

The first article, available in the on line or print edition of the December 7 *America* magazine, is a review of John Allen's new book, *The Future Church: How Ten Trends Are Revolutionizing the Catholic Church*, which is published by Doubleday. The review is by Richard Gaillardetz, who is the Murray/Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo and the author of *Ecclesiology for a Global Church* (Orbis, 2008).

John Allen is the English-speaking world's most informed, most insightful and most balanced commentator on the Roman Catholic Church today. Allen consistently offers richly textured reportage that refuses to opt for the superficial take on church events. His extensive travels across the globe, his years cultivating relationships among theologians, local church leaders and Vatican officials, his genuine curiosity regarding the manifold factors, apparent and hidden, that shape church events—all have uniquely equipped him to produce his most recent volume.

The Future Church explores a range of possible futures for the Roman Catholic Church based on what he identifies as 10 trends that will shape the church of the 21st century. Six criteria guided Allen's selection of the trends that would make his "top ten" list: 1) the trend had to apply to the global church; 2) it had to affect the church at the grass-roots level; 3) it had to be a trend that church leadership felt compelled to engage; 4) it had to have explanatory power, helping to make sense of otherwise disconnected church developments; 5) it had to have predictive power, meaning that it must help anticipate some new ecclesial developments and 6) it must not be ideologically driven.

... Faithful to Peter Berger's axiom that no significant social phenomenon ever has a single cause, Allen resists simplistic narratives. At one point he considers 14 possible factors contributing to the rapid growth of Pentecostalism. Moreover, he also acknowledges that many of these trends stand in tension: the conservative impulse of evangelical Catholicism, for example, pulls in the opposite direction of an increased attentiveness to inculturation and the positive contributions of indigenous religions.

A particular strength of Allen's work lies in the character of his prognostications. With each trend Allen distinguishes among "near certain consequences," "probable consequences," "possible consequences" and "long shot consequences." This creates a fascinating portrait of the many possible futures of the church. Allen dedicates an entire chapter to his explanation of why certain trends (e.g., the priest shortage, clerical sexual abuse, the growing role of women) did not make the list. Still, some of his trends seem to be more about larger societal developments to which the church must react rather than to trends in the church itself. Allen's book offers the reader a compelling account of the challenges and possibilities that lie before the Catholic Church in this still young century. Those who are invested in its future will find it an indispensable resource.

The following article, also from *America* magazine, urges caution in introducing the revisions to the Roman Missal. It was submitted by Rev.

Michael G. Ryan, who is the pastor of St. James Cathedral in Seattle and serves on the board of the national Cathedral Ministry Conference.

What If We Said, 'Wait'?

The case for a grass-roots review of the new Roman Missal
Michael G. Ryan | DECEMBER 14, 2009

It is now 45 years since the Second Vatican Council promulgated the groundbreaking and liberating document on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As an eager and enthusiastic North American College seminarian at the time, I was in St. Peter's Square on the December day in 1963 when Pope Paul VI, with the world's bishops, presented that great Magna Carta to the church. The conciliar document transcended ecclesiastical politics. It was not just the pet project of a party but the overwhelming consensus of the bishops of the world. Its adoption passed overwhelmingly: 2,147 to 4.

Not in my wildest dreams would it have occurred to me then that I would live to witness what seems more and more like the systematic dismantling of the great vision of the council's decree. But I have. We Catholics have.

For evidence, one need look no further than recent instructions from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments that have raised rubricism to an art form, or the endorsement, even encouragement, of the so-called Tridentine Mass. It has become painfully clear that the liturgy, the prayer of the people, is being used as a tool—some would even say as a weapon—to advance specific agendas. And now on the horizon are the new translations of the Roman Missal that will soon reach the final stages of approval by the Holy See. Before long the priests of this country will be told to take the new translations to their people by means of a carefully orchestrated education program that will attempt to put a good face on something that clearly does not deserve it.

The veterans who enthusiastically devoted their best creative energies as young priests to selling the reforms of the council to parishioners back in the 1960s will be asked to do the same with regard to the new translations. Yet we will be hard put to do so. Some colleagues in ministry may actually relish the opportunity, but not those of us who were captivated by the great vision of Vatican II, who knew firsthand the Tridentine Mass and loved it for what it was, but welcomed its passing because of what full, conscious and active participation would mean for our people. We can see the present moment only as one more assault on the council and, sadly, one more blow to episcopal collegiality. It was, after all, the council that gave to conferences of bishops the authority to produce their own translations (S.C., Nos. 36, 40), to be approved, it is true, by the Holy See but not, presumably, to be initiated, nitpicked and controlled by it. Further, the council also wisely made provision for times of experimentation and evaluation (S.C., No. 40)—something that has been noticeably missing in the present case.

This leads me to pose a question to my brother priests: What if we were to awaken to the fact that these texts are neither pastoral nor ready for our parishes? *What if we just said, "Wait"?*

Prayer and Good Sense

I know it might smack of insubordination to talk this way, but it could also be a show of loyalty and plain good sense—loyalty not to any ideological agenda but to our people, whose prayer the new translations purport to improve, and good sense to anyone who stops to think about what is at stake here.

What is at stake, it seems to me, is nothing less than the church's credibility. It is true that the church could gain some credibility by giving us more beautiful translations, but clumsy is not beautiful, and precious is not prayerful. During a recent dinner conversation with friends, the issue of the new translations came up. Two at the table were keenly—and quite angrily—aware of the impending changes; two were not. When the uninformed heard a few examples ("and with your spirit"; "consubstantial with the Father"; "incarnate of the Virgin Mary"; "oblation of our service"; "send down your Spirit like the dewfall"; "He took the precious chalice"; "serene and kindly countenance," for starters), the reaction was somewhere between disbelief and indignation.

... The bishops have done their best, but up to now they have not succeeded. Some of them, led by the courageous and outspoken former chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pa., tried mightily to stop the new translation train but to no avail. The bishops' conference, marginalized and battle-weary, allowed itself slowly but steadily to be worn down. After awhile the will to fight was simply not there. Acquiescence took over to the point that tiny gains (a word here, a comma there) were regarded as major victories. Without ever wanting to, the bishops abandoned their best pastoral instincts and in so doing gave up on the best interests of their people.

... "What If We Just Said No?" was my working title for this article. "What If We Just Said, 'Wait'?" seems preferable. Dialogue is better than diatribe, as the Second Vatican Council amply demonstrated. So let the dialogue begin. Why not let the priests who are on the front lines and the laypeople who pay the bills (including the salaries of priests and bishops) have some say in how they are to pray? If you think the idea has merit, I invite you to log on to the Web site www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org and make your voice heard. If our bishops know the depth of our concern, perhaps they will not feel so alone.

Jesuit Father Francis x. Clooney replies to last Sunday's *New York Times* letter to the editor entitled *Latin Mass Appeal*. It appears in full on the *America Magazine* blog (November 30).

Loving the Post-Vatican II Mass

You may have read Kenneth Wolfe's Op-Ed piece in Sunday's New York Times (Week in Review), Latin Mass Appeal. ...I found it unconvincing, not as a liturgist or liturgical historian or Vatican-watcher (I am none of these), but as a Catholic who is old enough to have served Mass in Latin as an altar boy, young enough to had no say about the changes in the liturgy, but nevertheless privileged to serve as a priest for more than 30 years thus far in the parishes and campuses of our Church, here and abroad. So here's what I think:

First, we've been taught for centuries to trust the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. Many a time the Vatican has called to work in the Vatican men without any particular training or experience that would justify their appointment; many a time, Popes have trusted such individuals with very important roles in shaping the theology and practice of the Church; and many a time, God has worked through such men. Archbishop Bugnini is one such person, and I see no reason to think that the Spirit, and intention of the Church, did not work through his sincere and humble efforts.

Second, while as a child I found the liturgy of the pre-Vatican II Church deeply satisfying and loved the ritual, the Latin, the mystery of this worship, I have never found it the case that the conciliar changes were a mistake or a loss. The typical Eucharistic celebration is no less holy or sacred now than it was in 1960. ...

Third, Mr Wolfe notes that Archbishop Bugnini sought to reform the liturgy to remove barriers dividing us from our Christian neighbors in Protestant traditions. I gather that he sees this as a fatal mistake, but I think it was a very good thing to remove, for many good reasons including the ecumenical one, barriers that made the Eucharist needlessly different or divisive. It is not a good thing when we Christians are divided to no good purpose ...

Fourth, Mr Wolfe finds it particularly disappointing that the altar was turned around to face the people; he cites Pope Benedict that externally at least, when the priest faces the people, this signifies a community "closed in on itself." But this is unfair, just as it would be to complain that in the old liturgy the priest kept turning his back on the community ...

Perhaps in an Advent mode of expectation, Mr Wolfe concludes with a visionary look forward: the Pope, and good Catholics, are doing away with the reforms and putting things back the way they were, and should be. But I think he has not seen deeply enough: God does bless us in the way we worship today, Christ is present in the Eucharist as we celebrate it, the Spirit touches our minds and hearts as we stand, hands outstretched, to receive the Body of Christ, and then proceed to drink his Blood from the cup. ...

Once again, subscribe to *America*. The online version is a treasure trove.

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Bishops struggling to promote their narrow vision of marriage

Nov. 27, 2009

... On Nov. 3, Maine suffered a profound setback in its march towards marriage equality for its citizens. The loss came after Maine's Catholic diocese waged a lengthy and costly battle against the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people to have the same legal protections as heterosexual couples. The state's Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices has since revealed that the Diocese spent \$553,608.27 on the campaign. Nearly half of the funds came not from anti-gay parishioners in Maine, but from anti-gay Catholic bishops around the country.

Fifty-seven different bishops ranging from the Diocese of Phoenix to the Diocese of Pittsburgh contributed money, either personally or under the auspices of the diocese or a diocesan fund, to the Catholic Diocese of Maine's campaign against marriage equality. (To see if your diocese gave money to defeat marriage equality, [click here](#).) But while certain bishops are contributing money to defeat the potential for all families to have equal protections under law, many Catholic laity are exemplary in their espousal of equality. In fact, of all Christian denominations, Catholics are the most favorable toward LGBT acceptance in the U.S. with 58% of Catholics believing that homosexuality should be accepted by society (Public Religion Research, 2008).

And while Catholics overall are evenly divided on the question of marriage equality with a provision for religious exemptions, in a few short years that is certain to change. The youngest generation of Catholics between 18 and 29 years of age are 60 percent in favor of full marriage equality (Public Religion Research, 2008). And the corresponding numbers across other generations are also growing.

... Instead of looking at the very real problems modern couples face, such as economic hardship, lack of health care and other obstacles to a healthy and life-giving union, the bishops decided to condemn practices that in their minds lead to the degradation of heterosexual marriage such as contraceptive use and same-gender marriage, among other things. Although one wonders from where the bishops are drawing their conclusions: Massachusetts, the first state to legalize same-gender marriage, was recently found to have the lowest divorce rate of any state!

While the bishops attempt to impose their circumscribed views on Catholics, most of the faithful have made up their own minds on these issues. The majority of Catholics believe that the final moral authority on beliefs about gays and lesbians rests not with the bishops, but with their own conscience. In 1987, 26% of the Post-Vatican II

Generation felt that the bishops had the final moral authority on the question of "homosexual behavior." By 2005, the number had dropped to a mere 19% (American Catholics Today, 2007).

Perhaps even more surprising is the shift happening among the Pre-Vatican II Generation. During the same time period, 13% of the oldest generation of Catholics changed their views so that now only 33% believe that the bishops hold the final moral authority on attitudes towards gays and lesbians.

Just this week I saw firsthand the way that the bishops' pastoral, while devastating, does not reflect the growing sentiment of equality that is held by the majority of Catholics. I received a call from a campus minister in Ohio who was trying to find a welcoming Catholic Church for a young bisexual woman who was headed home to Iowa. Our office was able to put her in touch with a local chapter leader so that the young woman would be able to find a faith community she could call home. While the bishops may issue a "pastoral letter" every now and again, millions of other Catholics are being pastoral each and every day.

When one stops gazing only at the 258 active Catholic bishops, but instead takes a good look at the approximately 65 million Catholics in the United States and their growing acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, there emerges much hope for the future of our church and society. ...

Finally, an article which appeared on Politics Daily on November 17, posted by David Gibson.

Bishops Try to Reassert Control of a Restive Flock

BALTIMORE -- The leader of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States on Monday launched a new effort to rein in Catholic debates and dissidents and to remind the flock that the bishops will be the arbiters of what it means to be a Catholic.

In remarks at the opening of the hierarchy's annual meeting in Baltimore, Chicago Cardinal Francis George made it clear that after years of repeated questions about the bishops' credibility, it was time for the bishops to clarify just who can and cannot speak for the church. He also confirmed that he had set up three committees of bishops to develop guidelines for determining what will be considered legitimate Catholic entities.

"Since everything and everyone in Catholic communion is truly inter-related, and the visible nexus of these relations is the bishop, an insistence on complete independence from the bishop renders a person or institution sectarian, less than fully Catholic," George, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, told some 300 of his fellow bishops. "The purpose of our reflections, therefore, is to clarify questions of truth of faith and of accountability or community among all those who claim to be part of the Catholic communion."

George's address followed a tumultuous year that saw both lay Catholics and many bishops sharply and publicly divide over almost every newsworthy development: the election of Barack Obama, the role of Catholics in public life, hot-button issues such as gay marriage and health care reform, the independence of universities such as Notre Dame, the freedom of theologians to speak and publish, and even the question of whether Ted Kennedy deserved a Catholic funeral.

... Setting the tone for his argument for episcopal control, Cardinal George prefaced his remarks by twice citing the 2nd century bishop, Ignatius of Antioch, who famously wrote to his flock "that you do nothing without your bishop."

"Your submission to your bishop, who is in the place of Jesus Christ, shows me that you are not living as men usually do but in the manner of Jesus himself," Antioch wrote in a citation noted by Cardinal George.

That elevated view of the bishop's authority guided George's remarks. For example, he made it clear that even the recent years of crisis would not cow the bishops in their effort to reassert their authority and relevance.

"There are some who would like to trap the church in historical events of ages long past, and there are others who would keep the bishops permanently imprisoned in the clerical sexual abuse scandal of recent years," George said. "The proper response to a crisis of governance, however, is not no governance but effective governance."

... Church officials said George's decision to establish the certifying committees reflected his frustration with the many differing Catholic voices and organizations that sprouted up during last year's presidential campaign and claimed to be representing Catholic positions, some of them in support of Barack Obama.

Many of the most prominent bishops were vocal opponents of Obama, who nonetheless won 53 percent of the key Catholic vote despite espousing pro-choice positions on abortion, which is the overriding issue for the bishops. And many of those outspoken bishops -- perhaps still a minority of the entire hierarchy, but an influential one with close ties to Rome -- were also incensed at the University of Notre Dame for inviting Obama to give its commencement address last May. The anger over that invitation, which was issued despite the opposition of the local bishop, John D'Arcy, and the rifts it exposed among the bishops and lay Catholics, still bother George, church officials said. Hence his effort to establish clear parameters on who speaks for the church and what it means to be Catholic.

But several bishops and church officials I spoke with doubted whether George's desire to implement the certifying committees would gain any traction among the bishops. For one thing, beneath the surface of civility, the bishops are as divided on many of these issues as the rest of the American church.

... the only applause line in George's address was when he cited the health care debate -- one in which the bishops have played a critical role so far -- and reiterated the desire of the bishops to have affordable and universal health care, and without

abortion funding. The cardinal said the bishops "are most grateful for those in either political party who share these common moral concerns and govern our country in accordance with them" -- though he did not mention that only one Republican, Rep. Anh "Joseph" Cao of Louisiana, voted for the House reform bill that the bishops backed.

Please send your articles and your comments to tony@tonyercolano.com