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MM HMTHE PAPAL OFFICE

We take as our starting point the recognition (para.23) that the unity in love and truth of the whole Christian community must be served, within the communion of all the bishops, by an episcope at the universal level. To the universal primate, who exercises this episcope, we ascribe the powers necessary to carry out faithfully this office - neither more nor less. This is, in fact, what we mean by his jurisdiction. Because his office is concerned with the unity of the whole Church, his jurisdiction is universal. It is also 'ordinary' because determined by his office. Furthermore, because this office is strictly the office of a bishop within the community of all the bishops, and since the episcopal ministry belongs to the fundamental structure of the Church, it is also itself intrinsic to the Church. This is what we mean when we say it is "de iure divino" i.e. it is part of God's design for the universal koinonia. This jurisdiction is also 'immediate', because for the sake of the unity of the whole church, the universal primate may intervene, if necessary, in any local church, but he must do this in such a way as to sustain the office of the bishop and to bring him the help he needs to keep his people in the fulness of communion of faith and charity. Within the strict limits inherent in his office which is "in aedificationem et non in destructionem Ecclesiae", he does not infringe the responsibility of the local bishop for his own church.

Communion in the profession of the one faith is at the heart of the unity of the Church, and is consequently one of the principal pre-occupations of episcope in the Church. What we call magisterium

is that facet of episcopal jurisdiction which is concerned with the maintaining of the Church in the truth. The magisterium of the universal primate is the corresponding facet of his universal jurisdiction. Consequently, what we have already said of the relation of the jurisdiction of the universal primate to the jurisdiction of the bishops has to be applied to the exercise of his own magisterium. The infallible teaching of the universal primate, therefore, has to be understood in this framework and in the light of the very rigorous conditions laid down in the First Vatican Council. "For the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope's dogmatic definitions which, fulfilling the criteria of infallibility, are preserved from error, do no more but no less than express the mind of the Church on issues concerning Divine Revelation." (24c).

The expression of Vatican I that papal definitions are 'irreformable of themselves, not because of the consent of the Church', was not intended to exempt the universal primate from the obligation to enquire into the mind of the Church, nor to claim that such definitions do not permit re-statement in other terms. "The phrase was intended as a rejection of the fourth of the Gallican Four Articles of 1682, which stated that the pope's judgment is not irreformable unless the consent of the Church be given to it' (DS 2284), and no wider implications should be read into it. The central point of the clause is that a papal definition, made under conditions that satisfy the stringent requirements and qualifications written into the 1870 decree, does not require subsequent ratification by a general council before it can possess juridical validity."

Just as the universal primate exercises his immediate jurisdiction only in exceptional circumstances, so his magisterium is infallible only when the faith of the Church requires his solemn intervention. In the other instances of his magisterium, the authority of his statements depends upon the truth which they express in communion with his fellow bishops.

The foundation of this service of all the churches is seen by Catholic Tradition in the role of Peter among the apostles as it emerges from the New Testament writings taken as a whole. For, at least at the level of the definitive redaction of the New Testament, it is undeniable that the person of Peter stands out quite sharply among the other apostles. Catholic Tradition saw in this fact a providential design already acknowledged in the apostolic age. Because at the end of the first preaching of the Gospel, which closed the apostolic age, Peter, even as Paul, gave his supreme witness in the city of Rome, the church of this city was quickly recognised as having, amongst the other churches, special prerogatives. Consequently, the bishop of the See came to exercise within a short time among his fellow bishops a function analogous to the one the New Testament documents ascribe to Peter amongst the other apostles. The experience of this service of unity and the reflection of the Church on this experience led Catholic Tradition to become aware of its significance, which finds expression in the teaching of the two Vatican Councils.