



A Continuing Pilgrimage

60 YEARS SINCE THE OPENING OF VATICAN II

The Second Vatican Council began in Rome on 11 October 1962. Pope John XXIII was elected on 28 October 1958, just three months after that he announced his plans for an ecumenical council. In Pope John's words, the cardinals who first heard his announcement responded with a 'devout and impressive silence'.

A NEW PENTECOST

Pope John continued to proclaim his vision for a council that would be a way of spiritual renewal, a 'new Pentecost' that would reinvigorate the Church for its mission in the world. In his opening address on 11 October he chided the "prophets of doom", people who "behave as if they had learned nothing from history.... and as if in the time of the preceding ecumenical Councils everything represented a complete triumph for Christian ideas and for Christian life and for rightful religious liberty". "Nowadays", the Pope said:

The Spouse of Christ prefers to use the medicine of mercy rather than severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations ... (We must, therefore) earnestly and fearlessly ... dedicate ourselves to the work our age demands of us.

COUNCIL FOR A NEW TIME

The first "pastoral" Ecumenical Council in the history of the Church began with a new style of Council for a new time. The Council documents, both in content and style, reflected this pastoral intent, this new mood.

Words and concepts such as "people of God", "pilgrim Church", "the universal call to holiness", "collegiality", "co-responsibility" and "communion", introduced fresh ways of understanding what it means to be Church

The privilege and responsibility of all the baptised was beginning to re-emerge as the primary determinant of the Church and the way it would function in the coming generations.

DRAMATIC CHANGES

At a Catalyst for Renewal seminar to mark the 40th anniversary of Vatican II, Fr Michael Whelan observed:

The Second Vatican Council marked the end of a certain way of being Church – an imperial form that had emerged in the fourth and fifth centuries. This form of Church had been consolidated through subsequent centuries by such events as the Gregorian Reform of the 11th century, the Council of Trent of the 16th century and the Counter Reformation that was set in train there, and the First Vatican Council of the 19th century and the definition of papal infallibility that

emerged there.

The Catholic Church entering the middle of the 20th century was more of a sanctuary from the world than a sign in it. John XXIII – and many others – saw that this situation could not continue.

THE PILGRIM CHURCH

Lumen Gentium, (Light of Christ) the document on the Church used a variety of biblical images to describe the mystery of the Church such as a sheepfold, a farm, a field, God's temple, the spouse of Christ and the Body of Christ. It states that the Church is not the kingdom of God. It is only *the seed and the beginning of that kingdom* n 5.

Chapter 7 of *Lumen Gentium* is titled The Pilgrim Church. Richard Lennan, in *Tilling the Church Theology for an Unfinished Project* writes:

"Pilgrim" makes plain that the church is not yet complete, that it is inseparable from God's grace in history, and that the Spirit of Christ draws the ecclesial community towards the realisation of all that God promises. Reinforcing the dynamism inherent in "pilgrim", Vatican II makes explicit the association between the church's pilgrimage and the Holy Spirit's presence in the Church. P 101

THE DYNAMICS OF PILGRIMAGE

Richard Lennan offers five elements of pilgrimage that can help us to appreciate what the dynamics of pilgrimage might ask of us as Church, as we journey towards the fulness of God's reign.

First, pilgrims share a goal that unites them, but does not eliminate their individuality. As pilgrims support and encourage each other sharing their food, drink and information, the communal nature of pilgrimage emerges and the pilgrims become a body in which what binds members together is more significant than any distinction between them.

Second, pilgrims as they travel must be willing to respond to the unexpected, since they can neither mandate who will be their fellow pilgrims nor determine nor determine in advance what will occur on their journey.

Third, the unpredictable incidents that transpire during a pilgrimage, some of which may be discouraging, make urgent the need to clarify, and appropriate ever anew the reason for undertaking the pilgrimage. The motivation of pilgrims must be sufficient not only to initiate movement, but to sustain hope and nurture energy in the face of weariness, physical discomfort, and tedium that are inevitable during the journey.

Fourth, since pilgrimage involves a journey not merely a destination, the participants in a fruitful pilgrimage will engage with the world around them, convinced that encounters along the way contribute to both how and whether they will reach their goal.

Fifth, and perhaps most importantly, pilgrimage brings about changes in participants, changes that are intimately connected to the four previous points. Pilgrims, then, must be open to change if they are to access the full richness of pilgrimage.

Taken as a single, yet multidimensional process, pilgrimage exposes its participants to what they could not have anticipated at the beginning of their time on the road. P104-105

IT TAKES 100 YEARS

In an address in 2018, Pope Francis said, "I know that the Lord wants the Council to make headway in the Church. Historians tell us that it takes 100 years for a Council to be applied. We are halfway there."

"What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word 'synod'. Journeying together – laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome – is an easy concept to put into words, but not easy to put into practice."

We are called to be Church together, on the way, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."



Pope Francis on 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops 2015

THE SHIFTS OF VATICAN II

from commands to invitations,
from laws to ideals,
from threats to persuasion,
from coercion to conscience

from monologue to dialogue,
from ruling to serving,
from withdrawn to integrated,
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
from exclusion to inclusion

from hostility to friendship, from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from defined to open-ended

from hostility to friendship,
from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from defined to open-ended

from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge