

## Dogma and Doctrine

In the life of the Church, we often use the words dogma and doctrine, sometimes as if they mean the same thing. While they are closely connected, there is an important distinction that helps us understand how the Church teaches and hands on the faith.

### **What Is Dogma?**

Dogma refers to those truths that have been revealed by God and definitively proposed by the Church for belief. These truths are found in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition and are entrusted to the Church so that they can be faithfully preserved, taught, and lived.

A dogma is not simply a theological opinion or interpretation. It is a truth revealed by God and authoritatively proclaimed by the Church. Because of this, dogmas require the full assent of faith from all the baptized.

At its core, dogma is about revelation—God making Himself known. It is not just something we understand with the mind, but something that involves the whole person: mind, heart, and life.

### **What Is Doctrine?**

Doctrine refers to the Church's teaching that helps explain and deepen our understanding of dogma. Doctrine explores how the truths of the faith are understood, expressed, and lived out.

While dogma names the revealed truth itself, doctrine gives us the language, reflection, and theological insight to enter more deeply into that truth. Within the bounds of faithful teaching, there can be different theological explanations that help the Church grow in understanding.

### **The Difference Between Dogma and Doctrine**

A simple way to hold the distinction is:

- Dogma is the revealed truth itself
- Doctrine is how we understand and explain that truth

Dogma is binding because it belongs to divine revelation. Doctrine allows for development, reflection, and different theological approaches, as long as they remain faithful to what the Church believes.