

Unit 4, Part One

Dogma, Doctrine, Disagreement & Dissent

How is the church “the focal point of the kingdom”? (pp.40-41)

- The church is the focal point of the kingdom’s presence because it is through the Church that the will of God – the foundation of the kingdom—may be most reliably known.

“The Church is necessary for salvation.”

- Salvation comes through Jesus. We say that the Church is necessary for salvation because Jesus is necessary for salvation. Without Jesus, who has chosen the Church as His body, there is no salvation.

The “permanent constitution” of the church

- This refers to the Church’s basic form and makeup, the structure that makes it possible for the Church to be the Church.

A "Bishop"

- A bishop is an "overseer." A Bishop is the successor to the apostles and head of a particular church. All of the bishops together and united with the pope exercise leadership of the church.



What is the role of the bishops as teachers of faith?

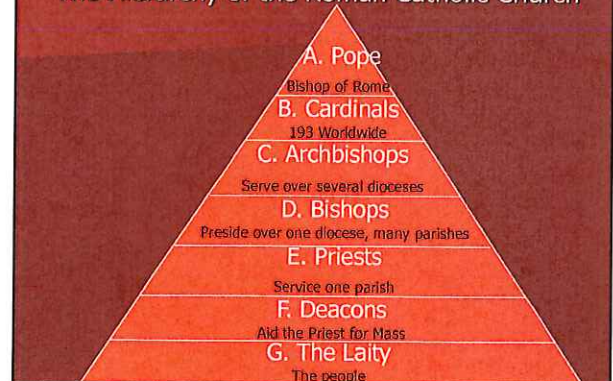
- Bishops are charged with protecting central truths and passing those truths on.
- The truths must be expressed in language which makes sense to people of the day.

"college of bishops"

- A term that is used to refer to the bishops of the world as a group.



The Hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church



The Catholic clergy is organized in a strict, sometimes overlapping hierarchy:

Pope: Head of the church, he is based at the Vatican. The pope is infallible in defining matters of faith and morals.

Cardinal: Appointed by the pope, 178 cardinals worldwide, including 13 in the U.S., make up the College of Cardinals. As a body, it advises the pope and, on his death, elects a new pope.

Archbishop: An archbishop is a bishop of a main or metropolitan diocese, also called an archdiocese. A cardinal can concurrently hold the title. The U.S. has 45 archbishops.

Bishop: A bishop, like a priest, is ordained to this station. He is a teacher of church doctrine, a priest of sacred worship, and a minister of church government. The U.S. has 290 active bishops, 194 head dioceses.

Priest: An ordained minister who can administer most of the sacraments, including the Eucharist, baptism, and marriage. He can be with a particular religious order or committed to serving a congregation.

Deacon: A transitional deacon is a seminarian studying for the priesthood. A permanent deacon can be married and assists a priest by performing some of the sacraments.

**Episcopal Conferences
(National Conferences of Bishops)**

The individual Bishop has the primary duty of caring for the faithful in his diocese. It is he who must teach them and shepherd them. However, every country or region now also has an Episcopal Conference

(ex, NCCB – U.S. bishops,
the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference,
The Canadian Catholic Bishops Conference,
CELAM – Latin American Bishops Conference)

Canon Law reserves certain disciplinary decisions to the Episcopal Conference for a region.

For example, the general law in the Code of Canon Law is that Catholics must do penance on Fridays by abstaining from eating meat, but it allows the Episcopal Conference for each region to substitute a different penance if they choose (which most appear to have done).

magisterium

- **The bishops, acting in unison with the pope, by virtue of their ordination constitute the "Magisterium."**

The Episcopal Conferences are not part of the Magisterium of the Church.

- They have no authority to teach in and of themselves. Their interpretations of doctrine and pronouncements on them are only binding insofar as your own bishop has lent his name to the interpretation or pronouncement.

The Synod of Bishops

The Synod of Bishops is a formal body within the Church. It is an advisory body to the Pope that meets in Rome on set occasions.

It is largely a creature of the Second Vatican Council and many considered it to be a continuation of the Council: the Bishops coming to Rome to consider important issues and develop Church teaching.

Many considered that the Synod of Bishops was an expression of the collegiality of Bishops, a **move towards the democratization of the Church** and the decentralization and diminution of Papal power.

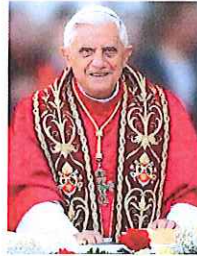
It was considered that the Pope, although theoretically still in charge, would not act contrary to the Synod of Bishops. With that perspective, the Synod of Bishops has proved to be a toothless tiger.

In the sense that it is to assist the Holy Father to understand the needs of the Church throughout the world, the Synod has proved to be valuable, and Pope John Paul II certainly holds it in high esteem. But, the Synod really is **only an advisory body** and the final decision (and teaching) remains with the Holy Father.

Only Bishops together in a General Ecumenical Council have the power to teach as a College (like the Second Vatican Council). And even Ecumenical Councils are ultimately subject to the authority of the Holy Father.

What role does the *pope* have with regards to leadership in the church?

- The bishop of Rome. The pope is the successor of Peter and as such holds the highest office of teaching and governance in the Catholic Church.



Who helps the pope and bishops in the area of teaching and preaching?

- **Competent theologians and spiritual writers – both lay and ordained**

What is the magisterium's role in interpreting Scripture and Tradition?

- **The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church. The Magisterium is the authentic interpreter of Scripture and Tradition.**

Give one example of how the presence of the magisterium within the church has served non-Catholics as well.

- **The Magisterium has ensured that issues such as abortion, justice for the poor, physician-assisted suicide – discussed from a Catholic perspective—will be brought to the forefront of life in society.**

What are the responsibilities of someone who disagrees with the magisterium?

1. **The person should be very cautious about disagreeing with the Magisterium.**
2. **When they do disagree with the Magisterium, they must admit that they are not speaking as representatives of the Catholic Church, but as individuals.**

3. **They must acknowledge that their opinions do not carry the weight of a universal Church, or of a teaching with an unbroken connection to Christ.**

4. **They must acknowledge their cultural biases and admit that in taking a stand different from that of the Magisterium, they are implying that the Holy Spirit has revealed things to them, and perhaps, their group, that have been withheld from many others who are equally committed to listening to the Spirit.**

What is meant by the church's "permanent ethic?"

- This refers to moral teaching that does not change from one generation to the next.

What is the role of the magisterium with regard to moral behavior?

- It is the Magisterium's role to guide the faithful as it determines the behavior appropriate to specific situations.

- The role of the laity: Every Catholic is called to pay close attention to the Magisterium's interpretation of the Catholic ethics in light of specific current circumstances.

What does your knowledge of absolute truths help you to do?

What do you think?

What is the *hierarchy*?

- The structural order of leaders within the church

- Pope, bishops, priests and deacons

What is meant by: “there is a permanent body of dogma?”

◦ **Those absolute truths which were revealed by Christ and are so essential to the faith that their essence can never be changed.**