

The Catholic hierarchy, or the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic sacrament delivery system, is an in-group. In-groups are groups that have ways of thinking (and acting) that are reinforced by the members of the group to each other but that are out of touch with other people's ways of thinking. The members of the group reinforce each other in their way of looking at things, a way of looking at things that does not grasp the existence of or understand other ways of looking at things. Question I'm talking about right now is not necessarily whether the other ways are bad because they're different from the ways the hierarchy is looking at things. Question I am raising right now is the fact that the hierarchy has to deal with people with other ways of looking at things. The hierarchy needs to understand where other people are coming from if the hierarchy is going to fulfill its responsibility to those people.

A good example of this is the question of doctrines of the church that have not been defined *ex cathedra* by a Pope. The fact that they have not been defined does not mean that they have not been taught definitively by the ordinary magisterium. But the hierarchy has failed to grasp the fact that as a member of the body of Christ I have a solemn right, a sacred right, to an unambiguous and unequivocal way of knowing that something has been taught definitively by the ordinary magisterium or has not been taught, has not been taught definitively by the ordinary magisterium.

For example in the statement on the ordination of women, the pope uses the word definitive to say that he's teaching definitively. But he also says he's teaching on his authority and does not claim the authority of all of the bishops. Now perhaps the pope has the authority to teach definitively. By the way I should've mentioned that immediately following the release of that statement on the ordination of women, Cardinal Ratzinger made the statement that it was not an *ex cathedra* proclamation. At least, Cardinal Ratzinger has been quoted as saying that the proclamation was not an *ex cathedra* statement. But when the pope is not speaking *ex cathedra*, does he have the authority to make a definitive statement for the ordinary magisterium?

Perhaps he does, and I'm ready to believe that he does. And I have no theological difficulty with excluding women from the priesthood or with any of the other so-called doctrines that are currently in dispute. But I have a solemn, sacred right to know in an unambiguous and unequivocal way whether it has been taught definitively that the pope can teach definitively on his own, when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*.

I have an unambiguous and unequivocal way of knowing that the pope can speak definitively when he is speaking *ex cathedra*. That dogma has been definitively taught by the first Vatican Council. But I am unaware of any place that it has been taught that the pope speaks definitively for the ordinary magisterium when he speaks alone, but not *ex cathedra* and without consulting bishops.

On the other hand in the encyclical on the gospel of life, the pope refers to the fact that he is using his own authority and has consulted with all of the bishops throughout the world. But he does not use the word definitive. So am I supposed to assume that it has been taught definitively?

One answer of Cardinal Ratzinger, at least as he is quoted in ethics and Medex this current issue-- and I am speaking on January 29th, 2003 -- Cardinal Ratzinger seems to say that you can tell whether something has been definitively taught by the wording and other such clues. I assume he means the context the seriousness etc. etc..

But theologians I have read claim, and I do not consider them infallible, that in the history of the church you can find very solemnly defined documents, or apparently very solemnly defined doctrines, which today we would say do not mean what we always thought they meant. In fact they do not mean what we always thought they had to mean. For instance, we always thought that the doctrine that there is no salvation outside of the church had to mean that people had to explicitly convert to the church to be saved. Only relatively recently has it emerged that the doctrine of no salvation outside the church does not have to mean that, even though it certainly appeared to have to mean that for hundreds of years. So the hierarchy has a problem, especially

a pastoral problem, which its in-group style of thinking has prevented it from recognizing: the problem of giving me my right to an unequivocal way of knowing what has and has not been definitively defined. In today's this is a new pastoral problem that the hierarchy did not face 500 years ago. That is one reason why the in-group thinking has not caught up with the pastoral situation in which the hierarchy is obligated to fulfill its pastoral responsibilities. For one thing, the doctrine of infallibility did not exist 150 years ago. So the problem of distinguishing definitive from non definitive teachings did not exist 150 years ago either as a theological or has a pastoral problem.

For another thing, the hierarchy is now dealing with a highly educated laity. Being highly educated does not make the Laity infallible, and being highly educated can even be as source of prideful disrespect toward the teachings of the church. But it can also be a source of sincere difficulties and even sincere doubts with respect to whether something has been definitively taught by the ordinary magisterium. For example, it can be a source of sincere intellectual doubts that simply by the wording of seriousness or the context we can draw the conclusion that the ordinary magisterium has taught what we think they must have taught on the basis of their wording.

This is a problem the hierarchy seems not to have confronted because it seems not to have recognized its existence. How could it not recognize its existence? Because of its in-group style of thinking. This is the same in-group style of thinking that led to the cover-up of the sex scandal in the church. Perhaps in the past before today's electronic media, coverups like that were possible. But times have changed and created new pastoral problems for which old pastoral methods simply are not adequate. Now such problems as we have been discussing can I think be easily solved. But rather than being easily solved, they are impossible to solve if they're existence is not recognized. And as far as I can see they're existence often is not being recognized today.

The easy solution would be to take advantage of the electronic means of communication today. In the past consultation with all of the bishops required a Council whose logistics in the days when travel was very very difficult, were daunting say the least. It's entirely within the tradition of the church if the consultation takes place electronically that's all that counts. In the days of Paul and Peter they certainly would have communicated by phone, or fax, or by e-mail. So the easy solution is for the pope and the bishops to produce a statement saying that the faithful can know that something has been definitively defined by the ordinary magisterium under the following circumstances. And those circumstances can't be just well the seriousness of the wording of the kind wording but those circumstances must be something like the pope uses the word definitive claims to be exercising his teaching authority and claims to have a consulted with all the bishops on the definitive nature of his teaching.

Now in Sullivan's book on these issues he claims that Vatican theologians have eschewed using the word quote infallible" because it has never been used in the past. But that is a perfect example of the kind of in-group narrow thinking that I'm talking about. You didn't have to use words like definitive or infallible in the past because the doctrine of infallibility, and therefore the possibility of non-infallible teachings, never existed explicitly before. Now that that doctrine exists and its accompanying pastoral problems exist. Or I should say now that that doctrine exists, accompanying pastoral problems exist. So today definitions or teachings using words like definitive (which by the way is already been used in the pope's statement on women's ordination; so there is a precedent) or infallible such words need to be used. If not those two words some other words that the pope in the bishops can agree to teach definitively that teachings using such words by themselves are definitive.

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In "creative fidelity" by Frances Sullivan, on page 163, he quotes Pope John the 23rd as saying this. "the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing and the way in which is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with

patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character."

That phrase about how everything is to be measured refers to the goals and the goals are pastoral. So the way that we present truths of doctrine, the value of the way we present truths of doctrine, is measured by pastoral goal. That is, it is measured by the goal of good pastoring.

But what I am saying is precisely that the way we have talked about the Eucharist since Vatican II, and the way we have neglected to talk about other things, is pastorally harmful. That is, it is harmful by the measure of the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.

Sunday January 19th the week that the Vatican released a new statement concerning the Catholic politicians obligation to follow Catholic teaching in making laws. The church teaches moral truths which can be known by natural reason but which Catholics must also accept on faith. The question is when a Catholic politician uses church teaching to make decisions about the laws of the society can he in conscience use church teaching on morality if the only thing he has to go on is the church teaching and not arguments from natural reason. The problem is that in something like birth control you can assent completely to the church's teaching and not necessarily have a good argument from natural reason because you can think that all the arguments you have seen are not good. So in that case why are not you as a politician bound in conscience not to impose that judgment on society even though that intrinsically it is a judgment belonging to natural ethics but you have no argument to show that it belongs to natural ethics. You only have the fact that it has been revealed according to the teaching of the church. If

on page 165 of Sullivan's book he quotes Pope Paul the sixth as saying that the council must settle some difficult theological controversies and to do this with its certain authority which may not be called into doubt."

If it may not be called into doubt, then it appears to be infallible. But if it is infallible, what is the difference between it and doctrines that have been definitively declared by the universal magisterium? that is, what is the difference, if any? There may be no difference but the point is this statement of Pope Paul illustrates my problem of needing an unambiguous way to tell.