

THE MAGISTERIUM

- *"He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." (Luke 10:16)*
- Before Christ left this earth, he prepared his apostles with everything they would need to carry out their ministry.
- He gave them special insights into the Gospel that he did not give to the crowds (see Mt 11:1; Mk 4:34) and gave them the power to forgive sins (see John 20:22-23).
- When he commanded, "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19), he gave them the power to re-enact the Last Supper and turn bread and wine into his Body and Blood.
- He gave them the power to govern when he said, speaking to Peter directly and the rest of the apostles united under him, "I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven" (Mt 16:19).
- He also ensured that their ministry would not die with them through his gift to the Church of Holy Orders which could be conferred on the apostles' successors and their successors after them forming one unbroken

chain of succession up to our present pope and bishops.

- An example of this is found in St. Paul's granting of his own authority to his disciples Timothy and Titus. In the Second Letter to Timothy, St. Paul instructs the young bishop thus: "Follow the pattern of the sound words which you have heard from me and guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (2 Tim. 1:13-14). Only the Church, however, is authorized to proclaim sound teaching that is the truth.
- This power to teach authoritatively in the name of Christ refers to the teaching office of the Church, called the Magisterium.
- In addition the Church claims as a right to announce moral principles and to make judgments where necessary to safeguard the fundamental rights of the human person or to ensure the salvation of souls.
- The office of the Magisterium is exercised ordinarily when a pope or bishop issues a letter or gives public teaching to instruct and help guide the faithful in matters of faith and morals.
- Such teaching on faith and morals must still be assented to by the faithful as a sign of obedience to Christ's Church and respect for the power of the keys given first to Peter and then passed on to future popes and bishops.

- The Church is *Mater et Magistra* (“Mother and Teacher”). One cannot claim to be a Catholic and reject either the Church’s Motherhood or its teaching authority.
- In a more solemn but much less frequent manner, the pope or bishops gathered in council can exercise the authority of the Magisterium in an extraordinary way, either when the pope issues definitive ex cathedra statements, as Pope Pius IX did when he promulgated the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (1854) or Pope Pius XII did with the dogma of the Assumption of Mary (1950). All of these extraordinary occasions produce documents that are infallible and must be assented to in faith.
- **It needs to be underscored that the authority of the Magisterium is for the good of the Church and its function is to preserve and guard the deposit of Revelation entrusted to her by Christ.**
- **The Magisterium serves the Word of God by guarding it from errors and authentically interpreting it for the Church’s faithful. (CCC 93-95, 888-892, 2032-2033, 2036, 2040)**