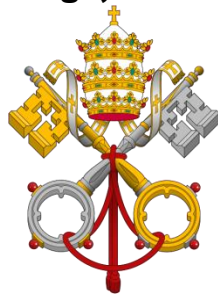


**“Is there a list of infallible teachings? Most Catholics have a favored list of teachings that they wish would be declared infallibly, or ex-cathedra (from the Chair [of Peter]). Odds are that these often revolve around hot-button issues like women’s ordination, gay marriage, or the reform of the liturgy.**



... There is no set list of ex cathedra teachings, but that’s because there are only two, and both are about Mary: (1) Her Immaculate Conception (declared by Pope Pius IX in 1854) and (2) Her bodily Assumption into heaven (declared by Pope Pius XII in 1950).

Neither of these was earth-shattering for Roman Catholics, because these beliefs had been long nurtured through the faithful’s devotion, prayer, and local teaching for centuries before becoming official papal teachings.

Ex-cathedra is the theological term for a teaching that has been declared infallibly by the Roman Pontiff. In short, ex-cathedra means that the pope can explicate an article of divine revelation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in full possession of his role as Peter’s successor. When he does so he is protected from error. This ex-cathedra possibility was supported by the Second Vatican Council. However, this does not mean that every time the pope speaks or writes a book, exhortation or apostolic letter that he is speaking infallibly—which is a common misunderstanding by some Catholics today. In such instances, he is simply exercising his apostolic authority, role and responsibility to teach the faithful—evangelizing the Good News!

Even though only two doctrines have been declared” ex-cathedra”, there are many others that the church professes must be believed. Some of these are explained in the 1998 “Commentary on the Concluding Formula of the Professio fidei” issued by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

According to this document, many teachings are “irreformable” and “definitive” and as such can be seen as possessing the binding quality of an infallible doctrine, although not necessarily proclaimed “ex cathedra”. That is, they aren’t promulgated by the Holy Pontiff himself, but by the larger magisterium of the Church. The compilation of “*irreformable*” teachings—ones divinely revealed—include those regarding Jesus, Mary, sin and grace, the sacraments, the primacy of the Pope, and the doctrinal formulations of the ancient Creeds.

The compilation of “*definitive*” teachings on faith and morals—ones the church holds to be logically derived from divine revelation—include teachings such as the doctrine of papal infallibility; the immorality of abortion and euthanasia; the communion of saints; and others. Assent of “intellect and will” to both categories of teachings are required for full communion with the Catholic Church.

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