Dogma and Devotions

RCIA

May 4, 2017
Dogma

Catholic dogma is a truth pertaining to faith or morals, revealed by God, transmitted by Tradition or from the Apostles in the Scriptures, and proposed by the Church for the acceptance of the faithful.

Roman Catholic Dogma is "a truth revealed by God, which the Magisterium of the Church declares as binding"
Dogma – “Immutable”

As Catholics we believe that the content of dogma has truly divine origin. It is considered an expression of an objective truth and does not change.

The truth of God, revealed by God, does not change, as God himself does not change.

“Heaven and earth will disappear but my words will not disappear.”
(Mark 13: 31)
Dogma

Although dogma cannot change, new dogma can be declared.

For instance, the 20th century witnessed the introduction of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

*However, these beliefs were already held in some form or another within the Church before their elevation to the dogmatic level.*
Dogma

- Existence of God
- Holy Trinity
- The Incarnation
- Divinity of Christ
- All of the Articles of the Apostles Creed or Nicene Creed
- The Resurrection of Christ
- Communion of Saints
- The Sacraments
- The Sacrifice of the Mass
- True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist
- Immaculate Conception and Assumption of Mary
- Infallibility of Pope
Papal Infallibility means the exemption from actual error, even from the possibility of error, relating to Faith and Morals.

It does not require holiness of life; sinful and wicked men may be God’s agents in defining infallibly.

It is the definitive result itself, and it alone, that is guaranteed to be infallible, not the preliminary stages by which it is reached.
An infallible pronouncement, whether made by the pope alone or in conjunction with an ecumenical council, usually is made only when some doctrine has been called into question.

Most doctrines have never been doubted or questioned by the large majority of Catholics.
Papal Infallibility

The pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God (The Church) abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. The exercise of this charism takes several forms (CCC 890):

The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful—he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals. . . .

The infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor (the Pope), they exercise the supreme Magisterium, above all in an Ecumenical Council.
Infallibility

When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed,” and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith.” (CCC 891)
The infallibility of the pope is not a doctrine that suddenly appeared in Church teaching; rather, it is a doctrine which was implicit in the early Church. It is only our understanding of infallibility which has developed and been more clearly understood over time.

In fact, the doctrine of infallibility is implicit in these Petrine texts:

- John 21:15–17 ("Feed my sheep . . . ”)
- Luke 22:32 ("I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail”)
- Matthew 16:18 ("You are Peter . . . ").

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Papal Infallibility

First Vatican Council  July 18, 1870

We teach and define as a divinely revealed dogma that:

When the Roman pontiff speaks EX CATHEDRA, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals.

Therefore, such definitions of the Roman pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the church, irreformable.
Papal Infallibility

The pope’s infallibility in his extraordinary Magisterium (teaching role) has been used only once since 1870 when Pope Pius XII solemnly defined in 1950 that belief in Mary’s Assumption is part of Catholic faith.
Dogma - CCC

Dogma are lights along the path of faith; They illuminate it and make it secure.

If our life is upright, our intellect and heart will be open to welcome the light shed by the dogmas of faith.
As Catholics we believe that God’s revelation was given to us in two forms: Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture.

Tradition, with a “T”, are our Dogma, our Doctrines.

The traditions with a “little t,” are our devotions.
Devotions

Our devotions are not considered Dogma and do change with time.

They are colored by History and Culture and they do not have to be adhered to
Devotions

A Catholic devotion is a gift (total or partial) of oneself, or one's activities to God.

It is a willingness and desire to dedicate oneself to serve God; either in terms of prayers or in terms of a set of pious acts such as the adoration of God or the veneration of the saints or the Virgin Mary.
Catholic devotions are "external practices of piety" which are not part of the official liturgy of the Catholic Church but are part of the popular spiritual practices of Catholics.

Catholic devotions do not become part of liturgical worship, even if they are performed within a Catholic church, in a group, or in the presence of a priest.
Devotions

Even though devotions are not required, everyone’s faith needs a personal, devotional expression that brings that person in God’s presence.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “In addition to the liturgy, Christian life is nourished by various forms of popular piety …” (CCC 1679).
Devotions … Various Forms

Catholic devotions have various forms, ranging from formalized, multi-day prayers such as Novenas to activities which may not involve any prayers, such as Eucharistic adoration outside Mass, the wearing of scapulars, the veneration of the saints, and even horticultural practices such as maintaining a Mary garden.
Novena

- A nine days' private or public devotion to obtain special graces.

- According to Scripture, after Jesus' Ascension into heaven, he told his disciples to pray together in the upper room and devote themselves to constant prayer (Acts 1:14). Tradition proposes that the Apostles, Blessed Virgin Mary, and other followers of Jesus prayed together for nine consecutive days, concluding with the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.
Eucharistic Adoration

The Catechism reminds us that the Eucharist is "the source and summit" of our faith (CCC 1324), meaning that everything we are and everything we do as a Church flows from (source) the Eucharist and moves us toward the Eucharist (summit).

St Augustine stated:

“No one eats that flesh (The Body of Christ) without first adoring it”
Eucharistic Adoration

Eucharistic adoration is the practice of placing the consecrated bread or host on the altar so that the faithful may join in prayer and worship before the presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The Eucharist draws us closer to God, nourishes our own life and spirituality, and impels us to be witnesses of God's love in the world through our words and actions.
Many Catholics understand Sacramentals to be blessed religious objects such as Rosary beads, crucifixes, religious medals, Holy Water…

But actually, it is the ceremony by which these objects are blessed that are the sacramentals.
Definition

Sacramentals are liturgical ceremonies instituted by the Catholic Church that bear some resemblance to the seven sacraments and dispose the Christian to receive and cooperate with grace.
Sacramentals

The first purpose of the sacramental is to prepare for and extend the grace of the sacraments.

The second purpose of sacramentals is the sanctification of every occasion of life.
Some scapulars have privileges and indulgences attached to wearing them, but like any religious article (holy water, blessed candles, etc.), scapulars are not magic; their efficacy depends on the proper intentions and faith of the wearer.
Mary Garden

Mary Garden is a garden, filled with flowers, plants and trees named for Our Lady and Jesus, designed to be a place of beauty that reminds us of our Lord and our Lady.

It allows one to experience God's creation, and invites prayer and contemplation.
A scapular is a religious article that looks like two small pieces of wool cloth connected by string that is worn over the neck, either under or over one's clothing (typically under the clothing), such that one piece of cloth hangs over the chest, and the second piece of cloth hangs over the back.

Monastic scapulars came, over time, to be called *jugum Christi* (the yoke of Christ), and receiving the scapular (becoming "invested") took on solemn meaning.
Devotions

Common examples of Catholic devotions include the Rosary, Divine Mercy, the Stations of the Cross, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Novenas to various saints, pilgrimages and devotions to the Blessed Sacrament, and the veneration of saintly images, etc.