

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

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE ON THE PAPACY

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>

March 5, 2019

PRIMACY OF HONOR: PAPAL TITLES & INSIGNIA
From 1911 *Catholic Encyclopedia* article on “The Pope”

Certain titles and distinctive marks of honor are assigned to the pope alone; these constitute what is termed his primacy of honor. These prerogatives are not, as are his jurisdictional rights, attached *jure divino* to his office. They have grown up in the course of history, and are consecrated by the usage of centuries; yet they are not incapable of modification.

- A. **Titles** – The full list of titles is “Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, Sovereign of the Vatican City State, Servant of the servants of God.”

1. “Pope”

The most noteworthy of the titles are *Papa*, *Summus Pontifex*, *Pontifex Maximus*, *Servus servorum Dei*. The title pope (*papa*) was, as has been stated, at one time employed with far more latitude. In the East it has always been used to designate simple priests. In the Western Church, however, it seems from the beginning to have been restricted to bishops (Tertullian, *On Modesty* 13). It was apparently in the fourth century that it began to become a distinctive title of the Roman Pontiff. Pope Siricius (d. 398) seems so to use it (*Ep. vi in P.L.*, XIII, 1164), and Ennodius of Pavia (d. 473) employs it still more clearly in this sense in a letter to Pope Symmachus (*P.L.*, LXIII, 69). Yet as late as the seventh century St. Gall (d. 640) addresses Desiderius of Cahors as *papa* (*P.L.*, LXXXVII, 265). Gregory VII finally prescribed that it should be confined to the successors of Peter.

2. “Pontiff”

The terms *Pontifex Maximus*, *Summus Pontifex*, were doubtless originally employed with reference to the Jewish high-priest, whose place the Christian bishops were regarded as holding each in his own diocese (*Epistle of Clement* 40). As regards the title *Pontifex Maximus*, especially in its application to the pope, there was further a reminiscence of the dignity attached to that title in pagan Rome. Tertullian, as has already been said, uses the phrase of Pope Callistus. Though his words are ironical, they probably indicate that Catholics already applied it to the pope. But here too the terms were once less narrowly restricted in their use. *Pontifex summus* was used of the bishop of some notable see in relation to those of less importance. Hilary of Arles (d. 449) is so styled by Eucherius of Lyons (*P.L.*, L, 773), and Lanfranc is termed “*primas et pontifex summus*” by his biographer, Milo Crispin (*P.L.*, CL, 10). Pope Nicholas I is termed “*summus pontifex et universalis papa*” by his legate Arsenius (Hardouin “*Conc.*”, V, 280), and subsequent examples are common. After the eleventh century it appears to be only used of the popes.

3. “Servant of the Servants of God”

The phrase *Servus servorum Dei* is now so entirely a papal title that a Bull in which it should be wanting would be reckoned unauthentic. Yet this designation also was once applied to others. Augustine (*Ep. 217 a. d. Vitalem*) entitles himself “*servus Christi et per Ipsum servus servorum Ipsius*”. Desiderius of Cahors

made use of it (Thomassin, "*Ecclesiae nov. et vet. disc.*", pt. I, I. I, c. iv, n. 4): so also did St. Boniface (740), the apostle of Germany (*P.L.*, LXXIX, 700). The first of the popes to adopt it was seemingly Gregory I; he appears to have done so in contrast to the claim put forward by the Patriarch of Constantinople to the title of universal bishop (*P.L.*, LXXV, 87). The restriction of the term to the pope alone began in the ninth century.

B. Insignia and marks of honor

1. Tiara

The pope is distinguished by the use of the tiara or triple crown. At what date the custom of crowning the pope was introduced is unknown. It was certainly previous to the forged donation of Constantine, which dates from the commencement of the ninth century, for mention is there made of the pope's coronation. The triple crown is of much later origin.

2. Cross

The pope moreover does not, like ordinary bishops, use the bent pastoral staff, but only the erect cross. This custom was introduced before the reign of Innocent III (1198-1216) (*cap. un. X de sacra unctione*, I, 15).

3. Pallium

He further uses the pallium at all ecclesiastical functions, and not under the same restrictions as do the archbishops on whom he has conferred it.

4. Kiss

The kissing of the pope's foot — the characteristic act of reverence by which all the faithful do honor to him as the vicar of Christ — is found as early as the eighth century. We read that Emperor Justinian II paid this respect to Pope Constantine (708-16) (*Anastasius Bibl.* in *P.L.*, CXXVIII 949). Even at an earlier date Emperor Justin had prostrated himself before Pope John I (523-6; *op. cit.*, 515), and Justinian I before Agapetus (535-6; *op. cit.*, 551). The pope, it may be added, ranks as the first of Christian princes, and in Catholic countries his ambassadors have precedence over other members of the diplomatic body.