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Petrine Ministry in the Catholic Church

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ABSTRACT:

"Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). These words of Jesus to Simon reveal to us about Simon and his mission. Indeed, though Simon is weak and could be tempted, Jesus always prays for him so that he became a foundation of the Church: "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). In this paper, I attempt to point out the mission of Peter and his successor, the pope, in the Catholic church and why the papacy is the matter with the catholic Church.

Petrine Ministry In The Catholic Church

by Fr. John Toan Phan, O.Cist.

INTRODUCTION

The Papacy, or the primacy of Rome, has always been a difficult issue not only for other Christian churches but even for members of the Catholic Church especially in democratic societies where there is no longer a sense of obedience, and people are more focused on individual freedom; where everyday issues of people are decided by vote. Cardinal Ratzinger once said: "The question of the primacy of Peter and of its continuation in the bishops of Rome is probably the most difficult problem of the ecumenical dispute. Even in the Catholic Church herself, the Roman primacy has, again and again, proved to be a stumbling block, from the medieval struggle between *imperium* and *sacerdotium*, through the early modern state Church movements and the nineteenth century's demands for independence from Rome, up to the contemporary surges of protest against the pope's function of leadership and his mode of exercising it."[1] Indeed, this has been a reality in the history of the Church. Despite tensions concerning the papacy, and regardless of positions inside

or outside the Church, there is one reality all must admit: "The papacy is the oldest institution in the world, surviving the rise and fall of empires, ideologies and the whole historical arena. It is still an institution of great importance to us whether Catholic or non-Catholic."[2] The Papal office is "an essential institution of the Church"[3] and a unique reality inseparable from the Church with its purposes of strengthening the Christians' faith and pursuit unity as Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, handed it over to Peter's ministry. Thus, the papacy is an uncompromisable element of the Church even in ecumenical dialogue as Schatz notes: "This primacy is thus a structural element in the Catholic understanding of the Church, something not to be surrendered in ecumenical dialogue and without which there can be no single, complete Church community."[4] The Catholic Church believes that papal primacy comes from Jesus through Peter to the popes. "But it was by no means complete and perfected from the beginning; instead, it has had a very lively history, not always proceeding along a straight line."[5] How, in what stages, and as a result of what historical factors did papal primacy come to be what it is? This paper will focus on the Petrine ministry in the context of scripture and tradition to understand the role the Petrine ministry and the primacy of Rome plays in the church; why the papacy matters in the catholic church, and to identify some preeminent popes who performed their ministries at a particular time in the history of the Church.

    I. Concerning the origin of the Church

        1. Did Jesus establish the Church?

There are arguments among biblical scholars as to whether Jesus came into this world to establish a Church or to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom. According to Cardinal Ratzinger, Jesus came to this world not to establish the Church, but to announce the Kingdom of God: "the Kingdom of God is near at hand" (Mark 1:15). This Kingdom is not a place or something, but it is the present action of God through Jesus Christ. He himself is God's

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1   Ratzinger, Joseph Cardinal. *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1991), 47.

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2   Madden, Thomas F. *The modern scholar great professors teach you: Upon This Rock: Course Guide* (Saint Louis University, 2006), 6.

3   Schatz, Klaus. *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present.* Trans. Otto, John A and Maloney, Linda M. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996), x.

4   Schatz, ibid., x.

5   Ibid.

nearness. Where he is, is the Kingdom."[6] However, to fulfill his mission, Jesus established the Church, a new people that began with the Twelve, to carry out his mission. Mark tells us that Jesus's intention of choosing the Twelve was so "that they might be with him and that he might send them" (Mark 3:14). So, the twelve were chosen to be his companions and to be sent forth to further his mission. When choosing the Twelve to be the foundation of the "new people," Jesus presents himself as the patriarch of a new Israel, the Church as Ratzinger notes: "The symbolic value of the Twelve is consequently of decisive significance: twelve is the number of Jacob's sons, the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. In constituting the circle of Twelve, Jesus presents himself as the patriarch of a new Israel and institutes these twelve men as its origin and foundation."[7] By choosing the Twelve to begin his "new people" Jesus indicates that his Church has two elements: the dynamism of unification and distinction. Ratzinger notes: "this early stage is already marked by the appearance of two elements that are essential for the future understanding of the Church. First, the dynamism of unification, in which men draw together by moving toward God, is a component of the new people of God as Jesus intends it. Second, the point of convergence of this new people is Christ; it becomes a people solely through his call and its response to his call and to his person."[8] The Church is the continuing Israel as people of God, but different from Israel.

In any secular institution or group, the leader is one of the most important components that determines the success or failure of an organization. The Church is no exception, since the Church, the "New Israel," while a mystery,[9] is also a visible institution,[10] that needs to have a leader. From among the Twelve, Jesus chose Peter, the rock, to be their leader. As *Lumen Gentium* states: "These apostles he constituted in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them" (LG 19). Upon this rock (Peter) Jesus built his Church (cf. Mt 16:17-19). This text clearly indicates that Jesus found the Church. He is the founder of the Church. Concerning this assertion, Frank J. Matera, a priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford and professor of New Testament at the Catholic University of American, writes: "In this text, Matthew portrays Jesus as the founder of the *ekklesia* that has emerged in communities such as his own, with Peter as its rock foundation. As regards this *ekklesia*, Jesus identifies it as his own ('my church') since he is the one who calls it into being. It is eschatological in nature because not even the powers of death ('the gates of Hades') can prevail against it. As regards Peter, he is the one upon whom the building is constructed, Christ being its founder."[11] Thus, we see Jesus Christ is the founder of the Church, installing Peter as the head of the Twelve to be his representative on earth, to govern the Church in his name, but not replace him.

2. Is the Church local or universal?

The Church was founded by Jesus Christ according to the Father's plan,[12] and it is One because its source is the Holy Trinity and its founder is one, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit who guides the Church is her soul.[13] We know that the Church began in Jerusalem and from there the Church of Jesus Christ spread throughout the world (see. Act 8:1). Thus, geographically, the Church began as local. But her mission and its essential character is meant to be universal, or catholic in "the sense of 'according to the totality' or 'in keeping

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6   Cf. Ratzinger, ibid., 22-23.

7   Ratzinger, ibid., 25.

8   Ratzinger, ibid., 23.

9   Pope Paul VI in his opening address at the second session of the Council declared: "The Church is mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefore, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and ever greater exploration." (Quoted from Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, (Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1974), 16.

10   Vatican II states: "The one mediator, Christ, established and ever sustains here on earth his holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as a visible organization through which he communicates truth and grace to all men" (LG, 8). Avery Dulles wrote: "The institutional model defines the Church in terms of its visible, hierarchical structures, with a strong emphasis on the authority of its office holders. Such an institutional or juridical ecclesiology has dominated Catholic theology since the Reformation, reaching a high point in the First Vatican Council's draft for a constitution on the Church." (Dulles, ibid., 63)

11   Matera, Frank J. *Theologies of the Church in the New Testament, in The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield, O.S.B.*, edit., Phan, Peter C. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 6.

12   Cf. LG 4.

13   Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd edit. n. 813.

with the whole.'"[14] We see this clearly in the Risen Lord's command to the Apostles: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15). Through the work of the Apostles, the Church was rooted in a particular place with its cultural, social and human structure, and its local dimension. So then, geographically, each Church is a local church with its particular and "different external expressions and appearances in each part of the world,"[15] but each church does not exist by itself. It exists because it is in communion with other churches. Thus, we see the local and universal dimensions of the Church are like two sides of a coin, and these two aspects cannot be separated. This dual character of the Church was essential from the moment she was born; as Ratzinger explains: "at the moment of her birth, the Church was already catholic, already a world Church. Luke thus rules out a conception in which a local Church first arose in Jerusalem and then became the base for the gradual establishment of other local Churches that eventually grew into a federation. He tells us that the reverse is true: what first exists is the one Church, the Church that speaks in all tongues – the *ecclesia universalis*; she then generates Church in the most diverse locales, which nonetheless are all always embodiments of the one and only Church."[16] Therefore, we see from the beginning that the Church has two characteristics: it is both local and universal. Despite these dual aspects, the Church is the Church of unity but not uniformity; it is unity in differences.

II. Petrine Ministry

The Church was founded by Christ and it is one. The question is to whom Christ entrusted his Church before leaving this earth to reign at the right hand of the Father. The Catholic Church affirms that "This is the single Church of Christ…which our Savior, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care (c. Jn 21:12)."[17] But how did Peter perform his ministry and how does the Pope, Peter's successor, perform his ministry? In this part, we will look at the primacy of Peter and Peter's successors.

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14   Cf. CCC, n. 830.

15   CCC n. 835.

16   Ratzinger, ibid., 44.

17   *Dominus Jesus, n.*16, accessed on November, 08, 2020, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

1. Primacy of Peter

Based on Jesus' instruction to Peter in John 21:15-17; Matthew 16:13-19 and other texts such as 1 Cor 15:5, the Church teaches that Peter has precedence among the Twelve. However, Richard McBrien, a priest of the Archdiocese of Hartford, and professor of theology of the University of Notre Dame and former chair of the department, does not agree with this view of the primacy of Peter. Using New Testament's accounts, he indicates that: "Peter is portrayed as consulting with the other apostles and is even sent by them (Acts 8:14). And Paul, 'opposes him to his face' (Gal 2:11) for his inconsistency and hypocrisy in drawing back from table fellowship with Gentile Christians in Antioch because of pressure from newly arrived Jewish Christians from Jerusalem."[18] Without denying this reality, Paul while not always agreeing with Peter, consistently recognizes Peter's authority. Saint Paul tells us that after his conversion he went to Jerusalem to meet Peter, staying with him for two weeks (Gal 1:18). Fourteen years later, Paul went to Jerusalem again to meet Peter, James and John to submit to them his gospel to the Gentiles, "so that I might not run in vain or have run in vain" (Gal 2:2).[19] They argued not against each other but to understand each other, as is necessary in life. Therefore, for Thomas F. Madden, a professor of History and Director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Saint Louis University, "these types of arguments made clear the need for authoritative teachings that were true. For this, the authority of the Apostles, but particularly that of Peter, was important."[20] Thus we cannot base an argument between Peter and Paul as a denial of the primacy of Peter. Beside seemingly "unfriendly" scriptural accounts, we have many others that support the primacy of Peter, such as the case of choosing who might replace Judas Iscariot. In this decision Peter initiates the idea and the condition of choosing, and no one questions him (Acts 1:15-22). Furthermore, though James, the local bishop, "presided over

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18   McBien, Richard P. *The Papacy*, in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology.* edit., Phan, Peter (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 318; Paul Collins has the same view about Peter when he associates Peter as "a *scandalon*, a 'stumbling block', and obstacle over which one trips". (Collins, Paul. *Upon This Rock: The Popes and Their Changing Role*, (Melbourne University Press, 2000), 3-5.

19   Cf. Ratzinger, ibid., 50.

20   Madden, Thomas F. *The modern scholar great professors teach you: Upon This Rock: Course Guide*, (Saint Louis University, 2006), 7.

the so-called Council of Jerusalem in 49/50,[21] it is Peter who resolves the first doctrinal issue over circumcision, not James (Acts 15:7-12).[22]

In John's Gospel, Peter is the first to speak and confess his belief in Christ after the Eucharistic discourse (John 6: 68). And after his Resurrection, Christ asks Peter thrice whether he loves him. Then he entrusted his "lambs," his "sheep" to Peter. For R. Bultmann "in this text Peter is 'entrusted with the supreme leadership of the Church,'"[23] not to rule it but to care for it.

In the Synoptic Gospels, Peter was considered the leader of the twelve. Peter is mentioned first among the apostles (Mt 10:2; Mk 1:36; Lk 6: 14-16). He is one of the three apostles present at the Transfiguration (Mk 9: 2ff) and in the Garden of Olives (Mk 14: 33ff). Likewise, these three alone witness the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk 5:37).[24] Most notably, in Matthew 16: 13-19, Jesus tells Peter: "you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church…" In Catholic tradition, this text is considered one of the most important scriptural texts for understanding the role of the papacy. As Ratzinger indicates: "It is – as the Protestant exegete Schelze-Kadelbach has observed – one of 'the things that we know with most certainty about this man:' that he was called by the title 'rock' and that this was not his original name but rather the new name that Jesus gave him. Paul – as we have seen – still makes use of the Aramaic form that comes from the mouth of Jesus and names the apostle 'Kephas.' The fact that this word was translated and the apostle thus went down in history with the Greek title of 'Peter' confirms beyond question that this was no proper name, for proper names are not translated …. How are we to understand the new first name Peter? … The designation 'rock' yields no pedagogical or psychological meaning. It can be understood only in terms of mystery, that is to say, Christologically and ecclesiologically: Simon Peter will be by Jesus' commission precisely what he is not by 'flesh and blood.'"[25] In accompaniment to his new title "rock, Kephas," Peter is entrusted with the keys of Kingdom of Heaven despite Peter's weakness (Mt 23:13), as Ratzinger notes: "As the faithful steward

of Jesus' message, Peter opens the door to the Kingdom of Heaven; his is the function of doorkeeper, who has to judge concerning admission and rejection (cf. Rev 3:7). In this sense, the significance of the reference to the keys clearly approximates the meaning of binding and loosing."[26] And he continues: "If we bear in mind the parallel to the word of the risen Jesus transmitted in John 20:23, it becomes apparent that in its core the power to bind and to loose means the authority to forgive sins, an authority that in Peter is committed to the Church (cf. Mt 18: 15-8). This seems to me to be a cardinal point: at the inmost core of the new commission, which robs the forces of destruction of their power, is the grace of forgiveness. It constitutes the Church. The Church is founded upon forgiveness. Peter himself is a personal embodiment of this truth, for he is permitted to be the bearer of the keys after having stumbled, confessed and received the grace of pardon…..the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven are the words of forgiveness, which man cannot speak of himself but are granted by God's power alone."[27] Thus, Peter's role of primacy with the privilege of binding and loosing extends not only among the Twelve, but over the entire Church.

2. Peter's successor

The New Testament gives us evidence of Peter's primacy among the Apostles, but it is silent about Peter's successors. As Ratzinger indicates: "The primacy of Peter is recognizable in all the major strands of the New Testament as incontestable…." But he also submits that "there is no explicit statement regarding the Petrine succession in the New Testament."[28] History also shows that the first bishop of Rome was not Peter but Linus.[29] Then how can the Church of Rome with its bishop hold primacy over the whole Church of Christ?

In the first millennium, the Church understood herself as a communion, meaning that the local church is a community of believers who gather around their bishop to celebrate the Eucharist. It is also a community of

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21   McBrien, ibid., 320.
22   John Salza, http://www.scripturecatholic.com/primacy_of_peter.html (accessed on 11/21/2019)
23   Quoted in Ratzinger, ibid., 52.
24   Cf. Ratzinger, ibid., 54.
25   Ratzinger, ibid., 54-55.

26   Ratzinger, ibid., 63.
27   Ratzinger, ibid., 64-65.
28   Ratzinger, ibid., 65.
29   McBrien, ibid., 318.

faith uniting the churches with one another,[30] with its duty is "to preserve the apostolic tradition and hand it on unadulterated."[31] Hermann J. Pottmeyer, one of Europe's leading Catholic theologians Hermann and professor of fundamental theology at the University of Bochum, Germany, notes that: "The paradigm of the church of the first millennium may best be described in this way: The church understood itself to be witness to the apostolic tradition."[32] The Church of Rome and her bishop is also first among equals in witness. However, Rome received an honor from other churches not because its bishop was Peter's successor, but because it the seat of the first apostles, Peter and Paul, who, though they did not found and govern that Church, were martyred and buried there. Because they bore witness to Christ by their martyrdom the Church of Rome became more important than the other churches and there were "no individual churches that could compete with Rome"[33] in this regard. Klaus Schatz notes: "In the definitive testimony of faith of their martyrdom, the two [heads, leaders], Peter and Paul, had simultaneously handed on their faith as an enduring heritage for the Roman church (*paradosis*) and endowed it with that faith forever. Their witness to the faith, made perfect in the shedding of their blood, was handed on in the *paradosis*; their martyrdom remained present in the witness of the Roman church."[34] Of course, these factors do not grant to the Church of Rome an

authentic authority over all other local churches, "but whenever explicit reasons were given, it was Rome's apostolic rank that mattered most."[35]

Although we have no evidence in the New Testament that Peter himself established the Church of Rome and served as its first bishop,[36] the Church had a living tradition before the New Testament as we know it today was fully canonized. Ratzinger explains: "Scripture became Scripture through the tradition, which precisely in this process included the *petentior principalitas* – the preeminent original authority – of the Roman See as a constitutive element."[37] This tradition accepts "both Peter and Paul as the 'twin pillars' of the Roman Church (Clement I, 5:2-7). Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 202) also assumed that Peter and Paul jointly founded the church of Rome and inaugurated its succession of bishops (Against Heresies 3.1.2; 3.3.3).[38] Because of the martyrdom of both Peter and Paul at Rome and the presence there of their tombs, the living tradition of the Church gradually extended to the See of Rome and its bishop primacy over other churches as arbiter among them. Schatz indicates that "In Church conflicts the parties increasingly turned to Rome, especially if the decision in their own communities had gone against them."[39] This is the reason why Clement I, the third bishop of Rome, sent a letter to the church of Corinth while the apostle John was undoubtedly still alive. As de Lubac points out: "'The manner in which the bishops of Rome have spoken and acted shows that they felt responsible towards the whole Church for the deposit they received from Peter,' and similarly, outside of Rome, 'neither their capacity as successors of Peter nor the principle of their authority, whatever its limits might be, were ever challenged in the first centuries.' As early as the year 95 or 96, while the Apostle John was undoubtedly still alive and Ephesus was closer than Rome to Corinth, and while the church of Corinth had herself been founded by an Apostle, the

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30   Schatz points out that part of this communion of local churches in themselves and with one another was that when bishops were elected the choice by the local church and the final decision of the neighboring bishops were coordinated elements. Another expression of this communion was the "communion letters" or "peace letters" bishops wrote for travelers or Christians moving from place to place. Anyone who could present such a communion letter was accepted into the new community as a Christian and a member of the *catholica*; he or she could participate in the Eucharistic celebration and had a claim to Christian hospitality, which meant being housed and cared for at community expense. Only bishops could write such communion letters valid for the entire Church; presbyters could address them only to the churches in their immediate vicinity. For this purpose the bishops kept lists of all, or most, of the orthodox bishops with whom they were in communion. (see. Schatz, Klaus. *Papal Primacy: From Its Origins to the Present*, trans. Otto, John A and Maloney, Linda M. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1996),17.

31   Pottmeyer, Hermann J. *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican I council I & II*, trans. O'Connell, Matthew J. (The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York: A Herder and Herder Book, 1998), 25.

32   Pottmeyer, ibid., 25.

33   Schatz, ibid., 7.

34   Schatz, ibid., 8.

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35   Schatz., ibid., 19; Relating to the importance of Peter's martyrdom with the church of Rome, Ratzinger wrote: "Having said all that, the site of Peter's martyrdom nonetheless appears clearly as the chief bearer of his supreme authority and plays a preeminent role in the formation of tradition – which is constitutive of the Church – and thus in the genesis of the New Testament as Bible; Rome is one of the indispensable internal and external conditions of its possible." Ratzinger, ibid., 71.

36   McBrien, ibid., 322.

37   Ratzinger, ibid., 70-71.

38   Quoted in McBrien, ibid., 320.

39   See Schatz, ibid., 19.

church of Rome intervened with the church of Corinth with calm and firm authority, through a letter from Clement, in order to set her internal affairs in order: 'If some disobey what we say to them on behalf of God, then they know that they are making a mistake and exposing themselves to considerable dangers.' 'It should be noted', remarks the Orthodox theologian Nicolas Afanasiev, 'that the Roman church did not judge it necessary to justify herself in one way or another' for her intervention; 'one would say that she had no doubt that her priority would be accepted without discussion."[40] Of course, the decision of Rome was not always accepted as final if "it was not in their favor. But it was always important to be acknowledged at Rome."[41]

The primacy of Rome was recognized not only by Christians, it was also recognized by the pagan emperor.[42] The claim of Roman primacy became clearer and stronger under the papacy of Leo I (440-461) who was first accorded the imperial title "Pontifex Maximus."[43] He "described himself no longer as simply 'successor of Peter' but as 'representative of Peter.'[44] He taught that "the pope as successor of Peter possesses the same fullness of power (*plenitude potestatis*) over the entire Church as Christ bestowed upon Peter."[45] For him, as representative of Peter, the pope speaks and acts in the place of Peter.[46] The Fathers of the council of Chalcedon in 451 also recognized Leo I's position as representative of Peter. They cried out, "The voice of Peter has spoken through Leo!" when Leo's *Tome* was read aloud at the council.[47] But more importantly, as Plumer points out, the pope's office, not the person, enables the papacy to retain its authority despite a dubious incumbent. Leo says that even though the pope might personally be an 'unworthy heir' of Peter, this does not negate his office.[48] This is the most important point to keep in mind when dealing with the doctrine of papal primacy, otherwise it is difficult to accept the Vatican I doctrine of papal infallibility. In that decree,

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40   De Lubac, Henry. *The Motherhood of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 281-83.
41   Schatz, ibid., 19.
42   Hertling, Ludwig. *Communio, Church and Papacy in Early Christianity*, (Chicago: Loyola Press,1972), 60
43   Cf. Plumer, ibid, 33-34.
44   Pottmeyer, ibid., 26.
45   Plumer, ibid., 34.
46   Pottmeyer, Ibid., 26 and Plumer, ibid., 34.
47   Plumer, ibid., 34.
48   Ibid., 34.

the pope's infallibility with regard to defining a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the whole Church is not based on the person of the pope, but *ex cathedra* – on his office.[49]

The doctrine of papal primacy continued to develop with pope Gregory the Great (590-604), Gregory VII (1073-1085),[50] and significantly with the First Vatican Council's (1869-1870) "expression of a will to papal centralization, the formulation of the primacy of jurisdiction and the papal magisterium."[51]

III. The Role of the Papacy

1. To strengthen his brothers and build up unity

At the Last Supper, Jesus tells Peter: "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat, but I have prayed that your own faith may not fail; and once you have turned back, you must strengthen your brothers" (Lk 22:31-32). It is true that Peter was weak and became a stumbling block, but with God's grace he became the one to "strengthen his brothers" and take care of the people of God. He could not do that before the resurrection of the Lord, but only after that event. Peter, then, as a witness of the Lord's resurrection, was able to strengthen his brothers and to reach out to the whole world. As Gerald O'Collins, an Adjunct Professor of the Australian Catholic University, writes: "Just as Peter's 'turning back' and witnessing to the resurrection had 'strengthened' his 'brothers' (Lk 22:32), so his witness to the risen Jesus now reaches out to those who have come to Jerusalem from the wider world."[52] Therefore, we must emphasize that the first and foremost mission of Peter is to proclaim the Good News of the

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49   The definition of the infallibility of the papal magisterium reads as follows: "It is a divinely revealed dogma that the Roman Pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is, when acting in the office of shepherd and teacher of all Christians, he defines, by virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, possesses through the divine assistance promised to him in the person of Blessed Peter, the infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining the doctrine concerning faith and morals, and that such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are therefore irreformable of themselves, not because of the consent of the Church [*ex sese, non autem ex consensu ecclesiae*] (ND 839) (Quoted in Pottmeyer, ibid., 94)
50   To know more about the development of doctrine papal primacy see Pottmeyer, ibid., 25-35; Plumer, ibid., 34-40.
51   Pottmeyer, ibid., 16.
52   O'Collins, Gerald, S.J., "Peter as Witness to Easter." *Theological Studies*, n. 73 (2012): 280.

Risen Lord. It follows that his second mission is that of unity.[53] He was called in a special way to be "the visible sign and guarantor of unity."[54] The pope, bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, has the same obligation as Peter had to "uphold the truth about Christ and preserve Christian unity as a function also exercised with other bishops (and, indeed, all Christians)."[55] This task of the pope is well defined in *the Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "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.'"[56] Throughout the history of the Church we see the popes performing this mission by assembling ecumenical councils so that the voice of God's people in different parts of the world are known, and so that the bishops in union with the pope resolve the issues of the Church. The pope can also convoke world synods of bishops[57] "through which he could

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53   For Cyprian, "Peter embodied the original unity of the Church and the episcopal office, but in principle these were also present in every bishop." (see. Schatz, ibid., 20)

54   Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23. The text is available online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html; and John Paul II, Ut Unum Sint, 88. The text is available online at http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html

55   O'Collins, ibid., 282; Collins rightly says that "Peter's role of leadership did not isolate him from the other apostles. Paul and the other apostolic missionaries also witnessed authoritatively to the good news, centered on the resurrection of the crucified Jesus, and set themselves to maintain unity among the churches."

56   CCC. 882.

57   The Synod of Bishops is a permanent institution established by Pope Paul VI, 15 September 1965, in response to the desire of the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council to keep alive the spirit of collegiality engendered by the conciliar experience.
      At the conclusion of a discourse beginning the last session of the Council (14 September 1965), Pope Paul VI himself made public his intention to establish the Synod of Bishops in the following words: "The advanced information that We Ourselves are happy to share with you is that we intend to give you some institution, called for by this Council, a "Synod of Bishops," which will be made up of bishops nominated for the most part by the episcopal Conferences with our approval and called by the Pope according to the needs of the Church, for his consultation and collaboration, when for the well-being of the Church it might seem to him opportune. It goes without saying that this collaboration of the episcopate ought to bring the greatest joy to the Holy See and to the whole Church. In a particular way it will serve a useful purpose in the daily work of the Roman Curia, to which we owe so much recognition for its most valuable help, and for which, as bishops in their diocese, We also have permanent need in Our apostolic concerns. News and norms will be made known to this assembly as soon as possible. We did not wish to deprive Ourselves of the honor and pleasure of making you aware of this brief communication so as to personally bear witness once more to Our trust, esteem and fraternity. We place this beautiful and promising innovation under the protection of Mary, the Mother of God." At http://www.synod.va/content/synod2018/en/the-synod-of-bishops.html. (Accessed on 11/24/2019)

consult the bishops and collaborate with them."[58] The pope exercises his papal ministry by promoting "uniformity in the Church and an increasing centralization of authority in Rome by means of an exaltation of the person and role of the pope whose high-point was the definitions of papal primacy and infallibility…,"[59] so that he can protect "the independence of the church and its bishops from the princes"[60] in the Middle Ages.

As "the visible sign and guarantor of unity," the pope has the duty of 'keeping watch' (*epislopein*) as Tallard J-M, a Dominican priest and theologian, notes: "In order to safeguard the communion of all the local churches in faith, charity, and mission, the Bishop of Rome has the duty to watch over the inner unity and cohesion of the whole episcopal college, to help his brothers in their tasks, to make known their needs, and sometimes to speak for them when they are unjustly accused or prosecuted."[61] So that "through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches. In this way, in each of the particular Churches entrusted to those Pastors, *the una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia* is made present. All the Churches are in full and visible communion, because all the Pastors are in communion with Peter and therefore united in Christ."[62]

The irony of history has been that the papal office "has also functioned as a principal cause of division in the Church."[63] The first one was the great East-West Schism in 1054. The second division in the church happened in the sixteen century with the Protestant Reformation. This is really a drama

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58   Collins, ibid., 301; From establishing in 1965 until now, there were 4 Ordinary General Assemblies and 1 General Extraordinary Assembly under the reign of pope Paul VI; 6 Ordinary General Assemblies, 1 General Extraordinary Assembly and 8 Special Assemblies under the reign of John Paul II; 3 Ordinary General Assemblies and 2 Special Assemblies under the reign of pope Benedict XVI; 1 Ordinary General Assemblies, 1 General Extraordinary Assembly and 1 Special Assembly under the reign of pope Francis http://www.synod.va/content/synod/en/synodal_assemblies.html (Accessed on 11/24/2019)

59   Komonchak, ibid., 70.

60   Pottmeyer, ibid., 28; Interpreting Vatican I's teaching on papal primacy, Kristin Colberg states: "After ascribing this power to the pope, the text [*Pastor aeternus*] goes on to explicitly state that his authority does not detract from the divinely given authority of his brother bishops, but is meant to 'assert, support and defend' their rights (PA 3)." (Colberg, K. (2019). *Looking at Vatican I's Pastor aeternus 150 Years Later: A Fresh Consideration of the Council's Significance Yesterday and Today. Horizons, 46(2), 323-347. doi:10.1017/hor.2019.57, 338*)

61   Tillard, J-M, "*The Papacy*" & "*Petrine Ministry*" in Encyclopedia of Catholicism, 995.

62   John Paul II, ibid., n. 94.

63   McBien, ibid., 327.

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of papal history, as Ratzinger notes: "In this history we repeatedly encounter two situations. On the one hand, the papacy remains the foundation of the Church in virtue of a power that does not derive from herself. At the same time, individual popes have again and again become a scandal because of what they themselves are as men, because they want to precede, not follow, Christ, because they believe that they must determine by their own logic the path that only Christ himself can decide: 'You do not think God's thoughts, but man's' (Mt 16:23)."[64] However, this historical reality should not decrease our love for the Church because it shows us that the Church is really the Church of the Holy Trinity; it is not the church of man. And it is the Holy Spirit who always "strengthens the organic structure of the Church and who maintains harmony within her." (LG 22). To support this idea, de Lubac quotes Ratzinger: "If we wanted to have absolute human guarantees, the primacy would remain extremely uncertain in the face of the perils which come from men, and it is always necessary to take note of this eventuality. Without reliance on the Holy Spirit and his protective power, the whole building of the Church is endangered, and there is no way out."[65] Jesus founded the Church and he never abandons the Church, instead he sent the Holy Spirit to teach and protect the Church from erring; "the powers of hell will not prevail against it…."[66] *Pastor aeternus*[67] asserts "Christ is the 'eternal shepherd and guardian (*episcopus*) of our souls,' whose saving work is made permanent in the church."[68] The saving work of redemption is permanently active in the world through the Church, and shepherds and teachers are in the Church to make permanently present the same saving work of redemption. As Gerard

Kelly notes: "God desires that the saving work of redemption be permanently active in the world; therefore, God has built a church; shepherds and teachers are in the church to make permanently present the same saving work of redemption; this episcopal office should be one and undivided; moreover, the apostle Peter has been instituted as head over the apostles and the permanent principle of both faith and communion."[69]

2. To Proclaim the Gospel

Thus, despite scandals in the history of the Church, the Petrine Ministry has always been an important part of the reality of the Church and this ministry needs to be carried out so that the pope can "proclaim the saving truth revealed by Christ and keep all Christians united in their faith."[70] Indeed, as O'Collins notes: "Vatican I described the papal office as a 'perpetual principle and visible foundation of the unity' that belongs to the bishops and the whole church. It is above all through being the primary, official proclaimer of the central truth, 'Jesus is risen,' that the pope expresses and supports this unity. Vatican I went on to describe the goal of papal primacy: 'by preserving unity, both in communion and the profession of the same faith, the church of Christ may be one flock under one supreme shepherd.'"[71] Kristin Colberg notes that, "By emphasizing the Petrine ministry as a service of unity - and papal infallibility as an instrument of this service - *Pastor aeternus* roots its teaching on the power's authority not in a notion of power but in the pope's fundamental responsibility to promote unity and build relationship within the body of Christ."[72] This responsibility of the pope continues and is necessary more than ever in this broken and divided world.

IV. How modern popes have been carrying out these missions.

In calling the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII, wished to open the door of the Church to the Holy Spirit, promoting a model witness and

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64   Ratzinger, ibid., 26; Referring to Peter's failure in Matthew 16:23 and 26:69-75, Collins says that the Jewish-Christian community of Matthew thought recognized Peter's leadership in the early Church but they "references to Peter's failure stressed that the leadership of the church was all too human and in need of constant reform" (Collins, ibid., 5)

65   Quoted in Lubac, Henry de. *The Motherhood of the Church*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 279-280.

66   Ratzinger, ibid, 74.

67   *Pastor aeternus* is Vatican I's Dogmatic Constitution of the Church. It "consists of four chapters that treat the following topics: (1) Christ's institution of the primacy in Peter; (2) the perpetuity of that primacy in the ongoing life of the Church; (3) the character of this primacy as the highest juridical authority; and (4) the infallibility of the papal magisterium." See Christin M. Colberg, *Vatican I & Vatican II: Councils in the Living Tradition*, (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2016), 58.

68   Kelly, Gerard, "The Roman Catholic Doctrine of Papal Infallibility: A Response to Mark Power." *Theological Studies*, no. 74 (2013), 132.

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69   Kelly, ibid., 132.
70   O'Collins, ibid., 282.
71   O'Collins, ibid., 284.
72   Colberg, ibid., 61-62.

proclamation of the Church.[73] In doing so he also sought the unity of all Christians. The pope affirmed that "the celebration of the ecumenical Council is not only intended for the edification of the Christian people, it is also an invitation to the separated communities in the quest for unity, which joins so many souls from every quarter of the world."[74] He wanted the bishops around the world to come to the council with their own witness and experiences of their local churches. Therefore, he invited them "to take a new look at the world in which the Church now lived, to offer an evaluation of its strengths and needs, to examine the appropriateness to this world of its pastoral attitudes, strategies, and institutions, to reform what was no longer appropriate, and to be willing at once to learn from the world even as it sought to teach it."[75] He did not want the Church simply to protect herself, but to engage in the world, to observe, to listen, to discern and to serve. Thus, instead of sending questions to the bishops around the world, he sent a letter of invitation to encourage the bishops to share their ideas and suggestions about topics to be discussed at the council.[76] Paul Collins, a historian and broadcaster with degrees from Harvard and the Australian National University, sees John XXIII as the most important pope of the whole post-Reformation period and he lists three areas of the pontiff's achievement during his short papacy: "He has succeeded in initiating a revolution in the church; he had brought the post-Reformation church and papacy to an end, and had made the ecclesial world more open to the secular."[77] Pope John XXIII's vision of the Church and the ministry of the papacy continued to be carried out by his successors.

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73 Alberigo points out that "the pope wants a council that would mark the end of an era; a council, that is, that would usher the Church out of the post-Tridentine era, and to a certain extent out of the centuries-old Constantinian phase, and into a new phase of witness and proclamation." (Alberigo, Giuseppe, *A Brief History of Vatican II*, trans. Sherry, Matthey. [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books,2006], 10)
74 Giuseppe, ibid., 1
75 Komonchak, Joseph A. *The Significance of Vatican Council II for Ecclesiology*, in *The Gift of the Church: A Textbook on Ecclesiology in Honor of Patrick Granfield, O.S.B.*, edit., Phan, Peter C., (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2000), 88
76 Collins, Paul. *Upon This Rock: The Popes and Their Changing Role*, (Melbourne University Press, 2000), 290; cf. Alberigo, ibid., 11.
77 Collins, ibid., 295.

Pope Paul VI followed Pope John XXIII's vision of the Church by continuing the council after John's death. The Council's dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, did not set apart the role of the pope as the promoter of unity above the college of bishops, but "sought to restore balance to the relationship between the pope and the bishops"[78] with the responsibility of promoting unity universally or locally. *Lumen Gentium* describes the role of the pope and individual bishops in this way: "The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter both of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity. Individual bishops are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches, which are formed in the image of the universal Church and in and out of which the one and unique catholic Church exists" (LG 23). In number 25, *Lumen Gentium* put "preaching the Gospel" ahead of pastoral and liturgical roles as the most important duty of bishops. O'Collins notes: "No less than the other bishops, the bishop of Rome must fulfill this duty, which, in a 1975 apostolic exhortation, Pope Paul VI called 'the preeminent ministry of teaching the revealed truth' (*Evangelii nuntiandi n. 67*)."[79] Christian unity and preaching the Gospel were priorities for Pope Paul VI. In January 1964, he made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and met the ecumenical patriarch of Orthodoxy, Athenagoras. Collins notes, "this action strengthened the ecumenical thrust of the council, and as one of the first major papal journeys, it had a world-wide impact."[80] They met each other again in Istanbul (25 July 1967) and in Rome (26 October 1967). Pope Paul VI also met Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey on 24 March 1966. As well as meeting these ecumenical leaders, in 1965 pope Paul VI was invited to address the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. In his address, he asked the world to respect human dignity and build peace. He famously insisted: "No more war, war never again." This pope also issued an apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) on 8 December 1975, which pope Francis would later acclaim as "to my mind the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written [on

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78 Hahnenberg, Edward P. *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*. (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007), 53.
79 O'Collins, ibid., 284.
80 Collins, ibid., 298-99.

Christian evangelization] to this day" ("*per me il documento pastorale più grande che è stato scritto fino a oggi*").[81] The exhortation affirms the role of every Christian (not only ordained ministers, priests, and deacons, or religious, or professional church staff) in spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the present situation of society and of the world.

Paul VI died on August 6, 1978. Karol Józef Wojtyla, born on May 18, 1920 in Wadowice, Poland, was elected pope in October 1978. Honoring the name of his short-lived immediate predecessor, John Paul I, Wojtyla ascended the papal throne as Pope John Paul II. He was the first non-Italian pope in 455 years. During his pontificate he made pastoral visits to 124 countries, including several with small Christian populations. John Paul II promoted ecumenical and interfaith initiatives, especially the 1986 Day of Prayer for World Peace in Assisi. He visited Rome's main synagogue and the Western Wall in Jerusalem; he also established diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel. He improved Catholic-Muslim relations, and in 2001 visited a mosque in Damascus, Syria.[82] Collins states that: Pope John Paul II, "as a catechist, has issued a series of encyclicals and other writings that range across issues dear to his heart, including ethics and morals, the millennium, labor and the social question, Christ and the redemption, the Blessed Virgin Mary, sexuality and contraception, the family, the priesthood, womanhood, and Slavic Christianity and culture… but perhaps the most remarkable and atypical encyclical of the latter part of the Wojtyla papacy is *Ut Unum Sint* (May 1995) on the papal commitment to ecumenism."[83] In this encyclical (*Ut Unum Sint*), the pope says that his essential ministry is to act as *servus servorum Dei* (the servant of the servants of God); "this designation is the best possible safeguard against the risk of separating power (and in particular the primacy) from ministry."[84] The role of the pope is to maintain a link to Jesus and the apostles, and to hold the responsibility of keeping apostolic tradition, which John Paul II calls the bishop of Rome's mission as "'keeping watch,' like a sentinel, so that,

through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches."[85]

If Pope John XXIII wanted the fathers of the second Vatican Council to be doctors who use "the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity," Pope Francis wants the Church to be a "field hospital" for the wounded. Cardinal Blase Cupich remarks: "By calling the church a 'field hospital,' Pope Francis calls us to radically rethink ecclesial life. He is challenging all of us to give priority to the wounded. That means placing the needs of others before our own. The 'field hospital church' is the antithesis of the 'self-referential church.' It is a term that triggers the imagination, forcing us to rethink our identity, mission, and our life together as disciples of Jesus Christ."[86] In this "field hospital church" the medicine of mercy is used to "meet the present need; it is available to all and requires no prescription."[87] In this "field hospital church" the role of the pope is to be "the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful."[88] In order to fulfill his mission, for pope Francis listening is a most important factor. He manifests this in a synodal church. Pope Francis insists: "A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening 'is more than simply hearing.' It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (John 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7)."[89] He sees himself is a witness among other witnesses, the bishops. He says: "The Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized, and within the College of Bishops as a Bishop among Bishops, called at the same time — as Successor of Peter — to lead the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches."[90] He wants the Ecclesiastical Provinces and Ecclesiastical Regions, Particular Councils and, in a special way, Conferences of Bishops to have more

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81   J. J. Ziegler in https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2013/12/12/the-greatest-pastoral-document-that-has-ever-been-written/ (access on 12/12/19)

82   https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-john-paul-ii/

83   Collins, ibid., 321-324.

84   John Paul II, ibid., n. 88.

85   John Paul II, ibid., n. 88.

86   Cupich, Cardinal Blase, Field hospital, in *A Pope Francis Lexicon*, edict. Wooden, Cindy and McElwee, Joshua J. (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2018), 72

87   Cupich, ibid., 73

88   Francis, "*Address at the Ceremony*,) available online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html (accessed 11/25/2019)

89   Francis, ibid.,

90   Francis, ibid.,

power to discern and to solve the issues which arise in their territory. He says: "it is not advisable for the Pope to take the place of local Bishops in the discernment of every issue which arises in their territory. In this sense, I am conscious of the need to promote a sound 'decentralization.'"[91] Pope Francis also likens the church to an orchestra, with a rich variety of instruments playing together to create a magnificent harmony. The Holy Spirit is the true "maestro" of this orchestra.[92] Thus, he criticizes those who equate unity with uniformity. Uniformity, he asserts, kills life. He says, "The life of the church is variety, and when we want to impose uniformity on everyone, we kill the gifts of the Holy Spirit."[93]

When pope Francis promotes a synodal Church, a Church of listening, not only listening to bishops but also listening to the people of God,[94] he accepts a risk: a risk of rebellion and loss of control. That was the case at the general council of Basel with which pope Eugene IV was confronted in the fifteenth century.[95] Or the case of the German church in this twenty-first century.[96] However, the pope has an optimistic view about the risk. He says that he "prefers a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security."[97]

In this "field hospital church," pope Francis emphasizes the role of preaching the Gospel with the joy of the disciples who met the Risen Lord: "The Joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus."[98] Once we encounter the Lord, we cannot keep our joy to ourselves, but we must be witnesses to Gospel values through our love for one another. The pope writes, "I especially ask every Christian in communities throughout the world to offer a radiant and an attractive witness of fraternal communion. Let everyone admire how you care for one another and how you encourage and accompany one another."[99] For the pope, by virtue of our common baptism, and because we have encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus, all Christians are called to become missionary disciples despite who we are, our position in the church, or our level of instruction in the faith. He writes: "Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are 'disciples' and 'missionaries,' but rather that we are always 'missionary disciples.'"[100] For Pope Francis, to be a Christian is to be a missionary. This is not an option but a requirement. Those who have the role of preaching the pope invites to listen carefully to the Word of God, meditate on it and personalize it. He insists that the preacher has to develop a great personal familiarity with the Word of God. He warns: "Yet, if he does not take time to hear God's word with an open heart, if he does not allow it to touch his life, to challenge him, to impel him, and if he does not devote time to pray with that word, then he will indeed be a false prophet, a fraud, a shadow impostor."[101] Not only in listening to the Word of God, the preacher must also listen to the people with loving attention to understand their situation in order to serve them better. Pope Francis portrays a pastor not as a ruler but a companion by walking with the people—sometimes in front, sometimes behind, and sometimes in the middle. He instructs: "We walk in front in order to guide the community, in the middle in order to

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91   Francis, ibid.,; Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 32.
92   Francis, General audience of October 9, 2013, available online at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20131009_udienza-generale.html (accessed 11/25/2019)
93   Ibid.,
94   In his address on October 17, 2015 on the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, pope Francis said: "… my desire that the people of God should be consulted in the preparation of the two phases of the Synod on the family, as is ordinarily done with each *Lineamenta*…"
95   For more information about the general council of Basel-Ferrara-Florence-Rome see Bellitto, Christopher M. *The General Council: A History of the Twenty-One Church Council from Nicaea to Vatican II*, (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 80-95.
96   Despite the intervention of Pope Francis and a letter from Cardinal Marc Ouellet that called their proposal "not ecclesiologically valid," on the first day of Advent 2019, the German church began "Binding Synodal Assembly" which attempts to reexamine universal Church teaching and discipline on a range of sensitive matters, including sexual morality, the role of women in offices and ministry, and clerical celibacy.
97   Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 49.

98   Francis, ibid., n.1.
99   Francis, ibid., n.99.
100 Francis, ibid., 120.
101 Francis, ibid., 151.

encourage and support, and at the back so that no one lags too far behind, to keep them united."[102]

In all of these popes, we see that as successors of Peter, and like Peter, they have two obligations: "to proclaim the saving truth revealed by Christ and to keep all Christians united in their faith." Of course, the pope "must lead the church with loving authority and celebrate the sacrament. But his great task for all the world is to announce through word and deed the news that lies at the heart of Christianity: Jesus is risen!"[103] This message can bring hope to a broken world. O'Collins says that in Jerusalem, Peter stood up to announce Jesus' resurrection to a group of people from different parts of the Empire and his message of the Lord's resurrection has forever changed human history. And "Peter's witness to the resurrection lives on strikingly in the pope's Easter proclamation. In that special way, the bishop of Rome visibly serves and strengthens the Church's faith by reenacting before all the world the primary role of Peter as a fundamental witness to Jesus risen from the dead."[104] With technology's help, the pope's Easter proclamation at St. Peter's Square can reach to the whole world in a minute. Hopefully, his message and his office can really become "the visible sign and guarantor of unity." Cardinal Ratzinger once said that "certainly it would be foolish to expect that in the foreseeable future a general unification of Christendom will occur around the papacy, understood as an acknowledgment of the Successor of Peter in Rome."[105] But despite the many historical dramas surrounding the papacy, and many criticisms of it by non-Catholic Christians, today "the pope personally remains in the view of the whole world a point of reference with regard to the responsibility borne and expressed in the Word of faith, and thus he remains a challenge, noticed by all and concerning all, to seek greater fidelity to this Word and, furthermore, a challenge to struggle for unity and to take responsibility for the lack of unity."[106] Pope Francis must acknowledge his

duty and his mission of becoming "the visible sign and guarantor of unity" not only among Catholics but also with other Christian churches. He promotes the building of a synodal church, a church of listening to understand and cooperate with each other. From this starting point we can create an ecumenical dialogue that builds unity within the Church, as Jesus our Lord prayed for it.

CONCLUSION

The Church is the Church of Jesus Christ. Christ is the founder and the head of the Church. However, from the beginning, Christ knew that he would not always be physically present in the Church. Thus, he installed Peter. From Peter came his successors, the popes, to be Christ's representatives on the earth to strengthen the faith of Christians and to guide the Church in his name. Peter, and his successors the popes, are the core of unity within the Church. In the first millennium, Peter and his successors performed this duty as "the first witness among the witnesses." Nevertheless, in the Middle Ages, presented with social and political change, the Church required strong leaders. Thus, the primacy of the papacy was built up and strengthened step by step. Papal primacy in Catholicism has served as the Church's core of unity, but it has also been a "stumbling block," a cause of division. Even today, the pope's primacy continues to present a hindrance to ecumenical dialogue, a "stumbling block" to the unity of Christians.

Despite this, "the papacy is the oldest institution in the world, surviving the rise and fall of empires, ideologies and the whole historical arena. It is still an institution of great importance to us whether for Catholics or non-Catholics."[107] The papacy is not based on the person of the pope but on his office, established by Jesus to "strengthen his brothers in their faith;" to be a core of unity. Christ promised to protect the Church so that "the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it." In the history of the Church, although the papal claims have at times indeed been a "stumbling block" and a cause of disunity, with the help of God the papacy itself is entrusted with perfecting unity. That is the reason it is the oldest institution in the world, is still present today and will be to the end of time. Moreover, in our present divided

102   Pope Francis, "Address to the clergy in the Cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi, Italy, October 4, 2013, available online at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2013/october/documents/papa-francesco_20131004_clero-assisi.html (Accessed on 11/25/2019)

103   O'Collins, ibid., 285

104   O'Collins, ibid., 285. For more on this, O'Collins refers to William Henn, "The Church as Easter Witness in the Thought of Gerald O'Collins, S.J.," in The Convergence of Theology 208-20.

105   Ratzinger, *The Primacy of the Pope and the Unity of the People of God*, available online at https://www.communio-icr.com/files/ratzinger41-1.pdf (accessed on 12/12/19)

106   Ratzinger, ibid.,

107   Madden, ibid., 6

society, the Church is the channel and voice of reconciliation because "the church, for its part, is not identified with any political party or even anyone political system (GS, 76). Rather, the church serves as the sign and safeguard of the transcendence of the human person. The church is witness to a truth that can have political implications for its members."[108] Indeed, the unifying office of the pope is its essential service to the Church. If the papal office were abrogated the Catholic Church would become no different than other religious institutions; she would lose the essence of her identity. Thus, whether papal models of monarchy or synodality are posited, the exercise of papal primacy itself remains the key to unity. While many issues are negotiable in the quest for Christian unity, my sense is that the papal office should not be stripped of its essential integrity since despite the risk of the ascendency of an unworthy incumbent its commission is forever from the Lord. By eliminating the papacy, the Church loses her hub of unity and like other social structures she will rise and fall with the times.

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108   Hahnenberg, ibid., 67