

Ask Mason & Teo



If the pope is infallible, can he ever be wrong?

The last column responded to a question asking why Catholics have a pope and why they honor him and listen to his teaching. This column continues the discussion, addressing the topic of papal infallibility.

Dear Mason & Teo,
So what about the Catholic doctrine that the pope is infallible? Does it mean that the pope can never be wrong about anything?

The word infallible, according to the dictionary, means "incapable of making a mistake, certain not to fail." The Catholic Church has been given the gift of infallibility, freedom from error, when teaching the truth of faith (what we are to believe) and morals (how we are to live) as revealed by God.

This doesn't mean that every pope will be absolutely correct on everything that he talks about. It doesn't mean that the pope knows everything that there is to know in the world. And it surely doesn't mean that the pope does not or cannot sin. The gift of infallibility comes from Christ to the church by the power of the Holy Spirit to the pope when he teaches officially as head of the church. It also pertains to the bishops united with the pope either in general council or when they express the teachings of the Church (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 891-892).

The day Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (Matthew 16:13-20), the Lord had asked the apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus made it clear that the answer did not come from Simon himself, but that it was revealed to Simon by God, the Father. Simon was given divine assistance to profess the truth about Jesus.

Then Jesus changed Simon's name to Peter (which means "Rock") and endowed him and his successors divine assistance. He gave Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" promising that the gates of hell would not prevail against the church.

Let's think about it. The gates of hell would prevail over the church if the apostles could not resolve confusion over the truth about Jesus and his way of salvation. Therefore, Jesus made sure to give the charism of truth to the successors of the apostles in general, and the successor of Peter in particular, so that the church can always be confident on what to believe and how to live in order to walk in holiness and truth.

Infallibility is not something the church made up to get everyone to do what it says. It is not the personal power of the pope, but rather belongs to his office as leader of the whole church. It is not absolute power, but one conditioned by Scripture and Tradition. The pope may not teach anything contrary to the Word of God or Christ's teaching. The authority is an act of service, not control, especially service toward the unity in

faith and love among Christians.

So when the pope, in his capacity as the successor of Peter, declares solemnly "ex cathedra" (Latin for "from the chair") something relative to faith and morals as having been revealed by God, he teaches infallibly. As Catholics we are obligated to believe such teaching with divine faith, since the teaching is guaranteed to have its source in God and his revelation, not in human opinion.

It is rare for a pope to define dogmas infallibly. The last infallible doctrine declared by the pope was in 1950, when Pope Pius XII defined the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The pope can also make definitive judgments about matters related to faith and morals, such as when he states the conditions necessary for the valid celebration of the sacraments. Once the pope makes such a judgment, Catholics are no longer free to debate the matter. The case is closed.

The Holy Father teaches his spiritual family daily through homilies, apostolic letters, encyclicals, other documents and talks to pilgrims, heads of states, etc. Catholics must receive such ordinary papal teaching with the "religious submission of intellect and will" (Vatican II, Lumen Gentium 25). Again, it is not the successor of Peter who teaches, but Jesus who teaches through him.

Therefore, we must approach the pope's teaching with respect and gratitude and allow our lives to be shaped by it.

In the many centuries when many Christian leaders have succumbed to heresy, fallen under the pressure of willful kings and emperors, the pope has never failed to profess the faith handed down by the apostles. His teaching office has been the light of truth in many troubled, dark moments of history.

The call to feed and care for the sheep is a call to sacrifice, not a privilege. It has its moments of joy and its moments of pain. We have learned through Christ's passion that sacrifice is the true, authentic expression of love. We must continue to pray for those who shepherd us and be thankful for the church that provides a rock solid foundation that does not slip with the times.

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HCH photo by Anna Weaver

Watch out, Oprah!

Young St. Francis graduate and actress aspires to talk show philanthropy in the Philippines

By Anna Weaver
Hawaii Catholic Herald

Sheena Joy Malbog didn't plan on becoming an actress in the Philippines, or starting three different charities there. The way she tells it, Malbog had a much simpler goal in mind when she was a St. Francis School student.

"In high school, my goal was to hurry up and graduate college, get out of my parents' house and live on my own," she said laughing as she reflected on how priorities have changed since graduating from St. Francis in Manoa in 2004.

On one of her regular trips back to her parents' native Philippines during college, Malbog spoke with a screenwriter who suggested she go into show busi-

ness there. But first things first. Malbog had to complete her psychology degree at Hawaii Pacific University, which she earned in June 2008.

Since then Malbog, whose screen name is Sheena Joy Vaswani, has made two films in the Philippines and will start shooting a third this spring — a big budget production about the life of Lapu-Lapu, the 16th century Filipino hero who killed Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan. She also is working on starting her own talk show in the Philippines.

"Because I'm inspired by Oprah Winfrey, Ellen DeGeneres and Tyra Banks, I want to do something like that for the people of the Philippines," said Malbog. "I think they have so much potential, they're

hardworking people and they deserve it. I want to be someone to give them the opportunity to soar with their dreams."

The petite, pretty 21-year-old has an enthusiasm that has served her well as she breaks into the entertainment field and pursues her even bigger passion for helping kids.

Because, like Oprah, in addition to a gift for gab, Malbog shares the talk show host's philanthropic spirit.

She started Sheena Joy's Foundation that provides poor children with tuition money, school supplies and uniforms. "I chose the brightest students that can't afford school," she said. In exchange the kids have to

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Movie reviews



CNS photo/Fox Searchlight

Slumdog Millionaire (Fox Searchlight/Warner Bros.): Vibrant drama in which a Mumbai, India, slum dweller (Dev Patel), suspected of cheating on a television quiz show, explains to a police inspector (Irrfan Khan) how his life experiences growing up with his brother (Madhur Mittal) and his loving pursuit of a childhood friend (Freida Pinto) enabled him to answer the acerbic program host's (Anil Kapoor) questions. Director Danny Boyle's sweeping panorama of Third-World life, adapted from Vikas Swarup's novel "Q & A," though harrowing at times, is ultimately hopeful, stressing the dignity of the underprivileged and the primacy of spiritual over material values. Beating and torture, fleeting rear nudity, crime and prostitution themes, underage drinking, brief scatological humor, and occasional rough and crude language. A-III (R)

Gran Torino (Warner Bros.): Improbable and gritty if ultimately humane redemption tale of a crusty Korean War vet (Clint Eastwood in peak form) who resents the encroachment of the Laotian Hmongs who have moved into his Detroit neighborhood, but becomes their reluctant hero and unlikely friend after he saves the young teen (Bee Vang) next door from being pressured to join a marauding Hmong gang. Eastwood directs with his customary frontier

worldview, with the cultural tolerance theme and a positive priest character (Christopher Carley) strong pluses, though the nonstop racial epithets and expletives are, even in this context, excessive. Pervasive rough language, profanity and racial slurs, violence with bloodshed, and a morally tangled ending. L (R)

Hotel for Dogs (Dreamworks/Nickelodeon): Wholesomely enjoyable canine caper in which an orphaned

brother and sister (Jake T. Austin and Emma Roberts) shelter their dog, along with a motley group of strays, in an abandoned hotel, outwitting their neglectful foster parents (Lisa Kudrow and Kevin Dillon) and causing complications for their genuinely caring social worker (Don Cheadle). Director Thor Freudenthal's cuddly adaptation of Lois Duncan's 1971 children's book, his feature debut, sees the affectionate siblings working together and with friends to care for

their expanding pack and improvising a part-human, part-animal surrogate family. A couple of crass words. A-I (PG)

Notorious (Fox Searchlight): Gritty but powerful biography of rapper Christopher Wallace, aka Notorious B.I.G. (gifted newcomer Jamal Woolard) from his working-class childhood under the care of his stern but devoted mother (Angela Bassett) and his sudden rise from streetwise drug dealer to musical star, to his tangled personal life and the events leading up to his murder at age 24. Director George Tillman Jr.'s warts-and-all portrait shows the excesses of its subject's lifestyle, but also his efforts to become a responsible father and to reconcile with friend turned violent rival Tupac Shakur (Anthony Mackie). Strong sexual content, including brief but graphic nonmarital sexual activity, adultery, full female nudity, drug use, pervasive rough and crude language, and at least one profanity. L (R)

Paul Blart: Mall Cop (Columbia): Largely good-natured slapstick comedy relies on the physicality of Kevin James, who, in addition to co-writing the script, portrays the titular plus-size security guard defending a New Jersey mall from a pack of acrobatic thieves on the busiest shopping day of the year. Because the loveably hapless hero embodies numerous qualities infrequently championed on-screen nowadays — including chivalry, diligence and honesty — any moderately untoward moments in director Steve Carr's effort are eclipsed by a positive message concerning respect for those not usually deemed successful or attractive, particularly those who don't fit the ideal body mold in our looks-conscious society. Frequent violence of a slapstick nature, some suggestive humor, several instances of crude and crass language, and one sequence involving alcohol use. A-II (PG)

Sheena

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keep up their grades. Malbog, in conjunction with students in the Asia Pacific College's theater group, has begun a cancer foundation to throw parties and host entertainment for sick children. And she is collecting donations for the Philippine Orthopedic Center before she flies back to the Philippines in a few months.

"There's nothing in the hospitals except beds," she said. Malbog is collecting beddings, toys and books. "The children of today are going to be the leader's of tomorrow," Malbog said. "If we don't help them, and we don't give them resources and we don't encourage them ... what's going to become of our society in the future?"

Malbog's parents, Peter and Arlax, are from Urdaneta, Pangasinan, and moved to Hawaii for work. Sheena Joy and her younger brother Peter Jr. were raised in a devout Catholic family, attending church and school at St. Joseph Parish in Waipahu.

"My parents followed the saying, 'The family that prays together stays together,'" she said. "Every Sunday we have family days. We go to church together, we eat together."

She also grew up taking dance and piano lessons, performing in mall shows and other events for Filipino clubs. At St. Francis, she loved participating in campus ministry work and skits but was too shy to audition for school plays. The school's 100-hour community service requirement increased her desire to help others.

That aspiration grew during her time in college.

"Some [young adults] are just so into themselves and 'What makes me happy right now,'" said Malbog, getting fired up. "They don't understand that they need to plan for their future and help other people as well."

Malbog certainly isn't thinking only of today. "I admire people — especially young adults — who have ambition, who want to do something and have a dream."

Since she came back from the Philippines in November for a "break," Malbog has been working at her father's construction company, PMJ Builders, hosting a local radio show on 101.5, and working as a skills trainer for Hawaii Behavioral Health.

"I have so many plans in my head that I want to do. I just have to take it one step at a time," she said. After working in entertainment for awhile, Malbog hopes to go back to school for her master's degree in psychology.

"Success is not an accident," she said. "You have to work for it."

Marianist College LIFE Retreat 2009

Chaminade University's campus ministry is organizing a Marianist College LIFE Retreat in March 2009 aimed at 18-22-year-olds, who were involved in the "Living In Faith Experience" during high school and are interested in learning more about the Marianist faith community or want a retreat experience. The LIFE Retreat will be held at the Marianist Residence in Ewa Beach from Friday, March 6 to Sunday, March 8. The cost is \$20 and free for neighbor islanders. For a registration form or questions contact Margarget Uiaalelei at muiaalelei@chaminade.edu or 735-4704.

Twenty-something



Christina Capecchi | Snow day: Surrendering to a higher plan

The swirling snow and howling wind make a vivid demonstration of how swiftly the best-laid plans can be overturned.

Tonight was supposed to be the annual Capecchi ladies' dinner at a family-style Italian restaurant in St. Paul. We gather there to consume enormous quantities of pasta and conversation. We toast with wine to the blood that binds our friendships.

But Mother Nature had a different agenda, unleashing a blizzard that made a mockery of our plan. You thought it would be so easy to all meet at the same location on the same day? Ha!

Much as I looked forward to our gathering, its cancellation sparked a glee that harkens back to grade school and the unbridled ecstasy of a snow day.

Our days are splintered into intervals of activity, one locked beside another. So when a larger force wipes out the schedule, it brings a certain relief and bestows a rare

gift: unallocated time. What a wonder! A million ways to spend the time! Where to begin? How to properly devour the surprise?

Humans, by nature, are planners. Every week we craft well-intentioned, neatly-laid, thoroughly-coordinated plans. Dinner plans, career goals. Romantic schemes, recreational ideas. Weekend plans, five-year plans.

We plot, we project, we anticipate.

There is nothing wrong with that impulse. God asks us to use our gifts to the fullest, to work hard and be deliberate about how we assign our energies and apply our talents.

But we cannot grow too attached to our plans. We must guard against the false notion that we possess control, that we're calling the shots. There is a larger force, a grander scheme.

This month's readings remind us of that bigger picture. Isaiah speaks to troubled people, Israelites whose plans for peace and prosperity were trampled. He tells them, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways

God's plans are higher — better, wiser, richer. They come from another realm, from the heart of our Creator, whose timing is perfect and whose wisdom is infinite.

my ways,' says the Lord. 'As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thoughts.'

This message can be hard to hear because we like our plans; they are clear guideposts in an otherwise hazy future. But God's plans are higher — better, wiser, richer. They come from another realm, from the heart of our Creator, whose timing is perfect and whose wisdom is infinite.

Believing in God's plan and waiting on its fruition demands a mature faith. I saw that in my friend Wendy last summer. We had been discussing our eagerness to achieve certain goals. She had

earned a master's degree in a specialized field and had been searching at length for a job in the industry.

One night she emailed me, "I have really come to accept that God has some kind of crazy plan for me and I will find out what it is at some point."

Three months later Wendy landed her dream job. "Two years and three months of patience, prayer and faith have finally paid off," she emailed.

Wendy met a formidable challenge, releasing her own plan and trusting in God's master plan - long before it had been revealed to her. She set her uncertainty and impatience aside and, like Samuel, said, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

God's plans always provide for us. In the darkest hour at our greatest need, he fulfills our deepest desires.

And so, as we gaze at that blank calendar and imagine 2009, let's remember the master planner and write our plans in pencil.

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