

THE PRIMACY OF PETER



Written and Compiled
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THE COVENANTED PEOPLE AND THEIR HEAD

Any understanding of the role of Peter as Head of the Church must be rooted in the Covenant. The Covenant is the key to understanding Church, the Journey, the People, the Pope. You can ask yourself a simple question "What is God doing upon earth?" Many a Catholic would answer, "God is creating a Church going people, a one hour a week religion." Many an evangelical would answer, "God is creating a Bible reading and believing people." Others would say, "God is primarily interested in our keeping His Ten Commandments." However, from the beginning God is doing something for more all embracing than any of these responses. What God is doing upon earth

IS CREATING FAMILY HIS WAY?

Yes, God is creating a covenanted people who are fathered, mothered, brothered and sistered by His Spirit. This covenant is the Key. "I will be your God, you shall be my people." All else fits into and flows from this. The family of God is the key mystery of our faith. That is why St. Paul could state so clearly, "It is for this reason that we kneel before the Father from whom every family both spiritual (the Church) and natural (the nuclear home) takes its name (i.e. its lifestyle, its spirit, its energy, its love).

So God built covenant upon covenant. A covenant is a family life structure, divinely established and maintained through a Man as head and woman as helpmate under whose authority all aspects of life are encompassed. (A covenant differs greatly from a contract.)

Thus God established 7 covenants each with a human male mediator, a structure and a covenanted sign.

The following is based on a schema created by Scott Hahn:

GOD'S GRACE & LOVE (3 x 7)

COVENANT TIME-LINE:

<u>TIME-ERA:</u>	???	C.2500BC	C.2000BC	C.1500BC	C.1000BC	C.500BC	3BC-30AD
<u>MEDIATOR:</u>	Adam	Noah	Abraham	Moses	David	Ezra	Christ
<u>Structure:</u>	marriage household	tribe	nation	kingdom	priesthood	church	
<u>Cov. sign:</u>	Sabbath	rainbow	circumcision	Passover	throne	temple	Eucharist

VI. Working Definition of Covenant: "A Family-Life Structure Divinely Established and Maintained Through a man (and a Woman) and ALL Under Their Authority Encompassing All Aspects of Life Over Space and Time"

*Note : 7 elements:

1. A "Trustee-Family" based on the centrality of faith, worship & sacrificial love
2. Trinity is Eternal Archetype of the Covenant-Family: Origin, Basis & Goal
3. "Trustee-Family" not merely Patriarchal, also Matriarchal & Fratriarchal

4. Obligations of Law in the Covenant are based on Relations of Love
5. Hierarchical Family Organization orders all life (econ., politics, ed., etc.)
6. Family as Social Organism indefinitely extended geographically (i.e. catholic)
7. "Corporate Personality" incorporates all generations: past, present & future.

Salvation-History Viewed Through the Covenants Between God and His People

<u>I. 7 Covenant Principles</u>	<u>7 Major Covenants</u>	<u>7 Covenant Actions</u>
1. "The Seed Principle"	1. Adam - Marital	1. Divine Call - Election
2. "The Generation Principle"	2. Noah - Domestic	2. Promise - Faith
3. "The Succession Principle"	3. Abraham - Tribal	3. Mediator - Authority
4. "The Pruning Principle"	4. Moses - National	4. Law - Sacrificial Obedience
5. "The Grafting Principle"	5. David - Royal	5. Judgment - Bless/Curse
6. "The Genealogy Principle"	6. Ezra - Priestly	6. Oath-Sacrament
7. "The Immanuel Principle"	7. Christ - Catholic	7. Family - Social Order

After the Ascension, Christ, to be true to God the Father's pattern of having a simple male representative of His Covenant here on earth, would leave Peter and his successors as His vicar or representative, i.e. one who could speak by His authority and in His name. He would never leave the Church on earth orphaned.

A KEY OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGE

In the 22nd chapter of Isaiah, we have an important chapter to help us understand the Primacy of Peter in the new covenanted People of God.

God "deposes" his office Shebna, the head steward who was in charge of the palace, for his sins.
v.19 "I will depose you from your office and you will be ousted from your position"

Then God says:

"In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkia. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. All the glory of his family will hang on him: its offspring and offshoots - all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars." v.20-24

Notice the symbols of authority that God uses here:

"the robe"

"the sash"

"the key to the house"

"the power to open a door that no one can shut and close a door no one can open"

Another key point to remember is that this steward of the palace would have successors. When we come to Jesus at Caesarea Phillipi passing on the keys to the Kingdom to Peter so that whatsoever Peter binds on earth shall be bound in Heaven and whatsoever Peter looses on earth shall be loosed in Heaven, remember this scene from Isaiah.

PETER AND THE APOSTLES

Jesus chose twelve Apostles. He meant this number to be symbolic. Just as the ancient people stemmed from the twelve sons of Israel, making the twelve tribes, so, too, the new people begins with twelve men. He himself alluded to the connection between the two (Mt. 19:28). (Schreck)

It is noteworthy that the Apostles included in their number a former tax-gatherer, that is, a "collaborator", Matthew, and a "zealot", a resistance fighter against the Romans, Simon—men who by nature should have been deadly enemies. They also included some fishermen from Galilee, whom Jesus had summoned to the apostolate in terms that might not strike us as particularly elegant—that they should be fishers of men (Schreck).

Peter

The figure who stands out most clearly is a fisherman called Simon Bar-Jona, which means son of Jona (John-son). In this impetuous and mercurial man of the people Jesus laid a solid foundation of loyalty and love (Schlock):

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you [plural], that he might sift you [plural] like wheat, but I have prayed for you [singular] that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22:31-32).

He is given the surname "Rock", *Petros* in Greek. He may have wavered for a while, but he was still the man who was to be the leader of the Church, the little flock, after Jesus' death. The Acts of the Apostles show beyond all doubt that this in fact is what happened (Schreck).

The gospels of Matthew and John and also Luke record in striking terms the charge which was given to Peter. In all the lists of the Apostles he is always named first. In Luke, the phrase "fisher of men" is addressed only to him (5:10). What is said in Matthew 18 about the authority of the Twelve in general is addressed, surprisingly enough, to Peter alone in Matthew 16 (Schreck).

Peter and the Apostles

The New Testament provides indisputable evidence that Simon Peter had a preeminent position among Jesus' disciples and in the early church. Consider the following points, taken from Alan Schreck's Catholic and Christian:

1. In the gospels, Peter is usually the spokesman for the apostles, especially at climactic moments, such as:
 - Mk 8:29—Peter's confession of faith
 - Mt 18:21—"Lord, how many times must I forgive? Seven times?"
 - Lk 12:41—"Lord, are you telling this parable (about being watchful, with lamps burning, awaiting the Master's return) to us, or to everyone?"
 - Jn 6:67ff—"Lord, to whom shall we go? You alone have words of eternal life."
2. Peter is often the central figure relating to Jesus in dramatic gospel scenes such as walking on the water and the following:
 - Mt 14:28-32—"Lord, if that is you, tell me to come to you walking on the water."
 - Lk 5:1ff—Jesus got into the boat, the one belonging to Simon (Peter).
 - Mk 10:28—Peter said to Jesus, "We have left everything to follow you."
 - Mt 17:24f—Peter is told by Jesus to "Take the first fish you catch, open its mouth and you will find a four drachma coin" (to pay tax for Jesus and Peter).

3. In the synoptic gospels, Peter is always named first when the apostles are listed (Mk 3:16-19; Mt 10:1-4; Lk 6:12-16; Acts 1:13). In fact, sometimes the apostles are referred to as simply, "Peter and his companions" (Mk 1:36; Lk 9:32; Mk 16:7).
4. In John's gospel, John waits for Peter before entering Jesus' tomb and allows him to go in first, a sign of honor and respect (Jn 20:3-8). Jesus also singled out Peter as a shepherd of God's people (Jn 21:15-17, see below).
5. Paul lists Peter as the first witness of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor 15:5), and calls him "Cephas" (rock), the name Jesus gave him (Gal 1:18; 2:7ff, 11, 14; 1 Cor 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5).
6. In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter's leadership is acknowledged in many ways:
 - Acts 2:14-40—Peter is the first to proclaim the gospel publicly.
 - Acts 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:3-9, 29-32; 8:20-23; 10:34-43; 11:4-18; 15:7-11—Peter gives many of the major speeches in Acts.
 - Acts 3:6-7—The first healing miracle after Pentecost is reportedly worked through Peter's command, and he apparently had a widely recognized gift of healing (Acts 9:34, 38-41; Acts 5:15).
 - Acts 10:9-48—Peter was the first to receive God's revelation that the gospel was to go to the Gentiles, and he was the first to command the baptism of Gentiles (Acts 10:46-48).

Then there are Jesus' explicit statements about Peter's unique role in the church. Such sayings are found in all four gospels, indicating that all of the New Testament writers acknowledged and supported Peter's leadership role (Schreck).

First, Luke's gospel reports that Jesus told Peter: "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" (Lk 22:31-32). Jesus' words were fulfilled. Peter's faith in Jesus did not fail, even after he denied that he knew Christ three times. He repented and truly became a "rock" of strength for his brethren, as the passages listed above indicate (Schreck).

Secondly, in John's gospel (21: 15-19), Jesus asks Simon Peter three times, "do you love me?"; each time Peter affirms his love for Jesus. This is a reversal of Peter's threefold denial of Christ, but Jesus' response to Peter here is also very significant. He tells Peter, "Feed my lambs," "Tend my sheep," and finally, "Feed my sheep." Jesus calls himself "the good shepherd" in John's gospel (Jn 10:11,14) and explains that the shepherd lays down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:11). Thus Jesus' words to Peter mean that Jesus is commissioning Peter to be the "good shepherd" who will feed and care for Jesus' flock after he departs (Schreck).

John places the election of Peter after Jesus' death. This shows that the foundation of the Church is provided for primarily in the time following Jesus' earthly existence (Cath. Catechism):

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21: 15-17).

This passage is important because it takes place after the Resurrection.

THE KEY PASSAGE Mt 16:18ff

Before going on to discuss the consequences that follow from what was said to Peter, let us try to read the words afresh, as though for the first time, and note the marvellous power for salvation which is here conferred on a human being.

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". And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! 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 to 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. 16:13-19).

These words of Jesus have sometimes been regarded as an interpolation, on the grounds that he could not possibly have said them. But modern scholarship has shown that they are to be found in all the manuscripts, even the most ancient ones. And the language itself, highly charged with metaphor, is so full of Semitic elements that there are few texts in Matthew that are so surely part of the gospel as this one. Thus, for instance, the play on the words Peter and Rock is only complete in the basic Aramaic text: *Kepha—kepha* (as it is, accidentally, in the French *Pierre—pierre*). The Greek translation showed the pun as *Petros—petra*. This was preferred to the other possible translation, *Petros—petros*, because *petra* means the live, unquarried rock or bed-rock, which was what Jesus meant, whereas *petros* would normally mean stone or boulder, something that could be thrown. For the proper name, however, *Petros* was chosen, since it would have been awkward to call a man Petra, the word for rock being feminine in Greek.

It is generally recognized today, even by Protestant writers, that the ordinary and obvious interpretation of the text is the most authentic. Thus the well-known Protestant exegete Günther Bornkamm writes: "In the interpretation of the saying about Peter and the Church, Roman Catholic and Reformed theologians are much closer to each other than they were in former times. The 'Rock' is not Christ, as was held long ago by Augustine, followed by Luther, nor the faith of Peter or the preaching office, as the Reformers held, but Peter himself as leader of the Church."

Books have been written about the meaning and application of this passage. What is the “rock” upon which Jesus said that he would build his church? Is it Peter? Is it Peter’s faith? Or is Jesus talking about himself as the “rock?” In this short book, I can only explain how Catholic Christians have understood this passage for many centuries.

First, Jesus gives Simon a new name: *Petros* in Greek, and *Kepha* in the Aramaic spoken by Jesus and his companions. Since Matthew’s gospel is written in Greek, the passage reads, “You are *Petros* and upon this *petra* I will build my church.” Some people propose that since *Petros* and *petra* are slightly different forms of the word “rock,” that Simon is not necessarily being identified as the “rock” (*petra*) upon which Jesus would build his church. For example, *petros* might mean a “chip of rock.”

However, these two words are identical in the original Aramaic that Jesus and the Palestinian church actually spoke: “You are the *Kepha* and upon this *kepha* I will build my church.” The words change in Greek because there is a gender difference in the words in the Greek language. *Petra* is feminine. Since it would be inappropriate to give Peter (the Rock) a feminine gender name, the author of the gospel simply changes it to its masculine form (*petros*), in order to apply it to Peter without embarrassment!

The Gospel also says that “upon *this (taute)* rock I will build my church,” immediately after having called Peter “rock.” This reemphasizes that *Peter* is the rock that Jesus is talking about. Most commentaries conclude that identifying the Rock as Peter’s faith, or as Jesus himself, unnecessarily complicates a rather straightforward statement. “You are Peter [rock] and upon this rock I will build my church.”¹

Jesus’ action in giving Simon a new name, Peter, and then explaining what it means is highly significant in the context of biblical culture. In the Bible, God gives a new name to a person or a people to mark a decisive turning-point—a new responsibility, role, or identity.² This fact makes the meaning of the passage even clearer. Jesus tells Simon that “you are Peter (Rock), and upon this rock I will build my church,” and goes on to explain that “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” “Keys” denote authority, as in the “keys” of the city (see also Is 22:15-25; Rv 1:18). Jesus then underlined the point by explaining Peter’s special authority in the kingdom of heaven, “and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 16:19).

"The powers of death" or "the gates of hell" (Hades, the underworld) mean the powers of evil. They will never overcome the Church of God.

Heaven, too, has its gates, and their invisible keys are in Peter's hands. He is the steward with full authority, with the function of regent as described in Isaiah 22:21-22.

Then come the words which in Matthew 18 are also addressed to the Apostles in general, "to bind" and "to loose", that is, to declare right or wrong, also to excommunicate or to lift the ban—with effect "in heaven", that is, "with God". This power is here bestowed on Peter alone, the weak, impulsive and very ordinary Peter, the rock which still has to be hewn and chiselled by Jesus with many a hard word. Even at his weakest moments, he will still receive a call from the Lord: "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter" (Lk. 22:61). That was very soon after Jesus had said to him, "And when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Lk. 22:32).

THE SUCCESSORS OF PETER

The biblical evidence strongly supports the view that Jesus gave Peter special authority. A key question, however, is whether Peter had successors. Peter may have had a leading role in the early church, but it is another matter to show that others were authorized to take over his role after he died. This is a question that Christians disagree on. Catholics believe that there is ongoing "Petrine" authority in the church, just as there is ongoing apostolic authority exercised through the bishops.

Two Key Points

- I. In the passage from Isaiah 22 the "steward of the palace" had successors, to the keys. Jesus knew that, and he knew his hearers knew that when he used the same imagery in conferring the keys to Peter.
- II. Also when Judas died the Apostles realized that some should "take his place." Therefore, after prayer for discernment, they elected Matthias.

The New Testament does not report any words of Jesus that explicitly instruct the apostles or Peter to hand on their leadership or authority to others. However, Catholics believe that God established a *pattern* for leadership and authority in the church, and that the Holy Spirit continues to lead the church through this pattern.

This is, in fact, what actually happened in early Christianity. Although Jesus never explicitly mentioned “successors to the apostles,” “bishops,” or “deacons,” the later New Testament writings tell us that the offices of bishop and deacon were recognized and accepted by Christians, with the bishops functioning as successors to the apostles in their ministry to God’s people. In a similar way, the church later came to believe that the Holy Spirit desired this “Petrine” role of overall leadership and authority in the church to continue.

It should not surprise us that the Holy Spirit eventually directed the church to adopt an authority structure closely resembling the pattern Jesus established among his apostles. The apostles worked together to guide God’s people under Jesus’ leadership, a leadership that Peter in some way carried on after Jesus had departed. Peter was *not* looked upon as a replacement for Jesus; he was only a visible representative of Jesus’ ongoing presence and authority in the whole church, just as each local bishop came to represent the presence and authority of Jesus and the apostles in the local church. In time, the Holy Spirit led the church to recognize the need for one bishop to exercise a special role of leadership among all the bishops—just as Peter had done among the apostles. Christians in the Western part of the Roman Empire looked to the bishop of Rome to carry on this role of leadership for the whole church. In this way, the bishop of Rome became a leader in the early church much like Peter was a leader among the apostles and the first Christians. The “Petrine charism”—the gift of God to Peter—was continued in the pope.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF PAPACY

Why the bishop of Rome? In some ways, that is like asking, “Why Peter?” God chooses whomever he wills. But there are some historical and spiritual reasons why this choice makes sense. Rome had long been the most important city in the world—the capital and center of the Roman Empire—and it was natural to look to Rome for leadership. However, Christians also looked to Rome for a reason that had nothing to do with Rome’s importance as a city. Early Christian writings stress that the church in Rome was carrying on the tradition of its two greatest Christian martyrs: the apostles Peter and Paul. An ancient and strong Christian tradition holds that both these apostles gave their final teaching in Rome and were martyred there. Thus, the bishop of Rome came to be considered the legitimate apostolic successor to the apostles Peter and Paul.

When did the bishop of Rome begin to be recognized as the successor to the apostle Peter? Many writings of the early church testify to the growing recognition of the unique leadership role of the bishop of Rome. Although a full account of these writings is beyond the scope of this book, a few of them will be considered here.

1. Before the end of the first century, the church in Rome helped to settle problems in other local churches. In 96 A.D., Clement of Rome wrote a strong letter to the church in Corinth to resolve a dispute over leadership there. The authority of this letter reminds one of Paul's letters to the Corinthian church forty years earlier.³

2. On his way to martyrdom in Rome in 110 A.D., the illustrious bishop Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the church in Rome:

You are a credit to God: you deserve your renown and are to be congratulated. You deserve praise and success and are privileged to be without blemish. Yes, you rank first in love, being true to Christ's law and stamped with the Father's name.⁴

3. Around 150 A.D., the martyr-bishop Polycarp of Smyrna journeyed to Rome to confer with Pope Anicetus about the proper date for the celebration of Easter.

4. In the late second century, bishop Irenaeus of Lyons refuted false teachers by referring to "the tradition which that very great, oldest, and well-known church, founded and established at Rome by those two most glorious apostles Peter and Paul, received from the apostles . . . every church must be in harmony with this church [the church in Rome] because of its outstanding pre-eminence . . ."⁵

5. In 250 A.D., Cyprian, the martyr-bishop of Carthage in North Africa, wrote this about the one who held the "chair" or office of Peter—the bishop of Rome:

It is on him [Peter] that He [Jesus] builds the church, and to him that He entrusts the sheep to feed. And although He assigns power to all the apostles, yet he founded a single chair, thus establishing by His own authority the source and hallmark of the churches' oneness. No doubt the others were all that Peter was, but a primacy is given to Peter and it is thus made clear that there is but one church and one chair. . . . If a man does not hold fast to this oneness of Peter, does he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he deserts the Chair of Peter upon whom the church was built, has he still confidence that he is in the church?⁶

Later Christian leaders also viewed the bishop of Rome as Cyprian did, as a “chairman” for the whole church—directing it, teaching it, and preserving its unity.

6. In the fourth century, Ambrose, the bishop of Milan who converted and baptized St. Augustine, stated: “Where Peter is, there is the church.”⁷ He also taught that whatever was condemned by the bishop of Rome was condemned by all.

7. Also in the fourth century, the great biblical scholar, Jerome, wrote to Pope Damasus:

I follow no one as leader except Christ alone, and therefore I want to remain in union in the church with you, that is, with the chair of Peter. I know that on this rock the church is founded.”⁸

This represents the attitude of Catholic Christians throughout the ages.

8. By the fourth century, the bishop of Rome was generally recognized as the “patriarch” (or chief bishop) of the Latin-speaking or “western” part of the church. He was also first called “pope” in the mid-fourth century, a term previously used as a title of respect for bishops and superiors of monasteries. By the end of Christian antiquity (600-800 A.D.), the title “pope” was reserved for the bishop of Rome in the Western church, which recognized him as their pre-eminent spiritual leader.⁹

9. Pope Damasus, pope from 366-384 A.D., extended the influence of the papacy to local churches throughout the Roman Empire. The term “apostolic see” was then used to refer to the office of the bishop of Rome.¹⁰

10. During the reign of the emperor Gratian, the title of “Pontifex Maximus” (Supreme Pontiff), a title previously applied to emperors, was given to the bishop of Rome because of his leadership of the universal church.¹¹

11. At the end of the Pelagian controversy, which the pope helped settle, St. Augustine stated: “Rome has spoken; the dispute is ended.”¹²

12. Leo I (the Great), pope from 440-461 A.D., provided decisive teaching about Jesus Christ that guided the bishops at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 A.D. The bishops exclaimed: “Peter has spoken through Leo!” Leo also defended the city of Rome by dissuading Attila the Hun from attacking it, and later convincing Gaiseric the Vandal to sack Rome peacefully instead of destroying it.¹³

13. Gregory I (the Great), pope from 590-604, also helped maintain the political stability of the declining Roman empire, but is more noted for his vibrant missionary efforts and the

unity he provided the expanding church. Gregory sent the first Christian missionaries to England, aided in the conversion of the Visigoths and the Lombards, and linked the Spanish church more closely to Rome. The pope came to be known as “the vicar of the prince of the apostles” and “the servant of the servants of God.”¹⁴

In addition to their increasing moral and spiritual leadership, the popes after Gregory I gradually assumed greater political influence due to the instability of the times and the decline of the Roman Empire. This joining of the pope’s spiritual and temporal roles of leadership eventually gave rise to “Christendom” in the middle ages—a political system in which the popes could influence the secular rulers to promote the Catholic Church and to rule according to Christian principles.

These are some of the reasons why Catholic Christians believe that the leadership role of the pope was intended by God. The Holy Spirit unfolded the role of the pope over the course of a few centuries, not overnight. Not all popes were “model Christians”; indeed, some were serious sinners. The joining of the pope’s spiritual and temporal powers gave rise to some problems in the church. Nonetheless, Catholic Christians thank God for his faithfulness in raising up a scripturally rooted position of leadership through which the truths of Christianity have been faithfully preserved and passed down through the centuries to us today.

THE POPE AS A CHRISTIAN LEADER

Like all God-given authority, the pope’s authority is intended for serving God’s people and building up the body of Christ. Popes are not to exercise their authority for their own benefit, nor apart from the other bishops and church leaders. The apostle Peter had been a spokesman, a “rock,” and a support for his fellow apostles and Christians. Consider Peter’s encouraging words to his fellow elders in the church:

So I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint, but willingly, not for shameful gain, but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory . . . Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you. (1 Pt 5:1-6)

This passage illustrates Peter's own great humility and provides an important teaching for his successors. Peter was the head of the apostles, but he reminds the other leaders that he is also a "fellow elder" with them. The First Vatican Council affirmed this in its teaching on the relationship of the pope and the bishops:

Rather, the power of the bishops is protected, strengthened, and upheld by the supreme and universal shepherd (the Pope), as Pope St. Gregory the Great writes: "My honor is the honor of the whole church. My honor is the solid strength of my brethren. I am truly honored when the honor due to every single one is not denied."¹⁵

Peter also presented himself as a servant of other Christians and a fellow believer with them. He began his second letter, "Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ," (2 Pt 1:1). The great Christian leaders have always professed their unworthiness to hold their positions of leadership. St. Augustine said of his role as bishop: "What I am for you terrifies me; what I am with you consoles me. For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a title of duty; the latter one of grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation"¹⁶ (St. Augustine, Sermon 340, no. 1). The same is true of the office of pope. The popes have realized that they will be held accountable on the day of judgment for how well they have responded to God's call to be representatives of Christ.

For this reason, the early popes took for themselves a title that they felt best reflected their role in the church: *servus servorum Dei*—servant of the servants of God. Jesus himself said "let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. . . . I am among you as one who serves" (Lk 22:26, 27). The image of popes "lording it over" other Christians and bishops is largely an exaggerated one; although not all popes were exemplary, most of them honestly sought to be servants of their brother bishops and of all Christians in imitation of Jesus Christ.

Some popes, bishops and other leaders of God's people have failed to live up to this high ideal of "servant-leadership." This grieves us, but the response of faithful Catholics is not to give up on these elders, nor to leave the Catholic Church, but to pray for their pastors and support their positive leadership

even more fervently. Church leaders, even the pope, are still sinners in need of redemption by Jesus Christ. Because of their positions of responsibility, they are subject to even more intense human and spiritual attack than most other Christians. They need support and prayer to fulfill their ministry. The fact that they sin is instructive. It shows us that God chooses weak and sinful men to represent him and to lead the church and that the wisdom and authority of these leaders comes from God, and not man.

THE POPE'S INFALLIBILITY

The pope works closely with the other bishops in proclaiming the gospel and discerning true Christian teaching. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit upon his apostles to guide them into the fullness of truth, and, as we saw in Chapter Four, this infallibility in the teaching of Christian truth is a gift of God to the bishops when they teach in unity.

Catholic Christians also believe that the pope himself can exercise the infallibility that God promised to the church. This belief is based, first of all, on the biblical portrait of Peter. There were times when Peter was anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim a truth that God wished to reveal. At Caesarea Philippi, Peter declared that Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ. When Jesus asked the apostles at that time, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter did not confer with the other apostles, but was inspired by the Holy Spirit to say, "You are the Christ" (Mk 8:29). In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter received another revelation that was crucial for the life of the early church and important for all later Christian history: that the Gentiles could be baptized to become Christians without first being circumcised. Peter did not submit his revelation to anyone else, but was led to the house of the gentile Cornelius where he understood the meaning of his vision and proceeded to baptize Cornelius and his household. These examples show that the Holy Spirit did, at times, give to Peter alone special guidance and revelation about Christian truth.

Catholics believe that at certain times in Christian history, God has spoken a similar word of sure truth through the pope, the successor of Peter, just as he spoke through Peter himself. This infallibility in teaching Christian truth is a sheer gift or charism of God for the benefit of the church; it has nothing to do with the natural wisdom, ability, or virtue of the particular man who possesses that gift through holding the office of "pope."

From the Bible we also learn that this charism of infallibility is not always operative. It is obvious that Peter did not always

speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, such as when he wanted to set three tents on Mt. Tabor for Jesus, Moses and Elijah (Mk 9:5), or when he denied Christ (Mk 14:66-72). Even after Pentecost, Peter was not totally preserved from personal weakness (Gal 2:11-14).

The same is true of the popes. Even though Catholics believe that God sometimes uses them to speak a sure word of truth to the church, this does not mean that everything they say is infallible. In fact, the Catholic Church has established some rigorous conditions to determine what can be considered an infallible statement of a pope. The First Vatican Council (1869-70) was the first ecumenical council to formally define what Catholics believe about the infallibility of the pope, even though Catholic Christians had recognized his special teaching authority for many centuries. (The Catholic Church often does not formulate an official definition of its beliefs until these beliefs are questioned or require clarification.) Vatican I taught that in order for a statement of a pope to be considered "infallible," it must meet the following conditions:

1. The pope must be speaking *ex cathedra*, that is, "from the chair" of Peter, which means in his position as chief teacher and shepherd of Catholic Christians.
2. The pope must clearly define the doctrine as being a truth of faith.
3. It must be a definition concerning "faith or morals."¹⁷

These requirements have many implications. One is that the pope cannot speak infallibly about science, politics, economics, etc., unless the issue involved is directly related to Christian faith or morals. Another implication is that the pope speaks infallibly only when he explicitly defines a doctrine as an "article of faith." This condition excludes most of the "ordinary" teaching of the pope, such as encyclical letters, apostolic exhortations, occasional speeches, and off-hand comments. The Second Vatican Council affirmed the teaching of the First when it stated that the pope's teaching is infallible only when as supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (cf. Lk 22:32), he proclaims by a definitive act some doctrine of faith or morals.¹⁸ According to this standard, only two of the pope's teachings in recent times have been considered infallible definitions of Christian faith: the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) and the Assumption of Mary into heaven (1950). These two doctrines will be discussed fully later in the book

when we discuss Catholic beliefs about Mary. They were defined not because they are the most important doctrines of the Catholic faith (most of those had been determined long ago by ecumenical councils and other papal teachings), but because they were two doctrines that some Catholics were uncertain about. The popes believed that the Holy Spirit had given them and the church sufficient insight to formally define these beliefs as true.

Although Catholics consider very few of the pope's statements to be infallible, Catholics are expected to respect and obey *all* forms of the pope's teaching. The Second Vatican Council teaches that

this religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*. That is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known chiefly either from the character of the documents (in which the teaching is presented), from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.¹⁹

The charism of infallibility is a great gift to the church, whether it is expressed through the united teaching of the bishops, through the pope defining a doctrine under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, or through the *sensus fidelium*—the whole Christian people being led to a belief through the “sense of the faith.”²⁰ Catholic Christians believe that God uses all these channels to fulfill his promise to preserve his people in the truth until he comes again to reveal all truth in its fullness.

A final word may be said about the honor that Catholics give to the pope. The Bible frequently exhorts Christians to honor and respect the elders of the Christian community (1 Thes 5:12-13; Rom 13:1; 2 Tm 2:2, 24-25), and this would certainly include the pope. But the pope is not God, and Catholics do not honor him as God. Catholics respect the pope as a human representative of Jesus Christ—a “vicar” of Christ Jesus. The pope is called “holy father” because he has a fatherly care for all of God’s people, like a good shepherd (Jn 10), and because his ministry reflects in an imperfect yet real way the perfect love and care of God the Father for his people. Most of all, Catholics respect the pope because they believe that he has

been given a special gift to proclaim and defend the Word of God, as it has come to us in the Bible and the authentic Christian tradition. Catholics believe that in so respecting the pope and other Christian leaders, they are honoring God, who has raised them up as leaders of his church.

Catholic Christians rejoice and bend in awe before God that he has shown his love by using imperfect human beings to transmit and proclaim his perfect truth, and to guide us to the Father through Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

PETER TODAY—

Unity through Peter

But here we must put a very obvious question, which will throw some further light on Christ's gift to the Church. The question is this. Where are we to turn if there is a division in the Church, among the bishops? We take this question as the occasion of speaking of the mandate of the bishop of Rome.

The special task of the bishop of Rome is that of Peter: to be the principle of unity in the Church, to keep it one in faith and life. For this purpose, the bishop of Rome is the authoritative head of the college of bishops. He is not placed above the bishops, but as the first among them and the one who gives directives. In this sense, he is of course above them, just as a head belongs to the body and still is above it. He has been called Pope (i. e. Father, from the late Greek *papas*), since the fourth century. As ruler and teacher, he is the head of the Church.

The rule of Rome became in the long run, especially after the fourteenth century, very active and centralized. This had disadvantages as well as advantages. It is possible that the Spirit is now leading the Church once more to a greater local autonomy under the presidency of the Pope.

At present the bishops are ultimately designated by the Pope. He can interfere in a diocese. And when a bishop can no longer exercise his functions he can even appoint an apostolic administrator in his own name.

The development has been that in the course of time the far-reaching central government has been exercised by the Pope with the help of the Roman Congregations, all of which together make up the Curia. They are like the various ministries in a State. Important helpers of the Pope are the cardinals. They were originally the bishops, priests and deacons of prominent churches in Rome and the surrounding districts. Since the eleventh century they have elected the Pope. The composition of the college of cardinals has become steadily more and more international. The bishops of many important dioceses belong to it. Other cardinals work in Rome, as heads for instance of the various Roman Congregations.

The unifying function of the Pope entails an important task as teacher. As head of the infallible college of bishops, he possesses infallibility in a special measure. He is the beacon. This does not mean that he can proclaim dogmas apart from the Church. He can only declare what the Church universal believes. He takes counsel with all the Catholic bishops, particularly with the Synod of Bishops instituted since the Second Vatican Council. But since union with the Pope is the touchstone for belonging to the unity, an utterance of the Pope is certainly full of the truth of God's Spirit, at least when he affirms explicitly (which happens very rarely) that he is speaking infallibly and binding all Christians. This charism (freely-given grace of the Spirit for the general good) is linked with the office of being first among his brothers.—As regards the faith of the Pope, he is a believer who receives his faith, even as Pope, from the fellowship of the Church in which he has such an important task to perform.

Many directives and pronouncements of the magisterium (the teaching authority) make no claim to absolute infallibility. This does not mean that they are therefore without the Spirit of God. They are utterances which call for extreme respect and are highly authoritative.

Because we have an authority structure (The Pope and the Bishops—called the Magisterium), we have a whole set of beliefs, moral practices and spiritual insights. All of Catholic theology can be divided into three points:

- 1.) Doctrine—including the Creed
- 2.) Morals—including the Commandments
- 3.) Spirituality—including Prayer and the use of the Sacraments.

Because of our Pope and the Magisterium, we know that there is a Jesus, "one person and two natures, one human and one Divine," that Jesus instituted a sacramental system, that Mary is a virgin forever, that she was Immaculately conceived and Assumed into Heaven.

In the field of morals we know that artificial birth control is a sin, as is abortion, extra-marital or pre-marital sex, we also know that artificial insemination, ever, by a husband is wrong, as is surrogate motherhood and genetic engineering. We knew that the war in Saudi Arabia was immoral, etc.

The Magisterium of the Church

I want to quote from a very beautiful letter that Pope John Paul II gave to the French Bishops on June 1, 1980:

"The mission of the Church, which is continually realized in the eschatological perspective, is, at the same time, fully historical. That is connected with the duty of reading 'the signs of the times,'

which was so deeply considered by Vatican II. With great perspicacity, the Council also defined what the mission of the Church is in the present stage of history.

Our common task remains, therefore, the acceptance and implementation of Vatican II, according to its authentic content. Doing so, we are guided by faith: it is our main and fundamental reason for acting. We believe that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, was with the consular Fathers, that the council contains, in its Magisterium, what the Spirit 'says to the Church,' and that He says it at the same time in full harmony with tradition and according to the requirements dictated by the 'signs of the times.'

The faith is based on Christ's promise: 'I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt. 28:20). On this faith is founded also our conviction that we must 'implement the Council' such as it is, and not as some people would like to see and understand it.

There is nothing surprising about the fact that, in this 'postconciliar' stage, there have also developed, quite intensely, certain interpretations of Vatican II, which do not correspond to its authentic Magisterium. It is a question here of two well-known trends: 'progressivism' and 'integralism.'

The first are always eager to adapt even the content of faith, Christian ethics, the liturgy, ecclesial organization, to changes of mentalities, and to the demands of the 'world,' without sufficiently taking into account not only the general feeling of the faithful, who are bewildered, but also the essentials of the faith, already defined, the roots of the Church, here centuries-old experience, the norms necessary for her faithfulness, her unity, her universality.

They are obsessed about 'advancing' but towards what 'progress' when all is said and done?

The others---pointing out these abuses which we are, of course, the first to condemn and correct---adopt an intransigent attitude, shutting themselves up in a given period of the Church, at a given stage of theological formulation of liturgical expression which they make an absolute, without sufficiently penetrating its underlying meaning, without considering the totality of history and its legitimate development, fearing new questions, without admitting, in a word, that the Spirit of God is at work in the Church today, with her Pastors united with the Successor of Peter.

These facts are not surprising if we think of similar phenomena in the history of the Church. But, it is all the more necessary to concentrate all forces on correct, that is, authentic interpretation of the conciliar Magisterium, as the indispensable foundation of the further self-realization of the Church, for which this Magisterium is the source of correct inspirations and orientations.

The two extreme trends which I have pointed out foster not only an opposition, but a regrettable and harmful division, as if they stirred up each other to the extent of creating uneasiness for everyone, even scandal, and of expending in this mutual suspicion and criticism so many energies which would be so useful for a real renewal.

There are actually three principles of discernment here. First of all, is what I feel God is saying to me in accord with the authentic tradition of the Church? Second, is it in accord with the present teaching of the Magisterium of the Church which will be based upon and in full harmony with tradition? Third, is it in accord with the requirements dictated by the signs of the times?

A discerning person, in other words, must be rooted in his tradition under the Magisterium of the authentic leaders of the Church and implementing the present Gospel according to the signs of the times.

Authoritative teaching . . . is seen as a hindrance to true liberty of conscience. To be truly adult, it is maintained, one's conscience must be formed exclusively from one's own insights, without reference to the authoritative teaching of the Church . . .

As we have recalled, it is precisely because conscience is so fallible in its insight into moral truth that such guidance has been provided by Christ. To expect to get along on one's own in moral matters, independently of all authority, is to run away from reality. It is a sign, not of maturity, but of immaturity . . .

The sense of right and wrong, which is the first element in religion, is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted, so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biased by pride and passion, so unsteady in its course, that, in the struggle for existence amid the various exercises and triumphs of the human intellect, this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous; and the Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy are, in the Divine purpose the supply of an urgent demand.' (cf. letter to the Duke of Norfolk) . . .

Should the case arise, he says, where one feels unable in conscience to obey a directive of the Pope, obedience to one's conscience certainly comes first . . . But the decision to go against the Pope's authority can only be taken for the gravest of reasons:

'Unless a man is able to say to himself as in the presence of God, that he must not, and dare not, act upon the papal injunction, he is bound to obey it, and would commit a great sin by disobeying it' . . ."

APPENDIX

Personal Experiences with Contemporary Popes

I have had the privilege of listening to Pope Pius XII---many, many times. Likewise, Good Pope John XXIII. I was in St. Peter's Square when he was elected. I can still hear the words of Cardinal Canali who announced him. I saw Pope Paul VI when he came to Yankee Stadium and when I went to Rome with my parents. I never saw Pope John Paul I but will always remember the Video of his smiling face.

Peter Today in Pope John Paul II

When Pope John Paul II came to Boston, I was there in the rain with a bus-load of people. I heard him challenge the youth of America to "go sell what you have and give it to the poor." I heard him say to us Americans at Yankee Stadium that the Lazarus', the poor of the world, are knocking at our door, that we Christians must give from our substance and not merely from our surplus, and that we American Christians must return to a simple life-style.

I eagerly read those speeches given here in the U.S. of A., on each of his two visits. I read his talks to Africans, Polish, Irish, Japanese, South Americans, etc., as he travels throughout the world bringing Christ's Gospel of love, faith, sacrifice, humility, purity, and generosity to all men of good will.

I read his first Encyclical on Jesus the Redeemer of man—a beautiful Christology of Jesus as Savior, Redeemer, and Lord of history. I was fascinated by his second Encyclical inspired by his love of Sister Faustina and her message concerning the Father Who is so rich in Mercy. I read his Encyclical on the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life—a charismatic masterpiece telling us that we are living in the age of the Holy Spirit.

As I read his beautiful universal letter on Mary, the Mother of the Redeemer (calling Mary the Model and Mother of all her faithful), I became filled with the inspiration of his life, which he has given totally to her and to her son, as exemplified by his pontifical motto, *Totus Tuus*—"Totally Yours (O Mary!)."

Further inspiration and fascination arose through my reading of his three encyclicals covering Social Problems: first, "On Human Work"; second, "On Social Things"; and third, "A Hundred Years". This third encyclical was written to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the First Pontifical Social Encyclical, "*Rerum Novarum*," by Pope Leo XIII.

I read his encyclical, "On the Lay Faithful," proclaiming that every member of the body of Christ by reason of their Baptism, are called,

- 1.) to holiness,
- 2.) to the apostolate,
- 3.) to be Priest,
- 4.) to be Prophet,
- 5.) to be King, and
- 6.) to continue across their particular time and space the redemptive, healing work of Jesus.

I have fond memories of Pope Pius XII calling the laity to the forefront of the life of the Church, and, especially, to a clear understanding of not only belonging to the Church, but being the Church.

Of Pope Paul VI

Pope Paul VI, while still a Cardinal, stated at the Second World Congress of the Lay Apostolate, "The genius of your apostolate consists in the simplicity of knowing how to love. We must love Catholics, Protestants, Moslems, Pagans, Atheists, even those who are indifferent. We must love the very young and the very old, the poor, the imprisoned and the sick. We must love those we deem worthy of our love and even those we deem unworthy. We must love with the fullness and greatness of God, our heavenly Father, who so loved this world of ours that He sent His son, Jesus, into it just to teach us how to love. And we must love with the magnanimity and

simplicity of Jesus who said, "My little children, a new, a wonderful commandment I give unto you...love one another as I have loved you." Is this going too far to love the whole world? What has become of our humility? My beloved brothers and sisters, it is not pride nor folly that teaches us to raise our eyes to God's Kingdom or to the fields too ripe for harvest. It is Hope, it is Catholicity, it is the Apostolate. Today we realize that you, the people of God, are called to take upon your shoulders (as collaborators with the clergy that is true), but primarily as your own principal task, the mission of Christ in the modern world. For you are the apostles of the modern world; you are the "other Christs of today."

I can see Pope Paul give away his tiara to feed the poor in South America.

I can still picture Pope John XIII coming to the Geso Bambino Hospital next door to my Seminary in Rome and blessing the deformed and sick babies. Then, he went out to the prison and said, "You could not come to me so I came to you."

I can still picture our present Holy Father forgiving the man who shot him. I can still picture his friendly smile and wise words as he leads our Church in the most trying time of all history.

I thank God for the Pope—I praise God for giving the keys to Peter.

I know where I stand—I stand where Peter stands.

I love my Catholic Church.
I love my Catholic faith

Because of Peter and his successors, it's so clear, so straightforward, so courageous, so holy.

I thank God for Peter.

I thank God for the Pope.

Heavenly Father, watch over our wonderful, holy Pope and give him to us many more years—we most humbly pray,
Amen.

I thank God for the Pope---I praise God for giving the keys to Peter.

I know where I stand---I stand where Peter stands.

I love my Catholic Church.
I love my Catholic faith

Because of Peter and his successors, it's so clear, so straightforward, so courageous, so holy.

I thank God for Peter.

I thank God for the Pope.

*Heavenly Father, watch over our wonderful, holy Pope and give him to us many more years---we most humbly pray,
Amen.*

BISHOP OF ROME IS PETER'S SUCCESSOR

Address of Pope John Paul II on the Bishop of Rome as Successor of Peter, the 50th talk on the series on the mystery of the Church (January 27, 1993)

Jesus' intention to make Simon Peter the foundation "rock" of His Church (cf. Mt. 16:18) has a value that outlasts the apostle's earthly life. Jesus actually conceived His Church and desired her presence and activity in all nations until the ultimate fulfillment of history (cf. Mt. 26:14; 28:19; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47; Acts 1:8). Therefore, as He wanted successors for the other apostles in order to continue the work of evangelization in the various parts of the world, so too He foresaw and desired successors for Peter who would be charged with the same pastoral mission and equipped with the same powers, beginning with the mission and power of being Rock, i.e., the visible principle of unity in faith, love, the ministry of evangelization, sanctification and leadership entrusted to the Church.

This was defined by the First Vatican Council: "What Christ the Lord, prince of pastors and great shepherd of the sheep, established in the blessed apostle Peter for eternal salvation and for the everlasting welfare of the Church, must always endure, by the will of the same Christ, in the Church which, founded on rock, will remain indestructible until the end of time."

The same Council defined as a truth of the faith: "It is by the institution of Christ the Lord, that is, by divine right, that blessed Peter has endless successors in his primacy over the whole Church." This is an essential element of the Church's

organic and hierarchical structure, which no one has the power to change. For the Church's entire duration, there will be successors of Peter in virtue of Christ's will.

Roman Pontiff succeeds St. Peter in the primacy

The Second Vatican Council accepted and repeated this teaching of Vatican I, giving greater emphasis to the link between the primacy of Peter's successors and the collegiality of the apostles' successors, without weakening the definition of the primacy justified by the most ancient Christian tradition, in which St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Irenaeus of Lyon stand out primarily.

On the basis of this tradition, Vatican I also defined that "the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter in the same primacy." The definition binds the primacy of Peter and his successors to the See of Rome, which cannot be replaced by any other See, although it can happen that, due to circumstances of the times or for particular reasons, the Bishops of Rome take up residence temporarily in places other than the Eternal City. Certainly, a city's political condition can change extensively and profoundly over centuries. But it remains, as is the case with Rome, a determinate space to which an institution such as an episcopal See is always referred; in the case of Rome, the See of Peter.

In truth, Jesus did not specify the role of Rome in Peter's succession. Doubtless He wanted Peter to have successors, but the New Testament does not state His specific desire to choose Rome as the primatial See. He preferred to entrust that to historical events in which the divine plan for the Church, the determination of the concrete conditions of Peter's succession, would appear.

The decisive historical event is that the fisherman of Bethsaida came to Rome and suffered martyrdom in this city. It is a fact rich in theological significance, because it shows the mystery of the divine plan which arranges the course of human events to serve the Church's beginnings and development.

Peter's coming to Rome and his martyrdom here are part of a very ancient tradition expressed in basic historical documents and archaeological discoveries regarding devotion to Peter on the site of his tomb, which early on became a place of veneration. Among the written documents we must first of all recall Pope Clement's *Letter to the Corinthians*, where the Church of Rome is considered as the Church of blessed Peter and Paul, whose martyrdom during Nero's persecution is mentioned by the Pope. In this regard it is interesting to underscore the reference of tradition to the two apostles associated in their martyrdom with this Church. The Bishop of Rome is the Successor of Peter. However, he can also be called the heir of Paul, the greatest representative of the early Church's missionary efforts and of the wealth of her charisms. The Bishops of Rome have generally spoken, taught, defended Christ's truth, celebrated pontifical rites and blessed the faithful in the name of Peter and Paul, the "Princes of the Apostles," the *olivae binae pietatis unicae*, as is sung in the hymn for their feast on June 29. The Fathers, the liturgy and iconography often depict this association in martyrdom and glory.

Unbroken chain links Peter and his successors

Nevertheless, the Roman pontiffs have exercised their authority in Rome and according to the conditions and opportunities of the times, have done so in wider and even universal areas, by virtue of their succeeding Peter. Written documents do not tell us how this succession occurred in the first link connecting Peter with the series of the Bishops of Rome. It can be deduced, however, by considering everything that Pope Clement states in the Letter cited above regarding the appointment of the first bishops and their successors. After recalling that the apostles, "preaching in the countryside and the cities, experienced their first fruits in the Spirit and appointed them Bishops and deacons of future believers," St. Clement says in detail that, in order to avoid future conflicts regarding the episcopal dignity, the apostles "appointed those whom we said and then ordered that, after they had died, other proven men would succeed them in their ministry." The historical and canonical means by which that inheritance is passed on to them can change, and have indeed changed, but over the centuries, there is an unbroken chain linking that transition from Peter to his first successor in the Roman See.

This method of historical investigation (which could be called genetic) into the Petrine succession in the Church of Rome is confirmed by two other considerations: a negative one which, beginning with the need of a succession to Peter by virtue of Christ's very institution (and so *iure divino* as is usually said in theological-canonical language), confirms that there are no signs of such a succession in any other Church. Moreover, there is another consideration we call positive: it consists in showing the convergence of signs that in every age point to the See of Rome as that of Peter's successor.

Regarding the link between the papal primacy and the Roman See significant testimony is given by Ignatius of Antioch, who extols the excellence of the Church of Rome. In his *Letter to the Romans* this authoritative witness of the Church's organizational and hierarchical development as it was experienced in the first half of the second century addressed the Church "which presides in the land of the Romans, worthy of God, worth of honor, deservedly blessed, worthy of happy success, worthily chaste, which presides over charity" (Intro.). Charity (*agape*) in St. Ignatius' language refers to the ecclesial community. Presiding over charity expresses the primacy in that communion of charity which is the Church, and necessarily includes the service of authority, the *ministerium Petrinum*. In fact, Ignatius acknowledges that Church of Rome's teaching authority, "You have never been jealous of anyone you have taught others. So, I want those lessons that you give and enjoin in your teaching to be steadfast too."

Agreement with Church of Rome required of all

The origin of this privileged position is indicated by those words regarding the significance of his authority as Bishop of Antioch, which is also quite venerable because of its antiquity and relationship to the apostles: "Not as Peter and Paul do I command you." Rather, Ignatius entrusts the Church of Syria to the Church of

Rome: "In your prayer remember the Church of Syria, which in my stead has God for its shepherd. Only Jesus Christ, and your charity, will rule it as Bishop."

In seeking to determine the apostolic succession of the Churches, St. Irenaeus of Lyon in turn refers to the Church of Rome as the example and criterion *par excellence* of this succession. He writes: "Since in this work it would take too long to list the successions of all the Churches, we will consider the great and very ancient Church known to all, the Church founded and established in Rome by the two glorious Apostles Peter and Paul. By showing the tradition received from the Apostles and the faith proclaimed to men, which comes to us through the succession of Bishops, we refute all who in any way, whether from madness or vain-glory or blindness and mistaken thought, gather together beyond what is right. In fact, it is with this Church, by reason of her more excellent origin, that every Church (i.e., the faithful who come from every area) must necessarily be in agreement, -- with this Church in which the tradition that comes from the Apostles has always been preserved by everyone."

The Church of Rome is acknowledged as having a "more excellent origin," which is that of Peter and Paul, the greatest representatives of the authority and charism of the apostles: the *Claviger Ecclesiae* and the *Doctor Gentium*. The other Churches can live and work only in agreement with her. Agreement entails unity of faith, teaching and discipline, precisely what is contained in the apostolic tradition. The See of Rome is thus the criterion and measure of the apostolic authenticity of the various Churches, the guarantee and principle of their communion in universal "charity," the foundation (*kephas*) of the visible organism of the Church established and ruled by the risen Christ as the "eternal Shepherd" of the entire sheepfold of believers.

POPE EXERCISES SUPREME JURISDICTION

Address of Pope John Paul II on the Bishop of Rome's authority as universal pastor
(February 24, 1993)

In an earlier Catechesis we spoke of the Bishop of Rome as the Successor of Peter. This succession has fundamental importance for fulfilling the mission that Jesus Christ handed on to the apostles and the Church.

The Second Vatican Council teaches that the bishop of Rome, as "Vicar of Christ," has "supreme and universal" power over the whole Church. This power, as well as that of all bishops, has a ministerial character (*ministerium* means service), as the Fathers of the Church had already observed.

It is in the light of this Christian tradition that the conciliar definitions on the Bishop of Rome's mission must be understood and explained, keeping in mind that the traditional language used by the Councils, especially the First Vatican Council, in regard to the powers of both the pope and the bishops, employs in its explanation terms proper to the world of civil law, which in this case must be given their correct ecclesial meaning.

Inasmuch as the Church is a group of human beings called to carry out in history God's plan for the salvation of the world, power in her appears as an indispensable requirement of mission. Nevertheless, the analogical value of the language used allows power to be conceived in the sense provided by Jesus' maxim on "power in order to serve" and by the Gospel idea of the pastoral leader. The power required by the mission of Peter and his successors is identified with this authoritative leadership guaranteed of divine assistance, which Jesus himself called the ministry (service) of a shepherd.

Roman Pontiff exercises full and supreme jurisdiction

Having said that, we can reread the definition of the Council of Florence (1439), which stated: "We define that the Holy Apostolic See -- and the Roman Pontiff -- has primacy over the whole world, and that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles and true Vicar of Christ, head of the whole Church, and father and teacher of all Christians; and that upon him, in Blessed Peter, our Lord Jesus Christ conferred the full power of shepherding, ruling and governing the universal Church, as is also stated in the acts of the Ecumenical Councils and the sacred canons.

We know that historically the problem of the primacy was posed by the Eastern Church separated from Rome. The Council of Florence, trying to foster reunion, expressed the precise meaning of the primacy. It is a mission of service to the universal Church, which necessarily entails a corresponding authority precisely because of this service: "the full power of shepherding, ruling and governing," without prejudice to the privileges and rights of the Eastern Patriarch, according to the order of their dignity.

For its part, Vatican I (1870) cited the Council of Florence's definition and, after mentioning the Gospel tests (Jn. 1:42; Mt. 16:16f; Jn 21:15f), expresses the meaning of this power in further detail. The Roman Pontiff "does not only have the office of inspection and direction," but enjoys "full and supreme power of jurisdiction, not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and governance of the Church dispersed throughout the world."

There were attempts to reduce the Roman Pontiff's power to an "office of inspection and direction." Some proposed that the pope be simply an arbiter of conflicts between local Churches or that he merely give a general direction to the autonomous activities of the Churches and of Christians with his counsel and exhortation. This limitation, however, did not conform to the mission Christ conferred on Peter. Therefore, Vatican I emphasizes the fullness of papal power and defines that it is not enough to recognize that the Roman Pontiff "has the principal role:" one must admit instead that he "has all the fullness of this supreme power."

In this regard it would be well to clarify immediately that this "fullness" of power attributed to the pope in no way detracts from the "fullness" also belonging to the body of bishops. On the contrary, one must assert that both the pope and the episcopal body have "all the fullness" of power. The pope possesses this fullness personally, which the body of bishops, united under the pope's authority, possesses it

collegially. The pope's power does not result from simply adding up numbers, but is the episcopal body's principle of unity and wholeness.

For this very reason the Council underscores that the pope's power "is ordinary and immediate over all the Churches and over each and every member of the faithful." It is ordinary, in the sense that it is proper to the Roman Pontiff by virtue of the office belonging to him and not by delegation from the bishops. It is immediate, because he can exercise it directly without the bishops' permission or mediation.

Vatican I's definition, however, does not assign to the pope a power or responsibility to intervene daily in the local Churches. It means only to exclude the possibility of imposing norms on him to limit the exercise of the primacy. The Council expressly states: "This power of the Supreme Pontiff does not at all impede the exercise of that power of ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction with which the Bishops, appointed by the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 20:28) as successors of the Apostles, shepherd and govern the flock entrusted to them as true pastors. . . ."

Bishops' jurisdiction not absorbed by the pope's

Indeed, we should keep in mind a statement of the German episcopate (1875) approved by Pius IX that said: "The Episcopate also exists by virtue of the same divine institution on which the office of the Supreme Pontiff is based: it enjoys rights and duties in virtue of a disposition that comes from God himself, and the Supreme Pontiff has neither the right nor the power to change them." The decrees of Vatican I are thus understood in a completely erroneous way when one presumes that because of them "episcopal jurisdiction has been absorbed by papal jurisdiction," that the pope "is taking for himself the place of every Bishop," and that the bishops are merely "instruments of the Pope; they are his officials without responsibility of their own."

Now let us listen to the full, balanced and serene teaching of Vatican II, which states that "Jesus Christ, the eternal Shepherd, . . . willed that the Bishops (as successors of the Apostles) should be shepherds in his Church until the end of the world. In order that the Episcopate itself, however, might be one and undivided he put Peter at the head of other Apostles, and in him he set up a lasting and visible source and foundation of the unity both of faith and of communion."

In this sense Vatican II speaks of the Bishop of Rome as "pastor of the entire Church," having "full, supreme and universal power." That power is "primatial authority over all, whether pastors or faithful." "Consequently, the Bishops, each for his own part, . . . are obliged to enter into collaboration with one another and with Peter's Successor, to whom, in a special way, the noble task of propagating the Christian name was entrusted."

According to the same Council, the Church is also catholic in the sense that all Christ's followers must work together in the overall mission of salvation, each in his own apostolate. The pastoral work of all, however, and especially that collegial activity of the whole episcopate, attains unity through the Bishop of Rome's *ministerium Petrum*. The Council again says: "The Bishops, while loyally

respecting the primacy and pre-eminence of their head, exercise their own proper authority for the good of their faithful, indeed even for the good of the whole Church." We should also add from the Council that, if the collegial power over the whole Church attains its particular expression in an Ecumenical Council, it is "the prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke such Councils, to preside over them and to confirm them." Everything, then, depends on the pope, the Bishop of Rome, as the principle of unity and communion.

At this point we should again note that, if Vatican II adopted the tradition of the ecclesiastical Magisterium on the topic of the Bishop of Rome's *ministerium Petrinum* previously expressed at the Council of Florence (1439) and at Vatican I (1870), to its credit, when it repeated this teaching, it brought out the correlation between the primacy and the collegiality of the episcopate in the Church. Because of this new clarification the erroneous interpretations often made of Vatican I's definition are rejected and the full significance of the Petrine ministry is shown in its harmony with the doctrine of episcopal collegiality. Also confirmed was the Roman Pontiff's right "within the exercise of his own office to communicate freely with the pastors and flock of the entire Church," and this in regard to all rites.

This does not mean claiming for the Successor of Peter powers like those of the earthly "rulers" of whom Jesus spoke (cf. Mt. 20:25-28), but being faithful to the will of the Church's founder, who established this type of society and this form of governance to serve the communion in faith and love.

Pope fulfills mission in humble service

To fulfill Christ's will, the Successor of Peter must assume and exercise the authority he has received in a spirit of humble service and with the aim of ensuring unity. Even in the various historical ways of exercising that authority he must imitate Christ in serving and bringing into unity those called to be part of the one fold. He will never subordinate what he has received for Christ and His Church to his own personal aims. He can never forget that the universal pastoral mission must entail a very profound participation in the Redeemer's sacrifice in the mystery of the cross.

Regarding his relationship with his brothers in the episcopate, he must remember and apply the words of St. Gregory the Great: "My honor is the honor of the universal Church. My honor is the solid strength of my brothers. I am truly honored, then, when each of them is not denied the honor due him."