



arcvoice

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Editorial

Having been brought up in country NSW in the 50's and 60's, we 'proddies' used to look up at the grand church on the highest part of the hill, telling ourselves that the 'tykes' were not 'real' Christians. After all, why were they entitled to such impressive buildings on the most expensive real estate in town? Why did they stick to 'their own kind' in schools that the rest of us couldn't attend? Why were they forbidden to marry 'one of us', why indeed did they refuse to attend protestant weddings and funerals and other rites that were not sanctified by their church? Why did they think they were better than us by claiming the Church of Rome to be the one 'legitimate' church? Were they going to destroy our anglo-protestant traditions? Why did they believe in confession and purgatory and saints and what was this infatuation with Mary all about? Why must you eat fish on Friday? It was all too confusing. We observed them, we gossiped about them, we judged them, and so we feared them.

It was 'them' and 'us'.

Both 'proddie' and, no doubt, 'tyke' prejudices and stereotypes were firmly embedded in the divisive sectarian society of those years. It took decades for me to explore more honestly the validity or otherwise of my previously held beliefs. But two years ago, even though I was aware that my thinking was out of step with the conservative, more authoritarian sections of Catholicism, I found my place within the Catholic Church. So now I am one of 'them'. How? Because Catholics, like Protestants or Muslims or Jews are not unquestioningly united on all matters of doctrinal and devotional significance. Within the modern church there is a diversity of viewpoints, and I was most fortunate to befriend many good people whose lives transparently reflected the strength of their faith and their goodness.

While there is no longer a bitter sectarian divide, I now observe a new form of division, but one *within* the church itself. It appears there is a disconnection growing between the traditional power-brokers within the institutional Church, and the everyday life of parishioners. Banning birth control, preventing the use of condoms to inhibit the spread of HIV AIDS, mandating celibacy for our clerics, excommunicating dissident-thinkers, forbidding women to train for the priesthood – these are just a few of the issues that puzzle so many of us. The current scandal involving the handling of the sexual abuse of our children by the Church illustrates this widening gap.

There is growing disquiet that the self-regulation by the Church in these matters has not been adequate. More Catholics now seem to think that the Church has been somewhat disingenuous in its commitment to the needs of victims, often demonstrating that it is more concerned with protecting its reputation and priests and brothers known to be paedophiles. It is thought by many to be legalistic in its approach and parsimonious in the matter of financial compensation to the victims of its negligence.

The revulsion to these crimes, the hurt felt for the victims, and the shame experienced for the obfuscation and piecemeal response of the hierarchy is creating a new divide that is not a sectarian one. The divide is between **us**, the garden-variety parishioner, and **them**, the seemingly remote power players of the church – be they in Rome, a local diocese, or religious order. The Royal Commission may provoke a much needed cleansing but only genuine renewal of the Church structures and a change of heart will overcome the disconnection.

Amanda Jordan
Member of ARC Secretariat

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Where is the star shining now?

John Buggy

Christmas – a special time of reflection. A star enlightened three wise men. Nearly two thousand years later another wise man, Pope John XXIII, convened a Vatican Council, the highest authority in the Church, which declared that the Church is the People of God, that collegiality of bishops should determine its direction as servants of the people and that it should be open to the wisdom of all right-minded people in a rapidly changing world. Fifty years on from that event, despite the changes in liturgy that enabled greater participation in the Mass, Catholics are still hoping for a new vision that illustrates that they **ARE** the Church and that it should be governed by them in association with their bishops for the welfare of everyone.

They await this vision because the governance they experience puzzles them. Parishes are closed without proper discussion, bishops appear to be removed from collaboration, and all-important decisions are determined by the Vatican, seemingly without consultation.

Is a new formal vision likely to be any closer? – Perhaps not. During the past three decades considerable power in the institutional Church has been developed by three ultra conservative organisations strongly opposed to the spirit of Vatican II and yet endorsed by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict. The organisations are Opus Dei, The Legion of Christ, and Communion & Liberation. These sects have wielded great power in the Church by their ability to develop enormous resources of wealth for the Church as well as political influence, in particular having provided support to the oppressive regimes of Franco in Spain, Pinochet in Chile and Marcos in the Philippines. All three founders of these sects, Fr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, Fr. Marcial Maciel and Mons. Don Giussani (hardly three wise men) and their ideology have been severely discredited, especially Fr. Marciel who was convicted of sexually abusing at least twenty

seminarians, in addition to his own illegitimate children. The ideology underlying these sects was held up by the (then) Cardinal Ratzinger and Pope John Paul II as the wave of the ‘New Evangelisation’.

Attempts by the Vatican to promote these sects as lay organisations as if they have arisen from the body of the faithful are dishonest and misleading. They are actually totally controlled by those clergy who are members and who stamp out any dissent from what is dictated by Rome. In the early 80’s when some South American bishops attempted to support genuine lay organisations that assisted the poor to overcome exploitation by governments they were condemned as exponents of ‘liberation theology’ and equated with Marxism. Since that time other attempts to identify with the poor in an organised way have been dismissed by the Vatican by applying that label. Personal sin is emphasised over social sin, charity is emphasised over justice, and obedience is emphasised over integrity.

Owing to the influence and endorsement of these sects, scores of bishops have progressively become members since the patronage of both Pope John Paul II previously and Pope Benedict currently is more likely to lead to gaining a cardinal’s hat if they are members. It is almost a guarantee that there will not be a Pope elected in the foreseeable future who is likely to prevent the dismantling of the Second Vatican Council in relation to the definition of the Church and its governance.

The star of Bethlehem, although it is a symbol, is a light that provides an important reminder of where the focus should be. It symbolises the lighting of a path to a man who came into this world and who identified with the poor both in his humble birth and simple life. The many individuals and organisations in the Church that strive to serve the poor and identify with them bring about the People of God, as already defined in the vision of Vatican II.

John Buggy

The German Church Tax issue!

Peter Meury

Introduction

Church taxes in Germany and mainly in non-English speaking Europe are based on a treaty (Concordat – Staatskirchenvertrag) between the Holy See and the State. It goes back a long time and was revived under Pope Pius XI when Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli was Secretary of State. He concluded for instance the most infamous of contracts with Hitler in 1933 which afforded him international credibility. More information is available under Google 'Konkordat'

The Basics

European Catholics (especially in Germany, Austria and Switzerland) believe that the burden of paying tax for the maintenance of their churches should be shared equally amongst believers (taxpayers) in accordance with the level of their income. The State in Germany, on the basis of the census declaration of the citizens, levies tax on behalf of the major (Catholic and Protestant) Churches (8-9% of taxable income). Out of this, the Government pays the Priests/Pastors a monthly salary based on the level of remuneration of a University lecturer. The balance is available to parishes, and it is administered by the local Church Community Council (Financial Administration Council). Taxpayers below an income of 1,300 euros per annum at present are exempt. Church members who declare that they are leaving the Church have to be reported to the State, so that no further taxes are levied. This consequently means for them, that they are unable to receive any of the services offered by their denomination. In other words, Catholics exclude themselves from the Sacraments when they leave the Church by their own free will.

The advantage of this system is that Parishioners are not asked each Sunday to put their hands in the pocket for collections, unless there is a special appeal, e.g. during Lent or for the Missions.

The Australian (Irish) System

When I came to Australia in 1960, I enquired from a Parish Priest what I had to do to pay tax. I was surprised to learn that it was a voluntary commitment to contribute to Church Funds. The Priest was unable to tell me how much I should donate! He certainly did not explain the two collections system. When I visited some migrant Parishes, especially those from Southern Europe, I found that many Parishioners put nothing in the plate on Sundays arguing that the Church was rich enough to support itself! Moreover, many of those who

were least able to afford it, put more money into the plate than the more affluent – a most unjust system! Indeed, I found that in a lot of cases, church coffers were filled by either legacies or by rich benefactors. When I became a member of a Parish Finance Committee, I discovered that envelope systems were in place, and that the

Parish Priest knew how much individual Parishioners contributed to the offering!

The Protestant System

In Protestant Churches in Australia, parishioners tithe, often from their gross wages, and in many cases, no records are being kept as to how much everybody contributes! The Churches obviously rely on Parishioners to observe gospel values, and it appears to work very well! This is why many of the fundamentalist Churches are very wealthy since they often believe in what is also known as the Prosperity Gospel. □



Yves Congar at Vatican II

Paul Collins

It's rare that one of the century's most important Catholic theologians has you laughing out loud. But that is precisely what Dominican Yves Congar often achieves in his massive *My Journal of the Council*, newly translated into English. Congar is without doubt one of the twentieth century's most important theologians and his influence on the Second Vatican Council's (1962-1965) vision of the nature of the church is definitive.

The *Journal* is his personal record of Vatican II. It's about the people he met and the contributions he made to all of the most important documents of the Council. Few people had his level of access to the inner workings of this immense international assembly and his knowledge of the personalities involved. Many of his characterisations of people are very funny and deliciously critical.

Born in 1904 in Sedan in northern France, he joined the Dominicans, was ordained in 1930, served as a medical orderly in World War II, was a prisoner-of-war in Germany from 1940-1945, and after the war became one of the most creative minds in French theology. From early in his career he was deeply interested in the history of the church and its government and was profoundly shaped by his study of past models of how the church conceived itself and interacted with culture. Congar's theology looked outward to society and to the communication of the Gospel.

That is why ecumenism was so important to him. Throughout the 1930s he was deeply involved with both Orthodox and Protestant churches and theologians and was the author of *Chrétiens Désunis (Divided Christians)* (1938). After the war he published *True and False Reform in the Church* (1950) which was censored by Rome and he was ordered to withdraw the book. In 1953 he published his definitive study *Lay People in the Church*. He argued that the true tradition of the church was often buried under recent accretions that were 'less profound and of lesser value.'

In the mid-1950s he lived under threat from the inquisitorial Holy Office and was removed from lecturing, publishing and teaching. He was exiled to Jerusalem and Cambridge. But in January 1959 Pope John XXIII (1958-1963) announced the Second Vatican Council.

Given his previous experiences with Rome, Congar had little time for Vatican and papalist theology. Speaking of Pius XII and the *curia* he says they 'produced a bottomless paternalism and stupidity'. Nevertheless, he was eventually appointed *peritus* (expert) on the Doctrinal Commission preparing for the Council presided-over by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani. Despite his appointment Congar said that 'I am still not free of the fears attached to a man who is suspect, sanctioned, judged, discriminated against'.

But as the Council got underway he became increasingly influential, working on formulating three of the major documents and six other documents issued by the Council. The *Journal* details his extensive formulation-work and the many people with whom he worked. Underpinning his attitude was that the church was being challenged 'by the world to rejoin it in order to speak validly of Jesus Christ'. From his perspective the key issues 'were being addressed to the church [from] ... the world and ... Others' – 'Others' here referring to other non-Catholic Christians.

He felt that historically the Council came twenty-five years 'too early'; that is, only the youngest bishops had imbibed the renewed theology and historical and scriptural studies that underpinned the Council's documents. From today's perspective it is significant that he thought that the Council 'had stopped half-way on many questions. It began a task that is not completed.'

Congar was rather reserved and often in poor health. At the beginning in 1962-3 he was 'enormously depressed' that John XXIII had kept all Pius XII's Vatican 'old guard' in place. 'The Council', he said, 'was to be mastered, dominated, emasculated [by them] as soon as it had been born and before it had ever lived'.

The *Journal* is full of fascinating personal details like his constant travel back and forth from Paris to Rome by train and increasingly by plane. Much of the time, despite trouble with his legs, he had to walk around Rome or cadge a lift in a car (only groups seemed to go in taxis). His work was often interrupted by bishops and others trying to see him, including 'a young French couple on their honeymoon who didn't know where to stay'. Congar could be very impatient and often found the Council's procedures very slow and frustrating.

Among his visitors was Archbishop Guilford Young from Hobart whom he describes as 'young [and a] mixture of straight-talking and solemnity ... He told me how terribly disappointed he was in the *schemata* [presented by the Curia] and in the [opening] ceremony in St Peters, indeed almost to the point of being

scandalised'. He also occasionally mentions other Australians like Cardinal Norman Gilroy and speeches by Bishop Thomas Muldoon and Archbishop James Carroll who he says had 'a nasal tone, slow, a bit soporific'.

He couldn't stand the Dominican Master-General and later Cardinal Michael Browne. 'Browne is a mule', he says. He describes the Jesuit historian (also later cardinal) Jean Daniélou as 'very superficial and banal', and said the theologian René Laurentin, who specialised in Mariology, 'seemed to me to have become impossible, buzzing about like a bee in a bottle, pouncing on everything that he can make use of, everything that he can turn to his own advantage. If I did not know him I would say: a schemer.' Of Hans Küng he says he is 'full of intelligence, health, youth and insistent demands. He is extremely critical ... He charges at things; he goes straight ahead like an arrow.' There are many references to bishops leaving the *aula* (council hall) for the coffee bar when other bishops were boring or spoke for too long.

He pulls no punches describing Cardinal Giuseppe Pizzardo, head of the Roman Congregation of Seminaries and Universities. 'That an imbecile, a sub-human like Pizzardo should be in charge of the department for universities and seminaries is scandalous and extremely serious.' He was shocked that 'this wretched freak, this sub-mediocrity with no culture, no horizon, no humanity ... This Pizzardo, who has red pyjamas and underpants, ... who haggles over the purchase of a newspaper ... This man in charge of the curial department for studies and research! And Congar accuses Küng of being 'extremely critical'!

The *Journal's* great strength is the clear explanation that it often gives of the core theological issues facing the Council. Running through all four sessions is the ecclesiological tension between what Congar calls the 'PAPA pole' and the 'ECCLESIA pole': that is the people of God pole. He defines the 'Papa pole' as 'a simplistic and false ecclesiology according to which everything is derived from the pope' and the church is 'a vast centralised administration.' During the first session he commented that 'this tension is latent in the council and it is more than likely that one day it will come into the open.' It certainly did on several occasions at Vatican II and it remains a problem that has yet to be resolved in the government of the Church. In fact it is possibly even worse now than it was before the Council because modern means of communication have made papal centralisation much easier. With the kind of papal travel we had with the likes of John Paul II we now have a kind of 'omnipresent' papacy.

The *Journal* is well translated into excellent idiomatic English with informative and helpful footnotes. Several excellent introductory essays help to contextualise Congar, both theologically and historically. This book will be an indispensable adjunct for anyone seriously studying Vatican II. We are very much in the debt of ITF Theology, who got this very large book translated and published in English.

Congar lived for another thirty years after Vatican II. He died in 1995 after having been made a Cardinal the year before by John Paul II. No doubt he would have found such an appointment ironic.

Details of the book:

Yves Congar: *My Journal of the Council*, Adelaide: ATF Theology, 2012. lxi and 979 pp.

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The Role of Bishops in the Church

A Vatican II Reform Aborted Early in Gestation

Alan Clague

Australian Catholics could observe recently the utterly subservient role of our spiritual leaders, the Australian bishops, to the dictates of their masters in the Vatican. The then-bishop of Toowoomba, William Morris, commenting on the dearth of vocations to the priesthood in his diocese, said that if the Church changed its regulations on entry into the priesthood he would not object. For his temerity in even broaching the topic, he was reported to Rome, investigated by an extremely conservative American Archbishop, and sacked. This caused great consternation in the Australian Catholic community, which clearly supported both the bishop and his views. Subsequently, our Australian diocesan bishops visited Rome on their *ad limina* visit, where they tacitly endorsed the dismissal – indeed, Cardinal Pell criticised Bishop Morris’s continued involvement with the diocese of Toowoomba. Yet it has been suggested that some of these bishops were quite concerned by both the process of investigation and the action taken against their fellow bishop. Why did these bishops feel unable to represent the views of the Australian Church? This *status quo* is in part a result of the pre-emptive strike of Paul VI against the reform-minded majority of the Council Fathers. An accessory factor is the mode of selection of bishops.

In the second period of Vatican II, 1963, the Melkite Patriarch, Maximos IV Saigh proposed a ‘new solution’ to the problem of central government of the Church based on the doctrine of collegiality, which was the Melkite tradition of church governance. He proposed a small group of bishops, with rotating membership, be always in session at Rome to assist the Pope in collegiate fashion. Two days after Patriarch Maximos’ proposal, Cardinal Frings, in a speech partly written by *peritus* Ratzinger, attacked the whole centralising tendency in the Church, but specifically the Holy Office. He said that the question should not be what powers the Holy See should concede to the bishops, but what powers should be reserved for the Holy See. The creation of such a body had been suggested by senior clerics for some years prior to Vatican II.

Collegiality was scheduled for further discussion on the Schema for Bishops, *Christus Dominus*, but on the opening day of the fourth period, 1965, Pope Paul VI issued a document on his own initiative, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, in which he established a Synod of Bishops with powers much less than those proposed earlier. It was to be an advisory body, subject immediately and directly to the power of the Pope, meeting only when the pope called it, with an agenda specified by the Pope, and with no authority except what the Pope conceded to it. This effectively pre-empted all further discussion on collegiality, and *Christus Dominus* was proclaimed by Paul VI in October 1965.

In 1963 there had been a real drive among the majority of participants in Vatican II for reform of the Holy Office, in part by establishment of the Synod of Bishops. Applause is recorded as breaking out when Cardinal Frings stated that the procedures of the Holy Office ‘in many respects are inappropriate to the times in which we live, harm the Church, and are for many a scandal’. It is obvious that the will of the Council Fathers in terms of the role of the Synod of Bishops and the curtailment of Curial power was thwarted by the actions of Pope Paul VI.

In the years since Vatican II, there have been twelve ordinary general Synod meetings with a diverse membership from around the world, two extraordinary general meetings and ten regional meetings. This is a rather different arrangement from that envisaged, but never fully debated, at Vatican II. There is no effective permanent body, and the power of the Pope and the Curia is not tempered by a representative group from the world’s dioceses in residence at Rome.

It is unreasonable to expect that a group of diocesan bishops on an *ad limina* visit to the centre of all effective Catholic power would be willing to risk a fate like that of Bishop Morris and criticise the Vatican line on his dismissal. It should be noted, however, that other diocesan bishops did not issue a statement so critical of Bishop Morris as that made by Cardinal Pell, and other senior, but non-Episcopal, Australian Catholic

figures have issued strong statements deploring the treatment of Bishop Morris.

Another important issue concerning bishops which was not changed at Vatican II is the method of their appointment. The secretive process of today is not that of tradition. The process was originally a popular election by members of the diocese, including laity. This was specifically commended by a number of popes, including Pope Leo the Great (*'The one who is to be head over all should be elected by all.'*). In addition, the bishop was considered to be 'wedded' to his See, and should not transfer to a more prestigious one. This was endorsed by Pope Benedict XVI: *'To be a bishop should not be a career with a number of steps, moving from one seat to another, but a humble service'*. The process of selection of bishops was changed at the Council of Trent (commenced 1545), so that bishops were appointed by

the Pope in conjunction with the secular monarch of the diocese. Currently, the appointment of bishops is the exclusive right of the pope under the Code of Canon Law, reiterated in *Christus Dominus*. There is the obvious danger of a culling out of candidates whose approach to issues is not entirely in line with that of the pope.

What a paradox it is that in the earliest days of the Church when autocracy was the secular norm, the Church repudiated an autocratic mode of middle leadership selection and gave a great degree of regional autonomy in action. But now, when democracy is the secular norm, a centralist, autocratic Church has whittled away local autonomy of selection and action! Those who criticise reformist Catholic attempts to broaden the involvement of Church members in all Church activities should look to the Church Fathers rather than the Renaissance Church for a role model. □

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Fish on Friday is back!

'A sign that we are proud to be Catholic'

Cristina Odone

The Telegraph (UK)
9 November 2012

Catholic bishops [in the United Kingdom] have not always been proud to be Catholic. They are always wary of triumphalism, always nervous of sticking out of the so-called faith community. They're not sure they like Catholic schools that are too Catholic (hence the recent tussle over the Cardinal Vaughan school in London) or figureheads, like Ann Widdecombe, who are too conscious of their Catholic identity. Their reluctance to show off their true colours has left the Church open to attacks from secularists who hate it as ante-deluvian. When the recent spate of child abuse scandals rocked the image of the Church, few raised their voice to remind outsiders that there were good priests as well as bad ones, and that the Church's charitable legacy should not be ignored because of horrible tragedies.

But now, the bishops have declared that the age of self-doubt is over. There's no encyclical, no drum-rolling for a big announcement. But the bishops are introducing once again the traditional diet of fish on Friday. It's a brilliant move, calculated to bind Catholics in England and Wales in an ancient observance many will remember as children. A change in diet may seem a small thing, but make no mistake about it: this is about strengthening the group's identity, drawing a clear line distinction (even if only at meal times) between Catholics and the rest. Finally, the bishops believe Catholics are proud of their faith, and are ready to show it every week.

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Editor's comment: I recall a survey conducted in the '60s, I think by *Time Magazine*, asking children of different Faiths to list their priorities. For the Catholics, responses overwhelmingly ticked No.1: 'Eat Fish on Friday'. For the non-Catholics it was: 'Love your neighbour!' This move by the UK Bishops sounds like another example of 'shifting deckchairs on the Titanic!' What do readers think?

Christianity beyond Christendom: Reflections on a European Sojourn

Noel Preston

Olga and I have just returned from a guided tour of Italy and central Europe. Predictably, our daily diet included one 'bloody church' after another. To a tourist from the antipodes, these cathedrals and abbeys with their multi-century histories are awesome. As structures, their construction defies the imagination. Architecturally, they are masterpieces. The music they create is superb, while the stained-glass windows, statues and frescoes re-telling the biblical sacred history are artistic wonders.

At the end of the day, however, they are testimonies to the significance of institutional Christianity in the past era of Christendom, in which the spoils of power and wealth were shared between church and state, amid great violence which often enslaved and impoverished the masses.

At the same time it cannot be denied that in post-Feudal days, institutional Christianity, arguably influenced by the Enlightenment, was the crucible from which many social welfare initiatives were born. Moreover, these structures still radiate spiritual influence, inspiring countless devotees to compassionate service, as a visit to Assisi reminds us. To this day these grand places of worship provide an ambience for the remaining faithful to celebrate rituals in settings which point to the transcendent.

However, even if one were to approach these amazing sites as a pilgrim seeking the mystical and magical among the medieval, only intellectual dishonesty would deny that, in the twenty-first century, they are essentially museums and mausoleums.

As we moved from sanctuary to sanctuary, there were reminders of martyrs who witnessed to costly discipleship, sometimes in spite of the established church, though such stories often went un-mentioned by our guides. For instance, the official tour of Westminster Abbey made no mention of the ten twentieth-century martyrs (including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Father Maximilian Kolbe and Martin

Luther King) represented in a row of stone busts above the entrance to the Abbey. While in Florence, the story of Girolamo Savanorola, a Dominican Monk executed in that city in 1498, went unnoticed. Savanorola was put to death after condemning the corrupt excesses of the Medicis and the incumbents of the Vatican. One exception was in very secular Prague where the monument to Jan Hus, burned to death for heresy, stands prominently in the town square, perhaps more as a testimony to Czech nationalism than faith.

In my heart of hearts the question was never far away: what would the Nazarene think of all this? Though, as a twenty-first century tourist, I observed all this as a theologically-trained tourist, schooled by the social sciences to see religious phenomena as social constructs.

Two conclusions are unavoidable: Without doubt, European civilisation is now thoroughly secular, though that doesn't mean that religion or spirituality are dead. The property wealth of Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism and Lutheranism are sure indicators that institutional religion is far from dead.

A story from my Protestant youth came to mind. As the wealth of the New World of the Americas was confiscated in the sixteenth century and brought back to Europe, indeed, much to the coffers of Cardinals, Archbishops and the Pope himself, one churchman was heard to say to another (recalling a story in the Book of Acts): 'No longer need St Peter say, 'silver and gold have I none' to which the other replied, 'yes but no longer can he say 'in the name of Jesus rise up and walk' '. Perhaps that story is apocryphal, though as we wandered around Vatican City and observed the homeless huddled behind its colonnades this yarn certainly had the ring of truth. It poses the conclusion our travels provoked: too often temporal power has been traded for spiritual integrity?

It so happens that our journey coincided with significant events for establishment Christianity: the search for a new Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope Benedict's convening of a Synod of Bishops. The Synod was to debate how to counter rising secularism on the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, whose conclusions Rome now seemingly eschews. During October, the Synod has heard the call of the Pontiff for a 'new evangelisation', while returning Catholicism to Roman orthodoxy. Europe is a special concern of this German Pope for, across Europe, Rome is fast losing adherents and many priests are joining the rebellious laity disenchanted with the hierarchy. This

concern was clearly flagged by Cardinal Ratzinger when he became Pope, taking to himself the name 'Benedict', the saint who led the evangelisation of Europe in the first millennium of the Christian era.

Incidentally, on our return from Europe we were fascinated to see two excellent Compass reports on ABC television (October 7 and 14) which documented the struggle going on within Catholicism in Europe and the connections between the Vatican and regressive, even fascist, groups like Opus Dei and the Legion of Christ.

At the end of our tour, in a Bolognan bookshop, I stumbled across a copy of the just released title by Matthew Fox, *The Pope's War: why Ratzinger's Secret Crusade has imperilled the Church and how it can be saved*. (Fox was one of the many casualties during Ratzinger's period as Prefect for the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith). Meanwhile, at Gatwick, I read a newspaper with an article headed 'Bishops to counter rising secularism' outlining the forthcoming Vatican Synod.

It concluded how the present Pope, as a young theologian, was an adviser to the Vatican Council convened by Pope John XXIII. The journalist quoted the young Ratzinger from those promising days: 'Faith has to come out of its cage, it has to face the present with a new language, a new opening'. The Report went on to say, 'But then came 1968 – a traumatic year for Ratzinger when students at his faculty interrupted professors and mocked dogma in the name of revolution'.

Actually, when we visited Regensburg in Bavaria, I had been reminded of how, in his autobiography, Hans Küng (now disbarred as a Catholic theologian by the Roman Curia) recalls theologian Ratzinger's flight from the ecumenical and open, theological faculty of Tubingen, where both Küng and Ratzinger worked. Professor Ratzinger retreated to the safety of a Catholic University in Regensburg, where he began his rise in the hierarchy, becoming by 1981 a Cardinal in the Curia where under Pope John Paul II he began to dismantle the work of the second Vatican Council.

Küng's account suggests that Ratzinger took fright at the challenges of the 1968 worldwide student unrest, which demanded debate of dominant orthodoxies and liberation from an authoritarian culture. Ratzinger himself reflected later on his flight from the 1968 ethos: 'Everything falls apart if there is no truth' (*Milestones*, p.153 www.ratzingerfanclub.com/biography.html). And he has seemingly been imposing his version of 'Truth' ever since!

All this became vivid to me as we made our way across Europe. These museums and mausoleums could be seen as signs of institutional Christianity, withdrawn into itself, in flight from liberal democracy and post-modernity, afraid to open its windows as John XXIII had prayed.

This personal analysis might sound overly cynical. It is not. Rather it backgrounds questions many of us who have grown up in one Christian church or another are asking: to what extent can a spirituality relevant to our global future be shaped *within* traditional religious institutions? That is, to use the time honoured imagery of the church likened to a ship: to what extent can we stay on board and rock the boat (i.e. honestly address these questions) or will we only be moving deck chairs on a sinking vessel? Is it inevitable that those who seek a spirituality, informed by the Jesus way, but stripped of unbelievable dogma, must either jump ship or risk being pushed overboard?

Post Script:

A reader might ask why I, as a person of Protestant heritage, should focus so much on the future of Roman Catholicism?

There are many valid responses to such a question. One simple answer is that what happens in the Roman Catholic community has clear impacts on those who are non-Catholics in our global and ecumenical society, both within and without institutional religion. Personally, I am drawn to this debate because Catholic spirituality, and the consequences of the second Vatican Council, have influenced my own life profoundly. On a wider stage, the drama now being played out under the papacy of the present Bishop of Rome has a similar character to the tensions in monotheistic religions of many brands – tensions about putting new wine in old wineskins, tensions between hierarchical authority and communal authenticity, tensions between an orthodoxy forged in a past era (for some, Christendom) and one that recognises that that era has passed.

And finally, is this a futile struggle, even an indulgence, when the urgent challenge is to translate compassion into local and global acts for peace, social justice and environmental sustainability? Is it better to *let the dead bury the dead*?

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Debunking four myths about John Paul I

John Allen

National Catholic Reporter Online

November 09, 2012



October 17 marked the 100th anniversary of the birth of Albino Luciani, the man who would become John Paul I, the ‘Smiling Pope’ of just 33 days in 1978. On the day of the anniversary, an official *positio*, or ‘position paper’, was filed in the Vatican to support his sainthood cause, writes John Allen in *NCR Online*.

John Paul I’s 33-day papacy was the 10th shortest of all time, and the briefest since Leo XI’s in the early 17th century. Yet the ferment shows he only needed a month to leave a deep mark on the Catholic imagination.

In part, that’s because he seemed exactly what most Catholics pray their leaders will be: warm, compassionate, genuinely happy to be with ordinary people, a man of obvious faith who didn’t wear his piety on his sleeve or take himself too seriously.

He pioneered the simplification of the papacy by dropping the royal ‘we’, declining coronation with the papal tiara and discontinuing use of the *sedes gestatoria*, or portable throne.

In part, too, fascination with John Paul I endures because he’s the great counter-factual of recent Catholic history: ‘What might have been had he lived?’ His papacy is for Catholics what the Kennedy administration has always been for Americans, a sort of Rorschach test allowing people to project their own hopes and dreams.

One value of the events marking the centenary, therefore, is that they can help recover the ‘real’ John Paul I, as opposed to misconceptions and hypothetical reconstructions that have flowered over the last 35 years.

In particular, the remembrances we’ve heard during the last month seem to debunk four persistent myths:

- The ‘smiling pope’ was good-hearted but weak, out of his depth in the Machiavellian environment of the Vatican.
- John Paul I was a closet radical who would have taken the church in a dramatically different direction than the two popes who followed him.
- John Paul I did not die of natural causes, but rather fell victim to a complex assassination plot.
- Although a breath of fresh air after the dour final years of Pope Paul VI, John Paul I’s reign was too short to have anything substantive to offer the church of the 21st century, especially with regard to its top internal priority, new evangelisation.

Full story available from Editor, *ARCvoice*

Comment on-line from ‘archhubby’

John Allen remains an apologist for the curia – I remain unconvinced on his arguments around the death of JP1 and wonder why he supports the official line that JP1 suffered a natural if premature death. Does the Vatican routinely keep a portable embalming machine in the room next to the pope’s bedroom as standard practice? Why the haste to embalm the body when most people in Rome didn’t even know the pope had died? John XXIII and Paul VI were elderly men with terminal conditions – their deaths were not unexpected. When a younger pope after only 33 days dies, surely an autopsy would dispel any suspicion that would naturally arise but the Vatican refused to allow an autopsy? The group that in the conclave supported the future JP2, including Opus Dei, was able to reassert itself after the death of JP1 to re-position their candidate. The pieces of the puzzle fit together too neatly to be coincidental. If JP1 is canonized at some later time, it might not be as a ‘confessor’ but as a ‘martyr’.

A Church in Crisis?

Extract from
The Priest Factory
1958-1962 and Beyond (2003)

Chris Geraghty

"A MOST SPLENDIFEROUS CRASH"

The highly-developed clerical system, which had been enshrined at Manly, had eventually collapsed, as it had done in Ireland, in France and North America. It had come down with a splendiferous crash, and the clergy were stunned. The Church had been ambushed by forces of enlightenment and the foot soldiers had suddenly dispersed. The troops had disappeared into the bushes.

From Rome to Woolloomooloo they had been shouting from pulpits about the evils of birth control, but no one was listening. Good people, rattling with the pill, had gone about their business, while the clergy grew older, greyer, and more bewildered. What had happened? Everything had been going splendidly one minute, then when they looked around, vocations had evaporated, churches were emptying, people were taking no notice. The old world was collapsing.

The authorities at Manly would have a lot to answer for. They had been responsible for the education and formation of the clergy of Sydney and its neighbouring dioceses. They had let us down. They had been too complacent, too dull, too isolated. They had allowed the spiritual formation of their keen recruits to wilt in the enclosure of an arid compound. Dreams, visions, the landscape of the Gospel message had been entrusted to the control of an octogenarian hermit, and when he had fallen sick, he had been replaced after many months, by a steely regulator. I imagine they thought there was no need of real spiritual development because we were operating on automatic, slot machine grace.

The moral theology we had been taught was narrow and as tricky as a clerical gangster. It had been based on the Ten Commandments rather than the Beatitudes, on neat distinctions, escape clauses, on Jesuitical niceties. We had been taught to dance and weave, to throw dummy passes and to put the ball into the second row. We laboured through acres of lectures on the sixth commandment, that is on adultery, fornication, bestiality and masturbation. We dealt at length with the commandments of the church, with little attention to international justice, to the principles of fairness and equality, to the overriding values of truth and love. We were not prepared to support and advise those in the modern world who were searching for peace, or justice,

for nuclear disarmament, or to preserve the environment. Our professors had not sought to train us to think creatively about moral and ethical issues. That was not necessary. Just toe the party line on sex, the pill, abortions and mortal sin. We were not going to educate the conscience of the community or establish Christian values in society. We had been programmed as functionaries of an ecclesiastical institution, just as they had been before us. The system had let them down too.

Our spiritual life had been programmed by our guardians to focus on pious devotions, devotion to our Lady, to the Sacred Heart or the Blessed Sacrament, for example, on repetition of ritual prayers such as the rosary or litanies, on routine liturgical actions (masses, confession, the recitation of the Breviary), and on a constellation of virtues – chastity, self-denial, perseverance, obedience, unquestioning fidelity and blind loyalty. We were not being trained to be religious leaders, only institutional functionaries. There had been no call for the development of the qualities of wisdom, for example. The solution to all problems was to be found in the fervent recital of prayer formulas or in the solemn pronouncements of popes. We were not introduced by any master into the art of prayer, or meditation, or into the difficult skill of thinking. These were not gifts which were necessary to the world in which we would be working. The mysterious power of silence had been reduced by the authorities to a means of control. Silence had been imposed on others by rule, as a punishment, or as a form of discipline, so as to enable young men to accustom themselves to loneliness, to cope without companionship. We had not been invited to develop a spirit of interior silence; the ability to relax or a sense of humour. Initiative, powerful silence, wisdom and an ability to identify bullshit, were not the kind of characteristics the institution of the 50s and 60s wanted to foster in its clerics.

Those responsible for introducing us to the mysteries of dogmatic theology would have us believe that the whole bouquet of supernatural truths which they explored and 'explained' could find the seeds which gave them life in the pages of the New Testament, that any doctoral development had ceased by the end of the middle ages. They had ignored the scholars of the twentieth century. They had spoken and thought as though nothing was happening elsewhere in the world. We knew practically nothing of Rahner, of Congar, de Lubac, Barth, Bultmann, Fuchs or Ebeling, of Bernard Haring or Teilhard de Chardin.

The theological world had been in turmoil, but at Manly we had been at peace. Worlds had been at war while we lived in unruffled complacency. We had been invited to believe that the structure and gears of the institution and all its dogmas and devotions could be traced back to the preaching of the apostles, and ultimately to the recorded words of Jesus. □

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