

# Brief on Infallibility of the Catholic Church<sup>1</sup>

By Richard Joseph Michael Ibranyi

God gave his Catholic Church the ability to teach infallibly on faith and morals. If this were not true, there would be no way for men on earth to know with all certainty the supernatural truths on faith and morals. God's Church, then, would give uncertain teachings:

“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound who shall prepare himself to the battle?”  
(1 Cor. 14:8)

Because Protestants and schismatics do not believe that any group of men or any one man can teach infallibly, they have as many different beliefs as they do churches and sects. Hence their leaders are trumpets who make uncertain sounds. Not one of them can say that what he believes is infallible and thus absolutely true because they do not believe any group of men or any one man can teach infallibly.

Hence, by implication, they have the Holy Spirit lying. How so? While they rightly believe that the Holy Spirit does not lie for “It is impossible for God to lie” (Heb. 6:18), they contradict their belief by heretically and illogically believing that the Holy Spirit teaches all men the truth without the need of a Church to infallibly teach the truth. If, according to them, the Holy Spirit teaches the truth to each Protestant individually and the Holy Spirit always tells the truth, then how come Protestants and schismatics disagree with one another regarding many of their official doctrines? Among their many different interpretations of a revelation, either none or only one interpretation could be correct. Logic dictates that all of the different interpretations cannot be true. Consequently, the Holy Spirit would be lying to all of the Protestants and schismatics whose interpretations are wrong. They have, indeed, accused the Holy Spirit of lying and have no way to know with certainty the supernatural truths regarding faith and morals. Hence the Holy Spirit that the Protestants and schismatics believe in is a liar and thus is an anti-Holy Spirit.

Therefore, not only dogma but also logic dictates that God's Church has to have the ability to teach infallibly. That is why St. Paul says,

“The Church of the living God [is] the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Tim. 3:15)

For God's Church to be the “pillar and ground of truth,” it has to have the ability to infallibly teach the truth. God's Catholic Church infallibly teaches truths on faith and morals in two ways: by the unanimous teachings of the Church Fathers (known as the ordinary magisterium) and by infallible papal decrees (known as the solemn magisterium). The Bible teaches of this power that God gave to the apostles (Church Fathers) and to St. Peter (the popes):

“But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you.” (Jn. 14:26)

“When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will teach you all truth.” (Jn. 16:13)

The ordinary magisterium is all the dogmas on faith and morals that were taught by the unanimous consensus of the Church Fathers. The twelve apostles were the first Church Fathers during the New Covenant era and thus their unanimous teachings on faith and morals are infallible and were the first dogmas of the Catholic faith. Jesus Christ gave the unanimous teachings of the apostles and disciples this authority and power when he told them,

“He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.” (Lk. 10:16)

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<sup>1</sup> RJMI's Briefs are Long Commentaries contained in the end of *The Catholic Bible*, revised by RJMI.

“And having called his twelve disciples together, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases, and all manner of infirmities... That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops... And going, preach, saying: The kingdom of heaven is at hand... For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you... He that receiveth you, receiveth me: and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me... And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words: going forth out of that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Amen I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment than for that city.” (Mt. 10:1, 27, 7, 20, 40, 14-15)

And just before Jesus ascended into Heaven, he said to the apostles,

“Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.” (Mt. 28:19-20)

And after Jesus ascended into Heaven, the ordinary magisterium was taught by the apostles and disciples:

“And they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles.” (Acts 2:42)

“Dearly beloved, ...contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.” (Jude 1:3)

“And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches, commanding them to keep the precepts of the apostles and the ancients.” (Acts 15:41)

While the ordinary magisterium is the unanimous teachings of the Church Fathers of faith and morals, no one Church Father has the ability to teach infallibly. The only man who has the power to teach infallibly on faith and morals is the pope. The solemn magisterium is all the infallible papal teachings on faith and morals. St. Peter, the first pope, and the following popes were given this authority and power by Jesus Christ when Jesus said to St. Peter,

“And I say to thee: That thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.” (Mt. 16:18-19)

Popes, then, like Old Testament religious leaders and prophets, can teach infallibly:

“The heart of man disposeth his way, but the Lord must direct his steps. Divination is in the lips of the king, his mouth shall not err in judgment.” (Prov. 16:9-10)

“For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pt. 1:21)

“God, ...spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets.” (Heb. 1:1)

“If thou perceive that there be among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment... and thou see that the words of the judges within thy gates do vary: arise, and go up to the place, which the Lord thy God shall choose.” (Deut. 17:8)

*Catholic Commentary*, on Deut. 17:8: “Here we see what authority God was pleased to give to the Church guides of the Old Testament, in deciding, without appeal, all controversies relating to the law; promising that they should not err therein; and surely he has not done less for the church guides of the New Testament.”

The biblically recorded fact that God spoke infallibly through mere men such as Abraham, Moses, and other prophets is guaranteed to confound Protestants when they say that God cannot

or does not speak infallibly through mere men. For example, God spoke infallibly through a mere man, the prophet Ezechiel:

“Son of man, I have made thee a watchman to the house of Israel: and thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth, and shalt tell it them from me.” (Ez. 3:17)

The Old Covenant came from God through the hands and mouth of a mere man, Abraham. And the Ten Commandments came from God through the hands and mouth of a mere man, Moses. Just as Abraham and Moses had the charism of infallibility when they spoke for God, so do popes have the charism of infallibility when they speak for God.

Logic also dictates that one man must have the ability to infallibly teach on doctrines regarding faith and morals in order to settle legitimate disputes regarding allowable opinions on faith and morals that have not yet been infallibly defined or condemned.

“There is one that uttereth an exact word telling the truth.” (Ecclus. 19:23)

Common sense dictates that there could not be one faith and one Church (Eph. 4:5), which is the pillar and ground of truth (1Tim. 3:15), if God did not give one man, the pope, the charism of infallibility and supreme authority over the flock to unite the Church in its sacraments, government, teachings, and laws. If God did not give the pope the charism of infallibility, there would be no way to know for certain what the truth is when legitimate disputes arise. Who, then, is the one that has the ultimate authority to infallibly condemn heresies and define the truth and thus end legitimate disputes? If more than one man decides and they disagree, there is no way for the truth to be known with certainty. Which man is right and which man is wrong? Consequently if one man were not given the charism of infallibility and supreme authority in God’s one Church, there would be a split in the Church as soon as a dispute arose, thus creating a new faith and new Church. This process would multiply into many faiths and thus many Churches, as has happened with the Protestants and schismatics who now number more than 30,000 faiths and thus 30,000 Churches worldwide.

Even though the pope can teach infallibly on faith and morals, he is not impeccable. He can commit any sin that other men commit and be condemned and punished when he does, which thus includes the mortal sin of idolatry or heresy, which causes him to automatically lose his office.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, not only is the pope *not* immune from condemnation and punishment when he sins, but he must be condemned and punished more than other sinners, as he holds the highest office in the Church. To whom much is given, much is required. The Bible puts it this way:

“And unto whomsoever much is given of him much shall be required; and to whom they have committed much of him they will demand the more.” (Lk. 12:48)

“For God will not except any man’s person, neither will he stand in awe of any man’s greatness: for he made the little and the great, and he hath equally care of all. But a greater punishment is ready for the more mighty.” (Wis. 6:8-9)

“For there is no respect of persons with God.” (Rom. 2:11)

The fact that the pope can fall into heresy or idolatry (and several popes have) is one proof that not all of a pope’s teachings on faith and morals are infallible. The pope’s charism of infallibility is limited and must meet the following condition:

1. The pope has the charism of infallibility, which means that he can infallibly teach, decree, and judge on topics that deal with faith and morals; that is, on topics that deal with the Catholic faith.
2. The pope uses his charism of infallibility when he makes infallible definitions or infallible condemnations.

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<sup>2</sup> See RJMI book *Non-Catholics Cannot Holy Offices in the Catholic Church*.

3. All the infallible papal teachings and decrees that thus belong to the solemn magisterium consist of the following:
  - a) Papally approved professions of faith (such as Creeds). No anathemas are necessary for infallibility.
  - b) Papally approved abjurations in the parts that deal with faith or morals. No anathemas are necessary for infallibility.
  - c) Papally approved council teachings and decrees that deal with faith or morals. It does not matter what kind of council it is—ecumenical, general, or local. No anathemas are necessary for infallibility. And the pope or papal legates do not need to call or preside over the council. The pope only needs to approve the teachings and decrees in the council to make them infallible.
  - d) Personal papal teachings, decrees, and judgments on faith or morals with anathemas attached to those who do not believe them. Hence these require anathemas for infallibility.
4. Popes make infallible teachings and decrees for the following reasons:
  - e) To infallibly settle a legitimate dispute over an allowable opinion regarding faith or morals either by infallibly defining it or infallibly condemning it, at which point it would become a dogma or a heresy for the first time.
  - f) To infallibly uphold a natural-law dogma or an ordinary magisterium dogma when it is significantly doubted, denied, or violated, at which point the dogma would also become part of the solemn magisterium for the first time unless a previous pope had already made it part of the solemn magisterium.
  - g) To infallibly uphold a solemn magisterium dogma by re-infallibly teaching or decreeing it when it is significantly doubted, denied, or violated.
  - h) To infallibly condemn sinners in order to protect the reputation of the Catholic Church, preserve the faith, protect Catholics, warn others, and prevent scandal.

(For more information on this topic, see *RJMI Topic Index: Magisterium of the Catholic Church*.)

*For the glory of God; in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Michael, St. Joseph, Ss. Joachim and Anne, St. John the Baptist, the other angels and saints; and for the salvation of men*

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