

The Magisterium¹

RCIA
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The word “magisterium” refers to the unique teaching authority of bishops and to the bishops themselves. The word is a synonym for the college of bishops under the headship of the bishop of Rome.

The magisterium is composed of the pope (the Bishop of Rome) and all other bishops.

We have one pope and lots of bishops:

Dioceses	Bishops	Catholics
OKC†	1	100,000
LA (largest)	10*	4 million
USA (194)	300	70 million
World (3,026)	4,876	1 billion

† 118 parishes

* 1 bishop and 9 auxiliary bishops

Wal-mart is the largest corporation in the world with 1 million employees. The Church obviously needs considerably more organization than Wal-Mart.

Our connection (church = diocese)

- St. Monica Parish → Church (Archdiocese of OKC — western OK)
- Province of OKC: dioceses of Tulsa (eastern OK) and Little Rock (Arkansas)
- [US Conference of Catholic Bishops]
- Other Churches of world
- Church of Rome

The church is not a democracy...Neither is it a monarchy

To the extent of their knowledge, competency, or authority the **laity** are entitled, and indeed sometimes duty-bound, to express their opinion on matters which concern the good of the church (*Lumen gentium* #37).²

Bishops

Each bishop is the *individual* pastor of his own church. With the pope, the bishops belong to a universal college responsible for the welfare of all churches.

¹ *By What Authority—A Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the faithful*, Richard Gaillardetz, 2003.

² *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* from Second Vatican Council.

A bishop gets his authority through episcopal ordination. The pope appoints bishops, but does not delegate power or authority to them, since it comes from ordination.

A “special charism of truth” is given to bishops and it is his responsibility alone to exercise it. He is the authoritative teacher and judge of the faith, responsible for safeguarding it from distortion and error.

Archbishop Beltran recently corrected a deacon.

Through episcopal ordination each bishop is inserted into the college of bishops, who together with the pope, and never apart from him, have supreme and full authority over the universal church.

Christ is the head of the whole Church, not the pope. The pope is the head of the college of bishops because from ancient times that the church of Rome was given distinctive primacy among all the churches. The pope is the servant of the servants of God.

There are various teachings of the church by

- an individual bishop
- a bishops’ conference
- an ecumenical conference
- the pope

It is difficult to assess the authority of such documents.

The exercise of the Magisterium

Ordinary Magisterium	→ Individual bishop (non-infallible)
	→ Groupings of bishops (non-infallible)
	→ Bishop of Rome (non-infallible)
Extraordinary Magisterium (rarely used: 5 times since 1336)	→ The college of bishops issuing a solemn definition while gathered in an ecumenical council (infallible)
	→ The Bishop of Rome (as head of the College of Bishops) issuing a solemn definition <i>ex cathedra</i> (infallible)
Ordinary Universal Magisterium	→ Whole college of bishops dispersed throughout the world when united in judgment that a teaching is to held as definitive (infallible)

Ordinary: bishop is chief catechist of local church and seeks to bring new insight into church reaching. While not infallible, we have obligation to listen and be respectful.

Infallibility is with respect to faith and morals and is said in a special way, such as “we teach and define as divinely revealed dogma....”