

## **A Polyhedron Model of the Magisterium's Authority**

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### **Abstract**

As the global Church continues to evolve into a more heterogeneous and non-Western unit, this paper explores the possibility of a decentralized exercise of magisterial authority using a polyhedron model. In the context of church authority, the figure of the polyhedron represents an expanded vision of unity that reimagines new connections between the local and global Catholic Church, but more importantly, places the local church in a unique position as locus of hierarchical teaching authority. The main question that will be addressed by this paper is the following: 'How can the local church participate in and/ or contribute to the exercise of the magisterium's authority?'.

### **Introduction**

In its service to the people of God of teaching and governing authoritatively, the magisterium of the Catholic Church grapples with issues of theological epistemology, as well as the realities and tensions of making this authority more accessible to all the faithful by which all members can actively participate. Since the Second Vatican Council, the exercise of magisterial authority has always emanated from a centralized authority of the church located at the pope who possesses that distinctive supreme teaching authority as bishop of Rome. This papal primacy frames the ecclesiology of communion that governs the church today, particularly the collegiality among bishops that places all local churches in communion with the universal church. While one apex in an ecclesiastical pyramid ensures and protects unity in the church, it also becomes problematic as the global church continues to evolve into a more heterogeneous and non-Western unit. On this basis alone, it would be surprising not to find the church with a new center outside of Rome.

In view of this, the paper explores the possibility of a decentralized exercise of magisterial authority using a polyhedron model. In the context of church authority, the figure of the polyhedron represents an expanded vision of unity that reimagines new connections between the local and global Catholic Church, but more importantly, places the local church in a unique position as locus of hierarchical teaching authority. The main question that will be addressed by

this paper is the following: *How can the local church participate in and/ or contribute to the exercise of the magisterium's authority?*