

MT. ST. MICHAEL

Tuesday Evening Doctrine Classes – 6:30-7:30 p.m.

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON THE PAPACY (many points will be taken from 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia*)

All audio recordings of classes & study sheets will be posted at the following link. You may listen online or download to your own computer.

<https://tinyurl.com/Papacyclasses>

December 4, 2018

THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

...the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15)

1. By her very nature, the Church is necessarily infallible in her teaching. Otherwise, she could not be a sure guide to salvation. If she could err and thereby lead the faithful astray, it would mean that Satan has triumphed over Christ!
2. Infallibility means that the Church can neither deceive nor be deceived in matters of faith and morals.
 - a. **Active infallibility** – that of the teacher
 - b. **Passive infallibility** – that of the ones being taught (this always depends on and is caused by active infallibility)
3. This class is focusing on the Church’s infallibility, but a few quick notes about the Pope’s infallibility:
 - a. As Catholics, we claim that only one man in the Church is personally infallible; Protestantism claims – at least implicitly – that each believer is infallible, by the heretical axiom “Bible alone,” i.e. each man reads it for himself and learns the truth
 - b. This does not mean that a true Pope is infallible each time he opens his mouth; rather it means that he is protected from heresy and error only when he teaches or rules definitively the entire Church.
 - c. The infallibility that protects the Church is also the infallibility of the Pope, since he is the chief Teacher and Ruler of the entire Church. These are not two separate “infallibilities.”
4. The Church is infallible whether she teaches in a **solemn** or an **ordinary** manner:

“Wherefore, by divine and catholic faith all those things are to be believed which are contained in the word of God as found in scripture and tradition, and which are proposed by the Church as matters to be believed as divinely revealed, whether by her solemn judgment or in her ordinary and universal magisterium.” (Vatican Council I, Session III, Chapter 3, *De Fide*, April 24, 1870)

“It is not to be thought that what is set down in Encyclical Letters does not demand assent in itself, because in this the popes do not exercise the supreme power of their magisterium. For these matters are taught by the ordinary magisterium, regarding which the following is pertinent: “He who heareth you, heareth me.” [Luke 10:16]; and usually what is set forth and inculcated in the Encyclical Letters, already pertains to Catholic doctrine. But if the Supreme Pontiffs in their acts, after due consideration, express an opinion on a hitherto controversial matter, it is clear to all that this matter, according to the mind and will of the same Pontiffs, cannot any longer be considered a question of free discussion among the theologians.” (Pope Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, 1950)

- a. The Church cannot be a safe guide only in her solemn teaching, in other words. She is infallible in those things she has taught on a day-to-day basis, i.e. her ordinary and universal magisterium.
 - i. Examples of solemn teachings: the Councils of the Church, solemn papal proclamations
 - ii. Ordinary and universal teaching: whatever the Church teaches on a consistent basis outside of her solemn teachings.
 - 1. The first General Council of the Church was in 325 A.D. The Bible in its present form of 73 books was taught by the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D.
 - 2. Most popes never issued solemn proclamations.
 - b. Examples of doctrines never solemnly taught:
 - i. that Guardian Angels exist
 - ii. that homosexual acts are wrong
 - iii. that Adam and Eve are the first and sole parents of the human race
 - iv. that the soul is created immediately by God.

These were never solemnly defined by the Church, but nevertheless they are divinely revealed and have been consistently taught by her. It would be heresy to deny them.
 - c. Those who erroneously claim that the Church is infallible only in her solemn teachings:
 - i. Followers of Fr. Leonard Feeney (“Feeneyites”)
 - ii. Society of St. Pius X (“SSPX”)
 - iii. Practically all others who “recognize, but resist” the authorities of the Vatican II church.
5. The infallibility of the Church has two objects, one primary, the other secondary:
- a. Primary – each and every religious truth contained in Scripture or Tradition
 - b. Secondary – all those matters closely connected with revealed doctrine about which we must have certainty
 - i. Theological conclusions
 - ii. Dogmatic facts
 - iii. Laws of the Church
 - iv. Approval of religious orders
 - v. Canonization of saints