



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY SESSION
OF THE CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 31 January 2014*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am meeting with you at the close of your Plenary Session; I greet you all cordially, and I thank Archbishop Müller for his words.

The duties of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are tied to the mission of the Successor of Peter to confirm the brethren in the faith (cf. Lk 22:32). In this sense, your role “to promote and safeguard the doctrine on faith and morals in the whole Catholic world” (Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus, n. 48) is a true service offered to the Magisterium of the Pope and to the Church as a whole. That is why this Dicastery commits itself to ensuring that the criteria of the faith prevail in the words and praxis of the Church. When the faith shines forth in its original simplicity and purity, ecclesial life too becomes a place where the life of God emerges with all its charm and bears fruit. Faith in Jesus Christ, indeed, opens hearts wide to God, it opens the spheres of human life to the True, the Good and the Beautiful, which come from him.

From the earliest days of the Church there has been a temptation to understand doctrine in an ideological sense or to reduce it to a set of abstract and static theories (cf. Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, nn. 39-42). In reality, doctrine has the single purpose of serving the life of the People of God and is intended to ensure our faith has a firm foundation. Great, indeed, is the temptation to grasp the gifts of salvation, which comes from God, in order to bend them — however good the intention may be — to the views and spirit of the world. And this is a temptation that arises continually.

Assuring for the integrity of the faith is a very delicate task, one that has been entrusted to you, always in collaboration with local Pastors and with the Doctrinal Commissions of Episcopal Conferences. This is to safeguard the right of the People of God to receive the deposit of faith in its purity and integrity. Also, your work should always observe the needs of constructive dialogue of, and patient with, the Authors. Should the truth require fidelity, this always increases through charity and brotherly help to those called to mature or review their own convictions.

Then, regarding your method of work, I know that your Dicastery is known for its practise of collegiality and dialogue. The Church is, indeed, the place of communion and, at every level, we are all called to cultivate and foster that communion, each one in the responsibility that the Lord has allotted to him. I am sure that the more collegiality becomes an effective feature of our work, the more will the light of our faith shine out in the world (cf. Mt 5:16).

In all your service, may you always keep a deep sense of joy, the joy of the faith, which has its inexhaustible source in the Lord Jesus. May the grace of being his disciples, of participating in the Church's mission of evangelization, fill us with holy joy.

During your Plenary Session, which has just finished, you also dealt with the topic of the relation between faith and the Sacrament of Marriage. This is a reflection of great importance. It also comes in the wake of [Benedict XVI](#)'s previous proposal concerning the need to study more deeply the relation between personal faith and the celebration of the Sacrament of Marriage, especially in this changing cultural context (cf. [Address to the Tribunal of Roman Rota, 26 January 2013](#)).

On this occasion, I would also like to thank you for your commitment in dealing with the most sensitive issues of the gravest crimes, in particular, cases of the sexual abuse of minors by the clergy. Consider the welfare of children and young people, who in the Christian community must always be protected and supported in their spiritual and human development. In this sense, study is required into the possibility of connecting your Dicastery with the specific Commission for the protection of minors, which I established and would like to be exemplary for all those who have the good of children at heart.

Dear brothers and sisters, I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and to yours I entrust myself and my Ministry. May the Lord bless you and Our Lady protect you.