

MT. ST. MICHAEL

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

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON THE PAPACY

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January 29, 2019

NATURE & EXTENT OF PAPAL POWER From 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on “The Pope”

A really good quote on how the Infallibility is present in less solemn papal pronouncements!

*The Holy Apostolic See, to which the safeguarding of the deposit of faith and the attendant duty and office of feeding the universal Church for the salvation of souls have been divinely entrusted, can prescribe theological pronouncements — or even pronouncements to the extent they are connected with ones that are theological — as teachings to be followed, or it can censure them as teachings not to be followed, not solely with the intention of infallibly determining truth by a definitive pronouncement, but also necessarily and designedly apart from that aim, either without qualification or by way of limited supplements, to provide for the safety of Catholic doctrine (cf. Zaccaria, *AntiFebronius vindicatus*, vol. II, diss. V, chap. 2, no. 1). Although infallible truth of doctrine may not be present in declarations of this kind (because, presumably, the intention of determining infallible truth is not present), nevertheless, infallible safety is present. I speak of both the objective safety of declared doctrine (either without qualification or by way of limited supplements, as mentioned) and the subjective safety of declared doctrine, insofar as it is safe for everyone to adopt it, and it is unsafe and impossible for anyone to refuse to adopt it without a violation of due submission towards the divinely established magisterium.*

(Cardinal John Franzelin (1816-1886), *Tractatus de Divina Traditione et Scriptura*, 2nd ed., Thesis XII, Principle VII)

The Pope's immediate and ordinary jurisdiction (from the 1911 Catholic Encyclopedia entry “The Pope”)

In the Constitution “*Pastor Aeternus*”, cap. 3, the pope is declared to possess ordinary, immediate, and episcopal jurisdiction over all the faithful:

We teach, moreover, and declare that, by the disposition of God, the Roman Church possesses supreme ordinary authority over all Churches, and that the jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, which is true episcopal jurisdiction is immediate in its character (Enchir., n. 1827).

It is further added that this authority extends to all alike, both pastors and faithful, whether singly or collectively. An ordinary jurisdiction is one which is exercised by the holder, not by reason of any delegation, but in virtue of the office which he himself holds. All who acknowledge in the pope any primacy of jurisdiction acknowledge that jurisdiction to be ordinary. This point, therefore, does not call for discussion. That the papal authority is likewise immediate has, however, been called in question. Jurisdiction is immediate when its possessor stands in direct relation to those with whose oversight he is charged. If, on the other hand, the supreme authority can only deal directly with the proximate superiors, and not with the subjects save through their intervention, his power is not immediate but mediate. That the pope's jurisdiction is not thus restricted appears from the analysis already given of Christ's words to St. Peter. It has been shown that He conferred on him a primacy over the Church, which is universal in its scope, extending to all the Church's members, and which needs the support of no other power. A primacy such as this manifestly gives to him and to his successors a direct authority over all the faithful. This is also implied in the words of the pastoral commission, “Feed my sheep”. The shepherd exercises immediate authority

over all the sheep of his flock. Every member of the Church has been thus committed to Peter and those who follow him.

This immediate authority has been always claimed by the Holy See. It was, however, denied by Febronius (op. cit., 7:7). That writer contended that the duty of the pope was to exercise a general oversight over the Church and to direct the bishops by his counsel; in case of necessity, where the legitimate pastor was guilty of grave wrong, he could pronounce sentence of excommunication against him and proceed against him according to the canons, but he could not on his own authority depose him (op. cit., 2:4:9). The Febronian doctrines, though devoid of any historical foundation, yet, through their appeal to the spirit of nationalism, exerted a powerful influence for harm on Catholic life in Germany during the eighteenth and part of the nineteenth century. Thus it was imperative that the error should be definitively condemned. That the pope's power is truly episcopal needs no proof. It follows from the fact that he enjoys an ordinary pastoral authority, both legislative and judicial, and immediate in relation to its subjects.

Moreover, since this power regards the pastors as well as the faithful, the pope is rightly termed Pastor *pastorum*, and *Episcopus episcoporum*.

It is frequently objected by writers of the Anglican school that, by declaring the pope to possess an immediate episcopal jurisdiction over all the faithful, the Vatican Council destroyed the authority of the diocesan episcopate. It is further pointed out that St. Gregory the Great expressly repudiated this title (Epistle 7:27 and Epistle 8:30). To this it is replied that no difficulty is involved in the exercise of immediate jurisdiction over the same subjects by two rulers, provided only that these rulers stand in subordination, the one to the other. We constantly see the system at work. In an army the regimental officer and the general both possess immediate authority over the soldiers; yet no one maintains that the inferior authority is thereby annulled. The objection lacks all weight. The Vatican Council says most justly (cap. iii):

This power of the supreme pontiff in no way derogates from the ordinary immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, in virtue of which the bishops, who, appointed by the Holy Spirit [Acts 20:28], have succeeded to the place of the Apostles as true pastors, feed and rule their several flocks, each the one which has been assigned to him: that power is rather maintained, confirmed and defended by the supreme pastor (Enchir., n. 1828).

It is without doubt true that St. Gregory repudiated in strong terms the title of universal bishop, and relates that St. Leo rejected it when it was offered him by the fathers of Chalcedon. But, as he used it, it has a different signification from that with which it was employed in the Vatican Council. St. Gregory understood it as involving the denial of the authority of the local diocesan (Epistle 5:21). No one, he maintains, has a right so to term himself universal bishop as to usurp that apostolically constituted power. But he was himself a strenuous assertor of that immediate jurisdiction over all the faithful which is signified by this title as used in the Vatican Decree. Thus he reverses (Epistle 6:15) a sentence passed on a priest by Patriarch John of Constantinople, an act which itself involves a claim to universal authority, and explicitly states that the Church of Constantinople is subject to the Apostolic See (Epistle 9:12). The title of universal bishop occurs as early as the eighth century; and in 1413 the faculty of Paris rejected the proposition of John Hus that the pope was not universal bishop (Natalis Alexander, "Hist. eccl.", saec. XV and XVI, c. ii, art. 3, n. 6)