

## ***The topicality of teaching of Leo the Great about doctrinal authority within the Church***

### **(summary)**

By the will of Jesus Christ, the existence of the Magisterium of Catholic Church, personified in the Bishop of Rome and bishops remaining in hierarchical communion with him, is the truth of Catholic faith. However, the issue of doctrinal authority in Church belongs to difficult theological matters and requires deepening, particularly in the face of changes initiated by the Second Vatican Council and of the problems that appeared afterwards. In this task, it is significant to refer to the “privileged witnesses to Tradition” who are the Church Fathers. A very important witness of the development of doctrinal authority in the ancient Church is Saint Leo the Great. In the years 440-461 he held the office of the Successor of Saint Peter in Rome, having to face numerous external and internal adversities. He deserved remarkably in the field of struggle for orthodox Christology, which was sealed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451. Leo is also the author of a very mature doctrine of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, which is integrated with the teaching of bishops creating one college of love.

This thesis intends to solve the problem of the significance of Leo the Great’s teaching for the current teaching of the Church on his doctrinal authority. Can one talk about the timeliness of the thoughts of this eminent Father and Doctor of the 5th century Church? In order to be able to answer this question, one should accept as the source base the preserved works of Leo the Great, namely speeches and letters, and contemporary documents of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae* addressing the issue of church doctrinal authority, including liturgical books.

The stated problem was solved in three chapters of the dissertation. In the first chapter, after giving the sources that influenced the formation of Leo's thought, the content extracted from his literary legacy concerning the mission of the Bishop of Rome, the role of synods and councils as manifestations of collegiality of the episcopate and the relationship between the primacy and the episcopate in the fundamental perspective of their teaching mission within Church was presented. Here emerged Leo the Great’s coherent vision of functioning of the church doctrinal authority, in which the Bishop of Rome cooperates with the College of Bishops in the mission of preservation and explanation of the deposit of faith; this cooperation is based on collegiality of the episcopate rooted in the *plenitudo potestatis* of the Pope.

The second chapter was based on a detailed review of the Church's contemporary teaching on her own doctrinal authority, including the changes that followed the Second Vatican Council. The theological foundations of the magisterial authority in the historical and systematic approach were indicated here, and then the issue was addressed from the side of the

subject. Therefore, the authority of the Bishop of Rome was discussed, starting from the truth about the primacy of the Successor of Saint Peter, and the forms and scope of his teaching task were presented. A similar investigation was carried out on the authority of the College of Bishops, analysing their *munus docendi* and the ways of its implementation. Finally, institutional forms of relations between the subjects of authority were examined, specified on the basis of the doctrine of partial implementation of episcopal collegiality: the Synod of Bishops, the College of Cardinals, particular synods and Episcopal Conferences, taking into account ongoing theological discussions and the evolution of magisterial regulations of this issue. In this way, a panoramic image of the contemporary Magisterium was delineated in a doctrinal and functional aspect.

In the last and most important chapter the theology and practice of church doctrinal authority developed by Leo the Great with the contemporary state of the Church's teaching office were juxtaposed in order to grasp the reception, ways and direction of the author's thought development. At the same time, new doctrinal and institutional elements were pointed out in relation to the times of Leo the Great and an attempt was made to evaluate them in the light of the 5th century Pope's doctrine. It was noticed here that the author's thought is clearly referred to in various documents of the *Magisterium Ecclesiae*, is a tool for argumentation in some specific issues, and remains present in liturgical texts. The rich legacy of Leo the Great regarding church doctrinal authority in various ways was taken up by successive Popes in the process of shaping the orthodox theology and praxeology of the Church's teaching office, which has been continuing in the midst of emerging errors and problems; the current pontificate shows, at least in certain issues, features of the vision of ecclesiastical doctrinal authority different from the one of Leo.

In this way, this thesis combining the elements of patristics and dogmatics proved the real and manifold actuality of Leo the Great's teaching on the doctrinal authority within the Church. The 5th century Doctor of the Church, despite the passage of a long time and the numerous changes that have taken place in the Church, is also a remarkable reference point today, which should be considered both by the Church's teaching office and the theologians trying to explore the issue of doctrinal authority.