

# The Teaching Church

"If I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, **which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.**" *Timothy 3:15*



Many non-Catholic Christians believe that the Bible is the pillar and foundation of the truth, and no knowledge outside of the Bible is necessary for our salvation. But then why does Saint Paul write that the Church, and not the Bible, is the pillar and foundation of the truth? This is a powerful text that refutes the theory of Sola Scriptura (Scripture alone) which erroneously holds that the Bible is the sole source of Christian truth (a theory which cannot be found anywhere in the Scriptures). Instead, Saint Paul affirms that the Church is the pillar and foundation of the truth.

This means that all the truth Jesus left us concerning faith, morality and our salvation flows from a living Church which, as we have learned, is built by Christ upon the rock of Peter and his successors. As the Catholic Church teaches, God has given us His Truth in the form of the living word (oral tradition and written Scripture) and the living teaching authority of the Church, (magisterium) endowed with the gift of binding and loosing. In fact, it is only because the Church is the foundation of Truth established by Christ Himself that we believe in the Bible. If the Catholic Church were not the pinnacle and pinnacle of the truth, our belief in the Bible would be without foundation.

# *The Church teaches through the Magisterium*

The Magisterium is the teaching office of the Church. It consists of the Pope and Bishops in union with him. Christ promised to protect the teaching of the Church : "He who hears you, hears me; he who rejects you rejects me, he who rejects me, rejects Him who sent me" (Luke 10:16). Now of course the promise of Christ cannot fail: hence when the Church presents doctrine ( a matter of faith and morals) as definitive or final, it comes under this protection, it cannot be in error; in other words, it is infallible. This is true even if the Church does not use the solemn ceremony of definition. The day to day teaching of the Church throughout the world, when the bishops in union with the Pope and one another, present something as definitive, this is infallible. (Vatican II, *Lumen gentium* # 25). It was precisely by the use of that authority that Vatican I was able to define that the Pope alone, when speaking as such and making things definitive, is also infallible. Of course this infallibility covers also teaching on what morality requires, for that is needed for salvation.



## **What does " in Union with the Pope" mean?**

It is the principle that all the bishops of the Church with the Pope as their leader form a single "college," which continues in every generation. Christ instituted this "college" of the Twelve Apostles, with Peter at their head, as the foundation of the Church. This college of bishops together with, but never without, the Pope has supreme and full authority over the universal Church (CCC 861, 880, 883).

In other words, a bishop's teaching only carries the weight of infallibility if his words are in accord with Catholic doctrine which has been handed down from Christ through St. Peter and all the Popes.

**The task of authoritatively interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on [Scripture or Tradition], has been entrusted exclusively to the living Magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ.**