

21 Centuries of Catholic Doctrine: THE PRIMACY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME

As taught in the Church's historical writings, from the time of the Apostles down to today

circa 70 destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem

ca. 96 Pope Saint Clement I, fourth Bishop of Rome, disciple of the Apostles Peter and Paul, *Letter to the Corinthians*

—universal authority (“if anyone disobey the things which have been said by Him through us”) | infallibility (“the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit”)—

1:1 Owing to the sudden and repeated calamities and misfortunes which have befallen us, we [i.e., the Church of Rome] must acknowledge that we have been somewhat tardy in turning our attention to the matters in dispute among you, beloved ...

58:2 Accept our counsel [i.e., the counsel of the Church of Rome] and you will have nothing to regret. For as God lives, and as the Lord Jesus Christ lives, and the Holy Spirit, and the faith and hope of the elect, as surely will he that humbly and with equanimity and without regret carries out the commandments and precepts given by God, be enrolled and chosen among the number of those who are being saved through Jesus Christ, through whom there is glory to Him forever and ever. Amen. ...

59:1 If anyone disobey the things which have been said by Him [i.e., God] through us [i.e., the Church of Rome], let them know that they will involve themselves in transgression and in no small danger. ...

63:2 You will afford us joy and gladness if, being obedient to the things which we have written through the Holy Spirit, you will root out the wicked passion of jealousy, in accord with the plea for peace and concord which we have made in this letter.

ca. 100 death of Saint John, last of the Apostles

ca. 107 Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, disciple of the Apostle John, *Letter to the Romans*

—universal authority (“presidency in love,” “others you have taught”)—

Address Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the Church that has found mercy in the greatness of the Most High Father and in Jesus Christ, His only Son; to the Church beloved and enlightened after the love of Jesus Christ, our God, by the will of Him that has willed everything which is; to the Church also which holds the presidency, in the location of the country of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of blessing, worthy of praise, worthy of success, worthy of sanctification, and, because you hold the presidency in love, named after Christ and named after the Father. ...

3:1 You have envied no one, but others you have taught. I desire only that what you have enjoined in your instructions may remain in force.

4:3 Not as Peter and Paul did, do I command you. They were Apostles, and I am a convict. They were free, and I even to the present time am a slave.

ca. 144 Pope Saint Pius I defends inspiration of books of the Bible against Marcion

ca. 150 Hermas, brother of Pope Pius I, *The Shepherd*

—universal authority (“to the cities abroad”)—

Visions 2:4:3 [*Hermas recounts that the old woman who is the Church came to him in a vision and said:*] “Therefore shall you write two little books and send one to [Pope Saint] Clement and one to Grapte [the head of the order of widows]. Clement shall then send it to the cities abroad, because that is his duty;

Grapte shall instruct the widows and the orphans.”

ca. 156 *martyrdom of Saint Polycarp, last of the Apostolic Fathers*

ca. 170 **Saint Dionysius, Bishop of Corinth, Letter to Soter of Rome**

—universal authority—

You have also, by your very admonition, brought together the planting that was made by Peter and Paul at Rome and at Corinth; for both of them alike planted in our Corinth and taught us; and both alike, teaching similarly in Italy, suffered martyrdom at the same time. ...

For from the beginning it has been your custom to do good to all the brethren in various ways, and to send contributions to all the Churches in every city, thereby relieving the poverty of the needy and providing for the brethren in the mines. In this way, through the contributions which have ever been made, you Romans have preserved the ancestral custom of the Romans. This custom your blessed Bishop Soter has not only preserved, but is augmenting, by furnishing an abundance of supplies to the saints and by urging with consoling words, as a loving father his children, the brethren who are journeying.

Today we have observed the Lord's holy day, in which we have read your letter. Whenever we do read it, we shall be able to profit thereby, as also we do when we read the earlier letter written to us by Clement (Eusebius, *History* 4:23:9-11).

ca. 180 **Saint Hegesippus, *Memoirs***

—universal authority (succession of bishops of Rome upheld as model for other Churches)—

When I had come to Rome, I made a succession up to Anicetus, whose deacon was Eleutherus. And after Anicetus, Soter succeeded; and after him, Eleutherus. In each succession and in each city there is a continuance of that which is proclaimed by the Law, the Prophets, and the Lord (Eusebius, *History* 4:22:3).

ca. 185 **Saint Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, student of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna, *Against Heresies***

—universal authority (succession of bishops of Rome upheld as model for other Churches) / infallibility (“all Churches must agree”)—

3:3:2 But since it would be too long to enumerate in such a volume as this the successions of all the Churches, we shall confound all those who, in whatever manner,

whether through self-satisfaction or vainglory, or through blindness and wicked opinion, assemble other than where it is proper, by pointing out here the successions of the bishops of the greatest and most ancient Church known to all, founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious Apostles, Peter and Paul, that Church which has the tradition and the faith which comes down to us after having been announced to men by the Apostles. For with this Church, because of its superior origin, all Churches must agree, that is, all the faithful in the whole world; and it is in her that the faithful everywhere have maintained the Apostolic tradition. ...

3:3:3 The blessed Apostles [Peter and Paul], having founded and built up the Church [of Rome], they handed over the office of the episcopate to Linus. Paul makes mention of this Linus in the [Second] Epistle to Timothy (4:21). To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the Apostles, Clement was chosen for the episcopate. He had seen the blessed Apostles and was acquainted with them. It might be said that he still heard the echoes of the preaching of the Apostles, and had their traditions before his eyes. And not only he, for there were many still remaining who had been instructed by the Apostles.

In the time of Clement, no small dissension having arisen among the brethren in Corinth, the Church in Rome sent a very strong letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace and renewing their faith. ... To this Clement, Evaristus succeeded; and Alexander succeeded Evaristus. Then, sixth after the Apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telesphorus, who also was gloriously martyred. Then Hyginus; after him, Pius; and after him, Anicetus. Soter succeeded Anicetus, and now, in the twelfth place after the Apostles, the lot of the episcopate has fallen to Eleutherus. In this order, and by the teaching of the Apostles handed down in the Church, the preaching of the truth has come down to us.

ca. 200 **Tertullian, *The Demurrer Against the Heretics***

—infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom)—

22:4 Was anything withheld from the knowledge of Peter, who is called “the rock on which the church should be built,” who also obtained “the keys of the kingdom of heaven,”

with the power of “loosing and binding in heaven and on earth?” (Mt 16:18-19). ...

23:10 [A]s Peter was rebuked because, after he had lived with the Gentiles, he proceeded to separate himself from their company out of respect for persons, the fault surely was one of conversation, not of preaching.

ca. 210 Tertullian, *Against Marcion*

—*universal authority / infallibility*—

4:5:1 Let us see what ... the nearby Romans sound forth, to whom both Peter and Paul bequeathed the Gospel and even sealed it with their blood.

ca. 211 Tertullian falls into the Montanist heresy

ca. 234 Saint Hippolytus of Rome, *Discourse on the End of the World*

—*infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom, “the teacher of the Church”)*—

10 First of all Peter, the rock of the faith, whom Christ our God called blessed, the teacher of the Church, the first disciple, he who has the keys of the kingdom.

ca. 245 Origen, disciple of Clement of Alexandria, *Homilies on Exodus*

—*infallibility (Peter the “rock”)*—

5:4 Look at the great foundation of the Church, that most solid of rocks, upon whom Christ built the Church! And what does the Lord say to him? “O you of little faith,” He says, “why did you doubt (Mt 14:31)!”

ca. 245 Origen, *Commentaries on Romans*

—*infallibility (Peter the “rock”)*—

And when the supreme authority for feeding the sheep was given to Peter and the Church was founded upon him as upon the rock, the confession of no other virtue is demanded of him except of love.

251 Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, *The Unity of the Catholic Church (first edition)*

—*universal authority (“a primacy is given to Peter”) / infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom, “Feed my sheep”)*—

4 The Lord says to Peter: “I say to you,” He says, “that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not overcome it. And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever things you bind on earth shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth, they shall be loosed also in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19).

And again He says to him after His resurrection: “Feed my sheep” (Jn 21:17). On him He builds the Church, and to him he gives the command

to feed the sheep; and although He assigns a like power to all the Apostles, yet He founded a single chair, and He established by His own authority a source and an intrinsic reason for that unity. Indeed, the others were that also which Peter was; but a primacy is given to Peter, whereby it is made clear that there is but one Church and one chair. So too, all are shepherds, and the flock is shown to be one, fed by all the Apostles in single-minded accord. If someone does not hold fast to this unity of Peter, can he imagine that he still holds the faith? If he desert the chair of Peter upon whom the Church was built, can he still be confident that he is in the Church?

252 Cyprian, *Letter to Antonianus, A Bishop in Numidia*

—*universal authority*—

55 [52]:8 Cornelius was made bishop by the decision of God and of His Christ, by the testimony of almost all the clergy, by the applause of the people then present, by the college of venerable priests and good men, at a time when no one had been made before him—when the place of Fabian, which is the place of Peter, the dignity of the sacerdotal chair, was vacant. Since it has been occupied both at the will of God and with the ratified consent of all of us, whoever wishes now to become bishop must do so outside. For he cannot have ecclesiastical rank who does not hold to the unity of the Church.

252 Pope Saint Cornelius, 23rd Bishop of Rome, *Letter to Cyprian of Carthage*

—*universal authority*—

[*Certain men, having fallen into a schism and now seeking reconciliation, besought Cornelius, saying:”* ... We are not ignorant of the fact that there is one God, and one Christ the Lord whom we confess, and one Holy Spirit; and that there must be one bishop in the Catholic Church” (Cyprian, *Letters* 49 [46]:2).

252 Cyprian, *Letter to Cornelius of Rome*

—*universal authority / infallibility (“not possible for perfidy to enter”)*—

59 [55]:14 With a false bishop appointed for themselves by heretics, they dare even to set sail and carry letters from schismatics and blasphemers to the chair of Peter and to the principal Church, in which sacerdotal unity has its source; nor did they take thought these are Romans, whose faith was praised by the preaching Apostle, and among whom it is not possible for perfidy to have entrance.

254 Cyprian, Letter to Florentius Pupianus

—*universal authority / infallibility (Peter the “rock”)—*

66 [69]:8 You have written also that on my account the Church now has a portion of itself in a state of dispersion. In truth, the whole people of the Church are collected together and made one and joined to each other in an indivisible harmony. They alone have remained outside, who, were they within, would have to be ejected. ... And the Lord too, in the Gospel, when the disciples abandoned Him while He was speaking, turned to the Twelve and said, “And do you too wish to go away?” Peter answered Him, saying, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the word of eternal life: and we believe and know that you are the Son of the Living God” (Jn 6:68-70).

There speaks Peter, upon whom the Church would be built, teaching in the name of the Church and showing that even if a stubborn and proud multitude withdraws because it does not wish to obey, yet the Church does not withdraw from Christ. The people joined to the priest and the flock clinging to their shepherd are the Church.

You ought to know, then, that the bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop; and if someone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church. They vainly flatter themselves who creep up, not having peace with the priests of God, believing that they are secretly in communion with certain individuals. For the Church, which is One and Catholic, is not split nor divided, but is indeed united and joined by the cement of priests who adhere one to another.

254 Cyprian, Letter to Qunitus, A Bishop in Mauretania

—*infallibility (Peter the “rock”)—*

71:1 One must not object [to heretical baptisms], however, on the grounds of custom; rather, one must overcome by reasoned argumentation. For Peter, whom the Lord chose first and upon whom He built His Church, when Paul later disagreed with him about circumcision, did not claim anything for himself insolently nor assume anything arrogantly, so as to say that he held the primacy and that he ought rather to be obeyed by novices and those more recently arrived.

255 Cyprian, Letter to Cornelius of Rome

—*infallibility (“divinely protected”)—*

46 [51]:1 I profess that I both have rendered and do render the greatest thanks without

ceasing, dearest brother, to God the Father Almighty, and to His Christ the Lord and our God and Saviour, that the Church is thus divinely protected, and its unity and holiness is not constantly nor altogether corrupted by the obstinacy of perfidy and heretical wickedness. For we have read your letter, and have exultingly received the greatest joy from the fulfillment of our common desire; to wit, that Maximus the presbyter, and Urbanus, the confessors, with Sidonius and Macarius, have re-entered into the Catholic Church, that is, that they have laid aside their error, and given up their schismatical, nay, their heretical madness, and have sought again in the soundness of faith the home of unity and truth.

300-325 Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea, History of the Church

—*universal authority (primacy of Peter)—*

2:14:6 [D]uring the reign of Claudius [A.D. 41-45], the all-good and gracious Providence, which watches over all things, led Peter, that strongest and greatest of the apostles, and the one who on account of his virtue was the speaker of all the others, to Rome ...

3:2 After the martyrdom of Paul and Peter, Linus was the first to obtain the episcopate of the church of Rome. Paul mentions him, when writing to Timothy from Rome, in the salutation at the end of the epistle (2 Tm 4:21).

3:13 In the second year of [Vespasian’s] reign, Linus, who had been bishop of the church of Rome for twelve years, delivered his office to Anencletus. ...

3:15 In the twelfth year of the [reign of Domitian] Clement succeeded Anencletus after the latter had been bishop of the church of Rome for twelve years. The apostle in his Epistle to the Philippians informs us that this Clement was his fellow-worker (Phil 4:3).

306 Saint Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, The Canonical Letter

—*universal authority (primacy of Peter)—*

9 Peter, the first chosen of the Apostles, having been apprehended often and thrown into prison and treated with ignominy, at last was crucified in Rome.

313 *Edict of Milan, legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

325 *Council of Nicaea formally defines the divinity of Christ*

341 **Pope Saint Julius, 35th Bishop of Rome, Letter to the Antiochians**

—*universal authority*—

22 For if it is entirely as you say, that some offense was committed by those persons, judgment ought to have been made, not as it was, but according to the ecclesiastical canon. It behooved all of you to write to us, so that the justice of it might be seen as emanating from all. For they were bishops who suffered; and they were not ordinary Churches which suffered, but were those which the Apostles themselves had governed. And above all, why was nothing written to us about the Church of the Alexandrians? Are you ignorant that the custom has been to write first to us, and then for a just decision to be passed from this place [i.e., from Rome]?

If, then, any such suspicion rested upon the bishop there [i.e., Athanasius in Alexandria], notice of it ought to have been written to the Church here [in Rome]. But now, after they have done as they pleased, they want to obtain our concurrence, although we never condemned [Athanasius]. Not thus are the constitutions of Paul, not thus the traditions of the Fathers. This is another form of procedure, and a novel practice. I beseech you, bear with me willingly: what I write about this is for the common good. For what we have received from the blessed Apostle Peter, these things I signify to you.

313 *Edict of Milan, legalization of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire*

325 *Council of Nicaea formally defines the divinity of Christ*

ca. 350 Saint Ephraim the Syrian, Doctor of the Church, *Homilies*

—*infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom, “the fountain from which My teaching flows”)*—

4:1 Simon, My follower, I have made you the foundation of the holy Church. I betimes called you Peter, because you will support all its building. You are the inspector of those who will build on earth a Church for Me. If they should wish to build what is false, you, the foundation, will condemn them. You are the head of the fountain from which My teaching flows, you are the chief of My disciples. Through you I will give drink to all peoples. Yours is that life-giving sweetness which I dispense. I have chosen you to be, as it were, the first-born in My institution, and so that, as the heir, you may be executor of my treasures. I have given you the keys of My kingdom.

Behold, I have given you authority over all my treasures.

382 *Pope Saint Damasus I, Synod of Rome, first declaration of the complete canon of the Bible*

382 Damasus I, 37th Bishop of Rome, presiding over the Synod of Rome, *Decree of Damasus*

—*universal authority / infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom)*—

3 After the announcement of all these prophetic and evangelic as well as apostolic writings which we have listed above as Scriptures, on which, by the grace of God, the Catholic Church is founded, we have considered that it ought to be announced that although all the Catholic Churches spread abroad through the world comprise but one bridal chamber of Christ, nevertheless, the holy Roman Church has been placed at the forefront not by the conciliar decisions of other Churches, but has received the primacy by the evangelic voice of our Lord and Savior, who says: “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it; and I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you shall have bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall have loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Mt 16:18-19).

In addition to this, there is also the companionship of the vessel of election, the most blessed Apostle Paul, who contended and was crowned with a glorious death along with Peter in the City of Rome in the time of the Caesar Nero—not at a different time, as the heretics prattle, but at one and the same time and on one and the same day: and they equally consecrated the above-mentioned holy Roman Church to Christ the Lord; and by their own presence and by their venerable triumph they set it at the forefront over the others of all the cities of the whole world.

The first see, therefore, is that of Peter the Apostle, that of the Roman Church, which has neither stain nor blemish nor anything like it. The second see, however, is that at Alexandria, consecrated in behalf of blessed Peter by Mark, his disciple and an evangelist, who was sent to Egypt by the Apostle Peter, where he preached the word of truth and finished his glorious martyrdom. The third honorable see, indeed, is that at Antioch, which belonged to the most blessed Apostle Peter, where first he dwelt before he came to Rome, and where the name *Christians* (Acts 11:26) was first applied, as to a new people.

385 Pope Saint Siricius, 38th Bishop of Rome, Letter to Himerius, Bishop of Tarragona
—universal authority / infallibility (Peter the “rock”)—

1 For in view of our office there is no freedom for us, on whom a zeal for the Christian religion is incumbent greater than on all others, to dissimulate or to be silent. We bear the burdens of all who are oppressed, or rather the blessed apostle Peter, who in all things protects and preserves us, the heirs, as we trust, of his administration, bears them in us.

2 On the first page of your letter, therefore, you indicated that multitudes who were baptized by the impious Arians were hastening to the catholic faith, and that certain of our brothers wished to baptize these same people again. This is not allowed, since both the Apostle forbids (cf. Eph 4:5) and the canons oppose doing it; and after the Council of Rimini was annulled, the general decrees sent to the provinces by my predecessor of venerable memory Liberius prohibit it. We unite these people, and the Novatianists and other heretics, to the assembly of catholics, just as it was constituted in the synod, solely through invocation of the sevenfold Spirit by imposition of the bishop’s hand [i.e., Confirmation]. Indeed all the East and the West preserves this practice, and it is also inappropriate henceforth for you to deviate from that path, if you do not wish to be separated from our company by synodal sentence.

3 Then follows objectionable confusion, in need of correction, about those who are about to be baptized just as it pleases each and every one of them. ... Enough error on this matter! All priests who do not wish to be torn from the solidity of the apostolic rock, upon which Christ built the universal Church, should no hold the aforementioned rule [i.e., *Prefaces to the Canon Law Books*].

ca. 400 Saint Augustine, Doctor of the Church, with Fortunatus and Alypius, Letter to Generosus

—universal authority (succession of bishops of Rome upheld as model for other Churches) / infallibility (Peter the “rock”)—

53:1:2 If the very order of episcopal succession is to be considered, how much more surely, truly, and safely do we number them from Peter himself, to whom, as to one representing the whole Church, the Lord said: “Upon this rock will I build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not conquer it” (Mt 16:18). Peter was

succeeded by Linus, Linus by Clement, Clement by Anacletus, Anacletus by Evaristus, Evaristus by Sixtus, Sixtus by Telesphorus, Telesphorus by Hyginus, Hyginus by Anicetus, Anicetus by Pius, Pius by Soter, Soter by Alexander, Alexander by Victor, Victor by Zephyrinus, Zephyrinus by Callistus, Callistus by Urban, Urban by Pontianus, Pontianus by Anterus, Anterus by Fabian, Fabian by Cornelius, Cornelius by Lucius, Lucius by Stephen, Stephen by Sixtus, Sixtus by Dionysius, Dionysius by Felix, Felix by Eutychian, Eutychian by Caius, Caius by Marcellus, Marcellus by Eusebius, Eusebius by Melchiades, Melchiades by Sylvester, Sylvester by Mark, Mark by Julius, Julius by Liberius, Liberius by Damasus, Damasus by Siricius, Siricius by Anastasius. In this order of succession not a Donatist bishop is to be found.

417 Pope Saint Innocent, 40th Bishop of Rome, Letter to the Fathers of the Council of Carthage

—universal authority / infallibility (“an incorrupted head”)—

29:1 In seeking the things of God, ... following the examples of ancient tradition, ... you have strengthened ... the vigor of your religion with true reason, for you have acknowledged that judgment is to be referred to us [i.e., the Church of Rome], and have shown that you know what is owed to the Apostolic See, if all of us placed in this position are to desire to follow the Apostle himself from whom the episcopate itself and the total authority of this name have emerged. Following him, we know how to condemn evils just as well as we know how to approve what is laudable. Or rather, guarding with your priestly office what the Fathers instituted, you did not regard what they had decided, not by human but by divine judgments, as something to be trampled on. They did not regard anything as finished, even though it was the concern of distant and remote provinces, until it had come to the notice of this See, so that what was a just pronouncement might be confirmed by the total authority of this See, and thence other Churches,—just as all waters proceed from their own natal source and, through the various regions of the whole world, remain pure liquids of an incorrupted head,—might take up what they ought to teach, whom they ought to wash, whom the water worthy of clean bodies would shun as being soiled with a filth incapable of being cleansed.

420 Augustine, *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*

—*infallibility*—

2:3:5 For it was not to heretics but to Catholics that the Apostle was speaking when he said: "Let us, therefore, as many of us as are perfect, be of this mind; and if in anything you be minded otherwise, that too God will reveal to you" (Phil 3:15). This was thought to have been done in the case of Caelestius, when he responded that he agreed with the letters of Pope Innocent of blessed memory, in which all doubt in this matter was taken away.

431 Council of Ephesus formally defines Christ, one divine Person with two natures (divine and human); sanctions Marian title "Mother of God"

ca. 460 Pope Saint Leo the Great, 45th Bishop of Rome, Doctor of the Church, *Sermon*

—*infallibility (Peter the "rock," keys of the kingdom, "the solidity of that faith," "the depravity of heretics cannot mar it")*—

3:2-3 Although, therefore, dearly beloved, we be found both weak and slothful in fulfilling the duties of our office, because, whatever devoted and vigorous action we desire to do, we are hindered by the frailty of our very condition; yet having the unceasing propitiation of the Almighty and perpetual Priest, who being like us and yet equal with the Father, brought down His Godhead even to things human, and raised His Manhood even to things Divine, we worthily and piously rejoice over His dispensation, whereby, though He has delegated the care of His sheep to many shepherds, yet He has not Himself abandoned the guardianship of His beloved flock. And from His overruling and eternal protection we have received the support of the Apostles' aid also, which assuredly does not cease from its operation: and the strength of the foundation, on which the whole superstructure of the Church is reared, is not weakened by the weight of the temple that rests upon it. For the solidity of that faith which was praised in the chief of the Apostles is perpetual: and as that remains which Peter believed in Christ, so that remains which Christ instituted in Peter. For when, as has been read in the Gospel lesson, the Lord had asked the disciples whom they believed Him to be amid the various opinions that were held, and the blessed Peter had replied, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the Lord says, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and flood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father, which is in heaven. And I say to thee, that thou

art Peter, and upon this rock will I build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (Mt 16:16-19).

S. Peter's Work is Still Carried Out by His Successors.

The dispensation of Truth therefore abides, and the blessed Peter persevering in the strength of the Rock, which he has received, has not abandoned the helm of the Church, which he undertook. For he was ordained before the rest in such a way that from his being called the Rock, from his being pronounced the Foundation, from his being constituted the Doorkeeper of the kingdom of heaven, from his being set as the Umpire to bind and to loose, whose judgments shall retain their validity in heaven, from all these mystical titles we might know the nature of his association with Christ. And still to-day he more fully and effectually performs what is entrusted to him, and carries out every part of his duty and charge in Him and with Him, through Whom he has been glorified. And so if anything is rightly done and rightly decreed by us, if anything is won from the mercy of God by our daily supplications, it is of his work and merits whose power lives and whose authority prevails in his See. For this, dearly-beloved, was gained by that confession, which, inspired in the Apostle's heart by God the Father, transcended all the uncertainty of human opinions, and was endued with the firmness of a rock, which no assaults could shake. For throughout the Church Peter daily says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and every tongue which confesses the Lord, accepts the instruction his voice conveys. This Faith conquers the devil, and breaks the bonds of his prisoners. It uproots us from this earth and plants us in heaven, and the gates of Hades cannot prevail against it. For with such solidity is it endued by God that the depravity of heretics cannot mar it nor the unbelief of the heathen overcome it.

494 Pope Saint Gelasius, 49th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Emperor Anastasius*

—*universal authority*—

If the hearts of the faithful should be submitted to all priests in general who rightly administer divine things, how much more should assent be given to the Bishop of that See which the

Most High wished to be pre-eminent over all priests, and which the devotion of the whole Church has honored ever since. ...

—*infallibility*—

The Apostolic See's confession of faith is unassailable; it is impossible for it to be stained by any false doctrine or be contaminated by any error.

519 Pope Saint Hormisdas, 52nd Bishop of Rome, *Formula*

—*universal authority / infallibility (Peter the "rock")*—

The first condition of salvation is to keep the rule of the true Faith, and in no way to deviate from the tradition of the Fathers, because the statement of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be put aside, when He said: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church." *These words are proved by their result in facts*, for in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion is always preserved inviolate.

Desiring not to fall from that faith, and following in all things the decisions of the Fathers, we anathematize all heresies, especially that of Nestorius.

Hence we approve and embrace all the letters of blessed Leo, Pope of the city of Rome, which he wrote concerning the right Faith.

Wherefore, as we have said, following in all things the Apostolic See, we also profess all its decrees; and for this cause, *I hope that I shall deserve to be in one communion with you*, which the Apostolic See proclaims, *in which is the entire and perfect solidity of the Christian religion*, promising in future as to *those who are separated from the communion of the Catholic Church, that is, those who do not agree in all points with the Apostolic See*, that their names shall not be recited during the Holy Mysteries.

523 Saint Fulgence, Bishop of Ruspe, *Letter*

—*universal authority / infallibility ("enlightened, as if by shining rays")*—

21 This is what the Roman Church (which is the summit of the world, enlightened—as if by shining rays—by the words of two great lights, namely Peter and Paul, and embellished with their bodies), along with the whole of Christendom, holds and teaches. And she also believes this without hesitation, leading to justification, and she confesses this without doubting, leading to salvation.

636 *death of Saint Isidore of Seville, last of the Western Fathers*

680 Pope Saint Agatho, 79th Bishop of Rome, *Letter to the Emperor*

—*universal authority / infallibility ("has never erred from the path of the Apostolic tradition," "Peter's faith should not fail," Peter the "rock")*—

For this is the rule of the true faith, which this spiritual mother of your most tranquil empire, the Apostolic Church of Christ, has both in prosperity and in adversity always held and defended with energy; which, it will be proved, by the grace of Almighty God, has never erred from the path of the Apostolic tradition, nor has she been depraved by yielding to heretical innovations, but from the beginning she has received the Christian faith from her founders, the princes of the Apostles of Christ, and remains undefiled unto the end, according to the divine promise of the Lord and Saviour himself, which he uttered in the holy Gospels to the prince of his disciples: saying, "Peter, Peter, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that (thy) faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Lk 22:31-32). Let your tranquil Clemency therefore consider, since it is the Lord and Saviour of all, whose faith it is, that promised that Peter's faith should not fail and exhorted him to strengthen his brethren, how it is known to all that the Apostolic pontiffs, the predecessors of my littleness, have always confidently done this very thing

Therefore the Holy Church of God, the mother of your most Christian power, should be delivered and liberated with all you might (through the help of God) from the errors of such teachers, and the evangelical and apostolic uprightness of the orthodox faith, which has been established upon the firm rock of this Church of blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, which by his grace and guardianship remains free from all error, [that faith I say] the whole number of rulers and priests, of the clergy and of the people, unanimously should confess and preach with us as the true declaration of the Apostolic tradition, in order to please God and to save their own souls.

739 Pope Saint Gregory III, 90th Bishop of Rome, Letter to Boniface about the Organization of the Church in Bavaria
—universal authority / infallibility—
Bishop Vivilo was consecrated by us. If, however, he has deviated from orthodox teaching in any point, correct and instruct him according to the traditions of the Church of Rome, as you have learned from us.

ca. 749 death of Saint John Damascene, last of the Eastern Fathers

817 Saint Theodore the Studite and four other Abbots, Letter to Pope Paschal
—universal authority (“Shepherd of Christ’s sheep”) / infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom, “strengthen thy brethren”)—
Hear, O apostolic head, divinely appointed Shepherd of Christ’s sheep, keybearer of the kingdom of heaven, rock of the faith, upon whom is built the Catholic Church. For Peter art thou, who adornest and governest the chair of Peter. ... Hither, then, from the West, imitator of Christ, arise and repel not for ever (Ps 43:23). To thee spake Christ our Lord: “And thou being one day converted, shalt strengthen thy brethren” (Lk 22:32). Behold the hour and the place. Help us, thou that art set by God for this. Stretch forth thy hand so far as thou canst. Thou hast strength with God, through being the first of all.

968 Liutprand, Bishop of Cremona, Report of His Mission to Constantinople
—universal authority / infallibility—
There was present also, with many bishops, the patriarch [of Constantinople]; in whose presence [Emperor Nicephorus] asked me many questions concerning the Holy Scriptures; which, the divine Spirit inspiring me, I expounded with elegance. And at last ... he asked me what synods we [the Western nations] recognized. ... I ... mentioned to him Nicea, Chalcedon, Ephesus, Carthage, Ancyra, Constantinople ... [T]he universal pope Gregory ... freed Eutychius the heretical patriarch of Constantinople from this heresy. This same Eutychius said, nor did he only say but taught, proclaimed and kept writing, that we would assume at the Resurrection not the true flesh which we have here, but a certain fantastic flesh. The book containing this error was, in an orthodox manner, burned by Gregory. Ennodius, moreover, bishop of Pavia, was, on account of a certain other heresy, sent here, that is to Constantinople, by the Roman

patriarch. He repressed it, and restored the orthodox catholic teaching. ...

[T]he salvation of all Christians pertains to the care of the Roman pope

Then, betaking myself to the church which I saw, weeping and wailing, I said: “Oh holy apostle Andrew ... Thou hast nothing to bestow on thy brother [Peter]; bestow something on the emperors who love thy brother by putting their trust in Him [i.e., Christ] who knows all things. Thou knowest with what labour and exertion, with what vigils and at what expense—snatching it from the hands of the godless—they have enriched, honoured, exalted, and brought back to its proper condition, the Roman church of thy brother the apostle Peter. But if my works cast me into peril, let their merits at least free me; and let not those whom thy aforesaid brother in the faith and in the flesh, Peter the chief apostle of the apostles, wishes to have rejoice and prosper, be saddened by this—that is, through me whom they themselves had sent!” ...

Rome is not to be despised by the Greeks because Constantine went away from it; but rather to be the more cherished, venerated and adored for the reason that the apostles, the holy teachers Peter and Paul, came thither.

1054 Eastern Schism

1081 Pope Saint Gregory VII, 157th Bishop of Rome, Letter to the Bishop of Metz
—universal authority (“universal power,” “universal mother”) / infallibility (Peter the “rock,” keys of the kingdom)—
[W]ho does not know the words of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who says in the gospel: “Thou art Peter and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in Heaven” (Mt 16:18-19)? Are kings excepted here? Or are they not included among the sheep which the Son of God committed to St Peter? Who, I ask, in view of this universal concession of the power of binding and loosing, can think he is withdrawn from the authority of St Peter, unless, perhaps, that unhappy man who is unwilling to bear the yoke of the Lord and subjects himself to the burden of the devil, refusing to be among the number of Christ’s sheep? ...

The holy fathers, as well in general councils as in their writings and doings, have called the Holy Roman Church the universal mother, accepting and serving with great veneration this institution founded by the divine will, this pledge of a dispensation to the church, this privilege entrusted in the beginning and confirmed to St Peter the chief of the apostles. And even as they accepted its statements in confirmation of their faith and of the doctrines of holy religion, so also they received its judgements—consenting in this, and agreeing as it were with one spirit and one voice: that all greater matters and exceptional cases, and judgements over all churches, ought to be referred to it as to a mother and a head; that from it there was no appeal; that no one should or could retract or reverse its decisions. ...

Shall not an authority founded by laymen—even by those who do not know God,—be subject to that authority which the providence of God Almighty has for His own honour established and in his mercy given to the world?

1152 Saint Elisabeth of Schönau, *First Book of Visions*

—*universal authority (“shepherd of the sheep”) / infallibility (keys of the kingdom)*—

15 At First Vespers on the feast of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, I sank into ecstasy, and I saw those glorious princes standing in the radiance of a great light with the signs of victorious martyrdom. With their faces turned toward me, they descended into the region of our atmosphere, preceded by the blessed Virgin, mother of our Lord Jesus. Peter stood making the sign of the cross over me, and I greeted him saying: “You are shepherd of the sheep, prince of the apostles,” et cetera.

1274 Second Council of Lyons, 14th ecumenical council, *Creed*

—*universal authority / infallibility*—

The same holy Roman Church also has supreme and full primacy and jurisdiction over the whole Catholic Church. This it truly and humbly recognizes as received from the Lord himself in the person of St. Peter, the Prince or head of the Apostles, whose successor in the fullness of power is the Roman Pontiff. And just as the holy Roman Church is bound more than all the others to defend the truth of faith, so, if there arise any questions concerning the faith, they must be decided by its judgment. Anyone who is aggrieved may appeal to it in matters pertaining to the ecclesiastical court; and in all

cases that require ecclesiastical investigation, one may have recourse to its judgment. Also, all churches are subject to it, and their prelates render it obedience and reverence. There is such a fullness of power vested in this Church that it admits other churches to share in its responsibility; and many of these, especially the patriarchal churches, the same Roman Church has honored with various privileges. Yet always its special position has remained intact, both in general councils and in some others.

1377-1378 Saint Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, *Dialogue*

—*universal authority / infallibility (keys of the kingdom)*—

115 [*God the Father*.:] This is how my glorious ministers conduct themselves. I told you that I wanted you to see the excellence that is theirs beyond the dignity I have given them by making them my christs. When they exercise this dignity virtuously they are clothed in this gentle glorious Sun that I have entrusted to their ministry.

Consider those who have gone before them: the gentle Gregory, Sylvester, and the other successors of the chief pontiff Peter, to whom my Truth gave the keys to of the heavenly kingdom when he said, “Peter, I am giving you the keys of the heavenly kingdom; whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Mt 16:19).

Listen well, dearest daughter. By showing you the magnificence of their virtues I shall show you more fully the dignity to which I have appointed these ministers of mine. This is the key to the blood of my only-begotten Son, that key which unlocked eternal life, closed for so long a time because of Adam’s sin. But after I gave you my Truth, the Word, my only-begotten Son, he suffered and died, and by his death he destroyed your death by letting his blood be a cleansing bath for you. Thus his blood and his death, by the power of my divine nature joined with his human nature, unlocked eternal life.

And to whom did he leave the keys to this blood? To the glorious apostle Peter and to all the others who have come or will come from now until the final judgment day with the very same authority that Peter had. Nor is this authority lessened by any sinfulness on their part; nor can that sinfulness deprive the blood or any other sacrament of its perfection.

1439 Council of Ferrara-Florence, 17th ecumenical council, *Decree for the Greeks*—*universal authority (primacy of Peter) / infallibility*—

[W]e define that the holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff have the primacy over the whole world, and that the same Roman Pontiff is the successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, the head of the whole Church, the father and teacher of all Christians; and that to him, in the person of St. Peter, was given by our Lord Jesus Christ the full power of feeding, ruling, and governing the whole Church; as is also contained in the proceedings of the ecumenical councils and in the sacred canons.

1517 *Martin Luther posts Ninety-five Theses at Wittenberg*

1538 *King Henry VIII breaks England away from the Church*

1545-1563 *Council of Trent formally defines various doctrines rejected by Luther*

1594-1596 Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva, Doctor of the Church, *Controversies*—*universal authority / infallibility (Peter the "rock")*—

6:2 [A]ccording to S. Paul: *No one can lay another foundation but that which is laid: which is Christ Jesus* (1 Cor 3:11); and according to the same we are *domestics of God; built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone* (Eph 2:19, 20). And, in the Apocalypse, the wall of the holy city had twelve foundations, and in these twelve foundations the names of the twelve Apostles (21:14). If then, say they, all the twelve Apostles are foundations of the Church, how do you attribute this title to S. Peter in particular? And if S. Paul says that no one can lay another foundation than Our Lord, how do you dare to say that by these words: *Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church* (Mt 16:18), S. Peter has been established as foundation of the Church? Why do you not rather say, asks Calvin, that this stone on which the Church is founded is no other than Our Lord? Why do you not rather declare, says Luther, that it is the confession of faith which Peter had made?

But in good truth it is an ill way of interpreting Scripture to overturn one passage by another, or to strain from it by a forced interpretation to a strange and unbecoming sense. We must

leave it to as far as possible the naturalness and sweetness of the sense which belongs to it.

In this case, then, since we see that Scripture teaches us there is no other foundation than Our Lord, and the same teaches us clearly that S. Peter is such also, yea and further that the Apostles are so, we are not to give up the first teaching for the second, the second for the third, but to leave them all three in their entirety. Which we shall easily do if we consider these passages in good faith and sincerely.

Now Our Lord is in very deed the only foundation of the Church; he is the foundation of our faith, of our hope and charity; he is the foundation of all ecclesiastical authority and order, and of all the doctrine and administration therein. Who ever doubted this? But, some one will say to me, if he is the only foundation, how do you place S. Peter also as foundation? (1.) You do us wrong; it is not we who place him as foundation. He, besides whom no other can be placed, he himself placed him. So that if Our Lord is true founder of the Church, as he is, we must believe that S. Peter is such too, since Our Lord has placed him in this rank. If any one besides Our Lord himself had given him this grade we should all cry out with you: *No one can lay another foundation but that which is laid.* (2.) And then, have you well considered the words of S. Paul? He will not have us recognise any foundation besides Our Lord, but neither is S. Peter nor are the other Apostles foundations *besides* Our Lord, they are subordinate to Our Lord: their doctrine is not other than that of their Master, but their very Master's itself. Thus the supreme charge which S. Peter had in the militant Church, by reason of which he is called foundation of the Church, as chief and governor, is not *beside* the authority of his Master, but is only a participation in this, so that he is not the foundation of this hierarchy *besides* Our Lord but rather in Our Lord, outside whom he would be nothing. We do not indeed recognise any other secular authority than that of His Highness [of Savoy], but we recognise several under this, which are not properly other than that of His Highness, because they are only certain portions and participations of it. (3.) In a word, let us interpret S. Paul passage by passage: do you not think he makes his meaning clear enough when he says: *You are built upon the foundations of the Prophets and Apostles?* But that you may know these foundations to be no

other than that which he preached, he adds: *Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Our Lord then is foundation and S. Peter also, but with so notable a difference that in respect of the one the other may be said not to be it. For Our Lord is foundation and founder, foundation without other foundation, foundation of the natural, Mosaic and Evangelic Church, foundation perpetual and immortal, foundation of the militant and triumphant, foundation by his own nature, foundation of our faith, hope and charity, and of the efficacy of the Sacraments.

S. Peter is foundation, not founder, of the whole Church; foundation but founded on another foundation, which is Our Lord; foundation of the Evangelic Church alone, foundation subject to succession, foundation of the militant not of the triumphant, foundation by participation, ministerial not absolute foundation; in fine, administrator and not lord, and in no way the foundation of our faith, hope and charity, nor of the efficacy of the Sacraments. A difference so great as this makes the one unable, in comparison, to be called a foundation by the side of the other, whilst, however, taken by itself, it can be called a foundation, in order to pay proper regard to the Holy Word. So, although he is the Good Shepherd, he gives us shepherds (cf. Eph 4:11) under himself between whom and his Majesty there is so great a difference that he declares himself to be only shepherd (cf. Jn 10:11; Ez 34:23).

1687 Pope Innocent XI, 240th Bishop of Rome, *Coelestis Pastor*

—*universal authority (primacy of Peter) / infallibility (to preserve Christ's teaching "whole and entire," "Feed my sheep," "that your faith may not fail")*—

In order to free the world, prostrate in darkness and bound by numerous pagan errors, from the power of the devil who held it a wretched prisoner after the fall of our first parent, the heavenly shepherd, Christ our Lord, by his ineffable mercy, condescended to take flesh and, as a living victim, offer himself to God for us on the wood of the cross, nailing the guarantee of our redemption to the wood of the cross as a proof of his love for us. Then before returning to heaven he left on earth the Catholic Church his bride, as a new city, a holy Jerusalem, coming down from heaven without wrinkle or spot, one and holy (cf. Eph 5:27), protected by his mighty weapons against the gates of hell. Its government he entrusted to the

prince of the apostles, Peter, and his successors; they are to preserve whole and entire the teaching drawn from his lips, lest the sheep redeemed by his precious blood feed on poisonous ideas and fall back into age-old errors. This power sacred Scripture teaches us he entrusted especially to blessed Peter. For to which of the apostles but Peter did he say: "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21:17). And again: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when once you have turned, strengthen again your brothers" (Lk 22:31-32). Therefore, we who occupy Peter's throne and possess power equal to his, not by our own merits but because of almighty God's inscrutable wisdom, steadfastly desire that the Christian people embrace that faith proclaimed by Christ our Lord through his apostles in a continuous and uninterrupted tradition; the faith which he promised will endure to the end of the world.

1750 Saint Alphonsus Maria de Liguori, Bishop of Saint Agatha, Doctor of the Church, *The Glories of Mary*

—*universal authority / infallibility ("especial protection in heaven")*—

2:7 And she, the most loving Mother, compassionated all, and consoled each one; to some promising her patronage blessing others with particular affection, and encouraging others to the work of the conversion of the world; especially, she called St. Peter to her, and as head of the Church and Vicar of her Son, recommended to him in a particular manner the propagation of the faith, promising him at the same time her especial protection in heaven.

1870 First Vatican Council, 20th ecumenical council, *First Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ*

—*universal authority / infallibility*—

[I]n order that the Episcopate also might be one and undivided, and that by means of a closely united priesthood the multitude of the faithful might be kept secure in the oneness of the faith and communion, He set Blessed Peter over the rest of the Apostles, and fixed in him the abiding principle of this two-fold unity, and its visible foundation ...

1 We therefore teach and declare that, according to the testimony of the Gospel, the primacy of jurisdiction over the universal Church of God was immediately and directly promised and given to Blessed Peter the Apostle by Christ the Lord. ...

3 Wherefore, resting on the plain testimonies of the Sacred Writings, and adhering to the plain and express decrees both of our predecessors, the Roman Pontiffs, and of the General Councils, We renew the definition of the Œcumenical Council of Florence, in virtue of which all the faithful of Christ must believe that the Holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff possesses the primacy over the whole world, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of Christ, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter to rule, feed, and govern the Universal Church by Jesus Christ our Lord. ...

—*infallibility formally defined*—

4 Therefore, faithfully adhering to the tradition received from the beginning of the Christian faith, for the glory of God Our Saviour, the exaltation of the Catholic Religion, and the salvation of Christian people, the Sacred Council approving, We teach and define that it is a dogma divinely revealed: that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedrâ*, that is, when in discharge of the office of Pastor and Doctor of all Christians, by virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith or morals to be held by the Universal Church, by the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, is possessed of that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed for defining doctrine regarding faith or morals: and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church.

1962-1965 *Second Vatican Council defines the nature of the Church*

1964 Second Vatican Council, 21st ecumenical council, *Lumen Gentium*

—*universal authority | infallibility (Peter the “rock,” “infallible magisterium”)*—

18 This Sacred Council, following closely in the footsteps of the First Vatican Council, with that Council teaches and declares that Jesus Christ, the eternal Shepherd, established His holy Church, having sent forth the apostles as He Himself had been sent by the Father (cf. Jn 20:21); and He willed that their successors, namely the bishops, should be shepherds in His Church even to the consummation of the world. And in order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He placed Blessed

Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium, this Sacred Council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful. Continuing in that same undertaking, this Council is resolved to declare and proclaim before all men the doctrine concerning bishops, the successors of the apostles, who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God. ...

19 And the apostles, by preaching the Gospel everywhere (Mk 16:20), and it being accepted by their hearers under the influence of the Holy Spirit, gather together the universal Church, which the Lord established on the apostles and built upon blessed Peter, their chief, Christ Jesus Himself being the supreme cornerstone (cf. Rv 21:14; Mt 16:18; Eph 2:20).

2002 Cardinal Castrillón Hoyos, Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy and President of the Pontifical Commission “Ecclesia Dei,” *Presentation of the Holy Father’s Autograph Letter to the Apostolic Administrator*

—*universal authority | infallibility (Peter the “rock,” “certainty of divine assistance”)*—

I thus bring you the fatherly heart of the Vicar of Christ, the universal Pastor, the Rock, on whom Christ chose to found his Church. I bring you the wide open arms of John Paul II, the Peter of today, his are arms that, like the colonnade of St Peter’s, are open in a universal embrace, that is also a pressing invitation to unity, communion and mission!

It is true that our time is difficult, it is true that the barque of the Church must sail through stormy waters, stirred up by winds of ideologies and cultures that are anti-human and for this very reason, anti-Christian. It is true that disagreements on the historical and human front can cause the waves to seep into the boat, as happened when the Apostles fearful and dismayed, on the Lake of Gennesaret, appealed to Christ who seemed asleep: “Save us, Lord, we are perishing” (Mt 8:25).

This is true indeed, but a sovereign voice rises above all our troubles, doubts, perplexities and fears, “the” voice: “Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?” (Mt 8:26). “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the

powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16:18). Yes, Peter's barque can find itself in stormy seas, but it enjoys the certainty of divine assistance—"ever tossed on the waves, and ever victorious", an act of faith St Alphonsus Mary de' Liguori liked to repeat.

Christ the Lord is in the boat, Peter, the perpetual principle and visible foundation of the Church's unity is at the helm and the Immaculate Virgin continues down through history to crush the head of the serpent until the end of time (cf. Gn 3:15).

This is the faith that has conquered the world, this is the faith that we glory to profess!