

Fr. Perozich comments —

These teachings such as the article below by faithful Catholics, are not always well received when I communicate them.

One woman could no longer stand the exposure and criticism of the turbulent chaotic time in the church where high ranking clergy declare their own opinion as if it belonged to the authentic teaching office: scripture first, tradition close to it. Instead of declaring Jesus from the Bible and the long established lived tradition of the church of his grace and salvation, they offer their own opinions that have developed from their personal short life experience in this time of human history.

The woman asked no longer to receive emails; rather she would trust whatever Papa Francis said.

Like Archbishop Fernandez, she succumbed to the error of *solum magisterium*, a “particular charism...a unique charism,...a living and active gift, which is at work in the person of the Holy Father...[not only] for safeguarding the deposit of faith... [but also for] the doctrine of the Holy Father.”

There is NO DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY FATHER.

From the article below :” the “pope’s ban” on contraception, women priests, etc. There’s no such thing.”

No pope can impose his personal opinion on the church and claim it is the Holy Spirit who has revealed it to him.

Every pope is to declare Jesus first from the Bible, then he Tradition of the church, its understanding of Jesus in the church’s lived experience of His grace and salvation to explain for the people of their time God’s redemption.

Such cannot be altered by a personal opinion or authority of the office of Peter. One man’s short life experience cannot override all that has been given to us before him.

This reminds me of the Mormon church where their Presidents over time have undone what was declared in times past in their brief history.

When some people thought they would have to leave the Catholic Church over the personal opinions, I reminded them:

Never leave the Catholic Church, even if its leaders’ teaching should obscure the truth. Find those who believe what the Church has always taught, who worship as the Church has always worshiped,

who are charitable toward the poor materially and in spirit, and walk with them. Common sense tells me I don't need to believe everything that comes from the mind of a man in power in the church, rather I must believe the truth of Jesus when such a man declares it, and that I cannot stop him speaking his personal opinions even when they do not reflect what Jesus taught in the bible and in the deposit of faith. Such opinions neither lead me to Jesus nor to eternal life, but I cannot stop authorities from expressing them, so I don't let them bother my spirit. I live God's revealed Truth while others live their opinions, their mindsets, their experiences, and their chosen lifestyles. — Fr. Richard Perozich

Solum Magisterium?

Archbishop Victor Fernández's claim about a "doctrine of the Holy Father" runs the risk of collapsing all distinction between the magisterium and its normative sources, such as Scripture and Tradition.



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How can the Church reconcile the teaching that the magisterium is a servant of the Word of God (“*Magisterium verbum Dei ministrant*”) and not above that Word (“*non supra verbum Dei*”), as *Dei Verbum* states (§10), with the presumption, as recently expressed in an interview with Edward Pentin by Cardinal-designate Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernández, that Pope Francis has a

particular charism...a unique charism,...a living and active gift, which is at work in the person of the Holy Father...[not only] for safeguarding the deposit of faith... [but also for] the doctrine of the Holy Father.

Fernández’s claim is puzzling. It is one thing to claim that the magisterium has a charism relating to the mission of preserving infallibly the Faith once for all delivered to the Church (Jude 1:3); **it is quite another to claim that the pope himself has a charism that safeguards his own doctrine.**

We may summarize one account of the presumption that the pope has a unique charism that safeguards his own doctrine with the following syllogism: “What the papal magisterium teaches with the assistance of the Holy Spirit must be true; but the papal magisterium teaches X. Therefore, X must be true.” This is an *a priori* argument that purports to be the basis for trusting in the promise of Christ that the Spirit of truth will guide the Church into the fullness of truth (John 16:13).

Archbishop Fernández's claim about the pope's unique charism runs the risk of collapsing all distinction between the magisterium and its normative sources, such as Scripture, which as Ratzinger argues, "threatens the primacy of the sources which, (were one to continue logically in this direction) would ultimately destroy the serving character of the teaching office." In short, the problem with this *a priori* argument is that it confuses the difference between two statements: one, we should accept the Church's teaching because it is true, in accordance with the supremacy of Scripture and other authoritative sources of faith, and, two, we should accept the Church's teaching simply because the Church teaches it.

The former statement is true, but not the latter. Ratzinger elaborates on the implication that would follow from the latter statement being true:

The result of this [a priori argument] was that Scripture was considered basically only from the aspect of proof it offered for already existing statements, and even when this was done with great care and with modern exegetical methods, this mode of procedure hardly allowed for a theme to be developed from the perspective of Scripture itself or questions from the Bible to be raised that were not covered in the body of the Church's teaching.

The logical direction of this *a priori* argument, and hence of Archbishop Fernández's claim, is *solum magisterium*.

The position of *solum magisterium* is sometimes called "ecclesiastical positivism." Avery Cardinal Dulles describes this position's logical direction as follows:

On some presentations it appeared as though the believer had to give a blank check to the magisterium. Catholic faith was understood as an implicit confidence in the teaching office, and the test of orthodoxy was a man's readiness to believe whatever the Church might teach for the very reason that the Church was teaching it. One danger in this approach was that it engendered a certain indifference to the content of revelation. Believers were heard to say that if the Church were to teach that there were five or ten persons in God, they would believe it with as much faith as they now believed in the three divine persons.

Now, the position of *solum magisterium* is mistaken because it makes the Church's teaching office the supreme norm of faith. In other words, the Catholic Church does not hold that her authority is the basis—"I believe because of the Church's authority"—for intentionally assenting to the divine truth that is believed, taught, and proclaimed by the Church. Rather, the Church is a

divine instrument through which we assent to that truth.

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Consider here, for instance, Ratzinger's remarks on the limits of the Church's authority regarding the ordination of women. His remarks here pertain to John Paul II's 1994 Apostolic Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*. Ratzinger writes in respect of this Letter's key statement:

*[Wishing to remain faithful to the Lord's example], "the Church does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination." In this statement the Church's Magisterium professes the primacy of obedience and the limits of ecclesiastical authority: **The Church and her Magisterium have authority not in and of themselves, but rather from the Lord alone. The believing Church reads the Scriptures and lives them out...in the living fellowship of the people of God in every age; she knows that she is bound by a will that preceded her, by an act of "institution."** This prevenient will, the will of Christ, is expressed in her case by the appointing of the Twelve.*

And more than thirty years earlier Ratzinger writes in the same vein:

“Tradition” is indeed never a simple and anonymous handing on of teaching, but is linked to a person, is a living word that has its concrete reality in faith. And, vice versa, [apostolic] succession is never the taking over of some official powers that are then at the disposal of the office-bearer; rather, it is being taken into the service of the Word, the office of testifying to something with which one has been entrusted and which stands above its bearer, so that he fades into the background behind the thing he has taken over and is (to use the marvelous image from Isaiah and John the Baptist) just a voice that enable[s] the Word to be heard aloud in the world.

The main point that Ratzinger is making here is that the authority of the Church’s teaching office is not based on itself, and hence the Church is itself not the norm of faith. The Church affirms the primacy of the authority of God, of His Word, in short, of divine revelation, over the teaching authority of the Church, which is an authority derived from Christ.

Certainly, the Church has teaching authority, indeed shares in the authority of Scripture, but it “is only a secondary rule,” says Yves Congar, “measured by the **primary rule, which is divine Revelation.**” Perhaps we can make this point clearer by distinguishing between the “formal reason” of faith and the Church’s teaching authority. The former is the reason why we believe something—say, that Jesus Christ is true God and true

man. We believe it by virtue of divine revelation. “Divine revelation is thus the reason without which there would be no reason to have faith.” The latter—Church authority—is the means the Church has “to avoid losing that most precious revelation.” The Dominican Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) explains what these means are:

*And so that no error might appear in the proposal or explanation of things to be believed, the Holy Spirit provided a created rule, which is the sense and the doctrine of the Church, so that the authority of the Church is the infallible rule of the proposition and explanation of things which must be believe by faith. Therefore, **two infallible rules concur in faith, namely divine revelation and the authority of the Church; there is between them this difference: divine revelation is the formal reason of the object of faith, and the authority of the Church is the minister of the object of faith.***

Does the denial of *solum magisterium* renounce the authority of the magisterium? In other words, is the Church’s teaching office, in the words of Cardinal Dulles, “capable of certifying revealed truth with divine authority”? Yes, the Church teaching office does serve as “the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15), meaning thereby that she speaks authoritatively and dogmatically to the whole Church in the name of the Church. As *Dei Verbum* §10 teaches,

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.

In sum, Cardinal Dulles explains a moderate infallibilism regarding the authority of the magisterium and a corresponding charism to preserve the Church:

1. God provides for the Church effective means by which it may and will in fact remain in the truth of the Gospel till the end of time.
2. Among these means are not only the canonical Scriptures but also, as an essential counterpart to the Scriptures, the pastoral office. Without such a pastoral office the Christian community would not be adequately protected against corruptions of the Gospel.
3. The pastoral office is exercised for the universal Church by the bearer of the Petrine office (which means, for Catholics, by the pope). It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the pope is equipped by God with a special charism (or grace of office) for correctly interpreting the Gospel to the universal Church, as circumstances may require.

4. In order that the papacy may adequately discharge its function of preserving unity in the faith and exposing dangerous errors, the papal charism must include the power to assert the truth of the Gospel and to condemn contrary errors in a decisive and obligatory manner. **Authoritative pronouncements from the Petrine office that are seriously binding on all the faithful must have adequately certified truth, for there could be no obligation to believe what could probably be error.**

How, then, does the Petrine office adequately certify truth? If tradition and the Church are intrinsically and necessarily related to Scripture, that is, coinhere as a network of interdependent authorities, presumably that means that the Church can justify, or adequately certify, no truth from Scripture alone, but for that matter neither from tradition alone nor from the magisterium alone. Yes, these authorities function together (each in its own way) differing in degree of authority, with **Scripture being the supreme rule of faith, the *norma normans non normata* (the norm with no norm over it), such that Scripture is not subservient to tradition or to the teaching office of the Church.**

Furthermore, the Church does not hold that the teaching office of the Church operates on its own, that is, without reference to any superior norm. Again, in *Dei Verbum*, §10:

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls.

There is a coinherence of Scripture, tradition, and the Church in the pattern of theological authority such that in an intrinsic and necessarily related way they “are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others.” But “each in its own way” operates under the action of the Holy Spirit such that within that pattern **Scripture has priority—*prima Scriptura*, according to *Dei Verbum*, §21–26.** Arguably, then, when *Dei verbum* affirms a necessary and intrinsic relatedness of tradition and the Church to Scripture, it also affirms a ***prima Scriptura*, indeed, it calls Scripture the “supreme rule of faith.”**

Thus, *pace* Archbishop Fernández, **there can be no such thing as the “Pope’s doctrine.”** This phrase reminds me of the reference by a journalist at the funeral Mass of John Paul II to the “pope’s ban” on contraception, women priests, etc. There’s no such thing. As Charles Cardinal Journet rightly states regarding the magisterium’s activity of teaching the truth of the Faith, it is therefore necessary for there to be

an infallible homogeneity and continuity between the divinely revealed deposit of faith revealed once and for all by the apostles, on the one hand, and its actual preservation through the ages by means of a divinely assisted teaching office, on the other.

Journet's point is not inconsistent with the idea and practice of doctrinal development expressed by St. John XXIII in his opening address at Vatican II, reiterating Vatican I, which, in turn, was citing Vincent of Lérins: "For the deposit of faith, the truths contained in our venerable doctrine, are one thing; the fashion in which they are expressed, but with the same meaning and the same judgment [*eodem sensu eademque sententia*], is another thing."

The subordinate clause in this passage is part of a larger passage from the constitution of Vatican Council I, *Dei Filius*, and this passage is itself from the *Commonitorium* 23 of Vincent of Lérins:

Therefore, let there be growth and abundant progress in understanding, knowledge, and wisdom, in each and all, in individuals and in the whole Church, at all times and in the progress of ages, but only within the proper limits, i.e., within the same dogma, the same meaning, the same judgment (in eodem scilicet dogmate, eodem sensu eademque sententia).

Although the truths of the Faith may be expressed differently, **the Church must always determine, in light of the ecclesial warrants, such as Sacred Scripture, ecumenical councils, doctors of the Church, the Christian faithful, and the magisterium, whether those new re-formulations are preserving the same meaning and judgment (*eodem sensu eademque sententia*), and hence the material continuity, identity, and universality of those truths. Only then can we distinguish between true and false development.**

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