

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS AND DIALOGUES, NOV. 10-12, 2008 GIVEN AND DIRECTED BY BISHOP REMI DE ROO AND SPONSORED BY ST. AUGUSTINE FRIARY, HYDE PARK, CHICAGO, IL

- 1) Pope John XXIII announced the Council on Jan. 25, 1959. In spite of a revisionist tendency by some ecclesiastics and lay people today who would like to consider Vatican Council II an aberration, it was indeed the Holy Spirit who guided the Council fathers who eventually came to recognize that the Apostolic Tradition had become incarnate in them. They even named clericalism as a sin and there was 90% unanimity around the final documents by both Eastern and Western bishops. The bishops themselves matured during the Council as more and more they became accustomed to working in collegiality, so it's a good idea to read the documents in reverse order so as to first see and appreciate this fact,
- 2) After a few sessions it became clear that, just as in the gospels, the Reign of God was to be the central focus, which implies the cause of the poor and marginated. The Latin American bishops in particular understood this, and began to organize their own regional conferences after the Council (e.g., Medellin and Puebla) in order to particularize this focus within their own realities, aided by outstanding theologians like Gustavo Gutierrez and Jon Sobrino (preferential option for the poor). The church is not the Reign of God but, rather, its reason for being is to help bring it about.
- 3) According to the Council, it is through baptism that all Christians have dignity, a call to holiness, and a call to ministry according to each one's abilities and community needs. In church structure, these needs and evolving ministries are to be facilitated and organized around the local bishop and pastors. Unfortunately, there is some significant movement today in Rome to curb the power and influence of the bishops in favor rather of a more centralized church administration.
- 4) In terms of the Council: one must go to the texts of each document and be vigilant of other works which might well be lifting passages out of context in order to pursue some extraneous agenda. Such is true, e.g., of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. And while being able to go to and use the texts of the actual documents is absolutely essential for anyone interested in church reform and renewal (aggiornamento), one must also look to understand the Vision of Pope John XXIII for the church.
- 5) Many Catholic thinkers, scripture scholars and theologians had been "silenced" in the years leading up to the Council. Pius XII reinstated some and John XXIII others, as e.g., John Courtney Murray, S.J. whose formerly condemned notion that democracy is compatible with Catholicism became enshrined in the Council document on Religious Liberty. Another theologian very influential before and during the Council was Yves Congar, who became a cardinal shortly before his death. In the gospels and in the Council documents the focus is on the Reign of God and that the church is intended to be in service of the Reign of God and not to be identified with it.
- 6) We, all believers, constitute the church, and there is a special obligation that people speak up (in particular the non-ordained), for the good of the church (*Lumen Gentium* # 37, *Gaudium et Spes*, #37 & 65 ff). Criticism of the church and its structures is best done, not as personal attacks on individuals, but as objective critiques of the institution and its structures. From the document on priestly formation # 16, we read that scripture is to be the soul of all theology, which also means to begin with Jesus who sets the ground for a

hierarchy of truths.

7) To realize that Jesus is **the revelation** implies a theological change of heart especially as regards the idea of a revealed morality. There came about a realization that all Christians are disciples. For Jesus there was only the Reign of God. Jesus and Paul were of course Jews, and Jesus was hoping for the deep conversion of the twelve tribes of Israel to the reality of the Reign of God. This is to move from a morality of obedience to an ethics of responsibility. One is called to participate in divinity, which is a call to be oneself, to be fully human, to grow into adulthood.

8) Abbot Christopher Butler and the Eastern bishops (who traditionally govern in collaboration with a Synod), helped move the Council fathers away from a need to see things in black and white and toward a deeper appreciation of paradox and mystery. Paradox helps energize the theological enterprise. The Council can be summed up by saying that it intends to move the church away from a pyramid model toward a circular one.

9) The Eastern bishops at the Council as well as the Europeans caught on more quickly about the implications of what they were doing than others due to culture and theological education (e.g., a circular paradigm), but by the third session it had become clear to almost all the participants. Many bishops even died prematurely after the Council due either to the difficulties they faced in implementing the Council or due to their reactions against it.

10) We need to use as many descriptions as possible when looking at the mystery of the church. The bishop's role in the local church is to serve as sign and maker of unity, as the pope is to concentrate on this same role of ministry for the entire church. All of the bishops as a collegium also participate in building up the unity of the entire church in their union with the Bishop of Rome.

11) The role of the theologian is to interpret revelation for the people. (Interesting that now the majority of theologians are women, whereas previous to the Council theological studies were a male prerogative).

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12) We must remember that Pius XII helped pave the way for a council by his insistence that theologians and scripture scholars enjoy academic freedom (as in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, 1943).

13) In *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Pope John XXIII presented three major signs of the times: justice for workers, women in the church, and a more level playing field for all nations.

14) And when he called for a Council (Jan. 25, 1959), he also called for a church synod for the city and diocese of Rome, and for the reform of the Code of Canon Law. The Synod of the diocese of Rome turned out not to be very successful. At one time (early first millennium) synods in Rome were the ordinary rule. The reform of Canon Law came about in 1983, and the new code is more laity friendly. No doubt the Holy Spirit is bringing new life into the church.

15) In our time we need synodality in terms of a democratic consensus-seeking parish and diocesan pastoral councils. Parishioners should insist on this as a Spirit-inspired way to be an adult Christian in an adult church. In a diocesan synod, the final report, once accepted by the bishop, is to go to Rome. In Bishop Remi's case, the synod report went to Rome and it included a request by the people for the ordination of women. It was organized into 22 dossiers. For Remi's diocese (Victoria, British Columbia), the process

of the synod was inductive, looking to surface ideas from the peoples' experiences. And there was to be no censorship. There were no questionnaires or attempts to manipulate results.

16) It is the Holy Spirit who effects the presence of Jesus in the Eucharistic assembly. The ministry of the presider is to tell the story of Jesus again, and all the people are celebrants together with the presider, and call upon the Spirit to make holy the gifts of bread and wine (Epiclesis). Even a eucharistic prayer, such as that of the Syro-Chaldeans which has no words of institution, is a valid way to celebrate because the story of Jesus is remembered and the Spirit is called to be present to make holy the gifts.

17) *In terms of an adult Christianity*, a bishop, priest or deacon or other leader- minister must remember to consult all in the community who will be affected by some decision before acting. So the principles of synodality & collegiality are applicable within all aspects of the circle which is the church. An adult Christianity implies that people develop a sense of what they need to do. In the Reign of God there are only responsibilities: one is responsible to become oneself and to love that self, others, creation and God. Out of one's response to God's call come rights.

18) As members of a collegium, the bishops are responsible for the preaching of the gospel in fraternal unity with the bishop of Rome, whose ministry is the unity of the whole church. Why Rome? Because it was historically, at the tomb of Jesus, Peter and Paul, the Center.

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19) As humans we need structure as well as gospel. So as a great circle, the people in union with their bishops who are in union with the Pope, have significant, operative structure. Bishops ordinarily organize their diocese into parishes, wherein the people are called to be in union with their pastors, who, in turn, are in union with their bishop.

20) The role of women in the church as a "sign of the times" came to fruition after the Council. There is significant concern in many churches that the structures around priesthood and the present cultural climate in many countries might well make it very difficult for women to exercise a priestly office.

21) **Synodality** is for everyone; **collegiality** refers to the bishops.

22) Why 12 apostles? Jesus was seeking a deep commitment of the 12 tribes of Israel to the Reign of God. He as human was deeply disappointed that his hope didn't materialize. Cfr. # 22 in *Church in the Modern World*: (paraphrased) Jesus in the flesh shows us what it really means to be human.

23) What about demanding silence about controversial issues (e.g., the ordination of women)? Even Pius XII back in 1950 sounded out peoples' views, as do the Council documents indicate the church needs to do. An adult Christianity means we speak about what we would like to see happen. And what are "grounds" for excommunication? Only on the basis of faith and morals. All are bound by canon law, including bishops. What about the "mandatum?" It has been roundly challenged because it comes close to being an infringement on freedom of conscience. 150 years ago Cardinal Newman was asked if he would toast the Pope. He said "yes" but first he would toast freedom of conscience. So, a person seeks a position at a Catholic institution and is asked to conform to the mandatum. What does one do who is seeking an adult Christianity? Part of the problem with this is quite frankly U.S. legalism and some bishops' exaggerated subservience to Rome.

24) Vat. II implies that we are all called to holiness, even to a certain mysticism. Many groups of ordinary people gather for contemplative retreats and take their spiritual life very seriously. There are groups of lay people who themselves initiate this kind of retreat. One can intuit an atmosphere of contemplative holiness among them.

25) The chapter of the *Grand Inquisitor* in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* can be seen as a parable reflecting the need for the old feudal system in which the institutional church is still largely embedded. In that system the lords do not question or critique the ruler, those below do not critique the lords, and, of course, those at the bottom do not critique or question anyone. The pyramidal edifice must give way to the circle. In the U.S church there is still no effective debate or conversation between bishops and people. The bishops by and large are forfeiting

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their right to determine how to respond to the pastoral needs of their specific populations, both as Ordinaries of dioceses and as a Conference in collegiality.

26) Re. the bishops' interventions in politics: there is a great need for them as teachers and pastors to push for solutions to pressing and serious social issues, like minimum wage, helping women who are pregnant with pre-natal care, funding homes for single mothers, and other programs which help women bring their children to term and avoid abortion. And the bishops need to push an ethic of life in a holistic sense: death penalty abolition, just wages, warfare avoidance, issues around abortion, etc. But they must not infringe on the people's right to decide for whom to vote. In many ways recently the bishops seem to not want a mature Christian laity but rather just unthinking obedient children.

27) What does Remi think of what is happening within the Anglican communion? The Spirit of Christ is the spirit of unity. Presently, Anglicanism has no effective center of unity and authority. It is in terrible straits. Their women clergy are being treated as second class citizens, which leads Remi and others to think that before the Roman church accepts women as ordained ministers, we need lots of education and preparation and some structural changes as well vis s vis an ordained priesthood. To advance the cause of women in the church, look for helping qualified women in ministerial roles. If enough people get behind women in ministry, eventually they will be received into the orders of priesthood. In Corinth, Lidia and her household were all converted by Paul and he felt at home with her. And, as householder, Lidia presided at Liturgy. Within Roman Catholicism the Center is trying to centralize too much. One could say we need a Petrine office, but not all the trappings of a Papacy such as it is.

28) Patriarchy runs deep in the church, and it is not just an ecclesial phenomenon, it permeates just about all the world's cultures and peoples.

29) In the view of Yves Congar, for the first 1000 years, the Eucharist made the church. Over the centuries, the clerics monopolized Catholicism, so eventually the cup is removed from common communion usage and restricted to clergy and the emperor. The Eucharist as meal was forgotten. The challenge for the Third Millennium is to achieve a balance between Eucharist as sacrifice and Eucharist as meal, for it is both.

30) By way of concluding this summary, what most stands out in my mind are the following: We, all of us, are the Church and the organization with the ordained ministries is to be in service of all the people, a service of unity and of consensus- building. The church exists for the sake of building up the Reign of God in this world, and the main

focus of the Reign of God are the poor, the powerless, the marginated, the voiceless. The best way to so organize the church so it can best fulfill this task, is through collegiality and synodality, and so give voice to all God's people and include all in this great work. Just as we need to seek a more just world for all, so we need to help create a more just future church wherein

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there is no longer rich or poor, slave or free, male or female, but we are all one in Jesus, to paraphrase St. Paul. And all the above is facilitated, animated and brought to fruition when we, the whole church, are soundly anchored in the person of Jesus, in the Scriptures and in the documents of the Second Vatican Council: Jesus as the definitive revelation of God to us, the scriptures which unpack the person of Jesus, and the Council documents which give us an elaborated game-plan for our times. May we all continue to become ever more conscious of the great vision of Pope John XXIII.

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