



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

18 February 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Papacy ^{ˈpā-pə-sē}

The office of the bishop of Rome, familiarly known as the pope; the term of a pope's reign; a succession of popes; the church's system of government with the pope as first among equals with authority over all other bishops.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-papacy>

CONTEXT

One of the main challenges of the **papacy** is to judge all tasks in the light of the gospel to avoid transforming ecclesiastical jurisdiction into political power.

—Father Jean-Marie Tillard, *O.P.*

We cannot dispute that the **papacy** itself, purely as a human institution, is unique.

—Paul Johnson in *The Papacy*

Since God has given us the **papacy**, let us enjoy it.

—Attributed to Pope Leo X, known for lavish living, patronage of the arts, and abuse of papal power

WHY IT MATTERS

Since the first century, the bishop of the local church in Rome has been understood to possess the "Chair of Peter," which endows great authority and carries the role of special keeper of the church's mission.

The power of the **papacy** stems from Jesus' choice to set Peter in authority over the rest: "You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18). Papal primacy and the role of the pope as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, with "full, supreme and universal power over the Church" was confirmed at numerous ecumenical councils, including Vatican II (*Lumen gentium*, 22).

RELATED WORDS

Pope | Pontiff | Vicar of Christ | Curia | Hierarchy

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What are the qualifications for being pope?

The vast majority of popes were ordained. Priesthood is a plus, topped off with a hearty Roman education at a pontifical institute. Doing time in highly visible chanceries in large cities increases your chances. Attaining the status of bishop and cardinal tremendously increases your odds even though neither position is canonically required.

Medieval and renaissance popes had the advantages of coming from princely or aristocratic Roman families, but never mind if you don't have a fine pedigree. Sixtus V was the son of a laundress, and Pius X the child of a seamstress. A few popes were renowned preachers like the Franciscan Sixtus IV, and others were lawyers, professors, and poets. But just as many had their beginnings as monks, anchorites, and even a hermit (Celestine V, but he abdicated to return to his hermitage after six months).

Though being extraordinarily wicked hasn't always been a deal-breaker, more than a few popes were martyred or popularly acclaimed as saints. Holiness is a great asset. Wanting to be pope probably isn't.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-papal-qualifications>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

CHAIR OF PETER, APOSTLE (FEBRUARY 22)

Power well exercised

The feast of the Chair of Peter honors the unity of the worldwide church and its teaching authority. This authority has given popes the ability to speak out for human rights and against injustice, which they have done with increasing frequency in the past century.

READINGS: 1 Peter 5:1-4; Matthew 16:13-19 (535 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/022224.cfm>). "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."

FAITH IN ACTION

Dip into the social teachings from recent popes <http://tinyurl.com/social-encyclicals> and be amazed by their thinking on labor, preferential option for the poor, human dignity, economic justice, and care of creation.