

Documents Related to Papal Supremacy

THE BULL UNAM SANCTAM , 1302

5 *The Bull 'Unam Sanctam', in which Pope Boniface VIII asserted his rights against King Phillip the Fair of France, is a landmark in the history of the doctrine of Papal Primacy.*

10 *The 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia says: "The Bull lays down dogmatic propositions on the unity of the Church, the necessity of belonging to it for the attainment of eternal salvation, the position of the Pope as supreme head of the Church, and the duty thence arising of submission to the Pope in order to belong to the Church and thus to attain salvation. - in the writings of non-Catholic authors against the definition of Papal Infallibility, the Bull ... was used against Boniface VIII as well as against the papal primacy in a manner not justified by its content. The statements concerning the relations between the spiritual and the secular power are of a purely historical character, so far as they do not refer to the nature of the spiritual power, and are based on the actual conditions of medieval Europe. 'Unam' is frequently quoted, and misquoted, by anti-Catholics trying to prove that Boniface VIII, and Popes in general, are arrogant and evil men, intent on extending their own power."*

15 *The following English translation of 'Unam' is taken from a doctoral dissertation written in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America, and published by CUA Press in 1927.*

UNAM SANCTAM (Promulgated November 18, 1302)

20 Urged by faith, we are obliged to believe and to maintain that the Church is one, holy, catholic, and also apostolic. We believe in her firmly and we confess with simplicity that outside of her there is neither salvation nor the remission of sins, as the Spouse in the Canticles [Sgs 6:8] proclaims: 'One is my dove, my perfect one. She is the only one, the chosen of her who bore her,' and she represents one sole mystical body whose Head is Christ and the head of Christ is God [1 Cor 11:3]. In her then is one Lord, one faith, one baptism [Eph 4:5]. There had been at the time of the deluge only one ark of Noah, prefiguring the one Church, which ark, having been finished to a single cubit, had only one pilot and guide, i.e., Noah, and we read that, outside of this ark, all that subsisted on the earth was destroyed.

30 We venerate this Church as one, the Lord having said by the mouth of the prophet: 'Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword and my only one from the hand of the dog.' [Ps 21:20] He has prayed for his soul, that is for himself, heart and body; and this body, that is to say, the Church, He has called one because of the unity of the Spouse, of the faith, of the sacraments, and of the charity of the Church. This is the tunic of the Lord, the seamless tunic, which was not rent but which was cast by lot [Jn 19:23-24]. Therefore, of the one and only Church there is one body and one head, not two heads like a monster; that is, Christ and the Vicar of Christ, Peter and the successor of Peter, since the Lord speaking to Peter Himself said: 'Feed my sheep' [Jn 21:17], meaning, my sheep in general, not these, nor those in particular, whence we understand that He entrusted all to him [Peter]. Therefore, if the Greeks or others should say that they are not confided to Peter and to his successors, they must confess not being the sheep of Christ, since Our Lord says in John 'there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.' We are informed by the texts of the gospels that in this Church and in its power are two swords; namely, the spiritual and the temporal. For when the Apostles say: 'Behold, here are two swords' [Lk 22:38] that is to say, in the Church, since the Apostles were speaking, the Lord did not reply that there were too many, but sufficient. Certainly the one who denies that the temporal sword is in the power of Peter has not listened well to the word of the Lord commanding: 'Put up thy sword into thy scabbard' [Mt 26:52]. Both, therefore, are in the power of the Church, that is to say, the spiritual and the material sword, but the former is to be administered _for_ the Church but the latter by the Church; the former in the hands

45 of the priest; the latter by the hands of kings and soldiers, but at the will and sufferance of the priest.

However, one sword ought to be subordinated to the other and temporal authority, subjected to spiritual power. For since the Apostle said: 'There is no power except from God and the things that are, are ordained of God' [Rom 13:1-2], but they would not be ordained if one sword were not subordinated to
50 the other and if the inferior one, as it were, were not led upwards by the other.

For, according to the Blessed Dionysius, it is a law of the divinity that the lowest things reach the highest place by intermediaries. Then, according to the order of the universe, all things are not led back to order equally and immediately, but the lowest by the intermediary, and the inferior by the superior.
55 Hence we must recognize the more clearly that spiritual power surpasses in dignity and in nobility any temporal power whatever, as spiritual things surpass the temporal. This we see very clearly also by the payment, benediction, and consecration of the tithes, but the acceptance of power itself and by the government even of things. For with truth as our witness, it belongs to spiritual power to establish the terrestrial power and to pass judgement if it has not been good. Thus is accomplished the prophecy of
60 Jeremias concerning the Church and the ecclesiastical power: 'Behold to-day I have placed you over nations, and over kingdoms' and the rest. Therefore, if the terrestrial power err, it will be judged by the spiritual power; but if a minor spiritual power err, it will be judged by a superior spiritual power; but if the highest power of all err, it can be judged only by God, and not by man, according to the testimony of the Apostle: 'The spiritual man judgeth of all things and he himself is judged by no man' [1 Cor
65 2:15]. This authority, however, (though it has been given to man and is exercised by man), is not human but rather divine, granted to Peter by a divine word and reaffirmed to him (Peter) and his successors by the One Whom Peter confessed, the Lord saying to Peter himself, 'Whatsoever you shall bind on earth, shall be bound also in Heaven' etc., [Mt 16:19]. Therefore whoever resists this power thus ordained by God, resists the ordinance of God [Rom 13:2], unless he invent like Manicheus two beginnings, which
70 is false and judged by us heretical, since according to the testimony of Moses, it is not in the beginnings but in the beginning that God created heaven and earth [Gen 1:1]. Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff.

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80 permission is granted for commercial use.

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halsall@murray.fordham.edu

Council of Florence

Session 6—6 July 1439

Excerpt

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Also, the souls of those who have incurred no stain of sin whatsoever after baptism, as well as souls who after incurring the stain of sin have been cleansed whether in their bodies or outside their bodies, as was stated above, are straightaway received into heaven and clearly behold the triune God as he is, yet one person more perfectly than another according to the difference of their merits. But the souls of those who depart this life in actual mortal sin, or in original sin alone, go down straightaway to hell to be punished, but with unequal pains. We also define that the holy apostolic see and the Roman pontiff holds the primacy over the whole world and the Roman pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter prince of the apostles, and that he is the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole church and the father and teacher of all Christians, and to him was committed in blessed Peter the full power of tending, ruling and governing the whole church, as is contained also in the acts of ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.

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Also, renewing the order of the other patriarchs which has been handed down in the canons, the patriarch of Constantinople should be second after the most holy Roman pontiff, third should be the patriarch of Alexandria, fourth the patriarch of Antioch, and fifth the patriarch of Jerusalem, without prejudice to all their privileges and rights.

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Vatican I

Session 4 : 18 July 1870

First dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ

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Pius, bishop, servant of the servants of God, with the approval of the Sacred Council, for an everlasting record.

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1. The eternal shepherd and guardian of our souls³⁷, in order to render permanent the saving work of redemption, determined to build a Church in which, as in the house of the living God, all the faithful should be linked by the bond of one faith and charity.

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2. Therefore, before he was glorified, he besought his Father, not for the apostles only, but also for those who were to believe in him through their word, that they all might be one as the Son himself and the Father are one³⁸.

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3. So then, just as he sent apostles, whom he chose out of the world³⁹, even as he had been sent by the Father⁴⁰, in like manner it was his will that in his Church there should be shepherds and teachers until the end of time.

4. In order, then, that the episcopal office should be one and undivided and that, by the union of the clergy, the whole multitude of believers should be held together in the unity of faith and communion, he set blessed Peter over the rest of the apostles and instituted in him the permanent principle of both unities and their visible foundation.

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5. Upon the strength of this foundation was to be built the eternal temple, and the Church whose topmost part reaches heaven was to rise upon the firmness of this foundation⁴¹.

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6. And since the gates of hell trying, if they can, to overthrow the Church, make their assault with a hatred that increases day by day against its divinely laid foundation, we judge it necessary, with the approbation of the Sacred Council, and for the protection, defense and growth of the Catholic flock, to propound the doctrine concerning the 1. institution, 2. permanence and 3. nature of the sacred and apostolic primacy, upon which the strength and coherence of the whole Church depends.

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7. This doctrine is to be believed and held by all the faithful in accordance with the ancient and unchanging faith of the whole Church.

8. Furthermore, we shall proscribe and condemn the contrary errors which are so harmful to the Lord's flock.

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Chapter 1

On the institution of the apostolic primacy in blessed Peter

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1. We teach and declare that, according to the gospel evidence, a primacy of jurisdiction over the whole Church of God was immediately and directly promised to the blessed apostle Peter and conferred on him by Christ the lord.

2. It was to Simon alone, to whom he had already said You shall be called Cephas ⁴², that the Lord, after his confession, You are the Christ, the son of the living God, spoke these words:
Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the underworld shall not prevail against it. 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 ⁴³.
3. And it was to Peter alone that Jesus, after his resurrection, confided the jurisdiction of Supreme Pastor and ruler of his whole fold, saying:
Feed my lambs, feed my sheep ⁴⁴.
4. To this absolutely manifest teaching of the Sacred Scriptures, as it has always been understood by the Catholic Church, are clearly opposed the distorted opinions of those who misrepresent the form of government which Christ the lord established in his Church and deny that Peter, in preference to the rest of the apostles, taken singly or collectively, was endowed by Christ with a true and proper primacy of jurisdiction.
5. The same may be said of those who assert that this primacy was not conferred immediately and directly on blessed Peter himself, but rather on the Church, and that it was through the Church that it was transmitted to him in his capacity as her minister.
6. Therefore, if anyone says that blessed Peter the apostle was not appointed by Christ the lord as prince of all the apostles and visible head of the whole Church militant; or that it was a primacy of honor only and not one of true and proper jurisdiction that he directly and immediately received from our lord Jesus Christ himself: let him be anathema.

Chapter 2.

On the permanence of the primacy of blessed Peter in the Roman pontiffs

1. That which our lord Jesus Christ, the prince of shepherds and great shepherd of the sheep, established in the blessed apostle Peter, for the continual salvation and permanent benefit of the Church, must of necessity remain for ever, by Christ's authority, in the Church which, founded as it is upon a rock, will stand firm until the end of time ⁴⁵.
2. For no one can be in doubt, indeed it was known in every age that the holy and most blessed Peter, prince and head of the apostles, the pillar of faith and the foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our lord Jesus Christ, the savior and redeemer of the human race, and that to this day and for ever he lives and presides and exercises judgment in his successors the bishops of the Holy Roman See, which he founded and consecrated with his blood ⁴⁶.
3. Therefore whoever succeeds to the chair of Peter obtains by the institution of Christ himself, the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. So what the truth has ordained stands firm, and blessed Peter perseveres in the rock-like strength he was granted, and does not abandon that guidance of the Church which he once received ⁴⁷.
4. For this reason it has always been necessary for every Church--that is to say the faithful throughout

the world--to be in agreement with the Roman Church because of its more effective leadership. In consequence of being joined, as members to head, with that see, from which the rights of sacred communion flow to all, they will grow together into the structure of a single body⁴⁸.

5. Therefore, if anyone says that it is not by the institution of Christ the lord himself (that is to say, by divine law) that blessed Peter should have perpetual successors in the primacy over the whole Church; or that the Roman Pontiff is not the successor of blessed Peter in this primacy: let him be anathema.

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Chapter 3. On the power and character of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff

1. And so, supported by the clear witness of Holy Scripture, and adhering to the manifest and explicit decrees both of our predecessors the Roman Pontiffs and of general councils, we promulgate anew the definition of the ecumenical Council of Florence⁴⁹, which must be believed by all faithful Christians, namely that the Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff hold a world-wide primacy, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of blessed Peter, the prince of the apostles, true vicar of Christ, head of the whole Church and father and teacher of all Christian people.

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To him, in blessed Peter, full power has been given by our lord Jesus Christ to tend, rule and govern the universal Church.

All this is to be found in the acts of the ecumenical councils and the sacred canons.

2. Wherefore we teach and declare that, by divine ordinance, the Roman Church possesses a pre-eminence of ordinary power over every other Church, and that this jurisdictional power of the Roman Pontiff is both episcopal and immediate. Both clergy and faithful, of whatever rite and dignity, both singly and collectively, are bound to submit to this power by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience, and this not only in matters concerning faith and morals, but also in those which regard the discipline and government of the Church throughout the world.

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3. In this way, by unity with the Roman Pontiff in communion and in profession of the same faith, the Church of Christ becomes one flock under one Supreme Shepherd⁵⁰.

4. This is the teaching of the Catholic truth, and no one can depart from it without endangering his faith and salvation.

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5. This power of the Supreme Pontiff by no means detracts from that ordinary and immediate power of episcopal jurisdiction, by which bishops, who have succeeded to the place of the apostles by appointment of the Holy Spirit, tend and govern individually the particular flocks which have been assigned to them. On the contrary, this power of theirs is asserted, supported and defended by the Supreme and Universal Pastor; for St. Gregory the Great says: "My honor is the honor of the whole Church. My honor is the steadfast strength of my brethren. Then do I receive true honor, when it is denied to none of those to whom honor is due."⁵¹

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6. Furthermore, it follows from that supreme power which the Roman Pontiff has in governing the whole Church, that he has the right, in the performance of this office of his, to communicate freely with the pastors and flocks of the entire Church, so that they may be taught and guided by him in the way of salvation.

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7. And therefore we condemn and reject the opinions of those who hold that this communication of the Supreme Head with pastors and flocks may be lawfully obstructed; or that it should be dependent on the civil power, which leads them to maintain that what is determined by the Apostolic See or by its authority concerning the government of the Church, has no force or effect unless it is confirmed by the agreement of the civil authority.

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8. Since the Roman Pontiff, by the divine right of the apostolic primacy, governs the whole Church, we likewise teach and declare that he is the supreme judge of the faithful⁵², and that in all cases which fall under ecclesiastical jurisdiction recourse may be had to his judgment⁵³. The sentence of the Apostolic See (than which there is no higher authority) is not subject to revision by anyone, nor may anyone lawfully pass judgment thereupon⁵⁴. And so they stray from the genuine path of truth who maintain that it is lawful to appeal from the judgments of the Roman pontiffs to an ecumenical council as if this were an authority superior to the Roman Pontiff.

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9. So, then, if anyone says that the Roman Pontiff has merely an office of supervision and guidance, and not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the whole Church, and this not only in matters of faith and morals, but also in those which concern the discipline and government of the Church dispersed throughout the whole world; or that he has only the principal part, but not the absolute fullness, of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate both over all and each of the Churches and over all and each of the pastors and faithful: let him be anathema.

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Chapter 4. On the infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff

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1. That apostolic primacy which the Roman Pontiff possesses as successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, includes also the supreme power of teaching. This Holy See has always maintained this, the constant custom of the Church demonstrates it, and the ecumenical councils, particularly those in which East and West met in the union of faith and charity, have declared it.

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2. So the fathers of the fourth Council of Constantinople, following the footsteps of their predecessors, published this solemn profession of faith: The first condition of salvation is to maintain the rule of the true faith. And since that saying of our lord Jesus Christ, You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church⁵⁵, cannot fail of its effect, the words spoken are confirmed by their consequences. For in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has always been preserved unblemished, and sacred doctrine

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been held in honor. Since it is our earnest desire to be in no way separated from this faith and doctrine, we hope that we may deserve to remain in that one communion which the Apostolic See preaches, for in it is the whole and true strength of the Christian religion⁵⁶.

What is more, with the approval of the second Council of Lyons, the Greeks made the following profession:

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"The Holy Roman Church possesses the supreme and full primacy and principality over the whole Catholic Church. She truly and humbly acknowledges that she received this from the Lord himself in blessed Peter, the prince and chief of the apostles, whose successor the Roman Pontiff is, together with the fullness of power. And since before all others she has the duty of defending the truth of the faith, so if any questions arise concerning the faith, it is by her judgment that they must be settled."⁵⁷

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Then there is the definition of the Council of Florence:

295 "The Roman Pontiff is the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church and the father and teacher of all Christians; and to him was committed in blessed Peter, by our lord Jesus Christ, the full power of tending, ruling and governing the whole Church." ⁵⁸

300 3. To satisfy this pastoral office, our predecessors strove unwearingly that the saving teaching of Christ should be spread among all the peoples of the world; and with equal care they made sure that it should be kept pure and uncontaminated wherever it was received.

305 4. It was for this reason that the bishops of the whole world, sometimes individually, sometimes gathered in synods, according to the long established custom of the Churches and the pattern of ancient usage referred to this Apostolic See those dangers especially which arose in matters concerning the faith. This was to ensure that any damage suffered by the faith should be repaired in that place above all where the faith can know no failing ⁵⁹.

310 5. The Roman pontiffs, too, as the circumstances of the time or the state of affairs suggested, sometimes by summoning ecumenical councils or consulting the opinion of the Churches scattered throughout the world, sometimes by special synods, sometimes by taking advantage of other useful means afforded by divine providence, defined as doctrines to be held those things which, by God's help, they knew to be in keeping with Sacred Scripture and the apostolic traditions.

315 6. For the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his revelation, make known some new doctrine, but that, by his assistance, they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles. Indeed, their apostolic teaching was embraced by all the venerable fathers and revered and followed by all the holy orthodox doctors, for they knew very well that this See of St. Peter always remains unblemished by any error, in accordance with the divine promise of our Lord and Savior to the prince of his disciples: I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren ⁶⁰.

325 7. This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this See so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine. Thus the tendency to schism is removed and the whole Church is preserved in unity, and, resting on its foundation, can stand firm against the gates of hell.

330 8. But since in this very age when the salutary effectiveness of the apostolic office is most especially needed, not a few are to be found who disparage its authority, we judge it absolutely necessary to affirm solemnly the prerogative which the only-begotten Son of God was pleased to attach to the supreme pastoral office.

335 9. Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, to the glory of God our savior, for the exaltation of the Catholic religion and for the salvation of the Christian people, with the approval of the Sacred Council, we teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that when the Roman Pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine

340 assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his
Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the
Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable.
So then, should anyone, which God forbid, have the temerity to reject this definition of ours: let him be
anathema.

345 Given at Rome in public session, solemnly held in the Vatican Basilica in the year of our Lord one
thousand eight hundred and seventy, on the eighteenth day of July, in the twenty-fifth year of Our
Pontificate.

In conformity with the original.
Joseph, Bishop of St. Polten Secretary to the Vatican Council

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Notes

37 1 Pt 2,25.

38 Jn 17, 20-21.

39 Jn 15, 19.

355 40 Jn 20, 21.

41 Leo I, Sermon. (Sermons), 4 (elsewhere 3), ch. 2 for the day of his birth (PL 54, 150).

42 Jn 1, 42.

43 Mt 16, 16-19.

44 Jn 21, 15-17.

360 45 See Mt 7, 25; Lk 6, 48.

46 From the speech of Philip, the Roman legate, at the 3rd session of the Council of Ephesus (D no. 112).

47 Leo I, Sermon. (Sermons), 3 (elsewhere 2), ch. 3 (PL 54, 146).

48 Irenaeus, Adv. haeres. (Against Heresies) 1113 (PG 7, 849), Council of Aquileia (381), to be found among: Ambrose, Epistolae
(Letters), 11 (PL 16, 946).

365 49 Council of Florence, session 6 (see above p. 528).

50 See Jn 10, 16.

51 Ep. ad Eulog. Alexandrin. (Letter to Eulogius of Alexandria), VIII 29 (30) (MGH, Ep. 2, 31 28-30, PL 77, 933).

52 Pius VI, Letter Super soliditate dated 28 Nov. 1786.

53 From Michael Palaeologus's profession of faith which was read out at the second Council of Lyons (D no. 466).

370 54 Nicholas I, Ep. ad Michaellem imp. (Letter to the emperor Michael) (PL 119, 954).

55 Mt 16, 18.

56 From Pope Hormisdas's formula of the year 517 (D no. 171), see above p. 157 n. 1.

57 From Michael Palaeologus's profession of faith which was read out at the second Council of Lyons (D no. 466).

58 Council of Florence, session 6 (see above p. 528). S Bernard, Ep. (Letters) 190 (PL 182, 1053).

375 59 Bernard, Ep. (Letters) 190 (PL 182, 1053).

60 Lk 22, 32.

The translation found here is that which appears in Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils ed. Norman Tanner. S.J. The numbering of the
canons is however found in Tanner's text.

380

The Catechism of the Catholic Church

The episcopal college and its head, the Pope

385 **880** When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent
assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them."³⁹⁸ Just as "by the Lord's
institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion
the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with
and united to one another."³⁹⁹

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395 **881** The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the
keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.⁴⁰⁰ "The office of binding and
loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head."⁴⁰¹ This
pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued
by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

400 **882** The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and
foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful."⁴⁰² "For the
Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full,
supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise
unhindered."⁴⁰³

405 **883** "The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's
successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church;
but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."⁴⁰⁴

410 **884** "The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an
ecumenical council."⁴⁰⁵ But "there never is an ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least
recognized as such by Peter's successor."⁴⁰⁶

415 **885** "This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and
universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled
under one head."⁴⁰⁷

420 **886** "The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular
Churches."⁴⁰⁸ As such, they "exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God
assigned to them,"⁴⁰⁹ assisted by priests and deacons. But, as a member of the episcopal college, each
bishop shares in the concern for all the Churches.⁴¹⁰ The bishops exercise this care first "by ruling well
their own Churches as portions of the universal Church," and so contributing "to the welfare of the
whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches."⁴¹¹ They
extend it especially to the poor,⁴¹² to those persecuted for the faith, as well as to missionaries who are
working throughout the world.

425 **887** Neighboring particular Churches who share the same culture form ecclesiastical provinces or larger
groupings called patriarchates or regions.⁴¹³ The bishops of these groupings can meet in synods or
provincial councils. "In a like fashion, the episcopal conferences at the present time are in a position to

contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegiate spirit."⁴¹⁴

*** The teaching office**

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888 Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task "to preach the Gospel of God to all men," in keeping with the Lord's command.⁴¹⁵ They are "heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers" of the apostolic faith "endowed with the authority of Christ."⁴¹⁶

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889 In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith."⁴¹⁷

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890 The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms:

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891 "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. . . . The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council.⁴¹⁸ When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed,"⁴¹⁹ and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith."⁴²⁰ This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.⁴²¹

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892 Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a "definitive manner," they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful "are to adhere to it with religious assent"⁴²² which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.

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398 LG 19; cf. Lk 6:13; Jn 21:15-17.

399 LG 22; cf. CIC, can. 330.

465 400 Cf. Mt 16:18-19; Jn 21:15-17.

401 LG 22 § 2.

402 LG 23.

403 LG 22; cf. CD 2,9.

404 LG 22; cf. CIC, can 336.

470 405 CIC, can. 337 § 1.

406 LG 22.

407 LG 22.

408 LG 23.

409 LG 23.

475 410 Cf. CD 3.

411 LG 23.

412 Cf. Gal 2:10.

413 Cf. Apostolic Constitutions 34.

414 LG 23 § 3.

480 415 PO 4; cf. Mk 16:15.

416 LG 25.

417 LG 12; cf. DV 10.

418 LG 25; cf. Vatican Council I:DS 3074.

419 DV 10 § 2.

485 420 LG 25 § 2.

421 Cf. LG 25.

422 LG 25.

Vatican II

DECREE CONCERNING THE PASTORAL OFFICE OF BISHOPS IN THE CHURCH CHRISTUS DOMINUS PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS, POPE PAUL VI ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

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PREFACE

1. Christ the Lord, Son of the living God, came that He might save His people from their sins¹ and that all men might be sanctified. Just as He Himself was sent by the Father, so He also sent His Apostles.² Therefore, He sanctified them, conferring on them the Holy Spirit, so that they also might glorify the Father upon earth and save men, "to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12), which is the Church.

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2. In this Church of Christ the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of His sheep and lambs, enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority over the care of souls by divine institution. Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, he is sent to provide for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, he holds a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.

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The bishops themselves, however, having been appointed by the Holy Spirit, are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls.³ Together with the supreme pontiff and under his authority they are sent to continue throughout the ages the work of Christ, the eternal pastor.⁴ Christ gave the Apostles and their successors the command and the power to teach all nations, to hallow men in the truth, and to feed them. Bishops, therefore, have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith, pontiffs, and pastors through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them.⁵

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3. Bishops, sharing in the solicitude for all the churches, exercise this episcopal office of theirs, which they have received through episcopal consecration,⁶ in communion with and under the authority of the supreme pontiff. As far as their teaching authority and pastoral government are concerned, all are united in a college or body with respect to the universal Church of God.

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They exercise this office individually in reference to the portions of the Lord's flock assigned to them, each one taking care of the particular church committed to him, or sometimes some of them jointly providing for certain common needs of various churches.

525 This sacred synod, therefore, attentive to the conditions of human association which have brought about a new order of things in our time,⁷ intends to determine more exactly the pastoral office of bishops and, therefore, has decreed the things that follow.

1. cf. Matt. 1:21.

2. cf. John 20:21.

3. cf. First Vatican Council, fourth session, part 1 of Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, c. 3, Denz. 1828 (3061).

4. cf. First Vatican Council, fourth session, Introduction to Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, Denz. 1821 (3050).

5. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, nos. 21, 24 and 25: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 24-25, 29-31.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, no. 21: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 24-25.

7. cf. John XXIII's apostolic constitution, Humanae Salutis, Dec. 25, 1961: A.A.S. 54 (1962) p. 6.

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