

VATICAN ONE

The centennial commemoration on December 8, 1969 of the First Vatican Council had been ushered in with solemn celebrations around the world, headed by Pope Paul VI at Rome, with the attendance of a great many members of the College of Cardinals, representatives of the Italian Government, and the Diplomatic Corps accredited both to the Vatican and to the Italian Government.

The beginning of this celebration was marked among us by a solemn Pontifical Mass and the Address of His Eminence Cardinal Santos at the Manila Cathedral.

Such an event could not be ignored in the Philippines. Actually, it was on that same day, one hundred years ago that the Philippines, for the first time in history, was represented at an Ecumenical Council. It was the then Metropolitan Archbishop of Manila, H. E. Gregorio M. Martinez, who was present at the inaugural Session of the Council on December 8, 1869, and took an active part in all discussions and balloting of the Council up to the end.

The event deserves being commemorated throughout the world. In fact, among all its events, the Church's history recalls as its landmarks the Ecumenical Councils. Those cosmopolitan meetings of the universal Church, duly represented by all Shepherds under the supreme authority of the Universal Shepherd have consistently been sources of vitality and unity in the preservation of the truth of the Faith. The *truth of the Faith*, as it is. As the Lord has wished his gospel to be "*the power of God saving all who have faith*" (Rom. 1:16), the truth of the faith is at the root of all the preachings of the Shepherds and of all beliefs of the faithful.

Such, in short, has been the story of every Ecumenical Council. All twenty universal councils that preceded Vatican II were called because of a definite need in this regard, the definition of revealed truth, mostly in the field of belief, with the corresponding applications to Christian conduct and the Church's government.

It was providential that in times of crisis for the truth of the faith, an Ecumenical Council came to the rescue. Cardinal among all councils was Nicaea with the all-embracing "consubstantiality"

of the Son. All the other Eastern Councils followed and completed Nicaea. Among the vast complex of Ecumenical Councils, however, Trent stands preeminent. In the gravest of Church's crisis, Trent offered the most complete, clear, comprehensive and aptly-worded *definitions* that stretch out from beginning to end of all questioned Church's doctrines.

Second to Trent comes Vatican One. True, the political conditions in Italy, after Sedan, forced the Council to adjourn and never to meet again, thus limiting the ambitious agenda. Yet, the two Dogmatic Constitutions *Dei Filius* and *Pastor aeternus*—in theological accuracy both worthy of Trent—did for ever settle the pivotal doctrine on God, faith, and revelation together with the powers of the human mind and its inherent non-opposition to faith and supernatural truth. The role of St. Peter as Head of the Apostolic College and that of the Pope's jurisdiction and infallible magisterium for ever determined the permanent rule for unity in the One faith of God's Church.

In fact the doctrinal work of these two Councils, Trent and Vatican One, has been considered as so thorough, and so much up-to-date that Pope John in His inaugural Address at the Second Vatican Council formally stated that the Council would not consider the definition of any new points of doctrine. Trent and Vatican One, he said, were sufficient unto the needs of the Church that for such purpose there were no need of any ecumenical council, "ad huiusmodi disputationes habendas opus non erat ut Concilium Oecumenicum indiceretur".

Actually the task assigned to his Council by Pope John was the renewed study of already defined truth, especially at Trent and Vatican One, and its pastoral application to the needs of our time. This Vatican II did marvelously fulfill in his inspired Documents. For this reason Pope Paul VI in his Address to the General Audience on December 10, 1969, insisted on the intimate union of the last two Councils and on the fact that the Second Vatican Council had been faithful to the work of the Vatican One and had even completed the work of the Fathers of the First Vatican Council on the Church and the role of the Bishops with the Head of the Church, the Pope. In this manner the Holy Father expects from this centennial celebration of the First Vatican Council a greater and deeper understanding of the homogeneous doctrine of the Church proposed one hundred years ago and as faithfully expanded throughout the pastoral field by the Second Vatican Council.

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