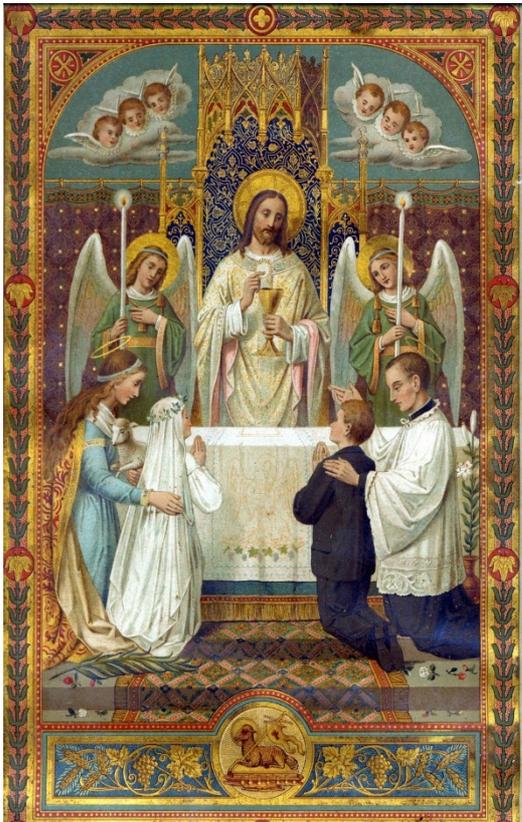


DIPPING INTO THE CATECHISM

From the Compendium of the Catechism: 177 – 179; 185 – 188

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Who are the faithful?

The Christian faithful are those who, joined into Christ through baptism, have been constituted as the people of God; for this reason, since they have become sharers in Christ's priestly, prophetic and royal office in their own manner, they are called to exercise the mission which God has entrusted to the Church. There exists a true equality among them in their dignity as children of God.

How are the people of God formed?

Among the faithful by divine institution there exist sacred ministers who have received the sacrament of Holy Orders and who form the hierarchy of the Church. The other members of the Church are called the laity. In both the hierarchy and the laity there are certain of the faithful who are consecrated in a special manner

to God by the profession of the evangelical counsels: chastity or celibacy, poverty and obedience.

Why did Christ institute a hierarchy in the Church?

Christ instituted an ecclesiastical hierarchy (hierarchy of priests) with the mission of feeding the people of God in His Name and for this purpose gave it authority. The hierarchy is formed of sacred ministers: bishops, priests and deacons. Thanks to the Sacrament of Orders, bishops and priests act in the exercise of their ministry in the name and person of Christ the Head. Deacons minister to the people of God in the *diakonia* (service) of word, liturgy and charity.

What is the mission of the pope?

The Pope, bishop of Rome and the successor of St Peter, is the perpetual, visible source and foundation of the unity of the Church. He is the vicar of Christ, the head of the college of bishops and pastor of the universal Church over which he has by divine institution full, supreme, immediate and universal power.

How do the bishops fit into this hierarchy?

The College of bishops in union with the Pope and never without him, also exercises supreme and full authority over the Church. They have the duty of proclaiming the Gospel faithfully and authoritatively to all. Bishops sanctify the Church by dispensing the grace of Christ by their ministry of the word and the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, and also by their prayers, their example and their work. Every bishop bears the care for all particular Churches and for the entire Church, along with all the other bishops who are united to the Pope.

When is the infallibility of the magisterium exercised?

Infallibility is exercised when the Roman Pontiff (the Pope), in virtue of his office as the Supreme Pastor of the Church, or the college of bishops, in union with the Pope especially when joined together in an Ecumenical Council, proclaim by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. Infallibility is also exercised when the Pope and bishops in their ordinary Magisterium (teaching office) are in agreement in proposing a doctrine as definitive. Adherence to such teaching requires the obedience of faith in every one of the faithful.

What is the vocation of the lay faithful?

The lay faithful have as their own vocation to seek the Kingdom of God by illuminating and ordering temporal affairs according to the plan of God. They carry out in this way their call to holiness and to the apostolate, a call given to all the baptised.

It is essential that every Catholic has access to good Catechesis to be able to deepen their faith. The Diocese of Plymouth recommends the many Catechetical Workshops from 'Franciscan at Home,' for more information on access to these and online or real group sessions contact deborah.vankroonenburg@prcdtr.org.uk

