

THE SECOND VAT

A TWENTIETH CENTURY event that will surely go down in history was the Second Vatican Council that ended last year. Viewed and reviewed fairly, critically, sarcastically by believers and non-believers alike, it captured the attention of international publications and was considered by billions who followed its sessions with extreme eagerness as an event of vital and supreme importance. The news of its opening on October 11, 1962 was on the same footing with the news of the massive advancement of Science, e.g., the sending of men up in space and the successful production of megaton bombs that will surely cause mega-death if used (God forbid) by war-loving devils.

A rare event in the history of the Roman Catholic Church, it was the 21st Ecumenical Council since the Council of Nicaea held during the 4th century A.D. — on the 20th of May, 325, to be exact.

When the news of the Second Vatican Council spread all over the world, laymen and prelates and protestants alike were shocked, stunned, overjoyed. It was not, however, a reckless, overhasty decision. The idea was in the making for three years, when the late Pope XXIII ruffled it out on January 25, 1959 on the Church Princes after he heard Mass in the patriarchal basilica of St. Paul's Outside the Walls. The day was the feast of the conversion of St. Paul.

It was a deliberate decision. Or to quote from Pope John XXIII himself, it was "the best prepared council in history." But although there was an overwhelming approval of the idea by various religious sects, dissenters could not be silenced with their protest. Their unified voices echoed like thunder and the Vatican found out that it could not be ignored. TIME Magazine in its issue of October 5, 1962, reported: "Some German bishops, who felt that many of the questions likely to come up before the council had not yet been sufficiently clarified by the theologians, asked the Pope to postpone Vatican II for at least 15 years. Many Curia Professionals made no secret of their dismay, seemed



POPE JOHN XXIII

to have no clear idea of what the Pope wanted the council to do."

But the Pope had made up his mind: The Second Vatican Council must be carried out; time was ripe for it.

And the dissenters gave way to the idea of the

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ICAN COUNCIL



POPE PAUL VI

majority. The preparations started.

TIME reported: "Requests for agenda items were sent to every Catholic bishop, to religious orders and theological faculties at Catholic universities. About 75% of the clerics sent in replies. Compiled into twelve volumes of 7,981 pages, the replies proved to be an

encyclopedia of churchly self-criticism, which ten preparatory commissions and two secretariat, set up by the Pope in June 1960, boiled down to a working agenda of 129 proposed subjects."

It was, indeed, a massive undertaking. It cost not only time and energy but also money and mental power.

OUR CENTURY NEEDS VATICAN II

THE WORLD is changing; it is no longer the same world the past generations have known: the world of established values, moderation and comfort. The twentieth century is a world of tremendous progress especially in the field of physical sciences where man seems to exert all his resources, talent and time. Ours, too, is a world of fear; man trembles before his own inventions. Living in a changing and confusing society, man finds himself clutching the old faith, only to be tempted to reject it and to join the army of unbelievers suffering from Sartre's **nausea** and Camus' **absurdity**.

Our generation has experienced the monstrosity of the two World Wars, the worst catastrophe the world has ever known. It is at present divided into power blocs, into different ideologies, into bitter prejudices.

Twentieth century man lives in a time of crisis; and if we were to believe the pronouncements of the pessimists, we are all marching toward doom. To maintain man's sanity and dignity, individual problems should and must be taken into serious consideration. There is need for re-evaluation and re-affirmation of faith and values.

And the Church is aware of this all. Hence, the decision to have another Ecumenical Council.

Within the span of 92 years since the last General Council (Vatican I, 1896-1870), serious problems which were unheard of in the 19th century have cropped up. The Church finds herself in an uneasy position if she were to condone the decisive issues of the day and the

"spiritual diseases" undermining the souls of her children.

Something must be done.

Drastic measures are necessary.

The Church, once again, must define her position, evaluate theological questions raised by theologians, Catholics and non-Catholics alike, to summon lost children back to the right path, to work for better understanding of the various religious sects (instead of exchanging insults, why not exchange ideas?). Besides, there is a need to clarify the decisive issues of the day: religious freedom, liturgy, the role of the Church in the modern world, etc. This must be remembered, however: the Church cannot repeal dogmas formulated by past councils or by past popes.

The Church, to repeat, is a living organism, and the living are looking at her as their guide especially in our time when many have abandoned their faith and become like idiots in the crossroads without any sense of direction.

There never was a time that the Church rejected any challenge forged from the chaotic womb of our chaotic world, no matter how critical or controversial it was. She has never taken the side of mere passivity when crucial questions and debates were in vogue. She is and she has always been an active participant in world affairs. The Second Vatican Council is a gesture of acceptance of the challenge posed by the twentieth century which is, no doubt, one of the most crucial challenges since the birth of Christianity. It must be remembered that in our time, one false move of the wary World Powers would mean a nuclear war — the kind of war nobody can win and survive.

AND THE AGGIORNAMENTO STARTED

On October 11, 1962, the historic Ecumenical Council began. Attended by 2,300 council Fathers, it cost the church a total of \$20,000,000—half a million cups of coffee and 1.2 million ballots included. Within the sacrosanct walls of the sacrosanct Basilica of St. Peter, the *aggiornamento* of the Roman Catholic church was in the making. More than 350 million Catholics all over the world waited for its development, not to mention the watchful eyes of world correspondents flocking the Vatican like hungry doves.

On that memorable day, TIME magazine reported: "In the Vatican Council, the Catholic Church will also be measuring itself against what is new in the world sciences burst of knowledge, morality's blurred standards, secularism's indifference to religion, industrialism's urban crowding and automation, politics' wars and swift reappointments of power. In trying to grapple with such problems, the Council may disappointingly settle for a series of revised clubhouse rules, more cautious than venturesome. But millions of the church's faithful — and others, too — are praying that good men will be guided to a larger effort, a renewal of spirit rather than law."

While Catholics said special prayers, millions of Protestants also were praying for the success of the Ecumenical Council, hoping that it would be on the same footing with the World Council of Churches Assembly in New Delhi way back in 1961.

However, on June 3, 1963 Pope John XXIII, the architect of the massive undertaking, died. There was a pause. On June 21, 1963 a new Pope was elected — Pope Paul VI. On the day of his election, he was at once aware of the heavy burden he had to carry: the unfinished Ecumenical Council.

In the TIME issue of September 24, 1965, Pope John XXIII and Pope Paul VI were compared. TIME calls Pope John as "an intuitive, charismatic prophet who threw open the windows and doors of the church to let in fresh air without worrying about — or even fully understanding — the consequences." The incumbent Pope appears to TIME as "a detached and painstakingly analytical technician who has left the windows open — but who keeps checking the thermometer lest any cold drafts seep in." But according to TIME his style is "A search for balance and order — a goal that runs the risk of ambiguity, of settling for surface rather than substance." And it goes on to say what some clergy and laymen say about Pope Paul VI: that he is "a puzzle, an enigma, a Hamlet."

With Paul's visit to the Holy Land and New York, he breaks the contention that popes are "prisoners of the Vatican."

THE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF VATICAN II

The major documents approved by the Council put to shame the pessimistic anticipation of skeptics; they shatter the contentions of godless critics and religious haters. The documents all point out to the objective of the Second Vatican Council: *aggiornamento*. They are the solutions of the problems faced by the Church and her children living in the twentieth century. They make the Church **modern**, and up-to-date institution, not a relic of the past like broken irons.

The fresh air of the twentieth century has swept out the ancient dust of the sacrosanct halls of the age-old church. Now that the windows and doors of the Cathedral are opened the world can view it better, understand it better, evaluate it better.

Benedictine Godfrey Diekmann, editor of WORSHIP magazine, and himself an expert in liturgy, wrote: "The bishops at the beginning were not especially enthusiastic. Many of them, of course, had been occupied with pastoral works and were not especially knowledgeable about recent developments in theology and liturgy. Perhaps the greatest achievement in the Council has been that in these areas where one would not normally expect a real deepening of understanding, just that has happened in only four years."

The four-year session has done so many things: it shapes new visions for the world to heed and cogitate; it outlines the future move of mankind for the better and not for the worst; it gives new perspective, new

dimensions, as wonderful as man's initial triumph of space exploration, to mention a few.

NEWSWEEK reported: "At the start, those blue-prints had seemed fanciful to many, catastrophic to some. But as session followed session, what an American peritus called 'the new theology, a pastoral and ecumenical theology,' won the minds and the votes of the bishops. The victory also marked the return to grace of theologians who had been in disfavor, if not actually in disgrace, before Vatican II convened. Once under pressure from the Holy Office for their doctrines, French theologians Yves Congar and Henri de Lubac are now mentioned as possible cardinals at Paul's next consistory."

The labor that lasted for four long years was not at all disgusting. Vatican II, in more ways than one, was a success. It shatters the crazy anticipations of skeptics; it wins the attention of the world; it captures the front pages of newspapers the world over; the praises of the world leaders. Here are the major results of the massive undertaking:

On Divine Revelation. The question on Divine Revelation was one of the most decisive questions raised during the Council. Just as the world today is divided into power blocs, the theologians are also divided into two main groups: those that adhere to the "Two-source" theory and those that insist that the only source for revelation is the Scripture, and that tradition is "nothing more than the church's living, unfolding interpretation of the Holy Bible."

The approved document contains a lengthy treatise which emphasizes the role of Scripture rather than tradition, although it is added, through the request of the Pope that the Church does not get her "certitude concerning revelation only from Scripture." The document aims to "merge into unity" Scripture and tradition. However, it acknowledges the Bible to have a "more central role in the life of the Church." Scholars on the Scripture, Catholics and Protestants alike, are encouraged to go on with their research.

To prevent a too literal interpretation of the Holy Bible, the treatise also makes it clear that the Bible teaches "firmly, with fidelity, and without any error, the truth which God, for our salvation, wanted put down in writing in Holy Writ, whose historicity the church constantly affirms."

Bishop James Patrick Shannon, Auxiliary of St. Paul, Minnesota, has this to say: "This (the document on Divine Revelation) contains the basis for the church attitude toward the world for centuries to come."

On Liturgy. This liturgical reform allows the use of modern languages and vernacular languages to replace Latin in most parts of the Mass and sacraments. The document **On Liturgy** has brought about external changes only, for essential meanings and purpose remain the same. Three documents were responsible for the change: The **Constitution on Sacred Liturgy**, December 4, 1963; **Motu Proprio**, January 24, 1964; and the **Instruction for the Proper Implementation of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy**, September 26, 1964.

Rev. Frederick R. McManus, president of the National Liturgical conference and official consultant for the Ecumenical Council, says that one contradiction in the rite of the Mass has been partially corrected: "Three of the most solemn and public prayers recited quietly by the priest will be sung or said aloud for all to hear and respond to. They are: the prayer over the offerings, called the secret prayer; the concluding Eucharistic prayer, and the prayer for deliverance from evil and for peace, which is added to the Lord's Prayer.

"On principle, the celebrating priest will no longer recite publicly or quietly any text of a prayer or reading that is said or sung by others, whether by the people or by the choir in case of chants and hymns. . . This change is intended to make clear the distinction of roles or parts in the liturgy, with each one — priest or layman — taking his own part."

Of the change, Pope Paul VI has this to say: "Are these changes for the better or not? Surely it is for the better." The Pope is right. Because of the change, the Mass gains new life, warmth, and better participation from the laymen.

On Religious Liberty. The text on religious liberty, one of the most controversial schemata discussed during the council, was approved, nonetheless by an overwhelming majority: 1,997 to 224. The time the voting was over, Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, Boston's Unitarian observer at Vatican II quips: "This is perhaps the greatest day of the council."

On October 1, 1965, TIME reported: "What made the vote on liberty statement especially significant was that the progressive majority thwarted a last-minute conservative maneuver to shelve the document entirely — and it won with the help of Pope Paul."

Based on divine revelation and the "very dignity of human nature," the treatise on religious liberty stressed that "no one can be forced to act against his conscience." The state has no right to impose to individuals any form of religion; also it cannot prevent its citizens from leaving or joining religious sects. The declaration bolsters the broad-mindedness of the Catholic Church: that it respects man's conscience, dignity and freedom. TIME issue of December 17, 1965, points out the important provision of the declaration: that "all men have a duty to embrace Catholicism once they recognize its truthful claims. . ." The document was received enthusiastically. The general comment was in conformity to what the Spanish prelates have uttered: **Muy bien.**

On the Church in the Modern World. NEWSWEEK issue of December 20, 1965, summarizes it thus: The document "guides, rather than determines, the Church's attitude toward such complex problems as atheism, poverty, nuclear war and parenthood. Here the Church's Fathers were realistic in their treatment of atheists, firm in their opposition to the nuclear balance of terror."

The complexity of this document was bolstered by
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the fact that it was rewritten 20 times. But the approved schema is not satisfactory either, as a matter of fact it is still open to possible change in the future.

The Church makes it clear that it is against the use of contraception but gives the families the right to decide the number of children they want, and that always they should remain "submissive toward the Church's teaching offices."

Commenting on the document, Bishop John J. Wright of Pittsburgh says: "Where **De Ecclesia** gave us the technical tools, this provides the pastoral ones. It is the crowning glory to a pastoral council. It opens up our dialogue with the world."

On The Apostolate of the Laity. Because the Church respects the dignity of human nature, it also gives her children greater responsibility and freedom. The document also encourages half-billion Catholics to participate actively in Church's activities. It stresses further the role of Catholic organizations and that of the layman in the Church's global mission, his role in the family, society, politics, and universal affairs. The Church is not the Pope, the bishops or the prelates. Laymen are not mere spectators or objective observers of the Church activities. Every layman is a part of this living organism, therefore he carries with him a responsibility. This document strengthens the laymen's faith in his Church.

On the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions. "The secretariat for promoting the new version of an Ecumenical Council declaration on anti-Semitism says the Jews should never be presented as 'rejected, cursed or guilty of deicide' — of being 'God-killing' people," so goes the text of this document.

The document corrected the error that has been in existence for nearly two thousand years. "The Church believes that by His Cross Christ reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one," the declaration goes on. On the matter, the FREE PRESS editorializes: "You see, all this business of blaming people for the death of Christ leads only to total mystery. His death should not produce injustice and persecution, more suffering for people; it should not lead us to discriminate but to unite, not to hate but to love, for if the Son of God died for mankind, then no man should be hurt, no one should be shamed or despised, we are all objects of God's tremendous solicitude."

The declaration does not stop there; it expresses further the Church's reverence for all forms of religions that acknowledge God. The declaration also recognizes non-Christian faiths.

On the Pastoral Office of Bishops. This document is akin to the constitution *On the Church*. This provides a synod of bishops to help the Pope on complex matter of Church government; that they too, share ruling power. This document will lead to the inevitable democratization of the Church.

Also, according to NEWSWEEK, "it urges modernization of Church administration in the Vatican Curia." The document also outlines the "scope and responsibility of national conference of the hierarchy."

The document cannot but lead to efficient Church administration; its significance is beyond doubt. It is laudable indeed.

On Ecumenism. This schema carries this theme: unity. It not only recognizes Protestant Churches but it also encourages the various religious sects to work for Christian unity. The document bridges the gap that has been present between the Catholic Church and other forms of religions. Certainly, if the aim is unity, the gap can be bridged only by better understanding. Christianity must unite all for the greater glory of God and humanity.

On Christian Education. The schema stresses the growing importance and need of Catholic school system. Aside from the defense on parochial schools, the document points out the role of Catholic universities in our complex world where we are constantly facing the challenge of time and opposing ideologies.

On the Church. TIME summarizes the assertion of the Constitution thus: "... bishops collectively share ruling power over the church with the Pope." Many theologians commented that this will slowly lead to the democratization of the church.

POST-COUNCIL CONSENSUS

After the formal closing of the Second Vatican Council early in December 1965, Pope Paul VI boldly announced that it was "one of the greatest events of the Church."

Indeed, it was.

The consensus was that Vatican II lives up to what Pope John XXIII said on the day it began that "It is the best prepared council in history."

The church's *aggiornamento* is *Aggiornamento* per se. It's no misnomer.

Commented Dom Christopher Butler, an English Benedictine abbot: "Before, the Church looked like an immense and immovable colossus, the city set on hill, the stable bulwark against the revolutionary change. Now it has become a people on the march — or at least a people which is packing its bags for a pilgrimage."

The unforgettable Council shows a positive attitude toward the complexity of our twentieth century world. Because of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church appears as something new in the eyes of the watchful billions of men diverse cultures and religions. It assumes a new posture, a wisdom not known before, a spirit of friendliness and never of hostility to non-Christian faiths.

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The Council has successfully drafted major documents that answer the need of a complex and pluralistic world. All of them are of vital and supreme importance; their significance can never be doubted. As a matter of fact, all the documents are never sneered or harshly criticized by the world press. Even Protestants and other religious sects acknowledge their worth enthusiastically.

All the documents are proofs of the Church's broadmindedness; they are all products of deliberate thinking; they are the laudable gestures of a living institution which is acutely aware of the need of the milieu of the time.

The day the council ended, the periti had almost exhausted their brainpower. But the very fact that the schemata are accepted are reward enough for their hectic time in drafting the said documents.

To repeat, the Council is a success.

The role of the periti in the Council cannot be ignored. Of course, they are less visible in the eyes of the world but the role they played cannot be ignored. Methodist observer Dr. Albert C. Outler, himself a scholar of theology, says: "This is the first council since Nicaea where the decisive balance was tipped by theology professors. When the council began, there were perhaps 500 who knew what the consequences would be, and 300 of these were conservatives. They knew, they still know the consequences of radical change. But this council of 2,400 men was led to form honest convictions on the progressive side — and without any real leadership in the American sense of the word. In every instance it was the professors who tipped it. Most bishops didn't know the answers. But they knew administration, and one point of administration is to ask if you don't know."

To the periti Pope Paul said: "It is the bishops who build the church but it is you who draw the blueprints."

Dr. John K. S. Reid, an observer from the World Alliance of Reform and Presbyterian Churches, opines: "By working together, the council has enabled the Roman Catholic Church to form a common mind. At the first session nothing was decided. In the final session, a real consensus had grown up."

TIME magazine, aware of the success of Vatican II commented thus: "The success or failure of Vatican II cannot be judged merely by the bulk of written documents. More important is the spirit that brought the council together and inspired its discussions. The most apparent impact of those discussions was the bishops' self-discovery of their common responsibility for the church as a whole."

Germany's Evangelical Bishop Otto Dibelius, quips: "If the Roman Catholic Church had looked 450 years ago as it looks today, there would never have been a Reformation."

But that is enough. The old error has been corrected; let the dead past bury its dead. Let's all work for better unity. Now that the Council is over, Protestant churches consider the old differences between their churches and the Catholic Church as something less relevant. It no longer matters so much; better understanding has bridged the age-old gap.

In the second week of December, when the Council was about to close, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople issued, TIME reported, "a joint statement deploring the mutual excommunications that Roman Catholic and Orthodox leaders had hurled at each other in 1054." The event aroused not only sympathy of the world but also praise from the world press. It is, no doubt, a healthy sign of reconciliation, a return to the spirit of friendship and unity, a growing understanding of principles and doctrines.

POSTSCRIPT

The day the council ended, Cardinal-Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh of Antioch opines that Vatican II has "put the church into a permanent state of dialogue — dialogue with itself for a continuous renewal; dialogue with our Christian brothers in order to restore the visible unity of the body of Jesus Christ; Dialogue, finally, with today's world, addressed to every man of good will."

The speech of Pope Paul VI during the last session summarizes the points which the church wants the world to know: "The church of the council has been concerned not just with herself and her relationship . . . with God, but with man — man as he really is today: living man. . . man as the superman of yesterday and today, ever frail, unreal, selfish and savage; man unhappy with himself as he laughs and cries. . . man as he is, a creature who thinks and loves and toils and is always waiting for something. . . We call upon those who term themselves modern humanists. . . to recognize our own new type of humanism: we, too, in fact more than others, honor mankind."

The end of the Council is only a beginning. However, there is a fair hope that the harmony and unity of different churches will continue to flourish and to grow; after all, the fruit of this better understanding and friendship is all for the good of humanity and for the greater glory of God.

Even TIME magazine foresees a favorable future of the Church when it writes: "Thus the more the church returns in spirit to the unfettered simplicity of the Gospel from which it sprang, the more likely it is that its voice will be heeded again by the world." (By the way, we feel like adding this: the Church did not spring from the Gospel; Christ himself founded the Church).

The formal closing of the Council ended when the Pope raised his arms and bid farewell to his bishops. Then he uttered the final words: "**It is in peace.**"