

Core Theology on the Papacy

A Resource for Catechesis in Preparation for the Visit of the Holy Father to the United States

The following information pertains to three general areas of catechesis in preparation for the pastoral visit of Pope Benedict XVI in April of 2008. The first area, "The Ministry of the Pope" deals with the unique office of the Roman Pontiff in the life of the Church.¹ The second area, "The Present Pontiff," attempts to acquaint the faithful with aspects of the personal life and vocation of Pope Benedict XVI, as well as his service prior to his election as Supreme Pontiff. The third area, "The Pope as Bishop," presents the office of the Supreme Pontiff, and the College of Bishops in union with him. It emphasizes areas of ministry and authority exercised by the Pope. These resources rely upon Scripture, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, *The United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, Canon Law and secondary sources.

CATECHESIS I: The Ministry of the Pope

1. What are some of the scriptural references to St. Peter and his ministry?

Some of the scriptural references to St. Peter and his ministry include:

Matthew 16:16-19

Simon Peter said in reply, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to him in reply, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." [Jesus] said to him, "Feed my sheep." Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you

¹ In this document, we refer not only to the technically correct "Office of the Pope," but also to the "Ministry of the Pope."

where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

Mark 3:16

[he appointed the Twelve:] Simon, whom he named Peter...

Mark 9:2

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them.

Luke 22:31-32

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 24:34

...who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!"

1 Corinthians 15:5

...that he appeared to *Kephas*, then to the Twelve.

2. What is the mission Jesus entrusted to Peter and the other disciples?

Jesus, the Son of God, is the One sent by the Father. Jesus has a twofold mission: to reveal the Father's love and the forgiveness of sins. Many people followed Jesus and were called "disciples." The word "disciple" means "learner." Jesus called twelve of his disciples and appointed them as his Apostles. The word "Apostle" means "one who is sent." The Twelve Apostles are distinguished by a fourfold criterion: 1) the apostle received a call from Christ to be an Apostle; 2) the apostle received a commission from Christ to preach in his name as an Apostle; 3) the apostle was an eyewitness to the public ministry of Jesus with the special feature of "dwelling with the Lord" (this criterion is suspended for the apostleship of St. Paul); 4) and the apostle is a witness to the resurrected Jesus.

The Apostles form a "college" of those who by office of the Apostle share in the mission of Jesus. In appointing the Apostles, Jesus established them with a unique office in his Church. He also gave them the command to continue his mission, saying, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you"² and he promised to remain with them until the end of the world.³ Already in the New Testament, the office of Apostle is transmitted to the

² Jn 20:21.

³ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) 175; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1997) 858-861.

successors of the Apostles the bishops, as seen in Matthew 28:16-20, the Great Commission. The Apostolic Succession continues through to the current day in the college of bishops who as pastors govern the Church in virtue of their unity with the head of the college, the pope.

3. The office of bishop is divided into three powers or functions. What are they?

The three functions or offices into which the office of bishop is divided are the powers/functions of teaching, governing and sanctifying.

4. Why do we call the Pope the Vicar of Christ?

Jesus gave an office uniquely to St. Peter, the first of the Apostles, to be transmitted to the Successors of St. Peter. A vicar is someone who stands in the place of another. Peter was chosen by the Lord himself to be his vicar. He was not elected by the other Apostles to preside over the Church. Jesus Christ specifically prayed for Peter.

5. What do we mean by the term “the power of the keys”?

The Lord gave an office uniquely to St. Peter. The “power of the keys” entrusted to him⁴ represents this authority.⁵ By virtue of his office the Pope possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely.

6. Why do we call the Pope the Servant of the Servants of God?

The Pope is the head of the College of Bishops. He serves those who serve. When Christ bestowed special gifts on Peter, these were not to be considered or used as special privileges for his own benefit; rather, these special gifts were to be a means of serving others. The Pope’s life is spent in imitation of Jesus who came to serve and not to be served.

7. Why do we call the Pope the Holy Father?

Catholics (and even non-Catholics) refer to the Pope as “Holy Father” or “his Holiness” because these terms remind us that the Pope is the universal pastor of the Church, into which Christ wants to gather all the children of God into one (cf. John 11:52). The Pope’s office has an objective sanctity about it, flowing from its divine institution.⁶

8. How many Popes have there been in the history of the Church, including the present Pope?

⁴ Mt 16:19.

⁵ *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2006) 111.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Including our present Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, there have been 265 Popes in the history of the Church.⁷

9. What do we mean by “Apostolic Succession”?

Apostolic Succession refers to the handing on of apostolic preaching and authority from Apostles to their successors, the bishops by the laying on of hands. The office of bishop is a permanent office in the Church. Apostolic succession is the transmission, by means of the sacrament of Holy Orders, of the office and power of the Apostles to their successors, the bishops. Thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Church remains in communion of faith and life throughout the ages, while she carries on the mission of Christ. Reference to Apostolic Succession can be traced back to the New Testament. Reference to it can also be found in the earliest writings of the Fathers of the Church - in Clement of Rome's *Epistle to the Corinthians*, which was written around 96 A.D. and Ignatius of Antioch's letter to the church of Philadelphia in Asia that was written in or about 106 A.D.⁸

10. Name the Popes who reigned during the 20th century.

The Popes who reigned during the twentieth century include Leo XIII, who reigned as Pope from 1878 to 1903; St. Pius X, who reigned from 1903 to 1914; Benedict XV, who reigned from 1914 to 1922; Pius XI, who reigned from 1922 to 1939; Pius XII, who reigned from 1939 to 1958; Blessed John XXIII, who reigned from 1958 to 1963; Paul VI, who reigned from 1963 to 1978; John Paul I, who reigned as Pope for only thirty-three days in 1978; and the Venerable Servant of God John Paul II, who reigned from 1978 to 2005.

11. Why do we say that the Pope is the visible source and foundation of unity?

This statement is taken from one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*, 23). The Pope, that is, the Bishop of Rome and Successor of St. Peter, is “the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful.”⁹ This refers to the fact that by the decision of Christ, St. Peter is charged with confirming the faith of the brethren. Papal teaching through the centuries has proclaimed the faith of the Church and has been the center of unity and peace in guarding the truth of Christ.

12. Why does the Pope permanently reside in Rome?

Since the Pope is the successor of Saint Peter who was the Bishop of Rome, he like Saint Peter lives in Rome. Rome is also the city where both Saints Peter and Paul were martyred.

⁷ For a listing of the Popes, see *2008 Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Almanac*, ed. Matthew Bunson (Huntington, Indiana: 2007) 236-40.

⁸ *Compendium* 176; cf. CCC 861-865.

⁹ CCC 882; *Lumen Gentium* 23. For commentary, see *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 5th edition, ed. Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., Thomas Comerford Lawler, Kris D. Stubna (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2005) 195.

13. What is Vatican City?

The State of Vatican City is the territorial seat of the papacy. It happens to be the smallest sovereign state in the world. Situated within the city of Rome, it embraces an area of 108.7 acres. Within its limits one finds the following buildings: the Vatican Palace, museums, art galleries, libraries, a radio station, post office, bank, astronomical observatory, offices, apartments, service facilities, St. Peter's Basilica, and neighboring buildings between the Basilica and the Viale Vaticano. The extraterritorial rights of Vatican City extend to more than ten buildings (including the major basilicas and office buildings of various congregations of the Roman Curia) and to the papal villas at Castel Gandolfo, the summer residence of the Holy Father that is located fifteen miles southeast of the City of Rome.

14. When did Vatican City become an independent country?

For many hundreds of years the Pope ruled the Papal States, 16,000 square miles of land across the central section of Italy. With the exception of the areas surrounding the Vatican, the Church of the Lateran Basilica in Rome and the Villas of Castel Gandolfo, these lands were seized from the Pope in 1870 by the kingdom of Italy and became part of the nation in 1871. Controversy occasioned by the seizure of this land and the voluntary confinement of the Pope to the Vatican was settled with the ratification of the Lateran Agreement on June 7, 1929 by the Italian government and Vatican City. This is when Vatican City became formally recognized as an independent country.

15. What is the Magisterium of the Church?

The Magisterium of the Church is the living, teaching office of the Church, whose task it is to give an authentic interpretation of the Word of God, whether in its written form (Sacred Scripture) or in the form of Tradition. The Magisterium ensures the Church's fidelity to the teaching of the Apostles in matters of faith and morals.¹⁰

16. What does the term "papal infallibility" mean, and when does the Pope teach infallibly?

Infallibility, which is a charism,¹¹ has been defined as "a certain inability to err in believing or teaching revealed truth."¹² Infallibility is exercised when the Roman Pontiff, in virtue of his office as the Supreme Pastor of the Church, by which he enjoys a special gift of the Holy Spirit, and as head of the College of Bishops in union with him and especially when joined together in an Ecumenical Council, proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. Infallibility is also exercised when the Pope and bishops in their ordinary Magisterium are in agreement in proposing a doctrine as

¹⁰ CCC 85, 890, 2033.

¹¹ A charism is "a special gift or grace of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefits the Church" (CCC Glossary).

¹² *The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults*, 5th edition, ed. Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., Thomas Comerford Lawler, Kris D. Stubna (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2005) 191.

definitive. Every one of the faithful must adhere to such teaching with obedience of faith.¹³

¹³ *Compendium* 185; cf., *CCC* 891.

CATECHESIS II: The Present Pontiff

- 1. When and where was Pope Benedict XVI born?**
- 2. What was the Pope's name when he was born?**

Joseph Alois Ratzinger, later to become Pope Benedict XVI, was born on April 16, 1927 (Holy Saturday in 1927) in the town of Marktl am Inn, a small town and market center in southern Germany, in the province of Bavaria, the most Catholic area in Germany. The town is located in the Diocese of Passau. He is the third and youngest child of Joseph Ratzinger, Sr., a police officer descended from an old family of farmers of modest economic means. Pope Benedict XVI's mother was the daughter of artisans from Rimsting, Austria, in south Tyrol, near the northern border of Italy. Prior to her marriage, she worked as a cook in a number of hotels. His brother, Georg Ratzinger, is a priest and, like his brother Joseph, a musician. His sister, Maria Ratzinger, never married and managed Cardinal Ratzinger's household until her death in 1991. He lived in Marktl am Inn for only two years before moving to Traunstein, just south of Marktl am Inn and about 20 miles west of Salzburg.

- 3. What are some of the important events in Pope Benedict's early life that prepared him to exercise his ministry as Pope?**

Pope Benedict XVI's relatives agree that Joseph Ratzinger expressed his desire to be a priest when he was a very young boy. They relate a story about the future Pope which took place when he was only five years old. He was with a group of children who welcomed the visiting Cardinal Archbishop of Munich with flowers. Struck by the Cardinal's brilliant red robes, he announced that very same day that he wanted to be a cardinal.

Like his predecessor, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict grew up at a time when the Nazi Regime had overtaken not only Germany, but many surrounding countries of Europe as well. In 1941, just after his 14th birthday, he was forced to enroll in the Hitler Youth Corps, but he was an unenthusiastic member and never attended any of the meetings, reflecting his father's disdain for the Nazis. In that same year, one of Ratzinger's cousins of his own age, suffering from Down Syndrome, was murdered by the Nazis in the program to do away with those who were physically or mentally imperfect. He also witnessed the Nazis beating his parish priest before the priest celebrated Mass.¹⁴

In 1943, while still in the minor seminary at age 16, Joseph was drafted into the German army as an anti-aircraft gunner. He then trained in the infantry. Due to illness, he did not have to undergo the usual rigors of military duty. In 1945, when the Allied front drew closer to his post, he escaped from the army and found his way back home to Traunstein. He was put into a POW camp, but was released a few months after the war in the summer of 1945. He reentered the seminary in Traunstein with his brother Georg in November of that year. The brothers were ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising on June 29, 1951, the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

¹⁴ <http://www.vatican.va>, *Biography of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI*, pg. 1.

It was the faith and education received from his parents that prepared him for the harsh experiences of his youth. "It was precisely during that complex situation that the young Joseph discovered the beauty and truth of faith in Christ. Fundamental for this was the attitude of his family, who always gave a clear witness of goodness and hope, rooted in a convinced attachment to the Church."¹⁵

The experience of war contributed greatly to the future Pope's concern with truth and hope that come from faith in Christ, a concern clearly manifested throughout his academic career, his priesthood, his many years of service to the Church prior to his election to the papacy and now during his tenure as Pope.

4. Pope Benedict as teacher and author

A year after his ordination, Joseph Ratzinger began teaching as a high school instructor in Freising. Several years after earning his doctorate in theology, he began a university career as a lecturer on dogmatic and fundamental theology. He taught in Greising, Bonn, Múnster, Tübingen and at the University of Regensburg. From 1962 to 1965 the future Pope participated in the Second Vatican Council as a *peritus* or theological advisor to Josef Cardinal Frings of Cologne.

The present Pope is a gifted linguist which has served him well as an author and teacher and especially now in his position as head of the Universal Church. In addition to his native German, he is fluent in the Italian, French, English, Spanish and Latin languages. He also has some knowledge of Portuguese and can read ancient Greek and biblical Hebrew.

The Pope is also a prolific writer. In addition to numerous articles written prior to his election, he has authored 36 books, as well as two Papal Encyclicals. In 1972, along with Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac (both later named Cardinals) and other important theologians, he initiated the highly reputable theological journal *Communio*.

5. Joseph Ratzinger as Archbishop of Munich

On March 25, 1977 (the Feast of the Annunciation), Pope Paul VI named Joseph Ratzinger as the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, a position he held for only four years until Pope John Paul II appointed him as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission and President of the International Theological Commission. In light of these later appointments, and particularly of his election as Pope in 2005, the episcopal motto he chose as Archbishop of Munich and Freising foreshadows those later appointments and reveals his passion for truth: "Cooperators Veritatis" (collaborators of the truth) (3 John 8). In his autobiographical work, *Milestones*, he comments on his selection of that motto: "On the one hand I saw it as the relation between my previous task as professor and my new mission. In spite of different approaches, what was involved, and continued to be so, was following the truth and being at its service. On the other hand I chose that motto because in today's world the theme of truth is omitted almost entirely, as something too

¹⁵ <http://www.vatican.va>, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

great for man, and yet everything collapses if truth is missing.”¹⁶ That same year, Pope Paul VI elevated him to the rank of Cardinal.

6. What important curial offices did Pope Benedict XVI exercise for 23 years until he became Pope?

Cardinal Ratzinger exercised numerous administrative responsibilities over the span of 23 years at the Vatican. He was a member of the Council of the Secretariat of State for Relations with States, of the Congregations for the Oriental Churches, for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, for Bishops, for the Evangelization of People, for Catholic Education, for Clergy and the Causes of Saints. He was also a member of the Pontifical Councils for Promoting Christian Unity and for Culture, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, the Pontifical Commissions for Latin America, “*Ecclesia Dei*”, for the Authentic Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law, and for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law of the Oriental Churches.¹⁷ In all of these experiences he gained an insight into the complexity of the world and of the Church that prepared him to serve as Pope of the Church he had served for his entire life.

Of all these positions, the one for which he is most known was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. This congregation has authority over the teaching of Catholic doctrine. A consummate theologian himself, Cardinal Ratzinger was well equipped to evaluate the orthodoxy of the writings of theologians throughout the world. In addressing these issues, he remained unswerving in his devotion to the truth that comes only from faith in Jesus Christ.

7. How did Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger become Pope Benedict XVI?

The Pope is elected to that office by members of the College of Cardinals who have not yet reached their 80th birthday. Upon the death of Pope John Paul II, the cardinals gathered at the Vatican in what is called a “conclave.” The term derives from the Latin phrase *con clave*, literally “with a key,” since the voting cardinals are locked in the Sistine Chapel for the process of electing a new Pope.¹⁸

While the cardinals gathered a few days prior to the election process, the conclave opened with a Mass in the morning, together with time for prayer and discernment. There is no campaigning for the office, as is the case for almost every other kind of election. The man to be chosen will be the successor of Peter, and the cardinals seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that they choose the man whom the Lord has destined from all eternity to be the next Pope.

In the afternoon of the first day of the conclave, two ballot sessions were conducted, with no one candidate receiving the necessary one-half plus one votes of all the participating cardinals. On the second day of balloting, in the fourth balloting session, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger received the necessary majority of the votes and thus was

¹⁶ <http://www.vatican.va>, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁷ <http://www.vatican.va>, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁸ For a short and very readable account of the procedures for electing a pope, see *When a Pope Dies*, Christopher M. Bellitto, Ph.D. (Liguori, Missouri: Liguori Publications, 1998).

elected Pope on April 19, 2005, three days after his 78th birthday. It was one of the shortest conclaves in recent history.

His first words to the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square immediately after his election was announced reveal his humility in requesting our prayers: "Dear brothers and sisters, after the great Pope John Paul II, the cardinals have elected me, a simple, humble laborer in the vineyard of the Lord. The fact that the Lord knows how to work and to act even with insufficient instruments comforts me, and above all I entrust myself to your prayers. In the joy of the Risen Lord, confident of his unfailing help, let us move forward. The Lord will help us, and Mary, His Most Holy Mother, will be on our side. Thank you."¹⁹

Benedict XVI is not the first German Pope, but rather the ninth. The last German Pope prior to Benedict XVI was Pope Adrian VI who reigned for twenty months (1522-1523), and like Pope Benedict XVI was a university professor (Louvain) and the first reforming Pope of the 16th century. Adrian was also the last non-Italian Pope until the election of John Paul II almost 500 years later.²⁰ Benedict was elected Pope on the feast day of Pope Leo IX, (1048-1054) the greatest German Pope of the Middle Ages and a reformer. Although he reigned for more than five years, he spent only 6 months in Rome. The rest of the time was devoted to pastoral visitations to Italy, Germany, France, and as far east as Hungary, to "project an image of the papacy in action to those for whom the Pope had only been a name, sometimes one of ill repute."²¹

8. When the Pope was elected, why did he choose the name Benedict?

The taking of a new name by the one chosen to be Pope dates from St. Peter himself, the first Pope, when the Lord says to him, after Peter's confession of faith, "Blessed are you, Simon, son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church."²²

The change of a name indicates a change in identity. He is no longer Joseph Ratzinger, but Pope Benedict XVI, the successor of St. Peter who continues the same mission the Lord entrusted first to him: "Go forth and baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you."²³ Likewise, Jesus handed to Pope Benedict XVI the same keys of authority that he handed to St. Peter upon appointing him as the head and foundation of the Church: "I give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."²⁴

The binding and unbinding power of the keys is to be understood as the authority to forgive sins, to make doctrinal pronouncements as well as to make and enact disciplinary decisions. It is to be noted that the Lord entrusts these keys not to the

¹⁹ The official translation of the Italian from <http://www.vatican.va>

²⁰ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 1967, "Adrian VI, Pope," vol. 1, p. 147.

²¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, p. 642.

²² Mt 16:17-18.

²³ Mt 28:19-20.

²⁴ Mt 16:19.

Apostles in general, but specifically and uniquely to Peter. In doing so, the Lord entrusts these keys to Peter not merely as an individual. Rather, in entrusting them to Peter whom he has just named as head of the Church, the Lord creates the office by which these keys are transmitted to every successor of Peter, that is, to every bishop who legitimately occupies that same office first entrusted to Peter. For the Lord charges each such successor of Peter with the same mission originally entrusted to him: *"Feed my lambs, feed my sheep"*²⁵

Helpful in understanding Pope Benedict XVI's relationship to St. Peter as his successor are the very last words of St. Matthew's account of the commissioning of the apostles: "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."²⁶ The Lord, who is always with us, re-entrusts to Benedict XVI, as Pope and Successor of Peter, the same and continuing mission that He first entrusted to Peter. It is precisely because the Lord Jesus remains with us that the office first entrusted to Peter remains with us as well. Therefore we can and must say that Benedict XVI *is* Peter for the Church in our age.

Pope Benedict XVI himself explained why he chose the name Benedict at his first General Audience speech to those gathered in St. Peter's Square: "I would like to begin by reflecting on the name that I chose upon becoming Bishop of Rome and universal Pastor of the Church. I wanted to be called Benedict XVI in order to create a spiritual bond with Benedict XV, who steered the Church through the period of turmoil caused by the First World War. He was a courageous and authentic prophet of peace and strove with brave courage first of all to avert the tragedy of the war and then to limit its harmful consequences. Treading in his footsteps, I would like to place my ministry at the service of reconciliation and harmony between persons and peoples, since I am profoundly convinced that the great good of peace is first and foremost a gift of God, a precious but unfortunately fragile gift to pray for, safeguard and build up, day after day, with the help of all. The name 'Benedict' also calls to mind the extraordinary figure of the great "Patriarch of Western Monasticism," St. Benedict of Norcia, Co-Patron of Europe together with Sts. Cyril and Methodius, and the women Saints, Bridget of Sweden, Catherine of Siena and Edith Stein. The gradual expansion of the Benedictine Order that he founded had an enormous influence on the spread of Christianity across the Continent. St. Benedict is therefore deeply venerated, also in Germany and particularly in Bavaria, my birthplace; he is a fundamental reference point for European unity and a powerful reminder of the indispensable Christian roots of his culture and civilization."²⁷

The name "Benedict" reflects two very personal experiences and continuing concerns of the Holy Father. Pope Benedict XV witnessed the horrors and tragedies of World War I; Pope Benedict XVI personally experienced similar, if not worse, horrors and tragedies of World War II. Like his predecessor, the present Pope is striving to be a peacemaker, both within and without the Church. His concern for peace is a continuation of the efforts of Pope Paul VI whose words before the United Nations in 1964 still ring in Benedict XVI's ears, "No more war; war never again."

²⁵ Jn 31:15-17.

²⁶ Mt 28:20.

²⁷ [Http://www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), First General Audience Speech of Pope Benedict XVI, April 27, 2005.

9. What are some of the hallmarks of Benedict XVI's papacy?

Pope Benedict's citing of Benedict of Norcia as "a powerful reminder of the indispensable Christian roots of his culture and civilization" is a clear reflection of his concern that a de-Christianized Europe is one that is in danger of losing true faith and true reason. Closely allied to the de-Christianization of Europe are his concerns that secularism and nationalism are doing immense damage to the faith and to human dignity as expressed in his address, "The Crisis of Culture," issued the day before the death of his predecessor, John Paul II. Peace, de-Christianization of Europe, rising secularism, consumerism and nationalism will probably be important themes during his papacy.

Other initiatives give us a preview of what will be additional hallmarks of his papacy. The closing paragraph of the homily given at his Inaugural Mass speaks passionately about a now recurring theme of his papacy: friendship with Christ.

"Are we not perhaps all afraid in some way: If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprives us of our freedom? No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. We give ourselves to him; we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ—and you will find true life. Amen.

This theme of friendship with Jesus Christ already pervades many of Benedict XVI's homilies, addresses and general audiences. Reinforcing the faithful's openness to friendship with Christ is the very purpose of his latest book, *Jesus of Nazareth*, in which he writes: "This impression [that we have very little certain knowledge of Jesus] has by now penetrated deeply into the minds of the Christian people at large. This is a dramatic situation for faith, because its point of reference is being placed in doubt: intimate friendship with Jesus, on which everything depends, is in danger of clutching at thin air."²⁸

Other themes that have already surfaced in this papacy are the unity and salvific universality of the Church together with continuing ecumenical efforts regarding dissident Catholics, the Orthodox, Protestants as well as dialogue with other religions (i.e., Judaism, Islam and Buddhism). Areas of concern that will certainly mark his papacy are consumerism, the "Dictatorship of Relativism," moral theology and liturgical renewal - particularly in allowing more frequent use of the Tridentine Mass,

²⁸ *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Benedict XVI, (New York: Doubleday, 2007) p. xii.

the Mass celebrated in Latin according to the rite prior to the liturgical renovations of the Second Vatican Council.²⁹ Some of these concerns will certainly surface in his pastoral visitations throughout the world.

10. What are some of the Pope's hobbies?

Pope Benedict enjoys writing in what little spare time he has. He has written over 35 books, numerous articles and two encyclical letters. During his later years as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he unsuccessfully tried to retire so as to devote more time to writing. The Pope is also an accomplished pianist. He tries to practice every day, and his favorite composers are Bach and Mozart.

11. Why is the Pope coming to Washington and New York? When will he arrive? How can we best prepare ourselves to welcome him?

For many years following 1870, the Pope was termed a "prisoner of the Vatican," referring to the fact that once elected Pope, he rarely ever left Vatican City. Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) was the first modern Pope to begin pastoral visits within Italy. His successor, Pope Paul VI, was the first Pope to travel throughout the world, a practice continued on a more extensive basis by Pope John Paul II. The Pope visits different countries for the same reason that a bishop visits the different parishes in his diocese: to meet with the people, to celebrate Mass with them, and to have the opportunity to directly teach his people. The bishop is the sign of the unity of the local Church with the universal Church, and it is important that people experience that unity by seeing the bishop who is the visible sign of such unity. The faithful are not just members of a particular parish, but are members of the entire local Church whose pastor is the bishop. A pastoral visit by the local bishop is also an opportunity for him to address certain particular concerns of his and of the parishioners.

Pope Benedict XVI will make a pastoral visit to the United States, visiting Washington and New York beginning on April 15 through April 20, 2008. This will be the first papal visit to the United States since Pope John Paul II's visit in 1999. During his stay in Washington, he will visit President Bush at the White House and then celebrate the Eucharist at the Washington Nationals baseball stadium. On April 16, 2008, Pope Benedict will celebrate his 81st birthday while in Washington. He will then go to New York City, where he will address the United Nations, visit "Ground Zero," the site of the former World Trade Center and celebrate Mass at Yankee Stadium.

The visit of the Holy Father will be a unique opportunity for us to renew our unity as a local Church and our unity with the Church throughout the world through the visible sign of that worldwide unity, the Pope himself. He wants to meet us, as well as give us the opportunity to meet him. He will undoubtedly speak to us about some of his major concerns as outlined above, and give us his vision of the Church, a vision of hope, a hope that we desperately need to renew at these crucial times for our country and our culture.

²⁹ *Motu Proprio Data Summorum Pontificum*, July 7, 2007. Cf. <http://www.vatican.va>, *op. cit.*

There are several ways in which we can prepare ourselves for this momentous visit. When an important guest is coming to visit, we make sure that our house is in order. So that our hearts and minds are open and ready to receive his message, we should make use of the sacrament of Reconciliation prior to his coming. Since the unity of the Church is experienced primarily in the sacrament of the Eucharist, we should participate in the Mass and in Eucharistic adoration as often as possible, even on a daily basis. Of course, we must pray for him, for a safe journey and stay in our country, and pray that the Holy Spirit will inspire him to speak in the name of Jesus as Christ's Vicar on earth. When someone important is coming to visit us, we should get to know something about that person prior to his or her arrival. Therefore, we should participate in all the catechetical opportunities and resources available to us to get to know our Holy Father so as to greet him in the proper way and renew our fidelity to him and thus to the whole Church.

CATECHESIS III: The Pope as Bishop

1. Why do we call the Pope the Bishop of Rome?

Every diocesan bishop, in distinction to an auxiliary bishop and the bishop of a personal prelate, is the chief pastor or local ordinary of a portion of the people of God territorially defined, which is referred to as a diocese. Thus, the term “Bishop of Rome” refers to the diocesan bishop who is the chief pastor or ordinary of the city of Rome as well as surrounding areas included within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Diocese of Rome.³⁰

Strictly speaking, the Pope is the Bishop of Rome in that he has all ordinary, proper and immediate power that is required for the exercise of his pastoral function within the territorial limits of the Diocese of Rome. However, the Bishop of Rome is also the successor of St. Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, to whom the Lord uniquely entrusted the Power of the Keys.³¹ The Pope’s title as Bishop of Rome is pre-eminent over all the other titles of the Pope, such as head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and the pastor of the universal Church on earth, because all these additional titles are derived from his authority as Bishop of Rome.

Pope Benedict XVI’s coat of arms bears witness to the fact that the Pope is first and foremost the Bishop of Rome. The personal coats of arms of all prior Roman pontiffs were situated on a background that bore the image of the papal tiara and the crossed keys. Pope Benedict XVI has replaced the tiara with a mitre, the traditional symbol of the office of bishop.

2. What is the Pope’s cathedral church?

Every diocesan bishop has a cathedral, a designated church building where the bishop’s chair, the sign of his episcopal authority, is prominently situated. The term “cathedral” is derived from the Latin word *cathedra*, which means “chair,” specifically the chair that symbolizes the rank of diocesan bishop.

While most people think of St. Peter’s Basilica as the Pope’s church, it is not his cathedral. The Pope’s cathedral is the Archbasilica of St. John Lateran. Shortly after his inauguration as Pope on April 27, 2005, Benedict XVI took possession of his cathedral church at a special Mass on May 7, 2005.

3. What do we mean by the term “hierarchy?”

³⁰ A distinction is sometimes made between a “diocese” and an “archdiocese.” The latter is used to designate a diocese, which has a particular status in terms of the size of the Catholic population, its historical import or its designation as the capital of a country. There is no canonical difference between them. Thus, a “bishop” has no less power or authority than does an “archbishop.” One would think that, given the particular historical prominence of Rome, it would be considered an archdiocese. However, by long tradition Rome is spoken of as a diocese. The Pope is therefore the “bishop” and not the “archbishop” of Rome.

³¹ Mt 16:19. The Power of the Keys is understood as the authority to forgive, to make authoritative doctrinal judgments and to determine and enforce disciplinary pronouncements for the universal Church. See Catechesis II, no. 8 for further clarification.

The term “hierarchy” refers to an ordered ranking of levels of authority in a particular organization. As for the Church, it is *constituted* as a hierarchy by the Lord himself in his naming Peter as the rock or the foundation upon whom His Church is built.³² To him and to his successors the Lord entrusted the governance of that Church by conferring upon them the Power of the Keys.³³ Thus, the Church is a hierarchical organization of the People of God under the direction of the Pope and the college of bishops.³⁴ It is important to understand that, constituted in this way by the Lord himself, the Church is not free to replace its hierarchical structure with any other kind of structure.

4. What is the nature of the relationship between Pope Benedict XVI and the bishops of the Catholic Church?

The relationship between Pope Benedict XVI and the bishops of the Catholic Church is identical to the relationship between St. Peter and the other 11 Apostles. The gospels speak of the Apostles as “the Twelve,” indicating a corporate identity. Jesus Christ “constituted them in the form of a college or permanent assembly at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them. Just as by the Lord’s institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter’s successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.”³⁵ The Power of the Keys, the office of binding and loosing, while given primarily to Peter, was also given to the other members of the Twelve.³⁶ It is to all the Apostles, together with Peter, that the Lord gives the mission to “go forth and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”³⁷ The pastoral office of Peter and the other Apostles is the very foundation of the Church and is continued today by the bishops under the primacy of Pope Benedict XVI.

The primacy of Peter as head of the Apostles is shown very concretely in another aspect of the Pope’s relationship with his bishops. It was Christ who called the apostles and instituted them as the college of bishops. Thus, Benedict XVI, particularly in his role as the Vicar of Christ on earth, calls those who are to be bishops and appoints them as members of the college of bishops. Only the Pope, as head of the college of bishops, can act as Christ’s Vicar, appointing successors to the original Apostles.

Just as the Pope is the visible source and foundation of unity for the universal Church, individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of their own particular Churches or dioceses. These particular Churches are not “branch offices” of the universal Church, nor should the universal Church be considered as simply the sum, or the federation of all the particular Churches. Rather, a diocese “constitutes a particular Church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present

³² Mt 16:18.

³³ Mt 16:19.

³⁴ *Code of Canon Law* (Washington, D.C.: Canon Law Society of America, 1983) c. 330.

³⁵ CCC 880.

³⁶ CCC 881.

³⁷ Mt 28:18-20.

and operative.”³⁸ Since the bishops of particular churches are constituted as a college, each bishop shares the Pope’s concern for all the Churches.

5. What is an ecumenical council?

An ecumenical council is a gathering of the entire college of bishops, convoked and presided over by the Pope. It is in the gathering of an ecumenical council that the bishops of the Church, acting in union with the Pope, exercise supreme authority over the entire universal Church. The matters to be discussed are at the discretion of the Holy Father, although individual bishops (“council fathers”) can suggest agenda items if approved by the Pope. All the bishops, and only the bishops, can participate in an ecumenical council with voting rights. The last ecumenical council was the Second Vatican Council, convened in 1962 by Pope John XXIII and was concluded in 1965 under Pope Paul VI. Vatican II brought about sweeping reforms and renovations in almost every aspect of the Church’s understanding of her role in the world, its governance and organizational structures, its legal statutes and norms, and its liturgical practice.

6. What is the threefold mission of Christ that the Pope and all bishops exercise?

Through baptism, every member of the Christian faithful is anointed into the three-fold ministry of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet and king.³⁹ Lay members of the Christian faithful exercise this threefold ministry in a variety of ways. Parents, in particular, are charged with the responsibility of raising their children in the practice of the faith so as to let the grace of baptism bear fruit.⁴⁰ They, like all the faithful, share in the common priesthood of Jesus Christ and thus must make all the sacrifices necessary so that their children may “keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts.”⁴¹ They exercise the prophetic or teaching ministry of Jesus by praying with their children and preparing them for reception of the sacraments. The kingly ministry of Jesus is to be understood as his role as Servant King, and thus parents are to set the example for what it means to serve the needs of others.

For bishops, each of these ministries of Jesus is raised to the dignity of an office. This is clear from the Lord’s commission to the apostles, authorizing them to “go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”⁴² This charge is made explicit in the rite of ordination of bishops as successors of the Apostles: “Attend to the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit appoints you an overseer of the Church of God—in the name of the Father, whose image you personify in the Church—and in the name of the Son whose role of Teacher, Prophet and Shepherd you undertake—and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church of Christ and supports out weakness with his strength.”⁴³

³⁸ *CIC*, c. 369.

³⁹ *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*, 228 and *Rite of Baptism for Children*, 62.

⁴⁰ *Rite of Baptism for Children*, 39.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 64.

⁴² Mt 28:19-20.

⁴³ *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop*, 18. See also *CIC* c. 375 1,2.

Jesus entrusted his triple ministry to the Church. The ministries are usually termed the teaching office, the sanctifying office and the governing office of the Church.⁴⁴

7. How do bishops exercise the office of teaching?

The Roman Pontiff exercises the threefold office of teaching, sanctifying and governing the universal Church. Appointed by the Roman Pontiff, bishops exercise of these offices within their respective dioceses or particular Churches. The first task of a bishop is to preach the Gospel to all peoples in keeping with the command of Jesus himself.⁴⁵ The *Catechism*, using words from *Lumen Gentium*, describes the bishop as “‘heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers’ of the apostolic faith ‘endowed with the authority of Christ.’”⁴⁶ The bishops exercise their teaching office in union with the Roman Pontiff. The bishops must be united with the Roman Pontiff who is head of the college of bishops. When the bishops, as a body are united with the Successor of St. Peter they exercise the supreme Magisterium, above all in an Ecumenical Council.

Bishops exercise the office of teaching through preaching the homily during the celebration of the Eucharist, and during other sacramental liturgies. Bishops also teach through the proclamation of pastoral letters, and articles in the diocesan newspaper. Every address that a bishop may deliver through various means of social communication is an opportunity to exercise his teaching office. The bishop is the first teacher of all those entrusted to his pastoral care.

The bishop invites priest to collaborate with him in his ministry, in particular as pastors of parishes. The deacon is called to assist the bishop through the ministry of the Word and service of charity.

The bishop, through the parish pastor, may call the lay faithful to service as catechists and to various works of service for which the faithful are prepared through the reception of Baptism and Confirmation. The bishop has a particular role in overseeing education on the primary, secondary, graduate levels and beyond.

8. How do bishops exercise the office of sanctifying?

The bishop fulfills the office of sanctifying primarily through the sacred Liturgy as an exercise of the priestly ministry of Jesus Christ, in particular through the celebration of the sacraments. All worship in the Church is a participation in the priestly ministry of Christ, and is carried out by the Head and members of the mystical Body of Christ.

The bishop is the “high priest and principal dispenser of the mysteries of God.”⁴⁷ When the bishop celebrates the Eucharist, the “source and summit of all worship and Christian life,”⁴⁸ he presents the unity of the Church in a vivid manner. Also proper to

⁴⁴ *The Catholic Way: Faith for Living Today*, Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, (New York: Doubleday, 2001) 120.

⁴⁵ Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15.

⁴⁶ CCC 888.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, c. 835 ¶1.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, c. 897.

the diocesan bishop is the publication of liturgical norms, which bind everyone in his territory including religious houses, oratories and private chapels.

Priests, as fellow workers with the bishop, share in the bishop's sanctifying office. The bishop sends his priests to be ministers of the sacraments, in particular in the Eucharist. Deacons assist the priest in the ministering the sacraments. It is the Eucharist, in which the bishop is the celebrant, surrounded by his presbyters and joined by the deacons and the Christian faithful, that both signifies and effects the unity of the People of God and brings about the building up of the Body of Christ.

The Roman Pontiff oversees the liturgy of the Church. Members of the curia assist him with promulgations of norms regarding the liturgical celebrations, the publication of liturgical books, the reviewing and approving of the translation of liturgical books into vernacular languages, and insuring that liturgical norms are observed faithfully throughout the Church.

9. How do bishops carry out the office of governing?

By virtue of his office, the Roman Pontiff possesses "supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely."⁴⁹ The college of bishops as successors of the apostles, and in union with the pope as Head of the College assists the pope in the governing office of the Church. Diocesan bishops and local ordinaries govern the particular Churches assigned to them by the Pope.

By reason of their appointment from the Holy Father, diocesan bishops possess all the necessary, ordinary and immediate power to govern the particular Church entrusted to their care. The pope is the supreme legislator in the Church. The legislative power of diocesan bishops is not universal, but can be exercised only within and for the particular Church entrusted to their care. Such legislative power can never be used to contradict a universal law of the Church, but only to complement it. This legislative power he exercises personally. He exercises his executive power either personally or through the vicar general or episcopal vicar. He exercises judicial power through the judicial vicar of the diocesan tribunal and judges assigned to that tribunal.

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, must be the model according to which the power of governance is to be exercised. Relying on the example of the Good Shepherd, the bishop has "compassion for those who are ignorant and erring. He should not refuse to listen to his subjects whose welfare he promotes as of his very own children... The faithful...should be closely attached to the bishop as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father."⁵⁰

10. What is an encyclical? What is the name of Pope Benedict's most recent encyclical letter? What does the Pope say in that letter?

⁴⁹ *CIC* 331.

⁵⁰ *CCC* 896 (citing *LG* 31).

An encyclical is a “formal pastoral letter written by the Pope for the entire Church.”⁵¹ While diocesan bishops often write a pastoral letter to the faithful in their particular Church, the term “encyclical” is reserved to a papal letter since the term implies a letter that “goes all around” the universal Church. An encyclical letter is distinguished from other forms of papal writings such as briefs, bulls, rescripts and constitutions, which have juridical value different from an encyclical. It is a pastoral letter in that it usually deals with matters of faith, morals or Church discipline. Encyclical letters, like the documents of an ecumenical council, derive their title from the first two or three words of the letter itself.

To date, Pope Benedict has written two encyclicals: *Deus caritas est (God is Love)*, December 25, 2005, and *Spe salvi (On Christian Hope)*, November 30, 2007. *Deus caritas est* is a moving reflection on two concepts of love: *eros*, which is to be understood as possessive, often sexual, love and *agape*, unconditional and self-sacrificing love and their relationship with the *logos*, the living word of God.

His latest encyclical, *Spe salvi*, is a reflection on the virtue of hope. Here the Pope is drawing on his familiar theme of friendship or intimacy with God. We have become so accustomed to the Christian concept of God that “we almost cease to notice that we possess the hope that ensues from a real encounter with God.” Our modern and technological world has replaced belief in eternal salvation with a “faith in progress” and technology. While science can contribute greatly to building up the kingdom of God on earth, it can also be destructive to humankind and to our world. An over-emphasis on human reason and freedom often displaces the Christian virtue of hope. Redemption is often seen as coming from science and technology, and real faith is dismissed as unimportant and private. The main point of the encyclical is that hope enables people to face even the most difficult present circumstances. It is important to remember, the Pope writes, that salvation is “not an unending succession of days in the calendar, but something more like the supreme moment of satisfaction.”

⁵¹ *New Catholic Encyclopedia, op.cit.* vol. 5, p. 332.