

Sixteenth Week of Ordinary Time (English)
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost (Latin)
July 19, 2026
Year of the Church in History

“Lex orandi, Lex credendi, Lex vivendi” (Ancient Latin Maxim)

As we proceed to read and reflect upon The First Apology of Saint Justin Martyr, I would like us to keep in our minds the ancient Latin maxim which translates into: **Lex orandi** (how we worship), **Lex credendi** (what we believe), **Lex vivendi** (how we live). In essence, the way we pray and worship shapes what we believe which in turn determines how we choose to conduct our lives. It is my intention, in the following reflections, to repeat this first paragraph so we may have a visible reminder each time we read. Likewise, I will present key statements from Saint Justin, using our Eucharistic Liturgy (Mass) as a benchmark.

“And this food is called among us Eukaristia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined. For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh. For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, ‘This do ye in remembrance of Me, this is My body;’ and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, ‘This is My blood;’ and gave it to them alone.”
(Saint Justin, First Apology)

Saint Justin, in this section of his First Apology, states something which, when asked in the form of a question, must be considered. From his writing, some person or persons have declared that no one is allowed to partake of the Eucharist unless they have received Christian education and Baptism. Here is our question: “Who said?” Who is that person or persons who declared this rule? And, for this rule to be in effect, does this imply the earliest Christians had a role which gave authority to a selected person or persons?

Authority within the Church has become quite an issue since the establishment of various Christian Communities. When Martin Luther stood on trial for his claim the Pope and Catholic Church lacked authority, he spoke these now famous words:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I

have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, my God help me, Amen.” (Martin Luther, Luther’s Works, 32, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. as quoted by Trent Horn, The Case of Catholicism, p 13)

Martin Luther would use Sacred Scripture as his defense concerning authority. This statement would develop further becoming a popular belief called *Sola Scriptura*. *Sola Scriptura* may be understood as Sacred Scripture being its own “sole, infallible rule of faith.” This statement is made for “only Scripture is God’s inspired word” and therefore is “inerrant, sufficient and the final authority in the life of a Christian.”

You may recall, from last weekend, I mentioned the New Testament lacked a list of primary doctrinal statements those first Christian converts were required to accept. Therefore, one would have to come to conclusions based upon reason, history and other works present which were composed as a part of early Christianity. Again, I remind you; the Gospels were written by Christians for Christians who had already been taught and accepted these primary doctrines. Therefore, inclusion of or absence of these primary doctrinal statements DOES NOT prove or disprove any of what we believe today. Rather, if we profess that the Gospels were written as an addition to what was taught, THEN we must accept that some person or some persons were in positions of authority to teach Christianity. Furthermore, we may assume this same authority wielded the power to say who could and could not be invited to participate in Christian worship thus receiving the Eucharist.

Saint Luke’s beautiful work, *The Acts of the Apostles*, would have spoken of the times, places and individuals prior to the birth of Saint Justin. This book recalls the events of the Christian Church expanding from Jerusalem and into the Gentile world. It mentions a famous preacher, an Apostle to the Gentiles, named Saint Paul. When Saint Luke wrote this book, he assumed his readers already understood the nature and structure of the Christian Church. He assumed they were already living as Christians; their belief in Christ guiding their moral decisions. He assumed their familiarity with the words of Jesus: “*He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me*” (Luke 10:16), “*Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*” (Matthew 18:18). In giving this power of Jesus’ own authority to His Apostles and disciples, Jesus has literally guaranteed God, through the working of the Holy Spirit, as the one true Authority who guides the Church, free from error. When Saint Justin wrote those words in AD150, he assumed as well, Christians understood and accepted the governance of the Church by those who had been invested with the same authority. The men who taught him were protected as well by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christianity was to be believed and held as true because God has assured humanity of His Presence. It is this assurance of the “Rightness” of Christianity which drove Saint Justin to write his Apology and would lead himself, and others, to offer their lives as martyrs.