

Authority

- As humans, we need law. We also need a group of people that make sure that law is followed. □
- It would be kind of odd if Jesus left the Church here on Earth with no structure, especially with no authority in place. Because Jesus knew that people would disagree about religious practices and sometimes use the Church for their own personal gain, He left us with a structure that ensures the Church remains focused on her mission of evangelization
- We need the authority of the Church because Jesus could not teach about some of the issues we face today (people in Jerusalem probably wouldn't understand nuclear war).
- The authority of the Church protects against Jesus' words being misinterpreted or misused. It protects God's law so we can find fulfillment and not become led astray into sin. □

Apostolic Succession

- When Jesus appointed the twelve apostles and sent them forth to make disciples of all nations, He entrusted them with the task of founding His Church and passing on His teachings in their entirety, from generation to generation.
- The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles, it hands on the teaching of the apostles with the help of the Holy Spirit, and because it continues to be guided by the successors of the apostles until Christ's return.
- The first apostles appointed new apostles by laying hands on them. Those apostles made new apostles the same way – and this continues to the present day.
- This is important for safeguarding and maintaining the mission of the Church. By having a hierarchy we can have a definitive teaching body that has the authority to interpret Scripture for us and guide us spiritually. This teaching body is called the Magisterium. □
- The Magisterium is made up of the College of Bishops (the entire group of bishops from around the world – the successors of the apostles) with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope.
- The pope and the bishops protect and pass on what they heard from the apostles who are passed on what they heard of Christ. This assures that we as a Church remain true to the faith and morals taught by Christ to the original disciples. We have a direct link that can be traced back to Christ, and we maintain that link within the Church. That is an incredible reality, and one of the reasons it is a blessing to be Catholic. □

The Pope

- Jesus established Peter as the rock of the Church and gave him authority to make decisions about it. □
- With Peter as the leader of the apostles, the early Church grew in numbers, but also in the understanding of her own mission. When there were questions about who could join or what was acceptable behavior for the followers of Christ, the people would turn to the apostles. If there was a dispute, Peter's decision was the last word. □(We know this because of the written account of *many* Early Church Fathers)
- There is a lot of confusion about what Catholics believe about the authority of the Pope. 2 terms that are important to know:
 - **Indefectibility** - is the concept that the Church will always teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ without error even in spite of the defects of the individual members of the Church, both the lay faithful and the ordained priests and ministers.
 - **Infallibility** is the gift of the Holy Spirit that allows the Church to teach faith and morals without error.
- There are two conditions where infallibility exists
 - in Ecumenical Council (all the Bishops teaching together, like Vatican II)
 - the Pope can exercise infallibility when teaching alone, BUT this teaching must be about ***faith and morals, held in common by all the bishops of the world*** and made from the "Chair of St. Peter" or "***ex cathedra.***"
- When the Pope speaks outside of these conditions (like giving homilies, addresses, letters) he does not exercise *infallibility*. (Meaning, not everything that makes the news is infallible!) but that also doesn't mean that we can ignore them.