

## **Proclaiming A Prophetic Vision: Blessed John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council<sup>1</sup>**

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My experience of the Second Vatican Council dates back to the summer of 1959. The story began to unfold on 25 January of that year, with the announcement made to a startled world by the newly elected Bishop of Rome, Pope John XXIII (now Blessed John). Convinced that he had received a message or vision from heaven, he had decided on a three-fold initiative. He declared that he would shortly convene an ecumenical council, hold a diocesan synod for his local church in Rome, and prepare a revision of the 1917 Code of Canon Law.

On 18 June he contacted all the Bishops of the world through a letter signed by his Secretary of State, Cardinal Tardini. He asked them to offer their suggestions concerning the agenda and content of this proposed Assembly, later to be known as the Second Vatican Council.

My own Archbishop at the time, Maurice Baudoux of St. Boniface, Manitoba, responded with enthusiasm to this invitation. He formed a research team of nineteen priests, of which I was one, and initiated a consultation with interested people throughout our diocese. He also consulted with his neighboring Archbishops with whom he had close fraternal relationships. They were Eparchial Archbishop and Metropolitan for the Ukrainians of Canada, Maxim Hermaniuk, a Redemptorist, and George Flahiff, Archbishop of Winnipeg (later Cardinal), a former superior general of the Basilian Fathers.

Archbishops Maurice Baudoux and Maxim Hermaniuk were of one mind on many matters of concern to both the Eastern Churches and those of the Roman or Latin Rite. I understand they also had the sympathetic support of

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Archbishop George Flahiff. The combined efforts of these church leaders from Manitoba deserves greater attention than they have received to date.

I will recognize my bias in using the term “Western Canadian Team” to refer to the several Council participants who benefitted from the leadership of Archbishop Baudoux. Their combined efforts produced more grist for the mill of Vatican II than any other group in Canada. I learned this while participating in a seminar organized by the Dean of the Faculty of Theology of Laval University in Quebec, Fr. Gilles Routhier. He has done an impressive amount of research and publication over the years and is probably the best informed person in Canada regarding these matters.

As a member of the group working with Archbishop Baudoux, which formulated some sixty proposals, I was disappointed to find their more creative insights were not reflected in the seven draft documents or *schemata* which the Vatican Preparatory Commission, controlled by members of the Curia, eventually forwarded to all the prospective Council Fathers. But that is another story, since none of these preparatory documents survived the Council intact. Only traces remain in the subsequent publications produced by the Council.

I was privileged to work with Baudoux during more than ten years, beginning with my return in 1952 from doctoral studies in Rome. Through my association with this pioneering church leader, I was made more aware of some of the pre-council experiments which were already in progress in several countries. In retrospect one perceives how they were a distant preparation for the Council. Various initiatives aimed at renewing church life were being launched, mostly in Europe, a few in parts of Canada. It was thus that I encountered the early lay apostolate movements, then known as Catholic Action. Here I met exceptionally gifted lay leaders like Claude Ryan and Romeo Maione. Baudoux took full advantage of the first cautious experiments tolerated by Vatican authorities to promote exciting local initiatives in liturgy, Catholic Action, religious education, and ecumenism. In the course of my one year of service as his personal secretary and vice-chancellor, I came to appreciate more fully the significance of the episcopal motto he had etched on his coat of arms: *Superimpendar* (I will expend myself beyond measure). His French biographer, Denise Robillard, has entitled her as yet unpublished manuscript *Le Géant de l'Ouest*.<sup>2</sup>

Baudoux also encouraged me when I joined in some ecumenical initiatives with Fr. Irénée Beaubien, a Jesuit in Montreal, and Fr. Frank Stone, a Paulist, working with his assistant, Ms. Bonnie Brennan, in Toronto.

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<sup>2</sup> Archives de l'archevêché de Saint-Boniface, Denise Robillard, *Le Géant de l'Ouest, Maurice Baudoux, 1902-1988*, (unpublished manuscript, n.d.).

They ran impressive Catholic Information Centres, and I established in St. Boniface a modest Catholic Inquiry Forum modeled after theirs. The public lectures and exchanges offered there aimed to inform interested people about the Catholic Faith as well as to develop better understanding and friendly relations with non-Catholics. In retrospect, these presentations were a distinct improvement over the kind of apologetics that passed for theology when I was a student at the seminary. But they still look rather primitive when compared to the ecumenical dialogue that has gained ascendancy since the Council.

In all of this, one can perceive how the Spirit was already moving before the Council even began. Pope John XXIII deserves full credit for having been sensitive to these stirrings and for having recognized the finger of God guiding them.

These experiences in Manitoba contributed to the observations that Baudoux and his co-workers submitted to the respective Commissions in Rome, along with the customary concerns focused on the Church disciplines current in those days. Bishops were already closely controlled by the Vatican, particularly through the countless indulgences that had to be obtained for any ecclesial initiative beyond established policy or routines. If time permitted I could share a number of horror stories, some with very negative consequences, others ludicrous when seen from a post-Vatican II perspective. (For example, an indulgence denied for the use of a drinking straw for a priest dying of throat cancer, unable to swallow the host; the Franciscan monopoly on erection of Stations of the Cross.)

As I recall, some sixty suggestions were sent to Rome from Saint Boniface. Most of them reflected the church model and discipline prevalent at the time and followed the outlines of the 1917 Code of Canon Law. But there were also a number of innovative and truly noteworthy insights. Some of these are cited in Bernard Daly's book *Beyond Secrecy: The Untold Story of Canada and the Second Vatican Council*.<sup>3</sup>

I quote from introductory remarks Baudoux attached to his suggestions (on file in St. Boniface Archdiocesan archives), where he proposed that as a "crucial general principle...the primary purpose of all council undertakings should be 'concern for that essential unity that is beyond the contingencies of times and places, following the example of the multiform unity manifested in God and in Creation.'"

Similarly, with regard to the reform of church discipline, he suggested that church laws should make the apostolate more efficacious among both

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard M. Daly, *Beyond Secrecy: The Untold Story of Canada and the Second Vatican Council* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2003).

Catholics and non-Catholics. Concerning the question of unity, he asked for clarification of the degree of incorporation of all human beings into Christ. As for “separated Christians,” he asked that the respect the church has for all Christian people and their expressions of church life be made manifest, while everything possible be done to expedite their return to the flock of Peter. One can see that Baudoux had an unusually open mind and heart with respect to ecclesial life and its impact on people at large.

During the first session of the Council, Baudoux courageously established a Secretariat for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) at their College in Rome. He labored against the clock with his assistant theologian or *peritus*, Fr. Antoine Hacault, who became Auxiliary Bishop in 1964 and later his successor in Saint Boniface, now deceased. They were ably assisted by Fr. Bernard de Margerie of Saskatchewan, a dedicated *avant-garde* ecumenist, who was then studying in Rome. Much of the council work done by the Canadian Bishops was coordinated through that office. The exception was Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger, who made an outstanding contribution to the Council, but kept his own personal agenda close to his heart. (Here is a challenge to the CCHA: more research needs to be done on the contribution that the Canadian bishops made to Vatican II. Proportionately, their influence was well beyond their numbers.)

When Archbishop George Flahiff succeeded Maurice Baudoux as President of the CCCC (1963-65), he asked the latter to continue guiding this Secretariat and to keep developing the connections he had established with the increasing number of other Conferences. These were rapidly being formed, partly to counter the determined attempts of the Vatican curial officials to control the Council agenda.

The Second Vatican Council opened on 11 October 1962. An “optimist,” Pope John XXIII called for a “pastoral” council, recommending the use of the medicine of mercy. He rejected the “prophets of doom and gloom” and chastised them for not learning from history as our teacher. He had himself labored for long years to produce a five-volume work on the sixteenth-century pastoral reform initiated by St. Charles Borromeo, whom he greatly admired. His vision for Vatican II can be summed up in two words: *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement* (words that implied looking forward and looking in retrospect, that is, fidelity to tradition, but openness to the Holy Spirit).

John XXIII revealed his warm personality to non-Catholic Observers at the Council when he said: “your presence stirs my soul as a priest and bishop...please read in my heart...even more than my lips.” One Methodist, Dr. Albert Outler, later said that it was “the Johannine charismatic vision, this heart-lifting demonstration of the irresistible power of Christian

graciousness, that brought the Council into being and gave it its distinctive character.”<sup>4</sup>

After John XXIII died in June 1963, a Canadian Protestant Minister and friend came to offer me his condolences. His eyes filled with tears, he exclaimed: “We have lost our Pope!”

I have my own special memory of this beloved Pope. It is a beautiful amethyst ceremonial ring which I treasure as a relic of a Saint since his beatification on 3 September 2000. Shortly after my arrival at the Council in November 1962, I was received in audience along with the other Canadian Bishops. When Pope John was advised of the presence of the most recently appointed member of the Canadian hierarchy, he beckoned me to come forward. He inquired about my age and when told I was thirty-eight, he smiled and said he hoped I would live to be eighty-three. I marveled at his quick wit and humor. Only later did it dawn on me that something else was at stake. Aged eighty one, and aware he was dying of cancer, he knew that his own hope for a healthy old age was not to be fulfilled.

Something must also be said about the role of Pope Paul VI. He reconvened the Council after its interruption by the death of John XXIII. He also accepted his predecessor’s “vision from heaven,” describing the council as a “New Pentecost.” In the light of the first session, he further clarified its goals, speaking of a new awareness of the inner nature of the Church; of renewal and reform achieved by stripping away anything unworthy or defective; of hope for a “new springtime” for a “church of charity”; of the search for authentic Christian unity by living out the prayer of Christ; and of a dialogue with the world of today, erecting bridges of service and love.

He gave stern instructions to the Curia in April 1966, admonishing them to remember that Conciliar doctrine belongs to the magisterium of the Church and is indeed to be attributed to the breath of the Holy Spirit.

In retrospect it might be argued that Paul VI vastly underestimated the resistance to change which the Curia Officials resolutely maintained, supported by several other Prelates from abroad. An ideological re-reading of the council has been noted in many articles written since the Council ended.

In all fairness one must also admit that some local Bishop-Ordinaries did not whole-heartedly espouse the vision of John XXIII or even fully apply the teachings and directives of the Council. Among other things, to this day they continue to rely needlessly on Rome for guidance in areas

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Albert C. Outler, World Methodist Council, Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, Texas (unpublished paper, n.d.).

where they are fully competent as personally and immediately responsible to Jesus Christ. Also in retrospect, it appears that the majority voting positively (generally over 90%) were naïve in assuming that their decisions would be automatically carried out. They failed to realize how ingrained and stubborn old mentalities and habits can be.

Again, an assessment made by Dr. Outler at the close of the Council is worth noting. Speaking of Paul VI, he said: “In accepting and modulating the Johannine program, [Paul VI] has become the highly reflective director of an incredibly complex enterprise that is solidly conservative in doctrine and discipline, on the one hand, and vigorously progressive in polity and program on the other.”<sup>5</sup>

From another perspective, the Council could be understood as a continuous act of liturgy. The body of vested prelates opened each day’s session with Mass in one of twenty-six possible rites. There followed the veneration and enthronement of a magnificent ornate Book of Gospels. When the Council held its first session, concelebration was not yet permitted. It developed naturally out of the experience of the council assembly, eventually to become the norm for group gatherings.

The Council was also characterized by natural human struggles. There were ongoing tensions and protracted argumentation (though within a fraternal atmosphere) and even some harsh disputes between differing schools of theology/ideologies. A future-oriented majority was opposed by a “status-quo (Roman/Western) orthodoxy focus” minority. There were also cultural tensions between the Western or Aristotelian “logical” mind, with focus on dualistic right-wrong, on “opposites,” and the Eastern approach, more concerned with holistic integration, seeking “harmony and balance.” It is a tribute to Pope Paul VI’s conciliatory skills that such a high degree of consensus was eventually reached.

One can also speak of the presence at the Council of elements in a growing “global consciousness.” Contacts increased apace between representatives of bishops’ conferences. We can take note here of the special, however discreet, role of “bilingual” Canada, (particularly through Baudoux and Flahiff) in consultative groupings, in countering the controlling efforts of the Curia. Canada had an early experience with a Bishops’ Conference (founded in 1943). Its bilingual nature made it a natural model from which other groups of Bishops could learn, as they “scrambled” to combine their efforts to offset or even counter the pressures from the Roman Curia. Some Vatican Officials fought tenaciously to control the Council and orient its deliberations.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

There were as well pastoral insights based on international and intercultural (missionary) experience. There was dialogue between schools of theology, between theologians and other *periti* and with non-Catholic Observers. Very fruitful “socializing” went on among many of the several thousand academics and pastors gathered in Rome.

The consequent openness helped me, and probably many other Council Fathers, to deepen our sense of a living pneumatology in the Church, to feel the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. I often thought of Cardinal Newman’s insights and his theory of development, as well as the observation attributed to him that to grow is to change and that to be perfect is to have changed many times.

A word must also be said about the special contributions of the theologians. Among my many personal contacts I recall, in alphabetical order: Gregory Baum, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Yves Congar, John Courtney Murray, Edouard Schillebeeckx, Jean-Marie Roger Tillard to name a few, contributing to and inspiring the work of the Commissions, sharing with the Bishops, drafting texts for interventions. To this day I am thankful to Blessed John XXIII for having “liberated” many of the leading theologians and allowed them free scope. One cannot say too much in praise of their competence, their self-less dedication, spending of themselves well beyond the call of duty, obviously out of a deep sense of faith and a perception of the deeper significance of what was happening at this providential time in history.

Women came late to the Council (at the 3<sup>rd</sup> session), as “listeners” (*auditors!*). Despite this regrettable delay, they still made a substantial contribution, even if mostly in an indirect fashion. A number of them were well known to and highly respected by the Bishops. The exchanges and on the spot consultations made possible by the areas set aside in St. Peter’s Basilica for relaxation, the three “coffee bars,” helped to enhance this important dimension. The latest one was designated as reserved to the women auditors. We Council Fathers soon opted to distinguish these venues by name: “Bar Jonah, Bar Abbas, Bar-Nun/None?”

Another characteristic of the personality of John XXIII was his sensitivity to the need of the Council participants for some relief from the tedious routine of listening to endless and not necessarily substantial speeches. Some were delivered in Latin accents not readily recognizable to those not totally familiar with this ancient language.

How can we sum up the Council, the impact of the vision of Pope John? Part of the Council’s importance is that it was the largest ever and most international council in history. Vatican II was more “catholic” and more “representative” than any previous council, with ten times more Council Fathers than the Council of Trent, and three times as many as Vatican I.

The main elements and results can be seen as growing out of Pope John's vision, which is to be found primarily in his Opening Address to the Council, and two of his encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963). These provided the "orientations" that gradually conditioned the deliberations of the Council and inspired several of its documents (see, especially, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Ad Gentes*, *Unitatis Redintegratio*, and *Dignitatis Humanae*).

It is an impossible task to "dissect" such a substantial and somewhat complex body of teaching under simplistic headings! However, the following "clusters" appear to me to reflect or group some of the more salient features. At the risk of over-simplifying, I offer the following as a summary:

A) A new way of being Church. Our ecclesial life should not only manifest itself by communion, but it should also exhibit the marks of genuine friendship. I believe this dimension is at the heart of John XXIII's contribution and extremely important for the future if the Church is to have meaningful relationships with the world.

B) A new Pentecost and the gradual restoration of pneumatology (in ministry as well as liturgy). Blessed Pope John XXIII had a strong faith in the Holy Spirit. He rejected the prophets of doom and gloom and confidently predicted that the Council would bring about a new Pentecost. Pope Paul VI, convening its second session, and subsequently Pope John Paul II, deliberately repeated this expression.

The Council gradually came to a renewed understanding of and respect for pneumatology, the influence of the Holy Spirit as well as the variety of charismatic gifts bestowed on all baptized and confirmed members of the Church. (See below the consequences for Liturgy and Sacraments).

The theology of the Holy Spirit has been better preserved in the Eastern rites. This applies to the Liturgy of the Mass and the restoration of the key role of the Epiclesis.<sup>6</sup>

C) A Christ-centred Church, which manifests a renewed focus on mission as prior to maintenance. Jesus Christ who is perceived as a personal

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<sup>6</sup> One example of post-Vatican II development is the Agreement of 26 October 2001, ratified by Rome, between the Chaldean and Assyrian church, concerning the Anaphora of Addai & Mari. This decision is based on the pre-Nicene tradition ('*lex orandi legem statuat credendi*', let the law of prayer determine the law of belief: as we pray, so we believe). The "Anaphora" does not have the isolated "formula of consecration." The entire core is consecratory. This illustrates how **the transforming power comes from the words of Christ**, alive today and present in the Eucharist through the Holy Spirit, not from the words spoken by the ordained presider, however significant this ministerial function.

living revelation, message and messenger, a model of the Human. Describing the Church as the “Sacrament of Christ who is Sacrament for the World.” Maintaining a distinction between the Kingdom of God or the Reign of Christ and the institutional Church as such.

I also remember hearing Yves Congar tell the Canadian Bishops that the terms Christ and Spirit are sometimes practically interchangeable. Another of his expressions I recall is that in Jesus Christ, God made the Divine visible in the form of self-sacrificing love.

D) The Liturgy perceived as the “Divine Work” of Christ and members of His Body and re-centered on the Paschal Mystery.<sup>7</sup>

Pope Pius XII had already called for liturgical renewal in 1958, in response to grassroots stirrings signaling an awakening, primarily in Europe. John XXIII encouraged the Council Fathers to initiate their deliberations by focusing on the liturgy, the very heart of the Church, which extends the “Work of Christ.” All believers are called to participate in worship “knowingly, actively, fruitfully.”<sup>8</sup>

Vatican II was itself a solemn expression of worship, as each day began with Eucharist followed by the enthronement of the Book of Gospels. Liturgical renewal combined with modern biblical scholarship would ultimately result in “homilies” replacing “sermons,” the “breaking of bread and of the Word” taking priority over “instructions in morality.”

I recall Yves Congar O.P. telling the Canadian Bishops about the millennial shift that occurred. The Eucharist initially fashioned the Church throughout the First Millennium. But eventually, clerical leadership sought to control and shape the Eucharist with new problems ensuing as they quarreled over “definitions” of its nature. The Church then appeared to “make the Eucharist.” We now face a basic challenge for the next millennium to clarify this major issue regarding the “source and summit” of ecclesial life and to once again let the Eucharist build and shape the Church.

E) A Pastoral Council. This term “pastoral” actually expresses a broader meaning than the widely used “doctrinal,” that is, a council aimed at repressing heresy or clarifying disputed theological points. Spiritual guidance for Christian living (orthopraxis) must be recognized as equaling in importance correct doctrinal teaching (orthodoxy). St. John’s Gospel presents Jesus, “I Am,” as the Way and the Life, as well as the Truth. A

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<sup>7</sup> See Pope John Paul II in *Laborem Exercens* (1981) regarding the “subjective” nature of work, as developmental of the human. One might also recall here the studies done by Yves Congar on the Baptismal Priesthood (Romans and I Peter 2:9-10) and those of Marie-Dominique Chenu on Creation and Work.

<sup>8</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #11.

renewed focus on the kind of spirituality required today is necessarily holistic, embracing the totality of the human being. The mystics can achieve greater wisdom than the logicians caught up in their philosophical categories and neo-scholastic speculation! Pope John called for a clear distinction between the unchanging substance of doctrine and the way in which it is presented. *Aggiornamento* means that the Church is called to continual adaptation and reformation with the rectifying of deficiencies. Also, “Friendship” needs to be the central focus or identifying quality of our Church, just as much as “Communion.”

F) Historical consciousness (the influence of the Church in history and of history in the Church). There are many aspects to this development. Reconciliation of the Church with modernity. Relativising some “Absolutes” and “Systems.” Accepting the positive elements of the current shift towards democracy. Recognizing the current global universalist trend and the need for freedom of research. Practicing honesty in the pursuit of truth. Pursuing equality and responsibility before the law. Putting in place structural checks and balances. Making a habit of systematic evaluation and self-criticism. One might also remember and reclaim the “analogy of faith” which is part of our teaching heritage.

John XXIII reminded the Council Fathers that history is our teacher. He was sensitive to the development of doctrine made manifest by recent scholarship, as well as of the new humanism that was in the throes of birthing around the globe. The resultant challenge was to evangelize “secularity” with an appropriately adapted presentation of the Gospel, facilitated by a renewed philosophy and theology. Secular society has adopted its own sacramental gestures, and they are amenable to grace. Vatican II requires ongoing interpretation in this sense for fruitful dialogue to continue.

G) East-West Reconciliation. A number of serious issues remain unresolved: the question of the five original Patriarchates and of Eastern historic precedence (Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, Constantinople). A specific and painful issue arose at the Council opening ceremony when the Cardinals (Counsellors to the Western Patriarch of Rome) were given precedence in seating ahead of the Eastern Patriarchs. Maximos IV reacted with a symbolic “boycott,” by absenting himself from the first day’s meeting at the Council. Archeprarch Maxim Hermaniuk championed the return to their ancient role of the Synods. Much more could be said about the reclaiming of Collegiality. For example, the reaching out to the Churches that had been alienated because of the Great Schism.

Prelates from several Eastern Rites participated, with several Orthodox Observers also present because of their personal relations and friendship with John XXIII. The end of the Council would see the mutual lifting of

the excommunications of 1054. The variety of Rites (26) and their relative autonomy would be formally recognized in a special Decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*.

H) The return to the Sacred Scriptures,<sup>9</sup> with *ressourcement* and renewed biblical scholarship (historical-critical method and scholarship accepted by the Council), new models/methodology for theological endeavors.

John XXIII gave definitive leadership during a dead-lock in the procedure, by ordering that a new draft of the Constitution on Revelation be prepared. This had far-reaching implications. Among them was the focus on Jesus Christ as being himself the total Message of Revelation as well as its Messenger. The bible, tradition and magisterium are precious tools or means, but they are not in themselves the source of Revelation, which is a Person, the Divine Word incarnate. The consequences for Ecumenism are obvious.

I) Reading the signs of the times. John XXIII's encyclicals provide us with rich insights in this regard. *Mater et Magistra* (1961) adds the notion of "socialization" to that of subsidiarity found in Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and developed by Pius XI's *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931).<sup>10</sup> *Pacem in Terris* (1963) focuses on the poor of this world and on the struggle for peace. It further identifies three signs of the times: workers claiming their rights; women demanding to be treated as subjects, not objects; and peoples around the globe aspiring to be agents of their own destiny, free from colonial domination. This was the origin of what has since become known as the "preferential option for the poor."

J) Mission reclaims priority over maintenance. The entire People of God is affirmed as Spirit-endowed. I recall Fr. Yves Congar O.P. and his special work on the laity. He shared with me his joy when the Council drafting Commission finally accepted his proposal to insert references to Romans and 1 Peter 2 concerning the universal royal or baptismal priesthood of all the baptized and their total lives offered as "spiritual sacrifices." Every Spirit-endowed believer is called to a three-fold role: missionary, ministerial and messianic. All are called to the fullness of sanctity and to mysticism. Lay responsibility extends to the entire church.

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<sup>9</sup> Note the emphasis on Scripture as the foundation of theology and spiritual life in the Decree on Priestly Formation, *Optatam Totius*, #4 and #16.

<sup>10</sup> Subsidiarity was first presented as a principle by Leo XIII, and further developed by Pius XI. It is now too often ignored in practice by some central authorities of the Church.

A dynamic movement began to animate the previously static ecclesial structures, together with an awakening of the laity, all too long neglected, indeed a “slumbering giant.”

K) Nonviolence - Peace - Paradigm of Humanity. Another dimension of John XXIII’s personality was that his very being radiated nonviolence and peace. *Pacem in Terris* (1963) contains the equivalent of a Charter for Nonviolence. Paul VI in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1963) develops another aspect of this teaching by detailing the conditions required for authentic and effective dialogue. Authentic communion is built on respect for the person of the “other” as other. The partner has the right to self-definition without pressure from the other party to conform to a different standard, as well as respect for the freedom of an informed conscience. Only thus can common ground be established, leading to true understanding and concord.

Paul VI expressed the mind of the Council when he addressed the United Nations in New York in 1965 and declared: “No more war! War never again!”

L) Ecclesial subsidiarity (a principle since Pius XI) applies to local Churches, synodality, collegiality, ultimately *diakonia* and *koinonia* as self-sacrificing service out of love, hence life-giving, authentic “auctor”-ity/authority.

Convening the Bishops of the whole world was a return to early tradition and also implied transforming the vertical quasi-monarchical model of church government in vigor under Pius XI and Pius XII (the “pyramid” symbol) in favor of a consultative style (symbol of the “circle”), where all interested parties could express their convictions and ultimately share responsibility.

M) Ecumenism and inter-faith dialogue. Key insight that the true church “subsists in” but is not identical with the visible structures of the Roman Catholic church; freedom of conscience, hierarchy of truths, pluriformity in unity, exchange of spiritual gifts, (remember Bernard Häring, “salvific solidarity in a morality/ethics of responsibility”).

Non-Catholic Observers were invited to participate actively in Vatican II. The “vision” of John XXIII included transparency and earnest efforts to befriend people of different faiths. The Council recognized in all religions elements of truth, which came to be known as “seeds of the Word.” His own initiatives, notwithstanding determined reticence on the part of some Vatican officials, bore abundant fruit and began to substantially transform the attitudes of many other religious groups. Vatican II would recognize the rights of local churches and be led to acknowledge a “hierarchy of truths” relating to the central Truth of Christ. I will never forget hearing

Abbott Christopher Butler O.S.B. (later Bishop) ask the Council Fathers: “why should we fear that truth might tell against truth?” (*Ne timeamus quod veritas veritati noceat!*)

N) Last but not least! Paradigm shifts: communion and friendship as central symbols.

John XXIII proposed a model of the Church which featured communion and also friendship. It is meant to reflect the loving relationships of the Blessed Trinity.

He addressed his messages not only to the People of God, but also to all people of good will. His openness and affability endeared him to the entire world. There emerged from the Council an image of the Church where all the baptized were recognized as equal. The stage was set to bring back to the fore the scriptural teaching concerning the “triple baptismal priesthood”: “prophets, priests, sovereigns” (cf 1 Peter 2: 9-10), fallen into disuse in the wake of the Council of Trent, and the offering of self as “spiritual sacrifice” taught in the Epistle to the Romans.

A word can be said about Post-Vatican II developments. John Paul II affirmed Vatican II as a “reliable compass,” though calling for an “authoritative re-reading” (as did later, Benedict XVI!). In 1985, a special Synod of Bishops met in Rome to evaluate Vatican II on the twentieth anniversary of its closing. In their 8 December “Message to the People of God,” they gave a positive endorsement to its work, declaring: “We have shared unanimously, in a spirit of thanksgiving, the conviction that Vatican II is a gift of God to the Church and to the world. In full adherence to the Council, we see in it a wellspring offered by the Holy Spirit ... for the present and the future.”

I would even venture to suggest that the Council documents are preferably read “in reverse order,” that is, starting from the latest ones promulgated, taking into account the developments, maturing or refinements expressed in the documents promulgated later on, taking into account how the thinking of the Council Fathers progressed, deepened, and its formulation improved. The orientation underlying all the documents is to be taken from these later insights, which best represent the true mind of the Council Fathers, faithfully responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. In that sense we also recognize the deeper insights found in the Vision of John XXIII, which the Fathers only grasped more fully as the deliberations proceeded.

Let me offer a few examples:

*Dignitatis Humanae* on the dignity of the human person, the freedom of conscience and the nature of the act of faith;

*Nostra Aetate* on the respect due to various forms of truth found in other world religions and the different faith relationships of other peoples with God;

*Ad Gentes* on the “seeds of the Word” hidden in all cultures and traditions;

*Presbyterium Ordinis*, in particular #16, another statement about Sacred Scripture as the foundation and soul of all theology and the renewed emphasis on the need to communicate salutary truths in a contemporary manner;

*Unitatis Redintegratio* on the Holy Spirit as the principle of unity, the various degrees of communion within the broader Catholic family, the need for a change of heart in a church that is called to be continually reformed and its deficiencies corrected.

So, where to now? There are things left to do. In a nutshell, the core issue can be expressed in one sentence, which I extract from a book published by the Africa Faith & Justice Network, AFJN, entitled *African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*:<sup>11</sup>

“Whereas a prophetic and courageous transition from Judeo-Christianity to Gentile-Christianity was made in the first century, a similar transition from Eurocentric Christianity to world Christianity has not yet been clearly and prophetically achieved in the twentieth century. As a result, the universal church is still missing the great enrichment and beauty it could gain from various identities of the local churches.”

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<sup>11</sup> Maura Browne SND (editor), *African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books 1996), 18.