

Chapter 34

The Sound and Fury of Renewal

The years between the Council of Trent in 1545 and the Second Vatican Council were certainly not considered an era of change in the Church. The Church had reacted to the Reformation and had defined herself largely in opposition to it. Thus, if the Protestants stressed preaching, the Church would stress the sacramental rites, if they stressed Scripture, the Church would stress philosophy, church authority and tradition.

The classic organizational model of the Church as a pyramid, with the pope on top and the laity at the bottom was basically accepted without question. The liturgy saw only minor modifications. Textbooks which included teachings about morality, divorce and the sacraments had experienced only minor variations for centuries.

By the nineteenth century, the concept of papal primacy and infallibility had become crystallized in the First Vatican Council. Vocations to the priesthood and the growth of the religious orders had been robust. Given the defensive, counter-Reformation attitudes, the question of ecumenism had been relegated to a position of “come on home” when you have seen the error of your ways.

There had been some positive developments. The late nineteenth century had seen some movement toward modern biblical studies, the social encyclicals had seen the Church take a positive step toward interacting with the secular world, inculturation had begun again in the missions and slavery had been condemned. Cardinal Newman had even introduced the concept of the development of doctrine and had stressed its positive value in his famous statement “to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often”. With Newman, development and change had been given a positive value, but there was little concrete evidence to show that it had happened in Church teaching.

With the Second Vatican Council, all this would change. Whether that change was for the better or the worse depended on an individual’s point of view. In any event, no one denies that the time between Vatican II and the present has been and continues to be a time of ferment - again a tug-of-war between conservatives and liberals.

Our text mentions nine areas of rapid change and intense debate. We shall briefly, all too briefly, consider each of these.

The Liturgy

As mentioned in the last lecture, the changes in the liturgy were immediate and sweeping in scope. Understandable, the reaction of the laity was mixed. Those familiar with organizational change theory will recognize that mandated change is often the most difficult to introduce and sustain. Change is usually easier when a group reaches consensus on an internal problem and then designs and implements its own “solution”. However, the Catholic laity, especially, in the U.S. were accustomed to orders coming

from the top and being obeyed without input or question. In this atmosphere the mandated changes in the liturgy went fairly smoothly.

Of course, there were elements on both ends of the spectrum who reacted. Liberals wanted more changes and at times introduced unauthorized “home liturgies” with or without the assistance of a priest. Conservatives, on the other hand, longed for the old, Latin liturgy and devotional practices and they often found priests to accommodate them. Certain conservative Catholics who attended the new liturgy continued to pray the rosary during Mass and would not participate in such novelties as the “sign of peace” and communion under both species.

A more radical conservative element either stopped going to church or sought out groups like the followers of the schismatic bishop Marcel Lefebvre and his ultraconservative fraternity known as Pius V, named after pope Pius V of Inquisition fame. A group of the Pius V fraternity resides in St. Mary’s, Kansas at the site of the old Jesuit college. Their hallmark is the Latin liturgy of the Mass, which originated at the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.

The Structure of the Church - Authoritarianism Verses Collegiality

How is authority to function in the Church and how is authority to be structured? These questions have haunted the Church since apostolic days and we are nowhere near their resolution in our day.

Without doubt, Jesus taught his followers that those in authority were to be the slaves of others (Mk. 10:42-45). Matthew 20: 25-27 has a parallel saying:

...You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

While Jesus leaves a clear benchmark to measure how authority functions, He left no hint of what kind of a structure, if any, would house this authority. However, immediately the Apostolic Church had to address this issue. The mission was clear - preach the Good News and baptize in the name of Jesus - but who was to guard the essence of this Good News so that it did not become distorted? Paul was clear, he was the authority in the communities he founded. Peter may have had a certain leadership among the apostles and in the Jerusalem community, but Paul, who had never met Jesus, successfully confronted Peter and won his case over the question of whether Gentiles had to become Jews before becoming Christians.

It became obvious then and is obvious now that a life giving authority structure is a requirement for the flowering of human life in any kind of group -- political, family, church, social. It is in well functioning groups that we are able to activate our potential to become full, authentic human beings. And since the Church is a community at least we

can say that the idea of structure is certainly not alien to its nature, in fact, it is in some form a necessity.

By the time the Gospels were written a tension was already evident. Matthew, the only Gospel to mention the word “church”, places Peter in a special position of authority. The Gospel and Letters of John, however, say the community is led by the Spirit and has little need for “teachers”. Historically, the structure side won out and the hierarchical model became predominant with mixed results.

Prior to Vatican II, Pope Pius XII had spoken of the Church as the Body of Christ, again with a head and members. However, Vatican II began to speak of the Church as a People, a People of God. Since then a controversy has again emerged over how this people is to be organized to best exemplify the nature of the Church and accomplish its mission. Both sides agree that the Church is not a democracy, but neither is it best seen as a monarchy complete with princes (cardinals), dukes (bishops) and serfs (laity). What options are left?

The key word today is *collegiality*. Collegiality is based in part on the equal dignity of each individual through baptism and the gift of the Spirit to the entire people, with the bishops as key figures in the structure and the laity as true, necessary participants. The task is to work out a living structure that will give adequate expression to this notion of collegiality. The present leadership favors a return to an authoritarian, autocratic model, we can only hope the future will find a more satisfactory solution.

Morality and Conscience

Prior the Vatican II, following one’s conscience was not a burning issue. Catholics were to be guided in their moral decisions by the teachings of the Church and the advise of their confessor. Of course, one had to follow one’s conscience, even an erroneous conscience, as St. Thomas had made clear in the 13th century. However, it was also stressed that one had the duty to form one’s conscience correctly and to do that it was best to simply reference the Church teachings. Therefore, the thought that a good Catholic could have a “conscientious objection” to Church teachings was for all practical purposes out of the question.

And, of course, there is always Pius IX’s *Syllabus of Errors* (1864) where he condemned:

that erroneous opinion which is especially injurious to the Catholic Church and the salvation of souls, called by our predecessor Gregory XVI insane raving, namely, that freedom of conscience and of worship is the proper right of each man, and that this should be proclaimed and asserted in every rightly constituted society.

The Documents of Vatican II gave lie to the simple assumption that all judgments concerning morality and conscience coming from the highest authority in Rome were the stuff of absolute truth. Without apologies, the Council reversed Pius IX in its *Declaration on Religious Liberty*:

On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience faithfully, in order that he may come to God, for who he was created. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience.

When the focus shifted from religious liberty to moral issues the *Declaration* states:

In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully *to attend to* (italics mine) the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church.

At first glance this seems to echo the pre-Vatican II concept of the conscience as a passive reservoir for Church teachings. However, an earlier formulation of this text by the curia had read “ought to form their consciences *according to* (italics mine) the teachings of the church.” By accepting this less restrictive reading “attend to”, the council affirms that the obligation binding on the faithful to follow the teaching of the Church does not make the teaching an exclusive basis of a moral judgment.

It does mean that Catholics must pay attention to the teaching of the Church and give it presumptive authority, but these teachings cannot *alone* settle a concrete case of conflicting values.

Richard Gula S.S., in his excellent book *Reason Informed by Faith* sums up the current position in this way:

The strong preference for the magisterial teaching guards against following cultural trends or special interest groups. It favors relying on the accumulated wisdom which the magisterium is able to articulate by drawing upon the expertise of a broad base of experience.

Although no external authority can ever replace conscience, conscience cannot be properly formed without the help of authority. The tension between conscience and authority will always be with us. Because we know how easy it is to deceive ourselves, and because we give at least a presumption in favor of authority, we sometimes take for granted that the authority is automatically right and any contrary opinion is automatically wrong. This need not be so. Both authority and conscience are complementary aspects of the search for what is morally true, right, and good. (p.161)

Divorce

The theology of divorce has had a long and somewhat confused history. The Old

Testament assumes that a man can divorce his wife with a simple “bill of divorce”, but a wife cannot divorce her husband. The key text is Deut. 24:1 where the reason for divorce is based on finding no favor in a wife because of finding “*erwat debar*” in her. Literally this is translated “nakedness of a thing” and translated by the RSV as “some indecency”.

At the time of Jesus rabbis were divided on the meaning of Deut. 24:1. One group following Rabbi Hillel permitted divorce for almost any reason whatsoever - bad cooking, a scornful look - , while those following Rabbi Shammai restricted it to adultery. The OT Law prescribed stoning for adultery, but scholars doubt that it was usually carried out, divorce being the alternative. However, we do have the “throw the first stone” episode in the NT.

In the NT Jesus seems to prohibit all divorce, period. He makes no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but recalled Genesis where God “made them male and female...they are no longer two, but one”. (Mk. 10-2-12).

Later, Paul would modify this and allow an initial non-Christian marriage to be dissolved in favor of the Christian party. Paul allows for separation (divorce), but makes no mention of remarriage. The Church would later allow remarriage in this situation for the Catholic party. This is the Pauline Privilege.

At the present time the Catholic Church understands marriage between two baptized Christians as indissoluble, even by the pope. However, given the drastic rate of divorce among Catholics, there has been a focus on the question of whether there ever was a valid sacramental marriage in the first place. If it is determined that there is sufficient reason to doubt that full consent was given to a sacramental marriage, then these marriages can be dissolved and declared null. This is the common practice of annulment. Perhaps we are coming to a realization that there are fewer sacramental marriages taking place than we once thought.

What will be the final outcome of all this? No one knows for sure, but one thing is certain - we are less certain about many things than we were before Vatican II.

Development of Doctrine

The term doctrine (lat. “teaching”) signifies an official teaching of the Church. A doctrine that is determined to be taught definitively (infallibly) is called a dogma (Gr. “what seems right”). Thus, every dogma is a doctrine, but not every doctrine is a dogma. The words are often confused, even in official documents. There is no official list of dogmas and the debate concerning “doctrines verses dogmas” is an ongoing process.

As noted earlier, John XXIII set the tone for the modern notion of the development of doctrine in his opening speech to Vatican II where he stated: “The substance of the ancient doctrine is one thing and the way in which it is presented in another”. This coincides with the concept of historicity in modern theology. Modern scholarship has shown that doctrinal formulations are conditioned by the language, culture and the

questions relevant to specific historical eras. This concept was confirmed by Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*.

Doctrines are typically developed over time by theologians and the magisterium. They become official teachings of the Church when they are promulgated by the magisterium by encyclicals, ecumenical councils and national, regional or local synods of bishops. By definition, doctrines are not infallible and thus may contain error and certain linguistic and cultural deficiencies. In other words, they are open to development.

For example, prior to Vatican II it was a doctrine of the Church that religious liberty was not an individual right. We have seen earlier that this was summed up in Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors*. This was supported by the accepted adage, "error has no rights".

Vatican II, however, taught that religious liberty is indeed the God-given right of every human being:

Chapter One on the *Declaration on Religious Freedom* states:

This Vatican Synod declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom....The Synod further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person, as this dignity is known through the revealed World of God and by reason itself. This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed. Thus it is to become a civil right. (article 2)

Here we have a clear, classic case of the development of doctrine.

As for dogmas the situation is different. Strictly speaking dogmas do not develop. Their meaning may be expanded as the mysteries they contain unfold, but their original formulation provides a certain framework or sets the parameters for all further consideration.

For example, it is a dogma of the Church that in Christ there are two natures - one divine and one human - hypostatically united in one divine Person (C. of Chalcedon 451). It is true that the mystery of Christ is inexhaustible and its meaning for us will unfold for all eternity. However, whatever we come to know about this mystery (christology) will always be within the dogmatic framework of one person and two natures. In this sense, dogmas do not develop.

Having said this, the language of dogmas may need to be revisited to grasp their meaning in their original theological and philosophical culture, e.g., the meaning of "person" in the original Trinitarian language of Greek culture verses the modern notion of person as an individual center of consciousness. And so to retain their original meaning dogmas may need to be reformulated to preserve their eternal truth for the present.

Vocations

The vocation crisis is a true crisis for the Church. The causes of this crisis are complex and the view of some conservatives that the crisis was precipitated by the liberal forces behind Vatican II is too simplistic. In any event, the facts are disturbing and they are linked in time to the convening of Vatican II.

In the mid-1960's at the time of the Council, American seminaries were bulging, but by 1974 seminarians throughout the world had been reduced over 30%. In the global Church, between 1969 and 1985 the number of priests had declined by some 26,000 - 425,000 to 399,000. However, even in the 1920's the global Church did not have enough priests. In fact, one of the reasons given by Pius XI for the development of Catholic Action was a priest shortage.

The real issue is not the number of priests, but the ratio of priests to the laity. In 1942 the priest-to-laity ratio was 1 to 617; in 1962 1 to 771; and in 1990 1 to 921. Predictions are that by 2005 the ratio will be 1 to 2,200.

The central problem of the vocation shortage is that many Catholic communities are unable to celebrate the Eucharist on a regular basis. The *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests* makes this point: "No Christian community, however, can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist. Here, therefore, all education in the spirit of community must originate" (note 6). The Eucharist is the central liturgical act of Catholic life. In the Eucharist celebration the Church becomes visible and the sacramental presence of Jesus is most intense.

Two major causes of the crisis that appear in the literature are an "identity crisis" and "burnout". Additional numbers would help the burnout issue, but the identity crisis is complicated. What does it mean to be a priest? In the past some were attracted to the priesthood because of the "priestly caste system" - better education, community respect and economic freedom. However, the laity are now often better educated than the priests and the automatic respect for the clergy has come on hard times, especially in light of the current child abuse scandals.

Others were attracted to the priesthood as a special means of serving people. However, a recent article in *America* magazine lamented the role of the priest as CEO of the parish, rather than a servant to the servants of God. There are also now a multitude of ways outside the priesthood to serve people. Young men who want to dedicated their lives to the building of the Kingdom simply have more choices for a vocation.

The Council spoke of the ordained priesthood as different in kind, not just in degree, from the common priesthood of the laity. However, the notion of the vocation to the priesthood as a "higher calling" has been eroded by an awareness that all the baptized have an identical call to holiness and share equally in the mission of the Church to promote the Kingdom..

The solutions that immediately come to mind - using married laicized priests, optional

celibacy, and the ordination of women - have, up to now, been rejected out of hand by Rome. On the other hand, married clergy from Lutheran and Anglican backgrounds have been accepted as converts to Catholicism and are serving in parishes with their families. The Eastern Rite continues to have married clergy and married deacons are now an accepted part of the Catholic ministry. Many bishops and cardinals, especially in missionary countries, are calling for optional celibacy.

Furthermore, scholars and Rome alike admit that there is no scriptural mandate for celibacy and that it did not become a rule in the Church until the Lateran Council in 1139. There is some hope.

For the present, an authorized stop-gap solution has been to allow Communion Services conducted by nonordained Catholics. In 1988, the Congregation for Divine Worship issued guidelines for these services. The danger here is that Catholics can come to confuse these services with the Eucharist. In any event, a communion service is not the Eucharist.

There have been some recent increases in seminarians, but the crisis is still with us. It will probably get worse. The laity are ready for and in need of radical changes, the hierarchy is not - yet.

Ecumenism

The Reformation had placed the Catholic Church in a polemic and defensive position. Any notion of Christian unity would be to “come back home to Rome”. Leo XIII was the first pope to show an interest in ecumenism. However, he stressed the need to recognize papal primacy and declared Anglican ordinations invalid. This remain a lasting obstacle.

When Protestants inaugurated the ecumenical movement in 1910 at Edinburgh, the two organizations initiated there - “Life and Work” and “Faith and Order”- invited Rome to attend, but Rome was not ready to get involved. In 1948, when the World Council of Churches was organized, Pius XII gave bishops the option to send Catholics to ecumenical meeting in their dioceses. However, in 1954 Cardinal Stritch outlawed participation in the second meeting of the WCC in Evanston.

In 1960, John XXIII created the Pontifical Secretariat for the Promotion of the Unity of Christians and sent observers to the third meeting of the WCC. He also invited Orthodox and Protestant observers to Vatican II. Since Vatican II Catholic participation in ecumenical activities has been taken for granted. Its direction was taken from the documents of Vatican II relating to ecumenism, religious liberty and the relationship of Christians to non-believers.

The Catholic Church has also initiated bilateral theological dialogues with Lutherans and Anglicans. These dialogues have resulted in much theological progress and agreements on such Reformation issues as justification by faith, the role of Peter in the NT and Mary in the NT. Pope John Paul II has been tireless in his efforts to meet with the Orthodox

and various Protestant Churches. He has apologized on various occasions for the sins of Catholics against other Christians and non-Christians.

In his dramatic encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* (1995), he noted that the issue of papal primacy was the main obstacle to Christian unity and he asked Protestant leaders to express under what conditions and expressions the papacy could be accepted by them. He also stated that “Dialogue has not only been undertaken; it *has become an outright necessity, one of the church’s priorities*” (italics in the original).

On the down side, on September 5, 2000, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith headed by Cardinal Ratzinger issued a document entitled *Dominus Iesus*. While aimed at theologians and bishops it naturally became public knowledge and its negative tone and message was a blow to ecumenical dialogue. Documents like this and the ordination of women by the Anglican Church have put somewhat of a damper on ecumenical dialogue. However, the course is set and most of the participants in the ecumenical dialogue look for more progress in the future.

What would eventual unity look like? Well, it would not be of the old “come back home” type. It would be a unity in diversity, much like that between the Western and Eastern Rites of the Catholic Church. And as John Paul II stated in *Ut Unum Sint*, “Legitimate diversity is in no way opposed to the church’s unity, but rather enhances her splendor and contributes greatly to the fulfillment of her mission.”

Mary

The role of Mary in the Church has been a traditional stumbling block between Catholics and Protestants. Happily, that has begun to change, thanks in great part to the Council Fathers at Vatican II.

When the Council Fathers took up the document on Mary, there was a major disagreement about where it should be placed. Reflecting different theological views, some wanted a separate document on Mary, others want Mary to be placed in the document on the Church. In deciding the matter theologians were brought in to discuss the theological issues involved. It was finally decided on a close vote - 1,114 to 1,074 - to include the schema on Mary in the document on the Church. This schema was to become the last chapter in the Constitution on the Church

After another long discussion, the title of the Chapter became “The role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church”. This places Mary in the midst of the Church as a member, the exemplary member, rather than set apart and above other members of the Church.

This coincides with the NT view of Mary as the first and model disciple of Jesus, i.e., one who hears the word of God and acts upon it. In the NT, Mary receives her dignity and respect primarily from being a disciple and only secondarily from being the mother of Jesus.

Mary's oneness with all Christians was noted in that she is "one with all human beings in their need for salvation" and her uniqueness is stressed as the "preeminent and altogether singular member of the Church" (note 53.) She is related to her Son through her faith and obedience. While Jesus is our sole mediator with God, through His power Mary is empowered "to manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this unique source" (note 62). This was an attempt to place the mariological themes of Advocate and Mediatrix in the proper perspective and avoid distortion.

To address the fears of Protestants concerning exaggerated mariology and devotions to Mary, the Document states:

But this Synod earnestly exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word that in treating of the unique dignity of the Mother of God, they carefully and equally avoid the falsity of exaggeration on the one hand, and the excess of narrow-mindedness on the other. Pursuing the study of sacred Scripture, the holy Fathers, the doctors, and liturgies of the Church and under the guidance of the Church's teaching authority, let them rightly explain the offices and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which are always related to Christ, the Source of all truth, sanctity and piety.

Let them painstakingly guard against any word or deed which could lead separated brethren or anyone else into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church. (note 67)

Thus the Fathers steered a middle course between opposing views. Mary was placed in relation to Christ and the Church and this approach has shaped most Marian thought since.

The final vote on the document was an overwhelming 2,080 to 10. A compromise and a consensus had been reached.

In the years immediately following the Council, there was a marked drop in Marian devotions and scholarship. However, both Paul VI and John Paul II had a strong personal devotion to Mary and promoted this devotion to the laity in the spirit of Vatican II.

Pope Paul VI had a traditional devotion to Mary. While the Council had refrained from calling Mary by the title "Mother of the Church", at his closing address to the Council, November 21, 1964, Paul VI referred to Mary as Mother of the Church. Later, in 1974, noting the decline in Marian devotions following the Council, Paul VI issued an apostolic exhortation - *Marialis Cultus*. While encouraging Marian devotions he set out criteria for their development:

- 1) They must have a biblical imprint
- 2) They must be harmonized with liturgy - not replace it with novenas and rosaries.
- 3) Care must be taken not to mislead other Christian brethren about true Catholic doctrine, e.g. Christ is sole mediator.

- 4) Certain devotions depicting Mary as totally submissive person cannot be reconciled with the modern stature of women in society.
- 5) Marian devotions must eliminate exaggerations, sentimentalism and legendary elements.

And in speaking of the Rosary he said: “We recommend that this very worthy devotion not be propagated in a way that is too one-sided or exclusive. The Rosary is an excellent prayer, but the faithful should be serenely free toward it. Its intrinsic appeal should draw them to calm recitation.”

Pope John Paul II also has a strong devotion to Mary, due in part to his Polish background. In 1656, King John Kasimir had proclaimed Mary the Queen of Poland after a victory over the Swedes.

John Paul II visited Fatima in 1982. In 1984 he asked all the world’s bishops to “renew the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary” made by Pius XII. He called for a Marian Year in 1987 in anticipation of the year 2000.

In 1987 John Paul II issued an encyclical *Redemptoris mater*. This letter promoted devotion to Mary and supported liberation theology by declaring that Mary exemplified the truth that the God who saves us is the God who has a preferential option for the poor. It also noted that Marian devotions provided a strong tie between the Orthodox and Catholic communities.

In all of this, the pope endorsed the guidelines of the Marian chapter in The Constitution on the Church in the documents of Vatican II. At a general audience in Rome in May 1972, he said the Marian chapter is “in a certain sense a *magna charta* of the mariology of our era.”

An excellent example of the ecumenical progress that has been made on the subject of Mary since Vatican II is a publication sponsored by the United States Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue. In 1978 this dialogue resulted in the publication of a book entitled: *Mary in the New Testament*. This was called a collaborative assessment by 12 scholars - six Catholics and six Lutherans - representing the best in NT scholarship. It provides an excellent scholarly assessment of the NT view of Mary.

Vatican II had also addresses ecumenical concerns in its principle of doctrinal relativity. It noted, following the lead of John XXIII, that doctrines often needed to be reformulated. It also spoke of a “hierarchy of truths”. The ecumenical implications for doctrinal agreement, especially in the case of Mary, include the possibility that since such Marian dogmas as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption are not fundamental to the Christian message or identity, operational unity between Catholic and Protestants could be possible even when agreement on these dogmas had not yet be reached. Again, something may be true, but not fundamentally true within the context of Christian belief.