

From COMMONWEAL magazine
October 12, 2007 / Volume CXXXIV, Number 17

Between Reform & Rupture
The Council According to Benedict XVI
Richard R. Gaillardetz

The last four popes all participated in the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) either as bishop or peritus (theological adviser), and it is clear that their legacies will be distinctively tied to that epochal event. It may be early to assess Pope Benedict XVI's approach to the implementation of council teaching, but two Vatican documents promulgated this summer, within days of one another, give cause for concern.

As pope, Benedict has made numerous statements supporting the teaching of Vatican II. At the same time, he has also expressed understandable concerns regarding the proper interpretation of the council. In December 2005, Benedict returned to a topic that had long preoccupied him as a theologian and leading curial official—namely, the appropriate methodology for interpreting council teaching. He identified two different approaches. The first he characterized, and to some extent caricatured, as a “hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture.” In Benedict's view, this way of understanding the council mistakenly emphasizes the discontinuity between Catholic tradition and the teaching enunciated by the bishops at Vatican II. Advocates of this perspective, Benedict has argued, presume a radical break from, and even a repudiation of, much of the preconciliar tradition.

The pope rejects this view of the council, advocating instead a “hermeneutics of reform.” This approach focuses less on Vatican II as an “ecclesial event” and more on the authoritative status of the council documents themselves. By ecclesial event I mean the way in which the council disclosed a new, more dialogical and reforming spirit within the church. For Benedict, however, the focus is on the council documents, in their final form, rather than on a larger textual history or a vague appeal to “the spirit of the council.” This approach, while insisting on continuity at the level of fundamental principles, allows for a measure of discontinuity in church teaching and practice in the face of changing historical contexts. Benedict does not seem to accept the possibility of discontinuity at the level of “principles.”

Benedict's description of the so-called party of discontinuity raises important issues. Of course, there is a danger in vague appeals to a “spirit of the council.” At the same time, the ecclesiological and theological impact of any council goes beyond the documents it promulgates. Every ecumenical council is the church in microcosm. What happens at a council is an expression, in a more dramatic and concentrated form, of what the church always is. Saints and sinners, the learned and the ignorant, gather together. They share their faith, voice their concerns, pray together, argue, gossip, forge alliances and compromises, indulge in political intrigue, rise above that intrigue to discern the movements of the Spirit, worry about preserving the great tradition in which their identity is rooted, seek to understand the demands of the present moment, and hope for a better future. As an event, it is possible for a council to transform one's sense of the church in ways that cannot be captured in formal documents. To see Vatican II as an ecclesial event is thus to reaffirm one's belief in the ongoing presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. An appreciation of the council as an ecclesial event reminds us that genuine change is not necessarily a sign of chaos or unfaithfulness; it may be a sign of life and evidence of the Spirit's gentle persuasion.

Benedict's assumptions regarding how change occurs within a living tradition also beg the question of whether something more than the affirmation of continuity is possible. In his December 2005 statement, all of this may have appeared as merely an argument about theories of conciliar interpretation. But the publication of the recent Vatican documents suggests that this debate will have significant concrete consequences.

The pope's new teaching in *Summorum pontificum* regarding the Tridentine rite

On July 7, 2007, the Vatican released the long-awaited *Summorum pontificum* authorizing the use of the Latin Missal of Pope John XXIII (a reissue of the Pius V Missal of 1570). The pope's action has dramatically expanded the faithful's access to what is often referred to as the "Latin Mass," which was promulgated soon after the Council of Trent. *Summorum pontificum* declares that all the faithful have a right to "request" celebration of the Tridentine rite. "If a group of lay faithful...has not obtained satisfaction to their requests from the pastor, they should inform the diocesan bishop. The bishop is strongly requested to satisfy their wishes." Although the reformed Missal of Paul VI (1969) authorizing the use of vernacular languages is to continue as the "ordinary" form of Catholic Christian worship in the West, the Tridentine rite is to be treated as equally legitimate. Benedict, in his explanatory letter, told the bishops that the John XXIII Missal "was never juridically abrogated and, consequently, in principle, was always permitted." He then goes on to say:

There is no contradiction between the two editions of the Roman Missal. In the history of the liturgy there is growth and progress, but no rupture. What earlier generations held as sacred, remains sacred and great for us too, and it cannot be all of a sudden entirely forbidden or even considered harmful.

Insofar as the Paul VI Missal is widely regarded as the fruit of Vatican II's most far-reaching reform initiative, Benedict's championing of the Tridentine rite suggests something about his ambivalent attitude toward the council.

To be sure, the pope does not question the legitimacy of the reformed liturgy. Indeed, he makes a point of praising the postconciliar liturgical renewal. However, by restoring the Tridentine rite, perhaps as a conciliatory gesture to Lefebvrist schismatics, the pope has quietly subverted one of the council's central initiatives. The council clearly stated the bishops' intentions:

The rite of the Mass is to be revised in such a way that the intrinsic purpose of its several parts, as well as the connection between them, may be more clearly shown, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved. To this end, the rites are to be simplified, due care being taken to preserve their substance. Duplications made with the passage of time are to be omitted, as are less useful additions. Other parts which were lost through the vicissitudes of history are to be restored according to the ancient tradition of the holy Fathers, as may seem appropriate or necessary (*Sacrosantum concilium*, 50).

In other words, the Tridentine rite was judged as insufficient to the needs of the church. The council established an agenda for liturgical reform that would produce a thoroughly reconceived rite, eliminating superfluous liturgical accretions while retrieving neglected features of the church's ancient liturgical tradition. These elements, thought to have been obscured in the Tridentine liturgy, included a greater participation of the faithful, a stronger emphasis on the paschal mystery, greater prominence for the proclamation of Scripture, and the recovery of the prayers of the faithful. Yet Benedict is now raising up the unrevised 1962 missal as an alternative to the 1969 missal. His *motu proprio* also allows the other sacraments, reforms of which were equally central to the council's vision, to be celebrated according to their preconciliar form.

CDF document on Vatican II's teaching on the church

A few days after the *motu proprio* appeared, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) issued “Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church.” This document was issued to clarify one of the Second Vatican Council’s most dramatic and long-contested teachings regarding the church’s understanding of the salvific status of other Christian churches.

In an early draft of the council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, the church of Christ is understood as being found only in the Roman Catholic Church. So absolute was the traditional identification between the church of Christ and the Catholic Church that non-Catholic Christians were simply not considered a part of Christ’s church. In what was regarded as a momentous development at Vatican II, this passage was amended to read that the church of Christ “subsists in the Catholic Church” (*Lumen gentium*, 8). Most ecclesialogists have interpreted the council’s substitution of *subsistit* for *est* (“is”) as a fundamental shift in Catholic teaching. The bishops at Vatican II acknowledged that there could be no absolute identification between the Roman Catholic Church and the church of Christ. Since other Christian communities also possessed objective means of sanctification and truth (such as the Bible and the sacrament of baptism), these believing communities could be referred to as “churches or ecclesiastical communities” (*Lumen gentium*, 15; *Unitatis redintegratio*, 3).

In the clarification released this summer, however, the CDF puts forward a substantial reinterpretation of this passage. According to the congregation, the use of the word “subsists” did not signal a departure from traditional teaching. “The Second Vatican Council neither changed nor intended to change this doctrine, rather it developed, deepened, and more fully explained it.” Arguing for a purely metaphysical understanding of the word “subsists,” the CDF claims that the church of Christ subsists only in the Catholic Church. This revisionist view appears to be based, in large measure, on a much longer essay published several years ago in *L’Osservatore Romano* by Karl Becker, a professor at the Gregorian University and an adviser to the CDF. Becker’s analysis of what the council intended has been challenged in a recent issue of *Theological Studies* by Francis Sullivan, himself a professor emeritus of the Gregorian University. Sullivan argues for a more historical, not strictly metaphysical, understanding of the term. The council, Sullivan wrote, wished to affirm that the church of Christ continues to exist in the Roman Catholic Church in its full institutional integrity (for it possesses the fullness of the means of sanctification and truth). But this did not preclude asserting that the church of Christ is also present in other Christian communities, even if they do not possess all of those elements found in the Catholic Church. These are issues of immense theological significance, and they will no doubt be the subject of ecumenical discussion for years to come.

But when the new CDF document is read in conjunction with *Summorum pontificum* and the pope’s accompanying letter, a recognizable interpretation of the council emerges. Although nuanced in some respects, this interpretation seems to rule out the very possibility that the council took substantive steps to change church teaching. The CDF document accepts the idea of a “development” or “deepening” of church teaching, but it has no place for any change that might be construed as a reversal or a “rupture” of tradition. Where many Catholics thought the council had effected substantive change in church teaching about religious freedom or Judaism, for example, Benedict sees only “innovation in continuity”—that is, change that is either “organic” development or merely a shift in historical application of unchanging principles.

What is the real issue?

Benedict has consistently spoken out against the forces of secularization and religious relativism that undermine belief in divine truth and the ability of the modern believer to maintain a coherent

religious identity. The antidote to our present cultural zeitgeist, he seems to be saying, is a more robust and unambiguous assertion of Catholic identity, one grounded in the certitude and distinctiveness of Catholic teaching and practice. Such a viewpoint makes little room for substantive shifts in church teaching, particularly shifts that suggest corrections or reversals. Nor is there much enthusiasm for celebrating the teachings of the council that stressed the real but imperfect communion existing among all Christians.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the theological conviction that church doctrine was static and immutable in all respects was often characterized as integrism. Although it may be tempting to attribute to Benedict a form of neo-integrism, that would not do justice to his many expressions of appreciation for modern biblical scholarship (even as he worries about its excesses) and his acceptance of genuine “innovation in continuity.” Still, Benedict’s understanding of how change is brought about appears to rely on a theory of revelation and doctrinal development that allows for change only at the level of contingent historical application or so-called organic maturation. Consider the CDF document’s quotation of Paul VI, regarding the promulgation of a Vatican II text:

There is no better comment to make than to say that this promulgation really changes nothing of the traditional doctrine. What Christ willed, we also will. What was, still is. What the church has taught down through the centuries, we also teach. In simple terms that which was assumed, is now explicit; that which was uncertain, is now clarified; that which was meditated upon, discussed, and sometimes argued over, is now put together in one clear formulation.

A similar stance has allowed Pope Benedict, along with other church leaders, to affirm their fidelity to Vatican II even as they resist the implications of the council’s teaching.

What is most regrettable about this reluctance to acknowledge more substantive shifts in church teaching and tradition is how unnecessary it is. Contemporary Catholic theology affirms the church’s central doctrines (dogma) while insisting on the possibility of reformulating those teachings to make them more intelligible to contemporary men and women and to reflect further insight into the mysteries they communicate. This consensus also recognizes that beyond the church’s central dogmatic affirmations is a much broader category of church teachings, laws, and practices that are not immune from error and which on occasion must be put aside. The church’s sacramental/liturgical tradition, for example, possesses elements essential to the very constitution of the church as well as elements that are merely historical accretions. The sacrament of penance is a classic example of a ritual tradition that has undergone profound changes over time. Other examples of doctrinal shifts or reversals include the church’s past acceptance of slavery or its justification of forced conversions and even torture. The noted jurist and historian John Noonan has documented such substantive shifts in church teaching in *A Church That Can and Cannot Change* and other books.

I share the concerns of the pope and other church leaders regarding the need to attend more deliberately to the formation and maintenance of Catholic identity. Yet no pastoral response that refuses to acknowledge the fact of historical change can offer a compelling long-term solution. Unqualified assertions regarding the certitude of all church teaching are ultimately futile. More fruitful for catechesis, I suspect, is the encounter with reflections on the compelling Christian narratives and distinctive Christian practices that help shape coherent religious identity. Should we be surprised by the number of young Catholics who are so taken with the stories of a Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, or Thomas Merton, or who are willing to volunteer in a Catholic Worker house or give a year or more of their lives to Catholic service projects like those sponsored by the Jesuit Volunteer Corps? My suspicion is that while some young adults may be drawn to the

easy certitudes to which the catechism is often unfairly reduced, a set of immutable propositions will not sustain their Catholic identity in the long run. The better answer is immersion in the life of a Catholic community.

Pope Benedict has often said much the same thing. Therein lies the tension in his vision. In his December 2005 address he juxtaposed two different approaches to the council, one emphasizing continuity and the other discontinuity. In doing so, he was offering two ideal types as foils for a more subtle middle position. Yet his middle position still discounts the possibility of substantive change. It still fails to do justice to the dynamics of tradition, in general, and to the shifts in church teaching embraced by the bishops at Vatican II.

Australian theologian Ormond Rush makes a helpful distinction that avoids a false absolutizing of either continuity or discontinuity. He distinguishes between a “macro-rupture,” a fundamental severance with the great tradition of the church, and a “micro-rupture,” which reflects a genuine innovation that must be considered discontinuous with some aspect of the tradition but which can also be read as “rejuvenating that broader tradition” (Still Interpreting Vatican II). Vatican II clearly did not represent a macro-rupture, but the council did effect specific micro-ruptures, especially with regard to religious freedom, the church’s stance toward Judaism, the need for fundamental reform of the liturgy, and our understanding of the relationship among the hierarchy, clergy, and laity.

Finally, reducing the impact of an ecumenical council to its formal documents, as some now want to do, is quite untraditional itself. As a church we must affirm the ways in which the Spirit’s guidance was evident both in Vatican II’s passing on of the great Catholic tradition and in its willingness to depart from some aspects of established doctrine and practice in order to affirm the deeper and larger tradition. Joseph Komonchak, John O’Malley, and other noted ecclesiologists and church historians have emphasized the significance and impact of Vatican II as an ecclesial event. As Komonchak has written:

From the standpoints of sociology and of history, one looks at the council against a broader backdrop and one cannot limit oneself to the intentions of the popes and bishops or to the final texts. One is now studying the impact of the council as experienced, as observed, and as implemented. It’s hard, from these standpoints, not to stress the discontinuity, the experience of an event, of a break with routine. This is the common language used by participants and by observers at the time—the young Joseph Ratzinger’s reflections after each session, published in English as *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, are a good example. It is from this perspective that James Hitchcock calls Vatican II “the most important event within the church in the past four hundred years,” and the French historian/sociologist Emile Poulat points out that the Catholic Church changed more in the ten years after Vatican II than it did in the previous hundred years. Similar positions are held by people along the whole length of the ideological spectrum. Whether they regard what happened as good or as bad, they all agree, “something happened.”

Finally, we must have the courage to embrace the possibility that at Vatican II genuine change, innovation, and even reversal were not repudiations of the great tradition but signs that the Spirit continues to move among God’s people. Only with that recognition can the council continue to be a sign of hope for the church today.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Richard R. Gaillardetz is the Thomas and Margaret Murray and James J. Bacik Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo. He is the author of *The Church in the Making*:

Lumen Gentium, Christus Dominus, Orientalium Ecclesiarum (Paulist, 2006) and Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent (Orbis, forthcoming).
Copyright © 2007 Commonweal Foundation

A perceptive analysis of two mindsets in understanding the significance of the Second Vatican Council. Grateful to Joe Hassan for passing this along and to *Commonweal* for publishing it.

Authentic Unity

By Robert F. O'Toole

I am troubled by what I see as a lack of unity in our church and wonder whether it results from a failure to appreciate precisely what kind of unity we Catholics should anticipate finding. Should we all hold and say the same thing, whether we are discussing a theological, philosophical, cultural or political question? Surely that would make our lives as Catholics less interesting. Most of us would judge correctly that such uniformity is not unity, but rather a failure to appreciate human nature and the challenges of human interaction. Since we have an intellect and a free will, we can reasonably conclude that each of us has to think things through and decide what the truth is. Our own experience teaches us that this is not an easy task; we know how complicated human motives can be.

Authorities in the church are there to assist us in the process, but the opposite is also true: at various levels we are there to assist them. Many Catholic lay people, for example, are highly educated and in some fields have much more expertise than most church officials. While we have every reason to believe that the Holy Spirit works above all in the pope and in his collaborators, the Spirit's activity is limited to no particular human person.

The lack of unity in our church does not stem from Catholics refusal to accept basic church doctrines, that is, our creedal statements. Rather, various spiritual weaknesses lead us to demand of others an unjustified agreement with ourselves. The old Latin saying *Divide et impera* (Divide and conquer) points to my main concern: Is the evil spirit promoting division among us to hinder as much as possible our real mission to evangelize?

For years the church has used the high priestly prayer of Jesus in Chapter 17 of John's Gospel ecumenically; all Christians are asked to reflect on the passage, especially verses 20-26, in which Jesus prays for those who will believe in him through the words of the apostles. Jesus is praying for you and me, yet it is a little early in the church's history, there in the upper room, to be speaking about ecumenism. Twice Jesus prays that we might be one as the Father is in him and he is in the Father, and that we may be one in them. And twice Jesus gives the purpose for this unity: that the world may believe that you sent me. Jesus explanation supports my negative contention that a lack of such unity hinders evangelization.

Even among Catholics, the unity that ought to typify the church is not easy to achieve. I think most Catholics would grant that the image of the church as the body of Christ is one of unity. Yet in 1 Cor 12, where Paul presents this image, he writes of diversity in the midst of unity. The body, though one, has many members. The diversity of our gifts comes from the Spirit, in whom we were baptized into the same body. Paul requires that these gifts be used for the

common good, but the very existence of different gifts challenges the members to allow each other to exercise all of the Spirit's particular gifts. To do this we must be accepting of one another; we need to practice a basic tolerance so that all can use their respective gifts. In his homily on Jan. 25, 2006, the feast of the Conversion of the Apostle Paul and the concluding day of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope Benedict XVI said, "True love does not eliminate legitimate differences but harmonizes them in a superior unity that is not ordered from the outside but gives form from within, so to speak, to the whole."

Catholic tradition has long supported that contention. Henri de Lubac, S.J., in his book *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, cites great church thinkers who have forcefully stated it. Tertullian, for example, contends in *Adversus Marcionem* that "the schismatic or provoker of dissension outrages what is dearest to Christ, for he commits a crime against that spiritual body for which Christ sacrifices his carnal body. But he is writing of a schismatic. More directly relevant is Fulgentius, who in *De Remissione Peccatorum* claims that "it is a violation of that vital charity which is the guardian of unity. Also Cyprian in one of his letters asserts that "he who does not keep charity cannot speak in the name of unity"; and Hugh of St. Victor, in *De Sacramentis*, was convinced that "charity is the unity of the church. Whether we call it charity or unity [it] is all the same, because unity is charity and charity is unity."

One can look for an incorrect concept of unity in the church and, upon not finding that, become an instrument of division. By contrast, we should be promoting the unity of the body of Christ, taking the church's justifiable diversity as a given.

What, then, about that passage in Luke 12:51 (and parallels) where Jesus says, "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? I assure you, the contrary is true; I have come for division." The "division" of which Jesus is speaking relates to those who believe in him as opposed to those who do not. He is not speaking of division that flows from our failure to appreciate the kind of unity appropriate to the church or from our inability to recognize the division that flows from our human weaknesses.

We need to pay attention to the diversity in the midst of unity of which St. Paul speaks in 1 Cor 12. Our new pope has apparently moved in this direction in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (God Is Love), for he asks us to reflect on a fundamental Christian truth, the importance of love in our life. If in our love we work at preserving the unity of our church, we will be better evangelizers; if not, we weaken the proclamation of the Gospel message.

Robert F. O Toole, S.J., is president of the Gregorian University Foundation in New York City.

Copyright ©© 2006 by America Press, Inc. All Rights Reserved. For information about America, go to www.americamagazine.org.

[Subscribe to America magazine.](#) An online subscription is available and quite worthwhile.

The Monthly Social Justice and Faith Webzine
November 2007

A DUTY OF CONSCIENCE

by Ted Schmidt

When Cephas came to Antioch I directly withstood him because he was clearly in the wrong.
Galatians 2: 11

The only duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and like a docile flock, to follow the pastors.

Pius X in Vehementer Nos, 1906

Certain forms of prestige, certain titles or insignia, a certain protocol, certain ways of life and dress, an abstract and pompous vocabulary are all structures that isolate us, just as there are structures that humiliate and degrade...This means we are in fact no longer able to meet men on the ground where they are most themselves, where they express themselves freely, experience their most real sorrows and joys, face their true problems. We are in danger of living in their mist, separated from them by a haze of fiction.

Yves Congar 1964

An individual layman by reason of his knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which he may enjoy is permitted and sometimes even obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church.

Lumen Gentium #37

The chosen people of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph.4:5)...They possess in common, one hope and one undivided charity. Hence, there is Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race, or nationality, social condition or sex, because, there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor freeman; there is neither male nor female. For you all are one in Christ Jesus."(Gal. 3:28)

Lumen Gentium #32

If the Church is in need of continual reform she is in need of continual criticism.

Archbishop John Quinn

In the conclusion to his hopeful book *Amazing Church*, a tome which proves that the creaking structures of the Roman Catholic Church do change over time, the great Canadian theologian Gregory Baum states that whenever the Church enters a new ethical horizon, where dormant truths re-appear with new clarity and urgency, great debates and dialogue break out at all levels of the Church. In the end after hearing and integrating these "signs of the times" official teaching changes. The book describes several such changes.

To many Catholics today that would indeed be good news; sadly many will not have read Baum's book and become aware of this historical fact. Those disenchanting co-religionists have become part of one of the most significant exoduses of our time, a massive departure from a Church they regard as hopelessly out of date, misogynist, sexist, and anti-democratic.

Baum, as always, writes with moderation and concern for the Church he has so marvelously served since the days of the Second Vatican Council.

In a period when a new ethical horizon appears he writes, "Disagreement with the magisterium may render an important service to the Church, helping it to respond to the signs of the times in light of the Catholic faith...This may be a duty of conscience."

This certainly is the case in today's Church. Most depressed Catholics simply walk away, shaking their heads at what they judge to be a refusal by the Vatican to seriously enter into

mature dialogue with the overwhelming majority of the Church who are not ordained. Others, like Baum, persist in attempting to raise concerns which need serious reflection and dialogue. This is one such attempt.

Baum mentions three issues that the hierarchical Church has refused to review despite widespread clamoring from below. In this essay, I would like to pursue the first of Baum's issues. He calls it the Church's authoritarian centralism "which contradicts its official teaching on collegiality, subsidiarity and the co-responsibility of people for their institutions." This refusal has certainly weakened the magisterium, and I would say, caused great scandal in the Church. One might simplify this argument by saying that the Church has refused to leave its feudal past, its monarchical bearings and reach out to listen to what the People of God (the so-called sanior pars) is saying. As Baum correctly states, "Catholics want to be personally convinced before they commit themselves to the Church's official teaching...Catholics believing in God's revealing word embrace the Church's teaching only when they are inwardly persuaded by the Spirit dwelling in their own reflections."

One can have a measure of sympathy for an institution as perduring as the Catholic Church. In order to survive so long the Church has built a formidable institution, which has lasted. But institutions as we know, seldom give life, often lose their ratio for being and become an entity unto themselves. This is why the Church at Vatican II described itself as "ecclesia semper reformanda" --always in the process of renewing itself, of becoming a true sacrament, a *communio* pervaded by the spirit of the living Christ. Vatican II was the great breakthrough as the Church ceased to define itself as *societas perfecta*, the perfect society of the Council of Trent. Many of us grew up under this Church with its lamentable triumphalism and arrogance. Vatican II gave us a whiff of collegiality, the Church as the People of God. United in baptism as the quintessential sacrament, we were all priests, prophets and kings, faithful to Jesus Christ, the suffering Servant whose spirit leads the Church. How energizing and liberating! What an explosion of gifts which inspired so much self-donation for our world.

A feudal order dies slowly

The old world however did not die. Power is seldom given up and the old clerical caste began to reassert itself. Threatened by pluralism, the emerging paradigm in a postmodern world, the ugly lack of humility returned. The Divine Mystery once again had taken up residence in the Vatican and with its aging male priestly interpreters, deemed all other churches "deficient" and certain sexual orientations created by a God of diversity as "disordered." The priest once again was restored to his primacy of place as Holy Orders made him (and definitely not her) "ontologically different." It was as if the *ancien regime* had returned.

In the Middle Ages one could understand this faulty ecclesiology. Clergy were better educated than the vast majority of lay people. The Church, as it often did, aped the age in which it found itself. The nobles were the bishops and priests consecrated by Holy Orders. The sacred power was always owned and controlled by the male celibate hierarchy. This was called apostolic succession and at the top was the Pope, an absolute Emperor. Boniface VIII (1294-1303) will do as our model here. Wearing a tiara, this megalomaniac, consigned to the nether regions of hell by Dante, declared himself lord of the world as spiritual power trumped secular power. "The breast of the Roman pontiff is the repository and fount of all law," he decreed. "This is why blind submission to his authority is essential to salvation." Happily, Popes of the modern age had a bit more humility than Boniface.

The Middle Ages however, persisted well into the 1960s. Perhaps the papal centralism achieved its zenith in the 1950's under Pius XII (1939-1958), though Pius IX 's outburst to Cardinal Guidi

at Vatican I (1870) was classically arrogant "Yes. It is an error because, I, I am the tradition. I, I am the Church!" ("Io, io sono la tradizione, io, io sono la Chiesa!") Pius XI's (1922-1939) famous comment "Io non voglio collaboratori, sed esecutori" ("I don't want collaborators those who follow orders") sums up as well the top-heavy ecclesiology we have seen under the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The latter two Popes, of course, are much more measured, sensitive and sophisticated than the two Piuses. As we shall see, John Paul II in his 1995 encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* is no papal maximalist, and seems quite open to redefining the Petrine office in a more collaborative way.

Historically the priest was deemed by virtue of Holy Orders to be the bearer of sacred powers (similar to a shaman). Only he had the power to bring Christ to the community; only he had the power to forgive sin. This magical worldview is not done yet. Vatican II, with its call to the universal priesthood deflated many small men who refused to go deeper into understanding the sacrament. Prestige and power were lost and with the revelations of the sex and the bishop accountability scandals, priesthood has suffered a radical diminution. Luckily the dethronement of the clerical caste at Vatican II was welcomed by mature men, but there still walk among us those who believe they are set apart as "ontologically different." The Protestant Reformation by its democratizing tendencies did us all a favour by demystifying the clerical status of the priest. Priesthood then had to be totally renewed and in many places it has --priest as celebrant, priest as leader of assembly, priest as servant of the community to be sure-- but no longer the Pope of the parish. This evolutionary leap in consciousness has been an intermediate step in the democratization of the Church. Bishop Ignace Bourget, the ultramontanist head of the Montreal diocese in the 1850s, could hardly sell his famous dictum today: "Let each say --in his heart I hear my curé, the curé hears the Bishop, and the Pope hears Our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Council brought forth an explosion of theological education, which the Church surely should have welcomed. After all, adulthood is what we all strive for. Inevitably it increased tensions. As men and women flocked to theologates from 1965 onwards, and as globalization began to threaten people's work worlds, the constant change inevitably created a backlash in the Church, a nostalgic desire for more order. Bring back the old days when everybody knew their place. But the genie, the Divine Disturber (also called the Paraclete, comforter etc.) was out of the bottle and people living in democracies began to be really agitated by a Church which still acted like a monarchy.

Goodwill after the Council

Before the previous Pope attempted to slam the door on the necessary changes needed to bring the Church into the contemporary world, there was an extraordinary flurry of activity in many countries that the Church was actually paying attention to the signs of the times.

Given that collegiality was a rallying cry of the Council, the great desire of the People of God was to open up church structures at all levels --parochial, diocesan, regional and national. This made infinite sense, communication needed to flow both latterly and upwardly and not simply downward, as had been the feudal *modus operandi*. There was much good will in those years. The People of God actually felt they had a stake in the Church. Bishops appeared to be listening. The first off the mark was the Dutch Church, a hotbed of dynamic reformism. The bishops of Holland desired a permanent national advisory council with strong lay representation. They were not afraid of change, but Rome quickly got cold feet when the Dutch Church in the late 1960s pressed Rome to relax the laws on celibacy. This was virtually unanimous among all Catholics in Holland. The episcopacy was deadly serious about co-responsibility in the Church. John Paul II ended this and drove a stake into the heart of the Dutch church by appointing very conservative

bishops with little interest in a collegial Church. The Dutch spring was an impressive model in this regard --a great respectful reciprocity was forged among all sectors of the Church.

The Germans as well, attempted a synodal approach. This common synod in the early 1970s was made up of an equal number of lay and clergy. Naturally it could not pass resolutions which the universal Church could not accept in the area of faith and morals. However, it was a legitimate assembly which pressed the envelope on many disciplinary and governance issues: Laicization of clergy, women deacons, new Eucharistic prayers etc. A two-thirds majority was needed to make decisions. It was fairly controlled to be sure, but an important step. The 150,000 replies received by the central committee signified the first shoots of a truly democratic Church.

While this article is not the place to get into the differences in European approaches, the openness was palpable. Gradualism was the order of the day. The Council giant Cardinal König had great respect for lay involvement in the Austrian process. He considered the delegates partners and not simply automata who carried out Episcopal decisions. Here was a bishop who had more than a constituency of one-Rome. In those halcyon days of the first decade after the Council, dialogue was taken seriously. Today monologue ("I am the teacher in this diocese") has become the episcopal *modus operandi*.

One sad example suffices to show the terrible deflation in the German Church. Reporter Kyle James told NPR radio that 120,000 Catholics leave the Church every year fed up with reactionary appointments. Cardinal Joachim Meissner appointed over the wishes and traditions of the Cologne cathedral chapter, has watched 300,000 Catholics leave since he was imposed on Cologne by the previous Pope in 1988.

The Canadian experience shows a similar pattern. While the Council proclaimed the common participation of all the faithful as priests, prophets and kings (*sic*), and while it insisted on true equality and placed the hierarchy at the service of the people and not vice-versa, papal appointments have reversed democratizing trends.

Centralism extinguishes the Spirit

As in the other countries with the advent of John Paul II centralism increased. Rigid control, fear of dialogue and distrust of the Holy Spirit increased. Curial and papal micromanagement began to strangle the Body and prevent the necessary oxygen from getting through. As Pius XI said in his last public address in 1939, "the Roman Church, the mystical Body of Christ, has become a monstrosity. The head is very large but the Body has shrunk" (A Canadian Bishop's Memoirs by Alex Carter, 1994). Bishops like Meissner were imposed on Catholics all over the world. The principle of subsidiarity --what could be one at a lower level should be done there-- was forgotten.

During the first thousand years of the Church, bishops were elected with no papal intervention. The famous words of Pope Leo the Great was often invoked as a fundamental principle. "Let the one who is going to rule over all, be elected by all (*qui preafuturus es omnibus, ab omnibus eligatur*)." Bear in mind as well that this ancient dictum was promulgated during a time of mass illiteracy and hardly at a time like our own when democracy is the provenance of so many Catholics. By the nineteenth century 80 percent of the bishops were named locally, the opposite of what we are experiencing today.

Prescinding from this, it is obvious that the Church is struggling with more democratic forms of governance. There has always been Peter, the apostles and the people. The Spirit by virtue of baptism has been given to all the baptized of whom 98 percent are lay and increasingly more educated. It is obvious that more participatory decision-making and accountability is called for.

The new globalized Church absolutely is in need of more democratic structures. A Church less institutional and more communal needs to develop.

A personal aside here: When I was editor of the Catholic New Times we did a survey of the greater Toronto area and discovered less than half had parish councils! Many priests, to be honest, loved this arrangement. In the end, they were accountable to no one. How infinitely sad and counterproductive. What an utter waste of talent and energy.

As time proceeds apace, the serious flaws in John Paul II's pontificate appear. The man who asked us to be not afraid appeared afraid of the Holy Spirit energizing the Church through more democratic structures. Again and again he was told by theologians who loved the Church as much as he did, that his brand of papal infallibilism and centralizing structures was hobbling the local Church; his ignoring local democratic traditions of nominating bishops was hurting local morale. He turned a deaf ear to all these entreaties.

From June 6-9 of 1990, the Catholic Theological Society of America (CTSA) with Canadian Basilian Walter Principe as its president, affirmed "the right of theologians to freedom of research, their right to raise questions, their right to re-examine the meaning of dogmas, and even more to explore the import of past authoritative statements by the magisterium, and finally the right within a faithful unprejudiced presentation of the official teaching to disagree publicly with that teaching under certain circumstances."

The statement "Do not Extinguish the Spirit" was critical of the growing chill within the Church and the increasing denigration of theologians who were now seen as "dissenters," rather than loyalists who had a different opinion. Principe addressed the Vatican criticism about "harm being done to the faithful by theologians." He countered with the harm being done by "the Vatican issuing of documents without prior discussion and consultation with bishops and theologians, their inhibiting legitimate discussion by premature decisions on complicated questions, their condemnation or silencing of theologians and their presentation of reformable teaching almost as if they were matters of faith." Do not extinguish the Spirit was concerned about "excessive Roman centralization" that diminishes the role of local bishops and which impugned the authority of bishops' conferences. This brave statement well summarizes the general disenchantment with this papacy.

I believe that toward the end of his pontificate John Paul II, great man that he was, began to become aware of the deep unhappiness in the global Church. There was simply too much principled resistance to his centralization. Audible grumblings in the episcopacy about Rome's high-handed style began to penetrate his awareness. Keith O'Brien the Scottish archbishop in no uncertain terms told the press after the European synod of 1999 that bishops were damned angry about the usurpation of their own authority. In 1987 an Acadian Archbishop Donat Chiasson had ripped the synods as being an exercise in futility and dissemblance, where the conclusions were written beforehand. In a candid interview he bravely stated that the doors were being closed on the collegial approach of Vatican II.

Quinn and Ut Unum Sint

In 1995 the Pope hinted at his mini-conversion. His encyclical Ut Unum Sint expressed a readiness to change a new way of defining the Petrine office as an exercise in communion with the whole body of bishops (#95). This was John Paul II at his best. It was time to make the papacy, "more of a service of love than domination." It was time to become more collegial. He wrote:

I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the

request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation.

In short order on June 29, 1996 he was answered by a distinguished American Archbishop, John Quinn of San Francisco, in a now famous lecture at Oxford. The Catholic Church needs to seriously look at itself, Quinn inferred. In no uncertain terms he called for a greater collegiality and a much greater autonomy for bishops. "Testimony from all over the world," he said, "points to a widespread dissatisfaction with the present procedure for the appointment of bishops." This was an understatement. There was deep resentment for the bypassing of local input, and in many observers' judgment, the sex scandal in the U.S. had been precipitated by the naming of too many sycophantic bishops who had placed the institution over the reign of God and the vulnerable among us. Quinn correctly pointed out that "the procedure chooses who can be trusted to be safe...But the problem is orthodoxy can be confused with integralism. Integralism may be described as a kind of narrowness and intolerance, raising private opinions and viewpoints to the level of dogma." Quinn knew well that the gatekeepers for the American episcopacy were Boston's Bernard Law and New York's John O'Connor, both papal loyalists. When O'Connor died in 2000, Law became the America kingmaker before he was disgraced in the sex abuse scandal.

Quinn wrote: "Even the modicum of consultation has disappeared." This was too obvious to challenge. I well remember the seminary professor's call before a well-known bishop was named. Regarded as a crank and marginal to almost everything, the new bishop would have never made 50th place in the terna (the three priests on a bishop's ballot sent around to a number of priests). The professor was in hysterics when he told me the name of the bishop. He knew it was so patently ludicrous that this far-right loyalist should be named to a large See. History proved him right. Like so many other papal impositions, the bishop turned out to be a disaster. This was the case in diocese after diocese.

Currently the Roman Catholic Church is in a state of ecclesial paralysis, unable to move forward. Sadly, millions have left convinced of its terminal dysfunctionality, its inability in an historical epoch noted for its rapid development, to move at more than glacier speed. Reasonable people living in a democracy watching this slow motion horror implosion proceed are aghast at the timidity of the present leadership to address this governance problem.

Is it that difficult to bring intelligent believers together for the good of the universal Church? What is the clerical caste afraid of? Can it be so shortsighted and unaware of the depth of the crisis? Can it simply be afraid of a loss of power?

Are they terrified that the obvious will happen --retrograde positions (no optional celibacy, no married or female priests, no new evaluation of sexual ethics, no serious consultation with the baptized and a host of others) they supported when the neo-conservative Church was in its ascendance will be shown to have so little support among the People of God? Maybe.

Gregory Baum is absolutely correct. It is a duty of conscience to play Paul to today's Cephas, to stand as a parallel magisterium against an adamantine papal magisterium, which heretofore appears hopelessly miscast as a monarchy in a democratic age.

The answers are all in place. Broaden the basis of consultation and decision-making.

Acknowledge the Spirit alive in the Baptized. Reconvene diocesan synods. Apply the principle of subsidiarity at each level of the Church. Give people a stake in the communio. Do not be afraid of accountability and a much greater democracy. We all have a right to a fuller participation in the life of the Church.

Disagreement with the Magisterium, as Baum suggests, may indeed render a service to the Church, a Church which Joseph Ratzinger, now Benedict XVI said needs "not adulators to extol the status quo but men (sic) whose humility and obedience are no less than their passion for truth; men who brave every misunderstanding and attack as they bear witness; men who, in a word love the Church more than ease and the unruffled course of their personal destiny."

Ted Schmidt is the former editor of Catholic New Times and the author of Shabbes Goy: A Catholic Boyhood. His new book Journeys to the Heart of Catholicism (Seraphim) appears in October. He may be reached at jtschmidt@rogers.com

Priest Who Declares Love for Woman Removed

PADUA, Italy (AP) — An Italian priest who publicly declared his love for a woman has lost his job, the diocese said Tuesday.

The Rev. Sante Sguotti can no longer work as pastor in his Monterosso parish and cannot hear confessions from the faithful, the diocese of Padua said in a statement. Sguotti remains a priest and can celebrate Mass, however.

Sguotti made headlines in August when he went on national television to say he was in love with a woman and wanted to be her boyfriend publicly while remaining chaste.

The case reignited the debate over priestly celibacy, particularly because the woman in question has a young son, whom Sguotti said he had helped name. He dodged direct questions about whether he was the boy's father, saying only that he cannot have a child according to church law. Bishop Antonio Mattiazzo issued a decree on Monday removing Sguotti from his pastoral duties, saying he was doing so because Sguotti "had been linked for some time to a woman and had asked for a dispensation to go out with her."

Men in the Eastern rite of the Catholic church who are married can become priests, and the Vatican has accepted into the priesthood some married Anglican priests who converted to Catholicism.

But the Vatican has constantly refused to relax the celibacy requirement for Latin rite priests. The Vatican reaffirmed that last November, when Pope Benedict XVI convened a summit of clergy who rebuffed a crusade by Emmanuel Milingo, the renegade Zambian archbishop who was excommunicated last year after marrying a woman and launching a campaign for the Vatican to allow priests to marry.

C'mon gentlemen. Can't we find a way to return to the TRADITION of a married priesthood?

Put this away and return to it during Holy Week, 2008!

The Historicity and meaning of the Resurrection Experience,

By John Shelby Spong

Part VI

Something clearly happened to the band of Jesus' disciples at some point following his crucifixion that was profound, life changing and deeply real. We have no written records between 30 C.E. and 50 C.E. from any source that purports to describe what that experience was. However, we can chart some dramatic changes that occurred in that time span that can only be attributed to whatever that experience was. Let me state them quickly.

According to Mark, the first gospel, when Jesus was arrested, all of the disciples forsook him and fled. I read this as a literal memory since by the time Mark wrote, the Twelve were heroes, yet the memory of their abandonment was still clear. Jesus is even made to predict this abandonment and to refer to how it fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures, citing a verse from Zechariah to give that claim particular emphasis. I do not think people go to this length to justify or excuse the disciples' behavior if that behavior had not happened. So I read this abandonment as literal history and believe that the facts suggest that Jesus died alone and that his disciples engaged in an act of unbecoming cowardice. Yet something happened to these fleeing disciples that changed them dramatically. When it happened, we do not know. The time frame of three days is clearly an interpretive and liturgical symbol to allow for the later celebration on the first day of the week which would be the third day from the crucifixion. Where it happened we do not know since in the gospels themselves there are two competing traditions. Mark, Matthew and the appendix to John argue for a Galilean setting. Luke and the regular conclusion of John argue for a Jerusalem setting. Most scholars regard the Galilean tradition as the more original, the earlier tradition, and the Jerusalem tradition as the more developed, later one. This conflict is, however, present in the gospels themselves.

How did whatever the Easter experience was actually happen? We do not know that either, but by reviewing the gospel material, we can pick up hints in a variety of places. The experience of the living Jesus that later came to be called resurrection seemed to have a liturgical context. Luke has the travelers on the road to Emmaus say, "He was made known to us in the breaking of the bread." That phrase was in obvious liturgical use when the gospels were written. John's appendix (Chapter 21) also suggests a common meal through which Jesus made himself known. The Book of Revelation uses the word "sup" or "dine" when describing what it means to commune with the raised Christ. The narrations of the Last Supper in Mark, Matthew and Luke carry resurrection connotations of the eschatological emphasis on the new meal that will be eaten in the Kingdom of God. John's gospel, which has no last supper, refers to the cross as the place where the bread of life is taken, blessed, broken and given, but he turns the story of the feeding of the multitude with a few loaves and fishes into a great eucharistic feast and identifies eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus with the resurrected life that will be eternal.

While we can only speculate about the when, where and how questions, we can be much more specific when charting the effects. Something brought the fearful and fleeing band of disciples back together. What was it? Something empowered them with such courage that they never again wavered in regard to their vision. Indeed they were quite willing to die for it. What has the power to change cowards into heroes, to redirect the lives of a group so dramatically? Whatever Easter was it had to be big enough to do that.

The second effect that is obvious is that whatever the Easter experience was it changed the disciples' understanding of God and how Jesus was related to that understanding. When we turn to the witness of Paul, who wrote between 50-64, he says in his epistle to the Romans that "God designated Jesus to be the Son of God" by the power of the "Spirit of holiness" and this designation was made operative in that God raised him from the dead. Long before any gospel writer had turned the Easter experience into a physical, resuscitated body, Paul had interpreted it as God raising Jesus into whatever God is and whatever God means. This transformation is then

written back into the life of Jesus when, in the synoptics, Peter is made to call him "the Christ, the Son of the living God," though, as it was later indicated, it would not be until the resurrection that Peter would understand his own words. When John has Jesus identify himself as being one with God and when Thomas is made to refer to him as "My Lord and my God," the revolution was complete. It is quite clear that what Easter did to these Jewish disciples was to force a redefinition of God onto them so that forever after they could not see God without seeing Jesus as part of that definition nor could they see Jesus any longer as other than as deeply at one with God. It would be some four hundred years before the Christian Church would define this transformation in the doctrinal language of the Incarnation and the Holy Trinity, but the experience appears to have been connected to whatever it was that originally constituted Easter. People do not redefine God except when driven to do so by an experience that is undeniable. Whatever Easter was, it has to be big enough to account for this dramatic change.

The final evidence of change is a little more vague and a little more stretched out in time, but it is powerful nonetheless. Whatever that life-changing, post crucifixion experience was, it came to be connected in practice with the first day of the week. My own study of the resurrection has led me to conclude that the first day of the week was never the day of the Easter experience but was rather the liturgical day set aside to celebrate the Easter experience. My best guess is that somewhere between six months and a year actually separated the crucifixion from what came to be called the resurrection, but what I call the Easter experience to keep it more vague and less literally defined. I see evidence for this in all of the gospels, especially in John (Chapter 21), but time does not permit me to spell that out here. There is no doubt, however, that very early the disciples of Jesus observed the Sabbath in the synagogue and then gathered for "the breaking of the bread" on the first day of the week. By the time Paul wrote to the Romans, the first day of the week was so deeply established that Paul could refer to it simply as "the Lord's Day" without any further explanation. Within a single generation, "the Lord's Day" rivaled the Sabbath in importance even among the Jewish disciples of Jesus. This was long before Christianity became a predominantly Gentile movement. When it did move from its Jewish womb into the Greek world of the Mediterranean region, it was the Jewish Sabbath that would ultimately be dropped by the increasingly non-Jewish Christians and the first day of the week became the exclusive Christian holy day.

The change that created the first day of the week as a new holy day was, however, connected to whatever the transforming Easter experience was. Something clearly happened. Change in behavior, change in theology, change in liturgical practice all occurred and all cry out for explanation. The Easter experience lies under all of the explanations.

The last thing I want to note in this column is that the various explanations of the Easter experience found in the four canonical gospels, which were written 40-70 years after the transformation they purport to describe, are completely contradictory in almost every detail. For those who want to literalize the Bible, the startling discovery is that in the Easter experience, on which the Christian movement so clearly stands, there is total disagreement on details. Who went to the tomb at dawn on the first day of the week? Paul does not seem know that tradition at all, while none of the gospels agrees on who these women were. Three went says Mark; two went says Matthew; an undisclosed number went says Luke; only one went says John. The only thing they all agree on is that Magdalene was central in that drama. Did the women see the risen Christ

at the tomb on that first Easter? No, says Mark; yes, says Matthew; no, says Luke; yes, says John but only on the second look. Who was the first witness to "see" the risen Lord? It was Cephas, says Paul. Mark never records anyone seeing. It was the woman in the garden says Matthew. It was Cleopas and his friend on the road to Emmaus says Luke. It was Magdalene says John. Where were the disciples when the Easter experience, whatever it was, broke upon their consciousness? Paul doesn't say. Mark says it will be in Galilee. Matthew says it was in Galilee on top of a mountain. Luke says it was never in Galilee but occurred only in Jerusalem and its immediate environs. John says it was originally in Jerusalem, but then he suggests much later it also occurred in Galilee.

So it is that we have an event that so clearly brought about substantial changes, making its reality difficult to dispute, but when people sought to explain what actually happened, they disagreed on almost every detail. This points, I believe, to the probability that the experience itself defied all human limits and forced those who were impacted by it to explain in human language this inexplicable action that was of God, but its effects were expressed inside human life. That is what the Easter experience was and is. That is also why those, who want to literalize its physicality and make the explanation of 40-70 years after the event a requirement for being a Christian, misunderstood so totally both the faith they seek to follow and the gospels they read so loosely.

Neither the miracles of Jesus nor the Resurrection of Jesus can be understood as literal, supernatural events. They are far more, not less, than that. The crucial fourth fundamental, I think we can state with authority, does not defend Christian truth, but actually distorts Christianity badly.

[Jesus lives! He will never die! How we understand this Truth is shrouded in mystery.](#)

ARCC spot LIGHT (analysis of current Church issues provided by the publications committee of ARCC, R. Schutzius, ed.)

A Timely Perspective

At thanksgiving time our transportation systems are clogged with people returning to their roots to be wrapped in the comfort of home. Many of us crave the "soul food" satiation of turkey, traditions, family and community. We look forward to it. We also begin advent, a season which symbolizes looking forward to the deep yearning of our soul to be satiated by Christ. It is a time of longing but also a time of hope.

The preparation for Thanksgiving often takes a lot of work, but the result is worth it. The Advent season as well should be an active time. A profitable waiting period also takes work. While we're waiting, why not consider in thanks the democratic ethos we American Catholics can find in the early Church and in the early days of the American experiment. We can bring the best of these models of Christian community into the twenty-first century.

Take the time to read Acts and the letters of Paul for a sense of a community of Christians taking

care of its own spiritual and physical needs. Read historian Jay Dolan on the democratic principles of popular sovereignty, elections and constitutions in early America finding their way into parish governance in Baltimore, Virginia and the Carolinas, Kentucky, Philadelphia, Cincinnati. Trustee models and constitution did exist. Suitable clerics were hired. Dolan makes the point that the Church was adaptable in America. If so, it can be adaptable to our needs again. If suitable clerics were once hired to deal with spiritual needs, American Catholics can again have a voice in securing suitable bishops to deal with our needs.

Please encourage your friends to consult the ARCC resources at <http://arccsites.org> and to join you in your support of ARCC for which we are most grateful. Feel free to circulate. Comments are welcomed (rschutz1@prodigy.net), and our hotline is 1-877-700-ARCC.

And you are waiting for what?

Cardinal's criticism is met with silence by Democrats

By Lisa Wangsness,

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2007/11/18/cardinals_criticism_is_met_with_silence_by_democrats?mode=PF

In 1935, Governor James Michael Curley was pushing hard for a bill to create a state lottery. The bill looked like it would sail through the Legislature. But on the eve of the vote, the afternoon papers carried stories of Cardinal William Henry O'Connell denouncing it.

"The next morning, it went down to crashing defeat," said James O'Toole, a history professor at Boston College.

It is the "mirror image," he observed, of the dynamic now. Last week, after Cardinal Sean P. O'Malley said the support of church members for Democrats "borders on scandal" because of the party's support for keeping abortion legal, most of the state's leading Catholic Democrats responded with silence.

John Walsh, chairman of the Democratic Party, declined to comment, as did Senators Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, and nearly all of the state's Democratic Catholic congressmen, on both sides of the abortion issue. The few who did have something to say - House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi, who spoke to reporters on a separate issue Thursday, and US Representative Michael E. Caputo, whose office provided a statement when asked for comment - respectfully disagreed with the church.

As they have for years, most Catholic Democrats in Massachusetts are likely to continue to disagree with the church on abortion without worrying much about the consequences for them or their party. If Catholic voters punished their politicians for opposing church views on abortion - or gay marriage, or any other subject - the response might be quite different, political experts said last week. But they haven't.

"I think the Catholic church wishes there was more tension between them," said Jeffrey M. Berry, a political science professor at Tufts University. "I think O'Malley's outburst is a reflection he's being ignored rather than engaged."

That does not mean that some Democrats who favor abortion rights were not upset by it.

"I don't recall in my lifetime any leader of the Catholic church making such a bold partisan statement," said Philip Johnston, a former state Democratic Party chairman who is also Catholic. "I think it's very regrettable."

Terrence C. Donilon, O'Malley's spokesman, said in a statement yesterday that the archbishop was trying to "emphasize the moral weight" of the abortion issue.

"While he addressed the position of one party, his primary concern was to call attention to the serious moral character of the issue and the attention it should receive from political leaders across the spectrum of our country," he said.

O'Malley's comments came in an interview with the Globe after the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, meeting in Baltimore last week, approved its quadrennial "faithful citizenship" statement providing advice for Catholic voters.

In the early part of the last century, the church became a powerful force in Massachusetts elections, helping Catholics overcome discrimination and gain political power. But over the years, Berry said, the church lost its political grip, as overall religiosity among Catholics has decreased and as Catholics moved into the suburbs, weakening the tie between precinct and parish. Many Catholic politicians agree to disagree with the church on abortion and gay marriage, and their overall willingness to criticize the church publicly may have grown because of the sex abuse scandal.

Several Catholic Democrats replied resolutely when asked last week for their reaction to O'Malley's words. DiMasi said he makes decisions based on what he thinks would be best for the Commonwealth, not "just following what my religious leader tells me to do."

City Councilor-at-large Michael Flaherty, in an interview, quoted the prophet Micah: "We are called to act with justice, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with God," he said. "Instead of hearing about the church plans to exclude groups of people from God's table, I would rather hear how the church could be a place where we are all truly welcome."

John Tobin, another city councilor, said, "I don't fault the cardinal. . . . I'm sure he feels a lot of frustration. But there are Catholics and Catholic politicians who feel frustrated with the church sometimes."

The "faithful citizenship" document approved last Wednesday also calls upon Catholics to support politicians who care about a range of issues important to the Roman Catholic Church, such as helping the poor, promoting justice, caring for the environment, and opposing torture.

But this year's statement put an especially strong emphasis on abortion, calling it an "intrinsic evil" and warning Catholics not to vote for politicians who support it, lest they jeopardize their salvation.

Some Catholic Democrats, however, argued that O'Malley's statements contradicted other aspects of the document.

Patrick Whelan of Watertown is the executive director of Catholic Democrats, a national political network that started in Massachusetts during the last presidential election to defend Kerry, the Democratic nominee, after he was condemned by several Catholic bishops for supporting abortion rights.

Whelan said O'Malley's statements conflicted with the document's assertion that the church "is not partisan" and "cannot champion any candidate or party." He also said that the faithful citizenship document requires voters to do good as well as to oppose evil, and to actively support programs that encourage childbirth.

O'Malley, Whelan said, seemed to endorse the Republican position on abortion - criminalization - as the best way to end the practice, while ignoring the Democratic approach, which he said is to do everything possible to decrease abortions by helping the poor, supporting access to healthcare, and increasing assistance to programs that support pregnant women and their families.

"I think an honest reading of the document really supports both the Republican and Democratic stance," he said.

Damien LaVera, a spokesman for the Democratic National Committee, added that President Bush had vetoed Democratic legislation aimed at reducing unwanted pregnancies and giving pregnant women the support they need.

"The broader definition of 'pro-life' outlined by the bishops is completely consistent with the shared values of Democrats," he added, "who continue to address core issues of poverty, healthcare, and the war in Iraq, and a major reason Catholic voters will continue to support our candidates."

Whelan added that he thought it was a curious time for O'Malley to cast abortion as such a partisan issue, given that "Republicans have a likely nominee named Rudy Giuliani who himself has views that are indistinguishable from all the Democratic candidates.

"It doesn't make any sense," he said.

Avoid predictions! But, otherwise ...

The first time I heard Fr. Greeley speak on Long Island in 1972, I became a fan. He is one of the most perceptive analysts of the Catholic Church in America. I am grateful that he is part of our family.

Why those who love America are feeling brokenhearted

I am ashamed for America. Note carefully that I do not say I am ashamed of America. Despite all its inherent flaws and all its tragic mistakes, the United States stands, however incompletely and with whatever imperfections, for the highest standards of freedom and democracy that the world has yet known.

I am ashamed for America because all the evil done in the nation's name in recent years is turning off the light on the mountaintop.

1. The president urges Congress in effect to accept the Turkish protest against the attribution of Armenian genocide because it might interfere with Turkish logistic cooperation in the ill-starred and foolish Iraq war. That's like silencing all congressional action on the Holocaust because we need Germany on our side. If Turks expect to become part of Europe and the West, they must acknowledge what their ancestors did. They could pass a resolution of their own accusing us of genocide against Native Americans if it would make them happy. How humiliating that the president wants us to ignore what happened to the Armenians so we can be victorious in the "global war on terror" (the current replacement for "weapons of mass destruction"). That's called appeasement, and it was appeasement when President Bill Clinton did the same thing.

2. The government kidnaps, tortures and murders the way the Gestapo did in Nazi Germany. The president blithely dismisses these charges. The United States, he says, does not torture. But that deception is based on a memo from Attorney General Alberto Gonzales defining torture, which the White House won't let anyone else look at.

3. The government pays large salaries to 148,000 "individual contractors" in Iraq -- more than the total American military there. A third of these are toting guns. They are mercenaries -- often, it would seem, with very quick trigger fingers. Ironically, the most recent victims were two Armenian Christian women. These contractors are a kind of American Foreign Legion, like the notorious French and Spanish foreign legions. They may well be very brave people who do very tough jobs. They also compensate for Mr. Rumsfeld's criminal underestimate of the number of troops required. If, however, the country is going to have a Legion Etranger, it should make sure that it works under tight control. An unrestrained security force quickly becomes a mafia. Humphrey Bogart, where are you when we really need you?

4. At a remarkably frank meeting of middle-range officers (majors and colonels) at Fort Leavenworth, the soldiers debated not whether there should have been a war in Iraq, but who was to blame for losing it. Was it the senior officers or the joint chiefs or the civilian leaders? The war is not even over yet, and already the officers who fought it and will have to fight its continuation have already given up hope. Too bad for them, because the president has made up his mind that we are still going to win the war and the Democratic presidential candidates speak about a 10-year presence in Iraq. Whatever the political leadership is or will be in 2009, no candidate seems capable of saying, "*We're getting out now!*" And the rest of the world laughs at us because both parties are led by fools.

Anyone who cares about the United States and its legacies has to be brokenhearted at what has been done to our beloved country by the crazy people who are running it -- people who have become so skilled at deception they don't even realize anymore that they are deceiving. Just like

the Democrats don't realize they are again stealing defeat out of the jaws of victory.

Bishops discuss married priests petition
www.cathnews.com/news/712/31.php

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference President Archbishop Philip Wilson has responded to a petition calling for married priests.

He gave an assurance that the Bishops had a discussion at last week's plenary meeting on the need to make "adequate pastoral and sacramental provision for the Church in Australia".

Catholica Australia reports the petition raised interest among the bishops and more than three hours were devoted to discussing the issue.

Dr Paul Collins, on behalf of the petition organisers, says he was "more than happy" with the formal letter response from Archbishop Wilson and general feedback from individual bishops.

"We were more than surprised with the level of interest the petition generated within the Church," Dr Collins said.

"Our original hope had been to try and generate a response of around 10,000 signatures and to receive over 16,700, including over 160 responses from priests, exceeded their expectation by a long way," he said.

[Speaks for itself!](#)

A Voice Within the Catholic Hierarchy Finally Speaks Out
By John Shelby Spong

"The Pope has too much power. The Pope is finally answerable to the Church."

"The Catholic Church has a problem with credibility."

"The Church's teaching on sex needs to be reviewed."

"Seminaries are not healthy places."

"A few phrases in the Nicene Creed need to be revisited"

"There are homosexual priests in the Catholic Church - a significant number probably higher than the percentage (of homosexual persons) in the general population."

These quotations are not lifted from the writings of some anti-Catholic Protestant reformer. It was no modern day Martin Luther or John Calvin who said these things; it was not even some Catholic-baiting Irish preacher like Ian Paisley. They are rather the words of a highly respected Roman Catholic Bishop in Sydney, Australia, who was such a significant leader in the Church that he was the one to whom the Catholic Church turned to investigate the sex abuse scandal involving priests in Australia and to issue that Church's national response to that tragedy. His name is The Most Reverend Geoffrey Robinson. His official title at the time of his recent

retirement was The Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney. He was by any measure Australia's best known and most admired member in the Catholic hierarchy. When the previous archbishop tendered his resignation to the Pope, Geoffrey Robinson was the clear favourite of the Australian people to be his successor. Sydney's archbishop is always the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in that entire land which makes him an immediate candidate to be a cardinal. With Joseph Ratzinger handling such appointments for Pope John Paul II, however, there was no way that Geoffrey Robinson would be chosen for that post. Instead the appointment went to George Pell, Melbourne's ultra-conservative and highly homophobic archbishop, whose inner circle of priestly advisors was known as "The Spice Girls" by many Australians. Bishop Robinson, feeling incapable either of working with or even of supporting this appointee as one of his assistants, decided that the best step for him to take was to retire. His work heading the commission on clergy sexual abuse had also disillusioned him with his church and had tempered his desire to continue any longer in what he felt was a losing battle. As his disillusionment grew other questions that he had long kept suppressed, not only about the way his church acted but also about what the church said must be believed, could be suppressed no longer. In his retirement he has broken his silence by writing a book entitled *Confronting Sex and Power in the Catholic Church: Reclaiming the Spirit of Jesus*. Published in 2007 in Australia by John Garrett Publishers, it has quickly rocketed to the top of the best selling charts in Australia and is inevitably now being attacked and vigorously debated on the Internet. In conservative Catholic circles the response has been vitriolic with Bishop Robinson's character being assassinated by his former colleagues. Australian television commentators have named that response: "Poison from the Catholic Right." The UK's liberal Catholic publication, "The Tablet," made this book a front page story. Since the book's publication Bishop Robinson has been a featured and frequent guest on Australian radio and television programs. Most of the quotations with which this column began were lifted out of the transcripts of those media interviews.

This kind of criticism is rare inside the Roman Catholic Church, which prides itself on keeping all conflict behind closed doors, with only the face of unity confronting the world. After a hotly contested papal election, the cardinals tell the world and the press that the person chosen was clearly the best possible choice for the papal task and in a public ceremony pledge their loyalty to the new Pope. Cardinals, archbishops, bishops and priests must take public vows to obey their superiors and to protect the church so that its reputation as "the holder of ultimate truth" never falls into public dispute. It was this mentality that collided with massive evidence and subsequent public charges of the rampant sexual abuse of minors carried out by ordained Catholic clergy that produced the crisis that ultimately drove Bishop Robinson to write his book.

Looking at Australia primarily and feeling his Church's refusal to provide full disclosure on these crimes, Bishop Robinson began to state publicly what everyone who followed the Catholic Church's investigatory process clearly knew. "I am not happy," he said, "with the level of support I am getting from Rome. Had the Pope responded (to this crisis) it would have been a totally different story. Instead we got silence. I regret saying this. It gives me no joy at all. I was one trying to work at this problem and with only silence coming, the Church fractured." He went on to say that the Church now has a massive problem with credibility: "We might say all sorts of beautiful things on other subjects, but with the great danger that no one is listening. We have not controlled or yet eradicated this problem within the church." Later he came back to this theme of credibility by saying that "vast numbers of people have left the Church, and they are the very

people that, if they had stayed might have been able to change the Church." In a public radio interview he stated what everyone outside the hierarchy of the Church believes to be factually true. "If one asks: 'Are you satisfied that the Catholic Church has done everything possible to study sexual abuse in the church and has eradicated everything that needs to be eradicated?' I don't see how anyone can answer and say yes." It is one thing to get to the core of a crisis, expose it and clear the Church's good name; it is quite another to manage the crises, to seek to minimize institutional guilt by pretending to purge when what you are really doing is covering up. That is clearly what the Roman Catholic Church has done across the world. When an international organisation acts in every country in a similar manner, what becomes obvious is that this strategy is being dictated from on high. The sad truth is that this duplicity and cover up will not work for several reasons. First, the power of religion in general and of the Catholic Church in particular is not today anywhere near what it used to be in the western world. Europe, once a Catholic stronghold now has the lowest birth rate in the world, indicating that Europeans do not listen to the Vatican's condemnation of birth control. The nation of Ireland, whose deepest identity once reflected the influence of the Roman Catholic tradition, is now moving to legalize abortion. Catholic couples get divorced in the West in about the same percentages as do non-catholic couples. This is not the 13th century and some Catholic hierarchical figures appear not to recognize that fact. Second, the spread of information today makes institutional secrets fair game for full exposure. Ecclesiastical closets will not remain closed. Corruption and criminal behaviour are not conditional on whether the perpetrator is a priest, a bishop an archbishop or a cardinal. Yet we witnessed Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston not being prosecuted despite massive evidence of his guilt of being an accomplice in crimes against thousands of minors. Instead of jail, he was promoted to a Vatican post in the Papal States where he is immune from prosecution and will never have to answer questions under oath or release the records which would prove his complicity. Instead of being forgotten he has become today nothing less than the public face of that Church's corruption. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles just this past fall agreed to pay \$696,000,000, on the day before the trial was to begin to settle the class action suit brought by the victims of priestly abuse. This last minute settlement represented resistance and cover-up, not co-operation in the face of criminal judgement, and let them off from the task of testifying publicly under oath. This fine was of such magnitude, that the imagination is stunned to embrace the depth of guilt that it revealed. Los Angeles Cardinal, Roger Mahoney, said, "we have now put this behind us," but he will discover that un-investigated evil is not cauterized by legal settlements that do not admit guilt. The details will continue to seep out. The disillusionment will continue to grow. People know that there was no real co-operation with the investigation. Catholic hierarchical figures have done little more than damage control, placing the well-being of the Catholic Church far ahead of the well-being of the victims of the Catholic Clergy. A genuine reform is clearly not forthcoming at this time.

Geoffrey Robinson offers a way to begin that necessary act of reformation. He believes a first step is to restore power to the bishops, which he argues has in recent years been drained from them into the upper echelons of the hierarchy and especially to the Pope. If nothing changes, those bishops who raise questions publicly in this Church will be silenced and marginalized in the same way that their creative, but questioning theologians were handled over the last thirty or so years. Remember this is the same church that removed Hans King from his position as Catholic Theologian at Tübingen University, harassed Dutch New Testament Scholar Edward

Schillebeeckx until he was drained of both his time and energy, dismissed tenured professor Charles Curran from the faculty of Catholic University in Washington, D.C., silenced Matthew Fox when he developed his new spirituality based on original blessing rather than original sin until he finally resigned his priesthood and became an Anglican in California, and then drove the Latin American theologian, Leonardo Boff, into his decision to be laicized. It was Joseph Ratzinger, serving as the Cardinal Inquisitor for Pope John Paul II, who was responsible for these actions. Now as Pope Benedict XVI, does anyone think it will be different if any bishop does not toe the line on all doctrinal, ethical and ecclesiastical issues? Creative change never arises from within when truth is suppressed and new ideas are never entertained. Geoffrey Robinson's great contribution is that he has broken the silence. He has called for the development of some mechanism that would make the Church accountable to the people. He believes that the 19th century dogma of papal infallibility should be revisited, that the church's whole attitude toward sexuality ought to be reviewed, and that Catholic scholarship needs to engage contemporary knowledge that it has not done since before the days of Galileo. My hope is that other bishops, who will inevitably hear about and read this powerful book, will recognize the truth and accuracy of Geoffrey Robinson's insights, that these issues will then be raised and examined inside that church's gathering of bishops, and that steps at reforming this church will be allowed to begin. My fear is that this Church, like so much of Christianity, is blind to its own incompetence and its fortress morality, which means that it will fail to see that these troubling symptoms are nothing less than the signs of death encircling this once great Church.

I am reluctant to acknowledge the “signs of death encircling this once great Church,” but is my reluctance emotional or critical?

Grateful to the always inspiring *National Catholic Reporter* for this article. If you do not have a subscription, you will have to answer for that one day.

Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx At 93, renowned Dominican still at work
http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2007d/121407/121407h.htm

Holland's towering Dominican theologian, Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx, is with us yet, though, at 93, his physical presence has diminished even as his influence flourishes.

I requested a meeting with him, knowing that though he was not involved in writing the startling new booklet by the four Dutch Dominicans, the radical proposals they put forward stem directly from his thought.

The Belgian-born Schillebeeckx remains in Nijmegen, where he taught for so many years at the University of Nijmegen, and where, in a small house on a quiet street, he awaits publication of his next book. I had been told that he is in failing health and might be too weak to receive visitors. But when I phoned, his full-time caregiver, Dominican Sr. Hadewych Snijdewind, said we could come.

My wife and I found Schillebeeckx sitting in his study, thin but bright-eyed, clearheaded and ready to chat. This man's theological ideas, expressed in some 400 books and articles, published in 14 languages, have influenced several generations of Catholic thinkers. Although he has

endured years of Vatican scrutiny and the Vatican has publicly rejected some of his ideas, he has managed to escape both silencing and censure.

It was Schillebeeckx who contended in his 1980 book *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* that the church had gone awry by connecting the faithful's right to Eucharist to some "magical power" of the hierarchy to ordain, thereby disconnecting it from the community of Christians. He noted that the Council of Chalcedon in the fifth century had declared any ordination of a priest or deacon illegal, as well as null and void, unless the person being ordained had been chosen by a particular community to be its leader.

Because the church has basically ignored that clear directive of the early church throughout the second millennium, Schillebeeckx recommended "new possibilities" for reconnecting the Eucharist to its community roots, even if such actions contradict current church law.

In "Church and Ministry," the newly released document, the Dominicans put forward such "new possibilities" as this: "Men and women can be chosen to preside at the Eucharist by the church community; that is, 'from below,' and can then ask a local bishop to ordain these people 'from above.'" ""

If, however, "a bishop should refuse a confirmation or ordination" of such persons "on the basis of arguments not involving the essence of the Eucharist, such as a requirement that deacons or priests be celibate, parishes may move forward without the bishops' participation, remaining confident "that they are able to celebrate a real and genuine Eucharist when they are together in prayer and share bread and wine."

This notion of community-based ordination was in the background as we sipped our wine, nibbled on cheese crackers and talked of other things. Schillebeeckx mentioned his many trips to the United States and shared his view that most young Catholics are "choosing their own vision of Christianity." He said he feared the institutional church did not "have enough movement toward Jesus Christ." And he spoke about his soon-to-be-published book, a collection of 60 of his homilies, with a title still being fine-tuned: something like *Weren't Our Hearts Burning Within Us: Theology as a Model for Proclamation*.

As for the future, Schillebeeckx is optimistic, "always optimistic."

But they have so many other things to do.

BISHOPS NEED TO LISTEN

Editorial

SOCIAL EDGE: A Monthly Social Justice and Faith Webzine

Gerry McCarthy, Publisher

October, 2007

<http://thesocialedge.com/index.htm>

Beginning in the 1980s, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops tried to develop a pastoral letter on women's issues. But after nine years of trying, the process broke down in 1992. No pastoral letter was ever produced.

In her recent book *Failing America's Faithful*, Kathleen Kennedy Townsend writes about what happened. "The bishops wanted to emphasize issues that American women endorsed, such as the need for equal pay and child care," she says. "The Vatican vetoed that approach, insisting that the letter contain disquisitions on contraception, abortion and priesthood."

But Kennedy Townsend says it wasn't just disagreement on the issues that wrecked the discussion. "It was the nature of the process itself," she writes. "The bishops refused to believe they had anything to learn from listening to women."

It was the late Bishop Francis P. Murphy who was left to speak for the bishops. He said the act of consultation about the pastoral letter raised the most concern among the bishops. The bishops, Murphy said, "asserted that Bishops are teachers, not learners; truth cannot emerge through consultation."

Perhaps unwittingly, Bishop Murphy summarized the most serious problem facing the Church today: The hierarchy isn't listening.

Unfortunately, Pope Benedict XVI embodies this attitude. One example: He continues to warn against "activism," particularly inside the Church. In an updated preface to his book *The Rule of Benedict*, David Gibson writes that Benedict XVI told interviewers last year (on a trip to Bavaria) that the Catholic Church itself is a sphere for contemplation rather than activity. Benedict added that renewal "cannot come only from suitable pastoral initiatives, regardless of how useful they are, or from blackboard plans."

There are numerous difficulties with what Benedict XVI is saying here. For starters, he's projecting onto lay Catholics (and clergy) terms that are unfair. "Activism" isn't what's at issue, but faithful reform. And it's reform that Benedict isn't interested in discussing.

Recently Benedict said that focusing on issues like the Church's views on women undermines the Church's mission. But this is also unfair. There are many Catholic reform groups who are not undermining the Church's mission in anyway. Instead they care deeply about the Church.

Many observers say Benedict XVI's statement about activism within the Church reflects his concern about modern culture. Others say he fears "Christianity from below." But part of the problem is that he doesn't see himself as a listener.

In North America, the Catholic Church is at a crossroads. People are walking away from parishes. Priests are overwhelmed with work. Still the hierarchy continues to limit the role of the laity, and refuses to dialogue about the possibility of married or women priests.

What's needed is a transformed Catholic hierarchy, and that begins with bishops adopting a listening attitude. How could they do this in a concrete way? Perhaps by launching a semi-annual Diocesan Congress where they would have to listen to all Catholics (not just those who parrot what they're saying).

It's true that some few bishops privately agree with lay people on the need to reform the Church. But there are scarcely any who dare to conflict with the Vatican publicly. It's as if they become different people when they visit Rome.

Authentic listening isn't easy. It demands patience, love, and understanding. Within the context of Christian faith, it means opening up the heart to hear the hopes, frustrations, and dreams of people.

The hierarchy will not undermine the Church's mission by listening to lay Catholics. Instead they'll build up the Body of Christ. But it's critical the hierarchy start listening now. More frustrated lay-people need to know their cares and dreams count for something in the Church.

Read part one first, however I only have the link to part two.

<http://thesocialedge.com/columns/tedschmidt/index.shtml#c1>