

## “AGGIORNAMENTO IN THE CHURCH”: VATICAN COUNCIL II– 1962 TO 1965

You might say I am a Vatican II baby. I was born **during** the recess between Sessions One (1962) and Two (1963), before any documents were promulgated. On January 25, 1959 while at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, in observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Pope John XXIII’s homily gave **nary a hint** of what he would say **after** the ceremony concluded. But he **surprised** even the Roman Curia by calling for an **ecumenical council**. No one expected it—this was only his 90th day in office! He was chosen in the papal conclave on October 28, 1958. Elected at the **age of 77**, he may have figured he had little time to waste! The opening address of the Council, delivered **60 years ago** this past Tuesday (October 11, 1962) has widely been quoted. And for good reason, as the pope set out to **chart a course** for the future. He knew that there was **tension** in the Church between the preservers of tradition and those who wanted a Church more open to **modernity**.

That tension very much exists to this day. I have previously written about twenty Ecumenical Councils, making this my **final** council in a **long** series. Whew! Vatican II’s influence is massive, but I will limit myself to highlight some key themes over the course of several columns. But before delving into the documents themselves, it is worth dissecting Pope John’s **opening speech**, so often is it quoted. And in English, I humbly add, **misquoted!** He envisioned the council as an instrument of *aggiornamento*, an Italian word for “**updating**,” though not in terms of defined doctrine. Rather, he referenced the manner in which the truths of the faith were to be communicated. His Address at the Council’s solemn opening noted: “It is necessary first of all that the Church should never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers.” Nothing in that opening address **signaled** any call for any **radical** doctrinal change.

It did however include this line: “The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another.” To be crystal clear, I **wholeheartedly agree**. But as an example of the **petty battles** that have been waged these past sixty years, only when I researched the Latin original and official Italian translation that I saw the **remainder** of that sentence. It continues, “nevertheless always in the same sense and with the same meaning” (*eodem tamen sensu eademque sententia*). The Latin text is crucial, as the key words cited are those of **St. Vincent of Lerins**, an early 5th century theologian in his essay on the **development of doctrine**. So why were they unceremoniously **excised** from the popular English compilation of Vatican II texts? To date, still **no** English **translation** appears on the Vatican website, only Latin, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish texts. So, why is that? **Details** matter!

Here is **my translation** of the key text: “For the Deposit of Faith itself, or the truths, which are preserved by our venerable doctrine, is one thing, the **manner** by which they are proclaimed is another, nevertheless always in the **same sense** and with the **same meaning**. Certainly to this manner, much will have to be attributed and if it is necessary, elaborated patiently. The methods of explaining things will have to be introduced which are most congruent with the Magisterium, whose nature is above all pastoral.” As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in 2005, we must guard against seeing in the texts of Vatican Council II a “hermeneutic of rupture.” Rather, the **lens** through which the Council is seen must be one of **continuity** with what went before and what will come after, and not as some radically new program for the Church.

It is also worth noting the **off-the-cuff** address Pope John XXIII gave from his window that same evening. On the night of October 11, 1962, thousands of people, many **carrying torches**, made their way to St. Peter's Square to celebrate the opening of the historic Second Vatican Council. Naturally, they hoped the Pope would speak to them, as the faithful seemingly refused to leave the Piazza. You can [watch a video](#) of that evening address, appropriately dubbed the "Moonlight Address". The pope said, "Here all the world is represented. One might even say that the moon rushed here this evening – Look at her high up there – to behold this spectacle." At the end of his brief address, he counseled, "When you go back home, you will find your children: and give them a hug and say, 'This is a hug from the Pope.'" Gazing up from the Piazza that evening was none other than **Fr. Joseph Ratzinger**, the future Pope Benedict XVI!

The Council met over **four sessions**, during the fall months of 1962-1965. Of its **16 documents**, the first was promulgated on December 8, 1963, the **Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy**, about which I will write more extensively. Pope Francis has said that Vatican II thoroughly shaped his spirituality. He has called Vatican II "decisive for the Church, for its development and its approach to the contemporary world." Since, I have **no substantive memory** of what came before, it thoroughly shaped me as well. My **earliest** liturgical memory was learning **English responses** for the Mass, something allowed after the Council even **before** the Novus Ordo was promulgated in 1969. I recall the congregation practicing "And with your spirit" before Mass. I hope to shed some light on the Council in the weeks ahead. (To be continued)

- Mea culpa! When speaking of the A.L. single season home run record, I erred. While the NL expanded from 154 to 162 games only in 1962, the AL did so in **1961**. Thus, Roger Maris' record of 61 HR's in 1961 **did** include **8 more games** than Babe Ruth. Maris hit #61 on the **final day** of the **expanded** season. Not all were thrilled, apparently including the scorekeeper. The Saturday attendance at Yankee Stadium was announced as 19,061 and Sunday's (last game) was announced as 23,154. Get it? **61** and **154**? Coincidence? I **seriously** doubt that!
- A big **Pro-Life thank you!** For the record, Yankee slugger **Aaron Judge** hit HR #61 in game #155 this year. He immediately thanked his **adoptive parents**, giving them credit for raising him! "Some kids grow in their mom's stomach; I grew in my mom's heart..." he said. "She's always showed me love and compassion ever since I was a little baby... I've never needed to think differently or wonder about anything." Little baby? That's impossible to imagine! God bless the **courageous woman** who chose life in offering him for adoption.
- We are conducting a **comprehensive** assessment of the Cathedral campus, its **buildings and grounds**. It is wise to do this periodically, even if we currently lack funding to make major improvements. We must begin to understand both the **challenges** and **possibilities** ahead. I will report to the parish the salient results when they arrive, hopefully around Christmas time.
- Speaking of the campus. I invite you to join the Cathedral Men's Association as we conduct our annual **fall clean-up** of the parish grounds from **8:30-10:00 a.m.** this Saturday, October 22. Coffee and donuts will be provided. Rakes and work gloves are advised– bring them if you have them!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector