



PONTIFICIUM CONSILIUM
DE IUSTITIA ET PACE

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Vatican II: A Council of Justice and Peace

Most Reverend Chancellor, your Excellencies, Mme Rector, distinguished University professors and scholars, honoured speakers and participants, dear friends:

J'aimerais d'abord remercier l'Université Saint-Paul de m'avoir invité à prendre la parole à l'occasion de cette importante Conférence pour célébrer le 50^e anniversaire du concile œcuménique Vatican II, et de m'avoir décerné ce doctorat *honoris causa*. C'est un grand honneur et une grande joie pour moi d'être associé à l'Université Saint-Paul par des liens si étroits. Je sais que l'honneur que vous me faites aujourd'hui se veut en même temps une marque de reconnaissance pour tout le bon travail accompli par le *Conseil pontifical Justice et Paix*, sur lequel j'ai le bonheur de siéger à titre de président.¹

This evening I would like to begin with memories and experiences of Vatican II, followed by the responsibility which is ours to interpret the Council faithfully in order to implement it fruitfully. In the third part, then, let us consider how its teaching on justice and peace feeds into the new evangelization, in order to inform, form and orient the next generation.

I. The Council

If you mention Vatican II to an adult Catholic, chances are the first image that will come to mind involves Blessed Pope John XXIII. He had broached the idea of an Ecumenical Council only three months into his pontificate. When asked why, he reportedly opened a window and said, "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in."¹

This wonderful image is worth meditating on. Pope John had two purposes in mind:

“So that we can see out...” Seeing those who are there, Catholics can learn about them and, discovering their needs, really serve them. While before, the world was to be fled or to be criticized, now a more humble attitude of service would mark the Church's stance towards the world "outside".

¹ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/John_XXIII

“So that the people can see in” and learn about who and what is inside, and why. Through open windows, dialogue is more likely. This willingness to engage in dialogue represented another important change in the Catholic stance towards the "outside" world.

When Blessed John XXIII said "the windows of the Church," he obviously meant the whole Church in the whole world, including the Bishops soon to assemble from every corner of the globe. That included the Roman Curia.

Let me share an African perspective on Vatican II. In the Church in North America and Western Europe, it is true that the Church has suffered a decline in numbers of clergy and even of lay faithful. There is indeed a good deal of worry about the statistics which no doubt occasioned the call for a New Evangelization on the part of both John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

The picture is dramatically different in my part of the world.² Starting with Africa as a whole: in 1962, the general population was 283 million – now it is about one billion. It has grown at a rate of 2.6% per year and, compared with 1962, the population of Africa is nearly four times larger today.³

Coming to the Church in Africa, when the Council opened in 1962, there were 29 million Catholics – today, we are 186 million. Our number has increased at a rate of 3.8% per year and, compared with 1962, the Catholic population in Africa is nearly seven times larger today.

And turning to the clergy: the number of Bishops grew from fewer than 400 in 1962 to 700 in 2012; priests rose from 15,000 in 1962 to 40,000 in 2012; religious brothers stayed approximately the same at 9,000; and religious women increased from 26,000 in 1962 to 68,000 in 2012.⁴

It is a striking contrast with Canada, isn't it? And it means that millions of African Christians see Vatican II in a rather different light. In Africa, the Church – albeit implanted in the very cruel and unjust context of colonialism, yet magnificently nurtured with the tireless and indeed heroic ministry of the missionaries – is now a Church of Vatican II, beginning with the facts of population. Most of us came into the Church after the Council. So we do not look back to a well-established Catholic Church adopting or implementing Vatican II. Instead, we feel part of a Vatican-II Church that has grown as we were being baptized and growing up in it. As Vatican-II Catholics, we give thanks to God for our lived experience of a Church “vibrant with vitality” in the ringing words of Pope John XXIII when convoking the Council.⁵

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Council may seem a retrospective, evaluating it at a distance and from without. As an African Christian, I do not simply look back "at" Vatican II of 50 years ago. Rather I think of myself and of all of us as being within Vatican II today!

Such are the windows through which I hope we can dialogue this evening.

² Thanks to Drs. Brian J. Grim and Juan Carlos Esparza Ochoa of the Pew Research Center and Mr. Peter Crossing of Center for the Global Study of Christianity for assembling and interpreting the data.

³ Principal source: Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, eds., *World Religion Database*, Brill, 2012.

⁴ Based on rough estimates by the World Christian Database and the Association for Religion Data Archives both using the *Annuario Pontificio*. See also Melissa Wilde, study of pre-Vatican-II, http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Analysis/VATICAN/VATICAN_VAR13_1.asp#I-REGION

⁵ Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, 1966, p. 705.

II. The dynamic of fidelity

Besides "opening windows", another telling image much associated with Vatican II comes from the Synoptic Gospels – here is the version in Luke, which combines two images:

No one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one, after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, "The old is good." (Luke 5:37-39).

The first saying says:

An old container is not suitable for new content. The new has to be handled appropriately, otherwise it self-destructs. But if you allow both content and container to mature properly, all will be well. So treat the new for what it is and be patient, for the process can be long.

The second saying says:

In excitement regarding the new, do not get confused about old and new. Once they have matured, both wine and wineskin fulfil their purpose. The old wine is good to savour, and everyone agrees.

The two sayings are not contradictory, nor is it not simply a matter of preferring one and rejecting the other. New-*versus*-old is not a firm opposition. Instead, the two sayings are wisely complementary. Jesus' teaching invites discernment of what is appropriate at each stage or circumstance. Let's see how it applies to Vatican II.

Some might expect a Pope who opens windows to opt heavily for new wine and fresh wineskins. But in his opening speech, Blessed John XXIII said that the Council wishes "to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion." Yet that doesn't mean he was opting exclusively for old wine and old wineskins, for he spelled out two duties:

- "not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity,
- but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us..."

Spelling out what that entails, he went on to insist that "the authentic doctrine ... be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another..." retaining the same meaning and message.⁶ So the paradoxical conclusion here is that to stay faithful, to retransmit the same message in changed times, requires us to deepen our grasp of it so as to update the way we communicate it.

Looking back on a journey or on one's life, you perceive growth in time and development, yet always remaining the same person. When certain choices are reviewed and even corrected, this might at first look like discontinuity. Rightly done, however, such revision will preserve your

⁶ Walter M. Abbott S.J., ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*, p. 715

inmost nature and deepen your true identity. Living faithfully means living dynamically, being spiritually alert, responding authentically to the world around you.

Let us fast-forward. A few days before Christmas 2005, the year in which Benedict XVI was elected Pope, in a gathering with the leading members of the Curia, the Holy Father spoke about the Second Vatican Council, which had concluded forty years previously. He asserted that the Church “increases in time and develops, yet always remain[s] the same, the one subject of the journeying People of God.”⁷

You can hear an echo here of what the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* has to say: “The Church, both before and after the Council, was and is the same Church, one, holy, catholic and apostolic, journeying on through time; she continues ‘her pilgrimage amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God’, proclaiming the death of the Lord until he comes.”⁸ When the Church “has reviewed or even corrected certain historical decisions..., in this apparent discontinuity it has actually preserved and deepened her inmost nature and true identity.”

“It is precisely in this combination of continuity and discontinuity at different levels that the very nature of true reform consists,” like the integrity of human growth and maturing which, applied to the Church, the Holy Father calls the *dynamic of fidelity*. So we are invited to continue what Vatican II began, “with great open-mindedness but also with that clear discernment that the world rightly expects of us in this very moment... If we interpret and implement it guided by a proper hermeneutic, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever necessary renewal of the Church.”⁹

Bringing our reflection home to Canada, Archbishop Weisgerber of Winnipeg situates us in the same dynamic of fidelity: “History tells us that it takes about 100 years for the Church to receive the teaching of a council. We are still very much in the early days of the Second Vatican Council. Much has been done, much remains to be done. We need to continue to strive with great energy to implement the vision of the Church given to us by Vatican II. The gifts, energy and good will of all members of our community are needed [to] build a Church of communion”¹⁰ and I add, “a Church of Justice and Peace” to which I now turn in the third part of my talk.

III. From *Gaudium et spes* to the New Evangelization

The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, usually called *Gaudium et spes*, is the Council’s treatment of one of its central concerns: the relationship between the Church and the modern world.

It begins by expressing the profound compassion and solidarity to which the entire Christian family is called:

⁷ Benedict XVI, *Address of Christmas Greetings* to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2005. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html

⁸ Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, § 8.

⁹ All three quotations from the *Address of Christmas Greetings*.

¹⁰ Abp James Weisgerber (Winnipeg), http://www.archwinnipeg.ca/letter_2005-10-15.php

“The hopes and joys, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts.”¹¹

Then, in its very last paragraph, *Gaudium et spes* affirms again with eloquence:

“Christians cannot yearn for anything more ardently than to serve the people of the modern world with mounting generosity and success. Therefore, by holding faithfully to the Gospel and benefiting from its resources, by joining with everyone who loves and practices justice, Christians have shouldered a gigantic task for fulfilment in this world.”¹²

These closing words deserve to be quoted as much as the famous opening ones. They show that, beginning with deepest Christian compassion and in fidelity to the Gospel, we are called to take part in generous and cooperative service for the betterment of our world. The Church believes that, through each member, each community and as a whole, she can help to make the family of man and its history still more human.

The Pastoral Constitution is in two parts. The first, more doctrinal part proclaims the dignity of the human person, the community of humankind, our activity throughout the world, and the role of the Church in the modern world.

Part two treats five problems of special urgency: fostering the nobility of marriage and the family; the proper development of culture; economic and social life; the life of the political community, and the fostering of peace and the promotion of a community of nations.

Thus, in the words of Blessed John XXIII, the Constitution combines “the precious treasure of doctrine” and the “work which our era demands of us”. An introductory note explains that *Gaudium et spes* is called pastoral because, while resting on solid doctrinal principles, the Constitution seeks to express the relation of the Church to a rapidly-evolving world. “Church teaching is one thing – giving closer or special consideration to more urgent contemporary problems is another.” The note draws an important lesson anticipating the dynamic of renewal we have just considered: *Gaudium et spes* “must be interpreted according to the general norms of theological interpretation. Interpreters must bear in mind the changeable circumstances which – especially in part two – the subject matter, by its very nature, involves.”¹³

Let me touch briefly on some key points in Part One: The dignity and destiny of the human person are rooted in God, who created us and sent his Son to ransom us from sin. Enjoying this inviolable dignity and freedom because we are created for communion with God, ours is not, however, a license to follow every whim and inclination. It is rather the freedom for responsibility to realize the common good, a free responsibility to be exercised towards oneself and one's own and to the wider community, indeed the whole human family.

¹¹ *Gaudium et spes*, § 1

¹² *Gaudium et spes*, §1 and § 93.

¹³ *Gaudium et spes*, Preface, Note 1.

Gaudium et spes asserts the fundamental equality of all persons because they are made in the image and likeness of God. It follows from this that they bear fundamental and inalienable rights. Further, it celebrates the great and growing number of opportunities to participate in economic, political and cultural life, in the shaping of institutions which affect the fabric of social life – all of this with a view to creating the conditions for justice and peace in the world. In its reflections on the necessity of working to foster peace and the community of nations, the council underlines that peace “is rightly and appropriately called ‘an enterprise of justice’. Indeed, genuine peace goes beyond the requirements of justice; it is rooted in love and forgiveness – even to the point of forgiving one’s enemies, the kind of love we discover in the paschal mystery that lies at the heart of Christian faith.”¹⁴

In the second part of the document, the Council Fathers spell out some practical consequences of this basic orientation of Catholic faith: the need to support and promote marriage and the family; to infuse culture with the value of human dignity; to transform economic, social and political life so that human life is protected and the common good and international peace are promoted. Part Two thus anticipates later Papal teaching which explicitly links work for justice with the defence of life at all stages (including in the womb). Most recently, in *Caritas in veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI clearly affirms the interdependence of human ecology with environmental ecology.¹⁵ Weakening one puts the other at risk. For a Catholic, the Holy Father insists, it is not a matter of being either “pro life” or “pro justice”; it is “pro both” and they are really one.

Thus *Gaudium et spes* calls on all Christians to work on the "problems of special urgency" which are crushing our brothers and sisters of the one human family in many many places around the globe.

But our task, as the Church, is not limited to these human and social issues. Pope John XXIII wrote, when convoking the Council, that the Church “is to infuse the vivifying, perennial, and divine energy of the Gospel into the veins of today’s human community.”¹⁶ That is an equally demanding task but at a different, deeper level. For the Gospel is the life and ministry, the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ who thus reveals the Father’s love for all humankind (Jn 3:16). The Church reminds us that this is an integral love, a love that touches and embraces every level of human existence and activity.

When Jesus stood up in the synagogue at Nazareth (Lk 4:16ff) to explain his mission to his neighbours, he proclaimed good news for the poor, release for captives, sight for the blind and liberty for the oppressed. These transforming provisions of the Jubilee became the banner under which he carried out the mission entrusted to him by his Father.

Jesus taught his followers to meet the spiritual and material needs of their neighbour. He told them to feed the hungry, to shelter the homeless, to clothe the naked, to visit the sick and imprisoned, and to bury the dead (Mt 25:31-46). These corporal works of mercy, called *diakonia* in the early

¹⁴ *Gaudium et spes*, § 78 [citing Is. 32:7?]; cf also §§ 29, 31, 55.

¹⁵ *Caritas in veritate*, § 51; cf. §§ 15, 28; and Cardinal Bernadin's consistent ethic of life and his compelling image of the “seamless garment”.

¹⁶ John XXIII *Humanae Salutis*, 25.12.61, § 3.

Church,¹⁷ were handed down by the Apostles, enriched by the Fathers of the Church, and further explored by the great Christian doctors.

For more than a century now, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this heritage – this tradition of belief and practices – has developed, been systematized and promoted in the Social Doctrine of the Church. And this Social Doctrine, in turn, proclaims and bears witness to the faith in Jesus Christ out of which it emerges. "With her social teaching the Church seeks to proclaim the Gospel and make it present in the complex network of social relations. It is not simply a matter of reaching out to [everyone] in society — man as the recipient of the proclamation of the Gospel — but of enriching and permeating society itself with the Gospel."¹⁸

The 1971 Synod of Bishops, which gathered to reflect on the theme of justice in the world, affirmed even more forcefully the indivisible call to follow Christ and to work towards a more just social order. "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."¹⁹

We find ourselves exactly at the point where *Christian faith* and the *love of Christ* encounter the social order. Benedict XVI teaches that "testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person. These important teachings form the basis for the missionary aspect of the Church's social doctrine, which is an essential element of evangelization."²⁰ This fruit of faith is, in turn, a new witnessing to or announcement of faith.

So the new evangelization must include "a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine".²¹ Blessed John Paul II explains that "today more than ever ... her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the *witness of action* than as a result of its internal logic and consistency."²² For example, in Africa I have experienced the profound evangelization that has been inseparable from unflagging concern for human development.

This action for justice, peace and development will give witness if it is not separated from our religious, spiritual life. *Gaudium et spes* warned sternly about the "the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives.... Let there be no opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other." Instead, Christians are encouraged to "gather their humane, domestic, professional, social, and technical enterprises into one vital synthesis with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are harmonized unto God's glory."²³

So the new evangelization, which will be thoroughly treated in next month's Synod, begins with "Christianity's capacity to know how to read and interpret the new situations in human history

¹⁷ Cf. Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-35.

¹⁸ Compendium 62 with reference to *Gaudium et spes*, § 40.

¹⁹ Synod of Bishops Second General Assembly, *Justice in the World*, 1971, § 6.

²⁰ *Caritas in veritate*, § 15.

²¹ *Compendium*, § 523.

²² *Compendium*, § 525 quoting *Centesimus annus*, § 57.

²³ *Gaudium et spes*, § 43.

which, in recent decades, have become the places to proclaim and witness to the Gospel.”²⁴ This cannot help but strike us as a reprise, nearly 50 years later, of the second part of *Gaudium et spes* deeply considering humanity's "problems of special urgency".

What might those new situations be? They are “new sectors which have emerged in human history in the last decade” which we need to turn “into places for proclaiming the Gospel and experiencing the Church.”²⁵

The four great sectors in the Synod working document are globalizing and secularizing culture, migration, the economy and finally civic life. Clearly, our understanding of the new situations as sectors for evangelization is born of the Church's entire Social Doctrine. And the goal of the new evangelisation is *human flourishing in the revealed love of God*. This indeed is what we, all of us who constitute the Church, are preparing in order to evangelize the people of our time and the new generations. Let us be encouraged by one of the most prophetic and compelling promises made by *Gaudium et spes*: “The future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping.”²⁶

CONCLUSION

We began with Pope John XXIII throwing open the windows of the Church, and we found ourselves, not so much looking back as living within the Vatican II Church. Then we considered wine and wineskins, the balance of continuity and change, the dynamic of fidelity, the hermeneutic of reform and renewal. Finally, from Vatican II we followed *Gaudium et spes* to the New Evangelization as ongoing faithful and creative implementation of the Council.

Après avoir dit du Concile qu'il est *la grande grâce dont l'Église a bénéficié au vingtième siècle*, le bienheureux pape Jean- Paul II ajouta que celui-ci *nous offre une boussole fiable pour nous orienter sur le chemin du siècle qui commence*.²⁷ Il ne me reste plus qu'à vous encourager, de tout mon cœur, à continuer à approfondir les enseignements du Concile et à chercher sincèrement à les mettre en œuvre afin d'assurer le renouveau de l'Église en notre temps. Dans cet esprit, j'aimerais ajouter mes prières à celles de bien d'autres et partager avec vous mon souhait de voir le nouveau *Centre de recherche Vatican II et le catholicisme du 21^e siècle* de l'Université Saint-Paul porter beaucoup de fruits.ⁱⁱ

Early this month, the great Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, in the last interview he gave before his death, raised many questions about the Church – especially in Europe – which echo the themes of Vatican II. In fact his concerns were so serious as to leave you wondering how they could ever be met. But Cardinal Martini ended the interview by saying to the journalist: “I have a question for you.” And then he asked him: “What can you do for the Church?”²⁸

²⁴ *Lineamenta* for the Synod on the New Evangelization (October 2012), § 6.

²⁵ *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synod on the New Evangelization, § 51.

²⁶ *Gaudium et spes*, § 31.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, §57.

²⁸ Martini, *Corriere della Sera*, 1.9.2012

To me this is the Vatican II Church at its best: rather than lamenting many lacks and awaiting solutions from on high, the real response is an invitation: “What can you – with the help of God and in cooperation with others – do for the Church and for all God's people?”

Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
President

ⁱ I wish to thank Saint Paul University for inviting me to address this important Conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the Ecumenical Council, and for conferring on me this doctorate *honoris causa*. I am delighted and feel blessed to be associated with Saint Paul University in this significant way. I am certain that the honour you so kindly extend to me today recognizes the importance of *the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace* where I serve as President.

ⁱⁱ Calling the Second Vatican Council “the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century,” Blessed Pope John Paul II promised we would find in it “a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning” (*Novo Millennio Ineunte*, §57). It only remains for me to encourage you wholeheartedly to continue and deepen everything you do for the Council's implementation and the ongoing renewal of the Church. In this spirit, I add prayerful good wishes for St Paul University's new Research Centre devoted to the study of Vatican II and 21st Century Catholicism.