

Spiritual Growth Through Study: Magisterial Documents

I Introduction: The Magisterium, its Role and Function

What is the Magisterium?

Etymology, from the Latin *magister*, master, in the sense of teacher.

Concretely, the Pope and the bishops regarded in their role of teachers.

What is the role of the Magisterium?

Guarding the Deposit of Faith.

The bishops, and even the Pope, do not construct or invent doctrine. Their role is conservative with respect to the content of the faith. Any doctrine taught in the Church must have been part of the revelation passed on within the era of the apostles.

1 Tim. 6:20 RSV O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted (deposit) to you.

‘The task of authoritatively (often translated inaccurately as *authentically*) interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.’ Dei verbum 10

How does this role function?

Ordinary magisterium of bishops: the pastoral, authoritative, but not infallible teaching of a bishop within his diocese.

Extraordinary magisterium of bishops: when teaching in a council. Under certain circumstances this is infallible. When they are in unanimous agreement on a matter of faith and morals.

Ordinary role of the Pope: as with the bishops, but with a universal role.

Extraordinary role of the Pope: Defining infallibly which occurs under 4 conditions: 1) speaking in his role as Pope; 2) appealing to his supreme apostolic authority; 3) teaching on faith or morals; 4) proposing the doctrine as something to be held by the whole church

The degree of authority “becomes clear from the nature of the documents, the insistence with which a teaching is repeated, and the very way in which it is expressed” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis* 24, 1990)

Documents of the Magisterium

The CCC

Council documents

Encyclicals

II The CCC

“Together with the reformed liturgy and the revised Code of Canon Law, the new Catechism constitutes **the firm foundation of the ecclesial renewal which the Council initiated.**” (JP II Address to the Bishops of Wales, 17 December 1992)

“[...] I ask the Church’s Pastors and the Christian faithful to receive this catechism in a spirit of communion and to use it assiduously in fulfilling their mission of proclaiming the faith and calling people to the Gospel life. This catechism is given to them that it may be a **sure and authentic reference text for teaching Catholic doctrine** and particularly for preparing local catechisms. **It is also offered to all the faithful** who wish to deepen their knowledge of the unfathomable riches of salvation (cf. Jn 8:32). It is meant to support ecumenical efforts that are moved by the holy desire for the unity of all Christians, showing carefully the content and wondrous harmony of the Catholic faith. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, lastly, **is offered to every individual** who asks us to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pt 3:15) and who wants to know what the Catholic Church believes.” (John Paul II, *Fidei Depositum*)

All this seems **even more important today with the approach of the third millennium**. For an **extraordinary commitment to evangelization** is urgently needed so that everyone can know and receive the Gospel message and thus grow “to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (*Eph 4:13*).
(John Paul II, *Leatumur Magnopere*)

Basic Structure

- I Profession of Faith (Creed)
- II Celebration of the Christian Mystery (Cult)
- III Life in Christ (Code)
- IV Christian Prayer

Uses

- Reference
- Group study
- Personal study
 - Reading
 - Following the references (*Companion to CCC*)

III Council Documents of Note

IV Papal Encyclicals of Note

Council Documents of Note

Vatican I: Dei filius

Vatican II

- Dogmatic Constitution on The Church (Lumen gentium)
- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei verbum)
- Constitution on The Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum concilium)
- Pastoral Constitution on The Church in The Modern World (Gaudium et spes)
- Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis redintegratio)
- Decree on the Mission Activity of The Church (Ad gentes)
- Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam actuositatem)

Encyclicals of Note

Encyclicals since Leo XIII (1878-1903) are available at https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/index.htm

The Social Teaching of the Church

A Reader in Catholic Social Teaching: From Syllabus Errorum to Deus Caritas Est, Peter Kwasniewski ed.

Caritas in veritate Benedict XVI

Laudato si Francis

The missionary encyclicals

- On The Propagation of Faith throughout the World (Maximum illud) – an apostolic letter Ben XV
- Rerum ecclesiae Pius XI
- Evangelii praecones Pius XII
- Evangelii nuntiandi Paul VI
- Redemptoris missio JP II
- Christifideles laici JP II
- Evangelii gaudium Francis

Marriage and family encyclicals Casti conubii (Pius XI), Familiaris consortio (JP II), Amoris Laetitia (Francis)

The Trinitarian encyclicals of JP II: Redemptor hominis, Dominum et vivificantem, Dives in misericordia Spe salvi Benedict XVI

Moral teaching: Veritatis splendor – especially Chapter 1 (JP II)