

the Immaculate Conception in 1854. This is in keeping with what Professor Duffy says about papal infallibility, namely that from early times it was believed that the Church could not fall into error about the fundamental truths of the faith; that infallibility is a negative concept in that it does not mean that the Church or any of its teachers are inspired, but that in certain circumstances they will be protected from fundamental error. Finally, and importantly, that infallibility was attributed from the earliest times to the collective teaching of the Church and hence to the decrees of general councils.

None of this implies that Catholics are free to disregard matters of faith and morals on which pronouncements have been made, though not made *ex cathedra*. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains (para 892): *“Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome, pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a “definitive manner,” they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful “are to adhere to it with religious assent” which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.”*

-Stephen S

Entrance Antiphon: All the earth shall bow down before you, O God, and shall sing to you, shall sing to your name, O Most High!

First Reading: 1 Samuel 3: 3-10,19

Responsorial Psalm: 39 Response: Here I am Lord! I come to do your will.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6 13-15, 17-20

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life. Alleluia!

Gospel: John 1:35-42

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: You have prepared a table before me, and how precious is the chalice that quenches my thirst.



Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle B, 2024 Weekly Reflection: Papal Infallibility:

An Overview : Some people wrongly mistakenly that everything the Pope says on Catholic issues have to be regarded by Catholics as infallible statements. A brief history of the defining of papal infallibility is contained in *“Saints and Sinners: A History of the Popes”* by Professor Eamonn Duffy. Papal infallibility

was defined at the First Vatican Council in 1870 after serious and prolonged debate. A draft decree headed: *“On the infallibility of the Roman Pontiff”* was criticised as erroneous by Cardinal Gaudi of Bologna. He insisted that the Pope was not infallible, though his teaching might be. The final decree took account of this objection and was headed *“On the infallible teaching office of the Roman Pontiff”*. The decree itself was carefully hedged round with restrictions. It declared: *“..when the Roman pontiff speaks ex cathedra, that is, when, in the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians.... 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.”*

The important point is that general papal pronouncements are not infallible. The pope has to be speaking in an especially solemn form (*ex cathedra*). His teaching has to be on a matter of faith and morals; this excludes any comment made e.g. on world affairs. It also has to be about fundamentals, a matter *“held by the whole church”*, so not addressed to some passing debate. It is significant that, since the declaration of papal infallibility at the first Vatican Council, the only example of such an *ex cathedra* statement stated to be infallible was when Pius XII in 1950 defined the Assumption of Our Lady as an article of faith. It is noteworthy that the First Vatican Council did not state that the pope could make infallible statements without consultation. Pius XII consulted Catholic bishops before promulgating the doctrine of the Assumption, as Pius IX had also done before declaring the doctrine of