Doctrine, Dogma, and Discipline

What is the Magisterium?

- The teaching authority of the Church
  - Pope
  - Bishops in communion with the pope
  - Theologians as advisors
- Role
  - To instruct the People of God in the truth God revealed
- The Magisterium presents this truth in different forms
  - They “teach the faithful the truth to believe, the charity to practice, the beatitude to hope for” CCC #2034
  - These teachings are presented in Doctrines, Dogmas and Disciplines

What is Doctrine?

- Doctrine- Any teaching of the Magisterium on faith or morals for the whole Church to believe
- All Dogmas are Doctrines
- Not all Doctrines are Dogmas
- The Church’s teachings are on different levels of authority, a kind of hierarchy
- Dogmas are the highest level of authority
  - They are the most fundamental teachings upon which all other teachings rest

What is Dogma?

- a) A truth formally revealed by God b) which has been proposed by the Teaching Authority of the Church to be believed as such
- Revelation
  - Truth communicated to man by God through extraordinary means
  - Scripture and Tradition
    - Contains all of Public Revelation
    - Not private revelation like visions that can happen to anyone
    - Ended when the last book of the Bible was written
      - II Peter 120 AD

Infallibility- free from teaching error regarding faith or morals

- “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth” John 16:13
  - It is not the human that teaches but the Holy Spirit that teaches through the Magisterium
- I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” Matthew 16:19
  - This is the most important scriptural evidence for infallibility
• Loosing can be applied to infallible matters, disciplines, and confession

• “Yet this Magisterium is not superior to the Word of God, but is its servant. It teaches only what has been handed on to it” *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #86

• The Popes and Bishops are not supposed to let their biases influence their teachings

• They are to reiterate and apply the truth God gave them
  
  • Scripture and Tradition

• Otherwise we have the Galileo debacle

**Infallibility**

• Deals with Faith or Morals, not Science

• Can be infallible in 3 ways
  
  • Defined infallibly
    1. Pope (“from the chair”)
    2. Pope and Bishops together- In Council, like Trent, not over a cup of coffee

  • Taught infallibly
  
  3. Bishops

**Extraordinary Papal Magisterium**- Fancy way of saying the pope’s authority to teach infallibly

• An *Ex cathedra* (“from the chair”) statement is when the Pope:
  
  • Acts as the successor of St. Peter
    
    • Not as a theologian, Jorge Mario Bergoglio instead of Pope Francis

  • and promulgates on faith or morals
    
    • not merely suggested or beating around the bush

  • for the whole Church to hold as true

• It is mostly agreed that there have only been 2 *Ex cathedra* statements
  
  • Pope Pius IX in 1854 made an *ex cathedra* statement that defined the **Immaculate Conception** (that Mary was conceived without original sin)

  • Pope Pius XII in 1950 made an *ex cathedra* statement that defined the **Assumption** (that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven)

**Immaculate Conception**

  o Fulfills the requirements for Ex cathedra statement
Pope Pius IX is speaking as Pope Pius IX and not as Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti.

- Through the document he references the authority coming from Peter.
- He is clearly defining his statement as true.
- It is clearly to be held by the entire Church.

Extraordinary Episcopal Magisterium

- Ecumenical Council—when bishops from around the world get together with the pope and make decrees which all Christians must hold to be true.
- All 21 ecumenical councils have defined infallibly.
  - The Council of Ephesus infallibly defined that Mary is the Mother of God.
- In these councils and papal encyclicals other things are dealt with that are non-infallible, such as disciplinary matters and applied teachings.
  - An example would be Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, he applied infallible teachings to the historical situation of communism and capitalism.

Ordinary Universal Episcopal Magisterium

- Infallibly taught.
  - When all bishops throughout the world, at any one particular time in history.
    - Does not exclude the pope.
  - Agree on some matter of faith or morals.
  - Teach it definitively.
    - Not wishy-washy.
- John Paul II said that the evil of abortion was infallibly taught.
  - “Therefore, by the authority which one Christ conferred upon Peter and his successors, and in communion with the bishops of the Catholic Church, I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral” Evangelium Vitae.
  - Confirm, as in confirming the teaching that had already been infallibly taught but had not been infallibly defined.

Why not define everything?

Take these explanations as you will.

- With regards to teaching on morality.
• With regards to ecumenical reasons
• With regards to schisms

• “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth” John 16:13

• The Church is a Pilgrim on Earth and the Holy Spirit is our guide
  • A guide doesn’t give you all the directions to the destination at the beginning and then leaves, he goes with you step by step to make sure you are going the right way

• We have the fullness of revelation within Scripture and Tradition
  • But we are not able to fully articulate this truth for every situation

• The Church grows and matures as it makes its pilgrimage toward the heavenly glory
  • It is important to note that infallibility doesn’t mean the ability to perfectly articulate the truth

What are Disciplines?

• Disciplines- the laws prescribed by the Church to aid the Faithful in living the Faith
• Can change with time and place
  • Pope
    • Bishop Conferences (USCCB)
• Dispensations- the suspension of a discipline
  • Pope
    • Bishops
      • Priests

Disciplines

Friday no meat example

• “[W]e emphasize that our people are henceforth free from the obligation traditionally binding under pain of sin in what pertains to Friday abstinence, except as noted above for Lent” USCCB 1966
  • The Church prescribed not eating meat every Friday
  • The Church no longer prescribes not eating meat every Friday
  • But, the Church still prescribes a penance every Friday
The USCCB suggests not eating meat but other penances are permitted.

**Assent**

Graph

Our standard response to teachings of the Church should be an assumption that it is true and then enter into search for truth.

You cannot just believe infallible teachings, you must recognize the pope, bishops and priests as God’s main instruments in communicating his will, thus when Fr. Allen gives a homily at the mass, while he is not infallible, you still must trust God is using him to speak to you.

However, there are times in which you should give “Faithful Dissent.” Giving assent of faith to matters that require assent of mind and will treats the non-infallible matters as infallible and thus one abandons the search for truth and just has a sort of blind obedience.

**Dissent**

The only way one can give faithful dissent is if it passes these three criteria:

1. Must be of non-infallible teaching  
   a. You can never give faithful dissent to infallible teachings
2. Must remain faithful to infallible teachings and generally faithful to non-infallible teachings  
   a. You cannot go around giving faithful dissent to every non-infallible teaching that displeases you
3. The basis for the dissent must come from a teaching of the Magisterium that is more fundamental  
   a. There is a hierarchy of authority with Dogmas at the top and your pure reasoning at the bottom  
      i. Reasoning is what makes us special. God wants us to use our reason in search of truth, but he also wants us to use what He has communicated to us as the basis in our reasoning

God gave us the Magisterium for a reason. Christ knew that without the Magisterium, we would all be interpreting Scripture ourselves. This is a problem because of The Fall and Original Sin; it caused our ability to reason to be injured, and thus if we cannot be relied upon to interpret Scripture the way God intended.

This is seen in Acts 8:30-31 “When asked by the deacon Philip, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ he replied, ‘How can I unless someone guides me’”

Vatican II says it best. “It is clear therefore that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others. Working together, each in its own way, under the action of the one Holy Spirit, they all contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.”