

FAITH CHAT

with James & John

Is The Pope Indefectible, Inerrant, Or Infallible?

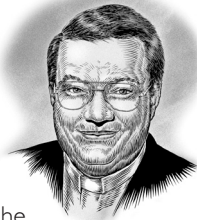
Know This...

Indefectible is that which is faultless and not subject to failure or decay. The Catholic Church is indefectible. The Pope is not. *Inerrant* is that which is without error. Holy Tradition and Sacred Scripture are inerrant. The Pope is not. *Infallible* is that which is unable to err in teaching the truth. Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church is infallible. Likewise, the Pope is infallible when he speaks on issues of faith and morals from the Chair of Peter—*ex cathedra*.



John: The Pope is not impeccable. He can and does sin. Impeccable and infallible are not synonymous. Only Jesus embodies the fullness of both words.

James: When the Pope speaks *ex cathedra*, he speaks as pastor and teacher with the full weight of the supreme apostolic authority he receives through Jesus.



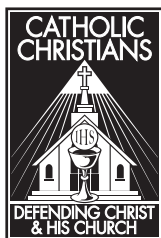
John: When he speaks *ex cathedra*, he speaks with the intention of deciding with finality a teaching of faith and morals that must be held by all the faithful.

James: When he speaks as a private theologian or as the bishop of his diocese or expresses a personal opinion, he is not speaking infallibly.

John: The charism of infallibility does not keep the Pope from making mistakes in his personal life or in his role as leader of the Church; but it does ensure that the Church will accurately proclaim the Gospel.

Deacon John Beckmann and Deacon James Russell are permanent deacons in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

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Jesus made His Church indefectible. "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Mt 16:18* "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." *Mt 28:20b* Jesus gave Peter and his successors the charism of infallibility. "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." *Mt 16:19b* Jesus acknowledged the authority of the one who sits in the Chair of Moses. "The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice." *Mt 23:1-3* The Chair of Peter is like the Chair of Moses.

In 1870, the First Vatican Council declared, "The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*—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 and Morals to be held by the Universal Church—by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, is possessed of the infallibility with which the Divine Redeemer willed that His Church should be endowed in defining doctrine regarding Faith or Morals; and therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not in virtue of the consent of the Church." *First Vatican Council* This statement did not constitute new doctrine, but clarified the conditions for infallible papal statements.



BE ATTITUDES In the 13th century, St. Thomas Aquinas spoke on Papal infallibility. "[It] belongs to that authority which is empowered to decide matters of faith finally, so that they may be held by all with unshaken faith. Now this belongs to the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, 'to whom the more important and more difficult questions that arise in the Church are referred.'" St. Thomas read 1 Cor 1:10 ('that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms among you') and said, "This [unity] could not be secured unless any question of faith that may arise be decided by him who presides over the whole Church, so that the whole Church may hold firmly to his decision. Consequently it belongs to the sole authority of the Sovereign Pontiff to publish a new edition of the symbol, as do all other matters which concern the whole Church." *Summa theologiae*

Almighty Father, You are the source of all truth. Through the charism of infallibility, You entrusted to Peter and his successors the responsibility of teaching the Gospel. I pray that You will keep my heart, mind, and soul open to their teaching and leadership. Grant this through my Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

