 20:21-23). It is through them and their successors

that the divine grace won for us by Jesus on the cross, and the fullness of his saving message, are communicated to the world.

A careful reading of the Gospels reveals that, for

Jesus, everything depended on the apostles. He himself wrote nothing down, and he often pulled the apostles aside to explain what was misunderstood or to reveal what he had hidden from the crowds and the other disciples. When they asked why he spoke to the people in parables, Jesus replied, “*To you it has been given to know the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it has not been given*” (Mt 13:11).

Although anyone who fears God and does what is good is acceptable to him (see Acts 10:35),

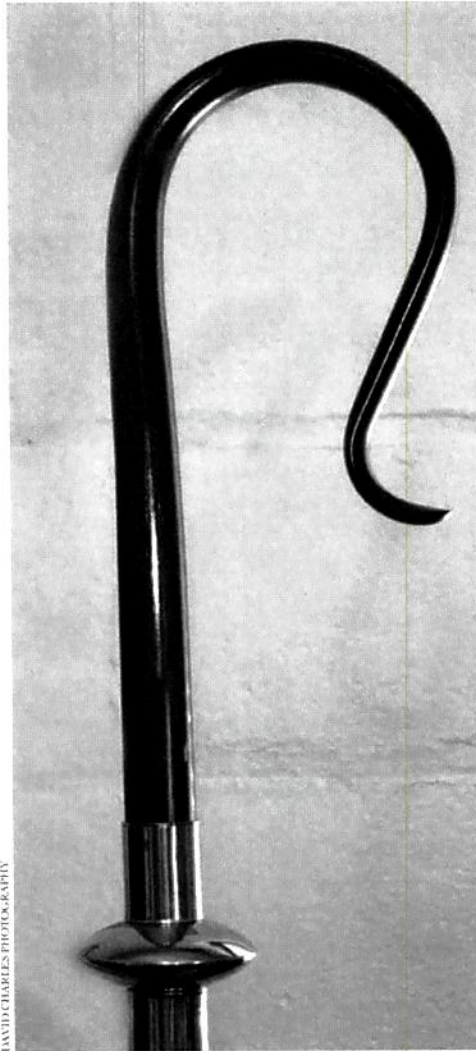


Pope John Paul II, reigning from 1978-2005, has been succeeded by Pope Benedict XVI, the 264th successor to the Apostle Peter

God wills to save us and make us holy as a "people" who are bonded and linked together in unity and charity. The calling of the Israelite race and God's desire to make them his own attests to this. Nevertheless, Israel was called in *anticipation* of the redemption and a *new people* who would be gathered together from every tribe and nation. Together, in all the reality and power of Jesus' death and Resurrection, they would become "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ... who once were no people but now are God's people" (1 Pt 2:9-10).

This new "People of God" was destined to be gathered, governed, and sanctified by "the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rv 21:14). They knew that God was calling them to be "ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor 3:6), "servants of God" (2 Cor 6:4), "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20), "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4:1). They were sent to preach the Gospel that converts hearts, establish believers in communities of faith, and administer the sacraments that give the graces necessary for salvation. In short, they were called to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, namely, the Church. Thus, the one Church established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity is an *apostolic* Church. Apostolicity is essential to its authenticity. It is founded upon the apostles and built upon Peter, chosen from amongst them (see Lk 22:31-32; Jn 21:15-17), with Christ himself as the chief cornerstone.

Since our Lord intended to be with us until "the close of the age" (Mt 28:20), the apostles needed to



DAVID CHARLES PHOTOGRAPHY

A bishop's crozier, symbolizing his office of shepherd of Christ's flock

"Every bishop, every priest, and every deacon can trace his ministerial powers through the laying on of hands of a bishop who himself can trace his ordination directly to the apostles themselves."

mission. It is the task of every Christian to spread the Kingdom of Christ to all people.
(CCC 75-79, 815-816, 857-865)

choose successors to themselves. We see this first in the Acts of the Apostles, when St. Peter initiates the selection of a successor to Judas the traitor (see Acts 1:15-26). St. Peter identifies this succession as one taking the "office" of Judas (see Acts 1:20). As the Church spread beyond Judea into the Gentile world, it became essential to appoint additional individuals to oversee the various local churches, as we read in St. Paul's letters (see Phil 1:1; 1 Tm 3:1; Ti 1:7; the English word "bishop" derives from the Greek *ἐπίσκοπος*, which means "overseer"). And we learn also from St. Paul that, in his role as apostle, he had the power to appoint others to serve as priests: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you" (Ti 1:5). This transfer of authority occurs by the laying on of hands, as we read in the book of Acts (see Acts 6:6; Acts 13:3) and in St. Paul's letter to his disciple, the bishop St. Timothy (see 2 Tm 1:6). It is the firm tradition of the Church that every bishop, every priest, and every deacon can trace his ministerial powers through the laying on of hands of a bishop who himself can trace his ordination directly to the apostles themselves.

The Church is also apostolic in the sense that, united to the successors of St. Peter and the other apostles, the Church is sent out to convert the whole world. Hence, all members of the Church are called in various ways to fulfill the apostolic

Infallibility: God's Perfect Gift to His Imperfect Church

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

~ John 16:12-15

THE infallibility of the pope is one of those key Catholic beliefs that are often puzzling, even to some Catholics. It takes its place beside terms like transubstantiation and the Immaculate Conception. If not suitably explained, the truths attached to these terms can lie trapped behind a wall of confusion. Where papal infallibility is concerned, a certain nagging suspicion or personal embarrassment may deepen misunderstandings. It is highly probable that many Catholics today turn a distinctive shade of red when asked why the Church continues to insist that the pope is perfect.

Infallibility versus Impeccability

If papal infallibility meant that "the pope is perfect," it would be an embarrassing and entirely unacceptable claim: only God is perfect. But the Catholic Church does not claim that her leaders have divine attributes. In reality, the term "infallible" is not synonymous with perfection. "Infallible" means "incapable of error," which is certainly a characteristic of perfection, but not the fullness of perfection. Most modern calculators are "incapable of error" when it

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means "without flaw," a claim that the Church does not make and never will.

"Papal infallibility" is a technical, theological term used to explain a fairly straightforward reality. It means that on specific matters and under very precise conditions, it is impossible for the pope to teach falsely. The following paragraphs set the stage for this gift and spell out the terms and conditions associated with it.

At the Sources of Infallibility

Like all things but sin, infallibility is a gift from above. It has its source in the divine life of the Holy Trinity. In concrete form, it has been revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the eternal Son of God made man (see Jn 1:1-2, 14), and who "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tm 2:4). Jesus Christ is "*the image of the invisible God*" (Col 1:15), the reflection of God's glory (see Heb 1:3), "*full of grace and truth*"



Papal crown and stole on the Sacred Scriptures: The Church discerns which books were inspired by the Holy Spirit

(Jn 1:14). He speaks the truth and is the truth (see Jn 14:6). In him, men and women have access to the truth without error and find the answers to their deepest questions.

The Ongoing Quest for Meaning

For centuries, the Church has asked "What did Jesus mean?" and "How does this apply to a given situation?" In general, these questions were answered in ecumenical councils by the successor of Peter (the Pope) and the bishops in union with him. Today, these questions are asked by Catholics, by Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church, and by men and women of good will everywhere. There is hardly a word spoken by or about Jesus Christ that has not been subject to careful scrutiny. Regrettably, the results of these analyses have led to many varying and often contradictory interpretations of meaning. A number of these have caused painful divisions in the Christian community itself and have weakened the power of the Gospel. These divisions continue to this day and have resulted in over 30,000 Christian denominations and sects.

From this, a new question is raised. "How do we know what Jesus really meant, and how do we apply this to present day circumstances?" Without a guide or teacher, without a true witness, we are in danger of error. In many cases, people simply resign themselves to the notion that there really is no way of knowing (with true certainty) the truth on which Christ constantly and forcefully insisted (see Jn 1:14, 17; Jn 3:21; Jn 4:23-24; Jn 8:31; Jn 14:6, 17; Jn 16:13). But is this really so?

The Church's Magisterium

In the midst of this uncertainty stands the "Magisterium" of the Church's teaching authority. It is comprised of the pope and the bishops in union with him. Thus, the Magisterium is rooted in the



Antique holy card dating from the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) which more clearly defined papal infallibility

mission given by Jesus to the apostles and is handed down to every generation through apostolic succession. The mission of the Magisterium is to "preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15) and to "guarantee," until the end of the world, "the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error" (CCC 890). As successors of the apostles, the pope and the bishops in communion with him, under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit, see to it that the People of God abide in the truth that brings freedom. They are the authentic teachers and witnesses of the Gospel and the guarantors of every true interpretation of it. To fulfill this service, they possess the gift of infallibility in matters of faith and morals.

Infallibility in Context

The gift of infallibility is exercised in several forms and under very precise conditions. First, it is only exercised in matters of faith and morals. Infallibility extends to the entire deposit of faith, as well as to elements of doctrine such as morals, to ensure that all the saving truths of the faith are preserved and explained without error. The teachings of the pope and the bishops are not infallible when they offer opinions or recommendations outside these areas. Matters of personal opinion, Church discipline, and Church administration represent examples of non-infallible teaching.

As chief shepherd and teacher of all Christians (see Jn 21:15-17), however, the pope teaches infallibly whenever he teaches *ex cathedra* (Latin for "from the chair"). This is a figure of speech meaning from the seat of teaching authority. When the pope teaches "from his chair," that is, formally and consciously as the Chief Shepherd, he is by the protection of the Holy Spirit prevented from teaching falsely. In other words, God sees to it

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that he remains immune from error.

The pope is infallible only by virtue of the special promise of Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit. The gift can be exercised without the consent of the other bishops or of the faithful, but the pope is not infallible as a private citizen. To teach infallibly, the pope must be acting deliberately as visible head of the Church, supreme teacher of all Christians, and a subject of Christ the King. Infallible teaching must be a definitive teaching on faith or morals. The bishops, too, can teach infallibly when they teach together in this way united with the pope. Outside of communion with the successor of Peter, no episcopal teaching can be authenticated. When the bishops teach infallibly, they normally do so in the context of an ecumenical council.

Though the teaching of Christ is constant and unchanging, it must be applied to the circumstances of every age. It must be read along with the signs of the times. The Church remains deeply conscious of her responsibility in this area. It is the Church's duty to examine the signs of the times and to interpret them in the light of the Gospel. She does this so that she can offer in a manner appropriate to each generation an authentic response to every human question about the meaning of life, the promise of the life to come and how they are related. It is therefore necessary for the Church to constantly and consistently answer the questions presented to her by the modern world.

Objections

A primary objection raised by this truth is the reality of weakness and sin. It is said that, given the notorious sins of certain popes, it is clear that infallibility does not exist. Yet the charism of infallibility is not a question of personal holiness. It is a question of teaching. It is a question of the Holy Spirit who will not let the Church sink into error regarding faith and morals. Popes may reject in their own personal lives both faith and morals, but they will never be given over to teaching as true what is actually false. It is worth noting that no pope in history has even attempted to make an infallible statement justifying his own sins or the sins of others, or to satisfy some whim or fancy.



Pope John Paul II, reigned from 1978 to 2005

Infallibility not Inspiration

Finally, infallibility does not imply divine inspiration nor is it to be considered new revelation. When the pope teaches infallibly, it is after much prayer and the careful study of divine Revelation (Scripture and Tradition), as well as collaboration with his brother bishops. It is chiefly a response to a question, the clarification of a particular doctrine, or the final settling of a dispute, all having to do with faith or morals. For example: Was Jesus truly God and truly human or a confused mixture of both? What does it mean when we say that Mary was immaculately conceived? When a pope is asked to formally decide on these questions, he has basically two choices. He can either give the right answer or no answer. To get the right answer he must investigate like anyone else. In light of his investigation and guided by the Holy Spirit, he is able to discern the truth and preserve and effectively guard the deposit of Revelation entrusted to the Church.

Recent Infallible Statements

Several examples can be cited of recent formal infallible statements made by popes outside of a formal church council. For example, Pope Pius IX in 1854 defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and, in 1950, Pope Pius XII defined the Assumption of Mary. Both definitions were made with almost unanimous consent from both the body of the bishops and the faithful (though this is not necessary). Other infallible definitions have been made through the voice of the many church councils through time, such as the definition of the Blessed Trinity made at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.

(CCC 888-892, 2035)

Servant of the Servants of God: St. Peter and His Successors in the Life of the Church

“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.” And he said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.” He said, “I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day, until you three times deny that you know me. ~ Luke 22:51-54

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ~ Matthew 16:15-16

Simon's Confession of Faith

SIMON'S CONFESSION OF FAITH is essential to understanding his unique role in the Church.

It was because of this confession that he was given the name Peter and entrusted with the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona!” Jesus declared, “for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven” (Mt 16:17-19).

Peter was “blessed” be-

cause the Father revealed to him the truth about his Son (see Mt 11:27). This truth was *foundational* and *definitive*. The faith of the whole Church depended upon and was grounded in it. Initially, and according to God's plan, it was given only to Peter. Through the Holy Spirit, he was able to profess it openly before his brother apostles. In turn, they too were blessed and given the grace to see the Lord for who he was. Thus, on the rock of Peter's faith, the apostles entered into *communion* around the only one who had the power to unite them, namely Jesus Christ. He is the Promised One, the Messiah — truly, the Son of the Living God.



Jesus is ministered to by angels, by Domenico Maistroianni, 1876-1962

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“Peter is the Rock”

Because of his profession of faith in Christ, Simon was given a new name. In the

“The Lord Jesus personally and permanently established apostolic authority.”

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Greek New Testament, this name is rendered "*Kepha*" (from Aramaic) or "*Petros*" (from Greek), both of which mean "rock." Jesus called Simon "rock" because he intended to build his Church on Simon's faith — a faith given him directly from the Father (see Mt 16:17). Ultimately and without a doubt, Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone of the Church (see Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Acts 4:10-11; Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pt 2:4-8), but he chose to build the Church on the person of Peter, whose faith was essential to God's plan.

Apostolic Authority and Succession

The role of Peter cannot be discussed without some mention of apostolic authority and succession. It is clear from Sacred Scripture that Jesus entrusted his own mission to the care of all the apostles (see Jn 13:20; Jn 17:18; Jn 20:21). He gave them authority to teach and to heal (see Mt 10:1; Mt 28:20; Lk 9:1). Furthermore, he promised to be with them until the end of time (Mt 28:20) and to send the Holy Spirit to guide them "*into all the truth*" (Jn 16:13). Hence, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus personally and permanently established apostolic authority (see 1 Cor 12:27-31; Ti 2:15). He did this in order to keep the Church united in truth and charity until "*the close of the age*" (Mt 28:20).

It is also clear from Scripture that the mission Jesus entrusted to the apostles was destined to last until the world's end. Therefore, they passed on their unique role and authority to their closest collaborators. They accomplished this by means of the "laying on of hands" (see Acts 6:5-6; 1 Tm 5:22; 2 Tm 1:6). Today this is called ordination, that is, admission to the sacrament of Holy Orders. It signifies and brings about "apostolic succession," the fullness of which resides in the bishops, but is shared by priests and deacons.

By the will and grace of God, apostolic authority has been preserved through an unbroken line. From the time of Peter to the present day, this authority has resided in the apostles and in their successors.



Drawing of Pope John Paul II kissing an infant, by Paul Kerrie

It is an authority to lead and govern. More importantly, it is an authority to teach in the name and the person of Christ and to sanctify. It is an authority given by Christ Jesus himself so that all in the apostles' care may live in the assurance of truth and achieve holiness and salvation.

The Primacy

Regarding Peter specifically, those who succeed him as Bishop of Rome also inherit his unique role and authority as chief shepherd and teacher. This is expressed by the word "primacy." It simply means that Peter and his successors

enjoy the first place among the college of bishops.

Primacy has very important implications. It is tightly bound to the events that unfolded at Caesarea Philippi. Remember that the Father first revealed the whole truth about Jesus to Peter alone (see Mt 16:15-17) and, on the basis of this Revelation, Jesus entrusted Peter with the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (see Mt 16:19). It was God, therefore, who founded the authority of all the apostles on Peter. This meant that their authority was legitimate only insofar as they remained in communion with Peter's profession of faith revealed directly by the Father himself. This is so significant that today, as then, Peter and his successors remain the perpetual source and visible sign of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole Church.

"Holy Father"

The word "pope" comes from the Latin word *papa*, which means "father." The word "papacy," which refers to the pope's office as such, much like the word "presidency" refers to the office of the president, comes from the same root. The roots of these words are important because they reveal a central truth. The pope and the papacy acquire their deepest meaning and expression only within the context of a faith handed on to others in the true spirit of fatherhood. This fatherhood manifests itself best in an authentic witness to Jesus Christ before the world, faith-

ful even unto the shedding of blood. So the pope is more of a father than he is anything else. In his role as universal shepherd, he is charged by Christ with the task of feeding, guiding, teaching, and defending the People of God (see Lk 22:31-32; Jn 21:15-17). Catholics, then, are not afraid to call him "father," or even "Holy Father" because by virtue of his office, that is precisely who he is. His office is sacred (holy) and his role is paternal (fatherly).

The Pope is Human

At the same time, Catholics are equally unafraid to acknowledge that the pope is a human being. He is imperfect. Peter, too, was human and imperfect, possessing all the strengths and weaknesses of human existence. Jesus prays for Peter "that [his] faith may not fail" (Lk 22:32), because he knows the depths of human weakness. Jesus knows that Peter will deny him; it is not a question of "if" (see Mk 14:30-31, 66-72).

In spite of Peter's denial, Jesus does not reject him (see Jn 21:15-17). While fully aware of human weakness, he is equally aware of the concrete possibilities of this man. He continued to value Peter's confession of faith at Caesarea Philippi and led him patiently through his Passion and death and beyond his denial. This valuing of Peter's profession of faith ultimately extends to his successors. They must also face human failings while continuing to proclaim the truth about Jesus to the Church and to the whole human family.

All of this is central, because it is not simply a question of the man Peter or the one who succeeds him. Chiefly, it is a question of the will of the Father (see Mt 16:17) and the work of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:4, 14). It is a question of Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone and the one who builds his Church on Peter and all the apostles.

The Pope: A Work of the Holy Spirit

Following the Resurrection, and despite Peter's denial, Jesus confirms Peter's primacy over the

whole Church, asking him "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (Jn 21:15). Peter, who had not stopped loving Jesus, responds: "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you" (Jn 21:16). "Feed my lambs ... Tend my sheep," the Lord commands him (Jn 21:15-16).

In this light, we see that for Jesus, Peter's primacy is not a question of his human strengths or weaknesses. Peter does not repeat what he stated before the Crucifixion: "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you" (Mt 26:35). It is not a question of that. By then, it had become a question of the Spirit of God, promised by Christ to the one who would take his place on earth. Despite his imperfection, Peter was chosen to stand in for Christ. His election became a question of the *concrete possibilities* of humanity redeemed in Christ.

In this regard, perhaps it is enough to remember that on the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who first spoke to those gathered in Jerusalem. Peter reminded them of the crime committed against Jesus (see Acts 2:14-41). By the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus could be confident in Peter's witness to the truth. He could, as it were, rely on Peter as his vicar on earth and on all the apostles — even on Paul, who at that time continued to persecute the Church and hated the name of Jesus. This trust and confidence on the part of Jesus continues to bear witness to the charism of infallibility possessed by the pope and the bishops in communion with him.

Servant of the Servants of God

To conclude, it is important to see the pope's role and presence in the Church as a necessary and fundamental *service* to the whole Body of Christ. In fact, without this *primary service of obedience to the truth*, the Church's unity — so integral to the Church — could not be guaranteed. Therefore, the pope is also called "Servant of the Servants of God." His role is ministry (service), to be carried out in the name of and in the person of Christ for the good of all.

(CCC 85, 551-553, 861-862, 874-896, 1559, 2034)

"For Jesus, Peter's primacy is not a question of his human strengths or weaknesses."



Pope St. Pius X, the first 20th century pope to be declared a saint

HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. ~ Matthew 16:18



AT THE GREAT outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at Pentecost (see Acts

2), the Church began its public ministry, bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations. During these early years, the Church was primarily a community of Jewish converts. It was to them that Jesus had focused his public ministry, and to them that the apostles and disciples had first carried the Good News. Thus, the focus of the Church's ministry was centered at Jerusalem, preaching to the Jews of that great city and those that came to it in pilgrimage from their faraway homes.

The Early Years

The Jewish focus changed with the Church's expansion beyond Jerusalem, which began about the year 36 AD. A deacon named Stephen was falsely accused of blasphemy, brought before the Sanhedrin (the Jewish court of elders), and later stoned to death (see Acts 6:8-7:60). His death triggered a

"The Edict of Milan legalized Christianity."

larger persecution of the entire Christian community in Jerusalem led by the Pharisee Saul, who would later convert and become Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles (see Acts 9:1-19; Acts 16:9-10). (The Gentiles were those not of Jewish descent.) As a result of this persecution, Jewish Christians fled to other major cities in the empire such as Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch. As Christians spread to these places, they came into more frequent contact with Gentiles, who quickly converted. Gentiles entered the Church in such large numbers that they soon outnumbered the Jewish Christians, and tensions between the two groups began to arise. A major dispute soon arose about whether these new Gentile Christians had to follow all the precepts of the Law of Moses. It was clear that the Ten Commandments (the Decalogue) should be kept by all, but not clear about dietary laws and practices such as circumcision. These latter precepts for centuries had helped to distinguish Israel from its pagan neighbors amidst persecution and slavery. To re-

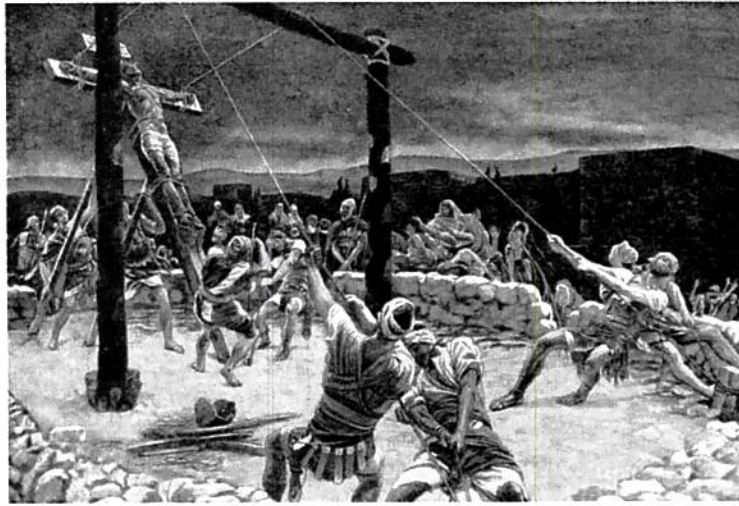


The Institution of the Eucharist, by Fra Angelico, 1587-1455

solve this dispute, the first Church council was called at Jerusalem, in about 50 AD. The decisions of this council made it clear that Gentiles were not bound by the law of circumcision but were bound to avoid eating meats which had been sacrificed to idols, both to ensure that they themselves would not be tempted to return to idolatry and to demonstrate respect for the traditions and customs of their Jewish brothers and sisters (see Acts 15:1-19).

The Period of Persecution

The Church continued to grow and spread in the following few decades during a period of relative peace. This changed when a fire that devastated much of Rome in 64 AD was blamed on the Christians by the emperor Nero. As punishment, Nero began persecuting Christians. Many Christians were martyred during this persecution, including the two great pillars of the Church, Saints Peter and Paul. This persecution lasted only a year, but it began a general attitude of hostility on the part of Roman authorities toward Christians that continued into the 4th century. During these centuries, the simmering Roman hostility several times erupted into outright persecution in which Christians were killed for their faith. It reached a peak in the early years of the 4th century when, in the years 303 and 304, the emperor of the eastern half of the empire, Diocletian, issued three edicts initiating a violent persecution that lasted almost twenty years in some regions of the empire. In the West, the emperor Constantine was more favorable towards the Church due to the influence of his mother, Helena, who had become a Christian. Following a miraculous vision urging Constantine to fight under the sign of the cross, Constantine achieved victory over his imperial rivals. He and his eastern counterpart issued the Edict of Milan in 313, which legalized



The elevation of the Cross, by James Tissot, 1856-1902

Christianity and gave it an equal status with the traditional pagan religions of Rome. Constantine eventually took control of the entire empire, put an end to the remaining persecutions, and reunited the empire under one leader. Some historians claim that Constantine himself converted before his death.

The Period of Heresies

In the wake of its new freedom, the Church was able to establish itself and begin to deal with the confusion and errors called heresies that were disrupting the lives of many of the faithful. Certain heresies, which centered around the person of Christ — whether he was God or man or both, and whether he was one person or two or a mixture of both — were valuable moments for the Church to reflect more deeply on its teaching, gain greater insight into the truth of its doctrines, and develop greater precision in the way they were expressed.

Several Church councils were convened during this time, beginning with the Council of Nicaea in 325. This council affirmed **Christ's divinity**, which had been denied by the proponents of Arianism, who asserted that Christ was only human and had been created at the beginning of time. Because of the vast extent of Arianism, which claimed in its ranks even many bishops, another council was called in 381 at Constantinople. This council reaffirmed the divinity of Christ and reaffirmed the creed first formulated at Nicaea, commonly called the Nicene Creed. In the following century, another heresy arose, called Nestorianism, which denied that Mary was the Mother of God (*Theotokos*, meaning in Greek "God-bearer") and claimed that she gave birth only to Christ's human person. In response, the Church at the Council

of Ephesus in 431 affirmed that Christ was a divine Person who assumed human nature when conceived

"By the fifth century, the Church had spread to nearly every corner of the Roman empire."

in Mary's womb. Mary's title as **Mother of God** came not because she herself was a divine person but because she gave

human birth to the Divine Person, the Son of God. Twenty years later at the Council of Chalcedon, the Church defined the way Christ assumed human flesh as a **union of two natures, human and divine, in one divine Person**. Pope Leo the Great's famous *Tome* that was read at the Council explained that this union in Christ's divine Person united two complete, distinct, and individual natures without any confusion. Upon hearing this, the bishops gathered there rose and proclaimed: "This is the faith of the apostles; so we all believe. Peter has spoken through Leo!"

The Creation of Christendom

By the 5th century, the Church had spread to nearly every corner of the Roman empire. Large civic halls called *basilicas* were converted into churches to allow for larger numbers to assemble for worship. Because the possibility of martyrdom had been largely removed when Christianity became a legal religion, some members of the Church went out into the desert, denying themselves every physical comfort as a kind of spiritual martyrdom witnessing to their desire and faith to live and die only for the Lord. Eventually, many of the faithful were inspired to draw away from the world to — if not the desert — a secluded place where they could pray and fast. A whole new way of Christian living was born, called monasticism. Monasteries sprang up around Europe, generally seen as beginning with St. Benedict's in Monte Cassino, Italy.

With the collapse of the empire in the West

"By the conclusion of the first millennium of Christianity, nearly the whole of Europe had become Christian."

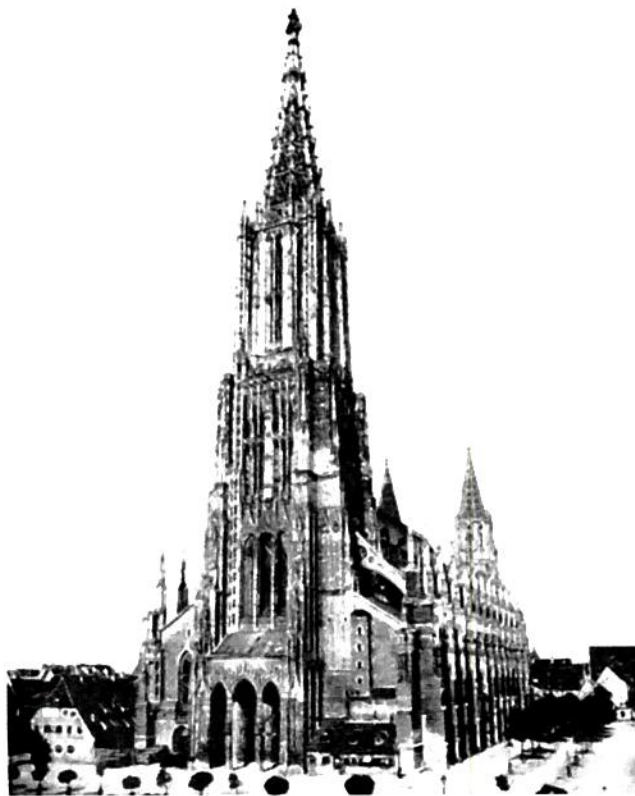
in 410, monasteries also became centers of education and culture. It is largely due to the work of monks who spent

long hours each day copying manuscripts that Western culture was preserved for future generations. During the 5th through the 8th centuries, missionary monks were sent out to preach the Gospel all over Europe. With the work of St. Patrick in Ireland, St. Augustine of Canterbury in England, and St. Boniface in Germany, to name only a few, the Church was established in modern-day Germany, France, Spain, England, Scotland, and Ireland. By the conclusion of the first millennium of Christianity, nearly the whole of Europe had become Christian.

The collapse of the empire in the West, which had left half of Europe without any centralized leadership or government, led the Church, specifically the popes, to step in and save Western Europe from total ruin. When Attila the Hun first approached Rome in 451, it was Pope Leo the Great who met with him and convinced him to spare attacking Rome. As

the years went by, the pope as Christ's vicar (representative) on earth wielding spiritual authority was seen more and more also as an authority in affairs of the world.

The rise of the papacy's political authority eventually wed the Church and state together in the West, contributing to a rising hostility between East and West in the Church. The Pope's addition of the words "and the Son" to the Nicene Creed to describe the procession of the Holy Spirit, without the use of a worldwide Church council, was seen by Eastern bishops as a usurpation of the authority of the bishops as a whole.



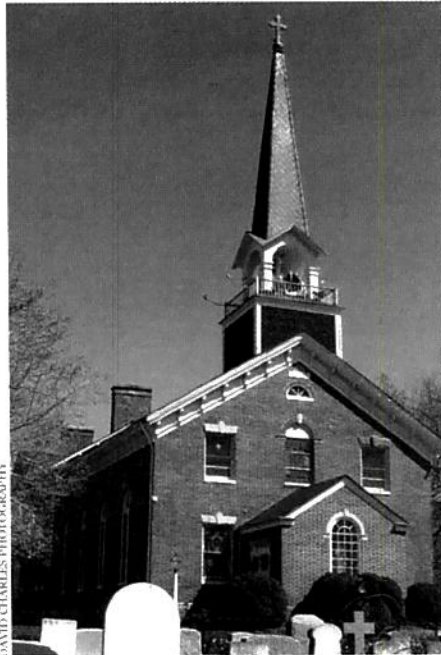
The majestic Gothic Cathedral of Ulm, Germany constructed from 1377 to 1477; its single spire rises to a height of 529 feet

When Pope St. Leo III crowned Charlemagne as emperor of the Holy Roman Empire on Christmas Day 800, the hostility reached its peak. How could the Pope not only allow but also crown a French barbarian king to the throne of the Roman empire? The Greeks in the East were furious. For the next 150 years the situation was only worsened by popes of ill repute. In 1054, the final break between Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople took place, thereby severing the Eastern (now called Orthodox) Churches from the West. Today, many of the wounds caused by this division have been healed and relations with the East have considerably improved, although the schism has not yet been ended.

The Rise of Islam and the Crusades

In the 7th century, Islam was founded and began a centuries-long period of conquest in the Christian world. Within a century, Islamic warriors had taken over much of Christian Asia Minor, North Africa, and Spain, only halted by Christian military resistance at Constantinople in 717 and southern France in 732. An uneasy peace with numerous clashes prevailed for the next several centuries.

The first Crusade, launched by Pope Urban II in 1095, was a response to the plea from the Byzantine Empire (the former Eastern Roman Empire) for help against Muslim conquest of Christian holy places and attacks on Byzantine soil. The Crusaders also sought to open a passageway to the Holy Land in order to ensure that pilgrimages by Christians would always be possible in the Muslim-dominated territory. However, after initial success, the later Crusades had less-honorable aims, becoming more and more materialistic. By the end of the 13th century, the Muslims had driven the Crusaders out of the Holy Land.



St. Ignatius in Port Tobacco, Maryland, the first parish founded by the Jesuit priest Fr. Andrew White, and the oldest parish in continuous service in the original thirteen colonies

“From approximately the 11th through the 14th centuries, Europe experienced its greatest period of unity and the formation of a true culture of Christianity.”

The “High Middle Ages”

From approximately the 11th through the 14th centuries, Europe experienced its greatest period of unity and the formation of a true culture of Christianity. This period is termed the “high middle ages” (that is, a portion of the period from about the 5th to the 14th centuries), and saw as well the rise of great learning, the establishment of universities, and a greater development in trade. This is the period of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic, founders of two of the Church’s greatest religious orders, and the period of the greatest philosopher and theologian the Church has ever produced, St. Thomas Aquinas.

A much-needed reform of the papacy began with the establishment of the Cluny monastery in France in 910. This monastery, free from feudal control, became the model for monasteries during this time; by the mid-12th century there were over 300 monasteries modeled on Cluny. Monks from these houses began taking leadership roles in the Church, including the papacy. This led to the actions of several popes to establish the Church’s autonomy from secular influence. The

most notable example is Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). Pope Gregory, himself from a reformed monastery, sought to free the Church from the influence of Emperor Henry IV. Although Pope Gregory lost his own battle, dying in exile from Rome, his ideas remained, and the Church eventually won the war. The pinnacle of papal power in this era was probably Pope Innocent III (1198-1216). Pope Innocent did spiritual battle with King Philip Augustus of France and later King John of England, in both cases coming out the victor. The power of the Church over kings would never be greater than under this pope.

But troubles remained. In the early 14th century the papacy moved to Avignon, France, where it re-

“The Counter-Reformation removed many of the abuses and problems that had made the Protestant revolt possible.”

maintained for about seventy years, heavily influenced by French monarchs. The Pope eventually returned to Rome, but there were rival claims to the papacy and by 1415 three men, each from a different “chain” of succession, claimed to be pope. Only with the Council of Constance in Switzerland in 1417 was the situation sorted out, but the damage that had been done lasted for centuries.

The Protestant Revolt and the Council of Trent

A whole variety of factors in the Church came together in 1517 when the Augustinian monk Martin Luther nailed his “Ninety-five Theses” (a list of criticisms of Church practices in his day) to the Church door in Wittenburg, Germany. Initially intended only as a challenge to debate, Luther’s Theses became a rallying point for people discontented with the Church and its problems at the time. Luther and others quickly broke away from the Catholic Church, leading away from the Church many millions in German-speaking states, France, Switzerland, England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia.

In response to the doctrinal challenges of the reformers, and the genuine need for reform of corrupt practices by members of the Church, the Church convened the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which reaffirmed the doctrines of the Church with great clarity. With assistance from a new order of priests called the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits), the Church launched the Counter-Reformation, which sought to reclaim the peoples and nations that had separated themselves from the Church. Although only a portion of Europe was restored to the Church, the Counter-Reformation succeeded in renewing the Church as a whole

and removed many of the abuses and problems that had made the Protestant revolt possible.

Simultaneously with the problems in Europe, the Church was growing tremendously in the New World. Missionaries were sent to preach the Gospel. They not only preached but also worked to improve the manner in which both natives and those people enslaved and transported from Africa were treated, and to alleviate their burdens.

The many Church condemnations of slavery, sadly, had little effect on its general practice in the New World. Nevertheless, great numbers of the oppressed population converted and entered the Church. Missionary efforts, most notably by the Jesuits, were also carried out in the Far East in India, Japan, China, Indochina, and the Philippines. The blood of many martyrs was spilt in order to establish the Church in these lands.

The “Enlightenment,” Vatican I, and the Early 20th Century

The next major challenge to the Church did not come from kings and rulers but from philosophers. With the dawn of the “Age of Reason,” also called the “Enlightenment,” faith was ridiculed. The “enlightened” philosopher could not be a person of faith because religion and science, faith and reason were viewed as incompatible opposites. The consequences for the faithful were dire. Not only did outright persecutions result from the denial of God’s role in human affairs, such as that which characterized the French Revolution in the late 1800s, but more importantly the faith of many people was systematically undermined, so that today, throughout nearly all of old Christendom and the parts of the world where



Pope Pius VII, a Benedictine monk, reigned from 1800 to 1825, began to reestablish the Jesuit Order, resisted and excommunicated Napoleon, and was himself imprisoned by the French ruler, established several important feast days in honor of Mary, and aggressively sought to foster evangelization; portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1769-1850

"Western values" predominate, a new kind of paganism has become the predominant culture, but without even the redeeming feature of belief in and worship of some kind of god.

At the Vatican I Council in 1870, the relationship of faith and reason was affirmed. The Council explained that, although the truth obtained through faith is inaccessible to reason alone, it is no less rational because of it. The person of faith does not put his or her reason aside. Rather, the light of faith purifies reason and enables the believer to use reason to make sense out of divine Revelation. Also, amidst the growing atheism of this time, Vatican I affirmed that knowledge of God's existence could be discovered through reason alone. As Scripture says, "*Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse*" (Rom 1:20), that is, those who say they cannot discover him.

At the turn of the 20th century, a new heresy called modernism appeared that was a synthesis of many previous heresies. Pope Pius X (1903-1914) was an ardent defender of the Church's teaching in the face of modernism. His successors would find themselves occupied with the problems of two world wars and the political ideologies of Communism and Fascism that came between and after them. Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) sought to confirm the rights of Catholics under Fascist governments in Italy and Germany. Pope Pius XII (1939-1958) sought to stop World War II and saved hundreds of thousands of Jews from the genocidal evil of the Nazi regime in Germany.

During this period and in the following decades up to the present, the Church has vigorously defended human rights and promoted the value of the individual person against both totalitarian communist states, which suppressed human freedom by promoting the state over and against the individual, and states that allowed or promoted such evils as abortion and euthanasia. In the West, the Church also faces the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to an increasingly secular and materialistic culture. In various encyclicals (papal letters), the popes during these years have defended the value of marriage and the family and promoted the value of human labor over capital, underscoring that the person and his or her work cannot be treated as another mere raw material in the process of production. The Church has also repeatedly remind-

ed wealthy nations of their obligation to help the poor and to work toward a more just distribution of human goods throughout the world.

Vatican II to the Present

In order to adapt itself to the quickly-changing times and more successfully proclaim the Gospel, the Church held its twenty-first Ecumenical Council in 1962-1965, Vatican II. In many ways, Vatican II was the fruit of the renewal that had already begun in the areas of liturgy and biblical studies. In the wake of this Council, the Church has sought to implement its reforms and become more effective in proclaiming the Gospel to the modern world. Pope John XXIII called the Council; Pope Paul VI closed it and implemented many of its reforms. Pope John Paul II emphasized the theological, social, and political importance of human dignity and made Vatican II the rallying point of his papacy as he led the Church into the third millennium of Christianity. Pope Benedict XVI, elected in 2005, has made Christian unity, combatting the relativism of the secular culture (see handout on Errors of Modern Culture), and re-evangelization of nations once authentically Chris-

tian important parts of his work as Universal Shepherd.

Sadly, the first several decades following Vatican II coincided with a rise in a "culture

of dissent" within the Church, which even claimed that the conciliar documents somehow supported their desire to change doctrine and overthrow ancient disciplines. This culture may be on the wane, but it is the responsibility of every Catholic to fully and joyfully conform to the Church's unchanging teaching, even when the cost is, as Jesus tells us, taking up our cross daily (see Lk 9:23).

Although God allows us to work out, for both good and ill, the consequences of the use of our free will, we must always realize that he is the Lord of history; ultimately, he is in charge: "*For thou hast done these things and those that went before and those that followed; thou hast designed the things that are now, and those that are to come. Yea, the things thou didst intend came to pass, and the things thou didst will presented themselves and said, 'Lo, we are here'; for all thy ways are prepared in advance, and thy judgment is with foreknowledge.*" (Jdt 9:5-6).

(CCC 269, 304, 817, 849, 851-852, 882, 1040, 1122)

"The Church has vigorously defended human rights and promoted the value of the individual person."