



AN ECCLESIOLOGY FOR A WORLD CHURCH

THE TEACHING OF VATICAN II AND ITS RECEPTION



SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1962-1965) AND ECCLESIAL IDENTITY

- Church “ad intra”
 - Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)
 - Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)
 - Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)
 - Eastern Catholic Churches; Laity; Religious Life; Life and Ministry of Priests; Pastoral Office of Bishops
- Church “ad extra”
 - Decree on Religious Liberty (Dignitatis Humanae)
 - Decree on Mission (Ad Gentes)
 - Decree on Ecumenism (Unitatis redintegratio)
 - Decree on Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate)

DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH (LUMEN GENTIUM)

- Mystery of Communion (LG I)
 - “like a sacrament of unity that God desires with whole human community” (LG 1)
 - God’s plan of salvation – goal of participation in the life of the Triune God
 - Many biblical images:
 - Sheepfold, flock, field, vineyard, building, household of God, temple, bride, spouse of the Lamb, heavenly Jerusalem (LG 6)
 - Body of Christ (LG 7)
 - “first budding forth of the kingdom of God” (LG 5)
- People of God (LG II)
 - “in need of purification ... penance, and renewal” (LG 8)
 - “new” people of God; in new covenant
 - Priestly people (priest, prophet, king); 1 Pet 2:9; sharing in priesthood of Christ (LG 9-12)
 - equal dignity of all members
 - “pilgrim church” – a human community moving through history towards its eschatological fulfilment
 - Relatio: “the presentation on ‘People of God’ pertains to the very mystery of the church considered in itself”

INTERNATIONAL
THEOLOGICAL
COMMISSION
“SELECT
THEMES OF
ECCLESIOLOGY
” (1984)

- The council gave “pride of place” to image of church as people of God
- “the expression ‘people of God has come to stand for the ecclesiology of the council”
- Has the advantage ”that it could better render that sacramental reality that all the baptized share in common, both as a dignity in the church and a responsibility on the world. At the same time, it could underline the communitarian dimension of the church – as many of the fathers wanted”

EXTRAORDINARY SYNOD OF BISHOPS (1985)

- Commemorates 20th anniversary of Vatican II
- Warns against “ideological and false notions” applied to the notion of church as “people”; neglect of its mysterious, sacramental dimension
- Key claim: “The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the council’s documents.”
- Mentions “people of God” once, as one among many other biblical images
- 1984 CDF Warning against Liberation Theology: the notion of “people of God” tainted by the classicism of Marxist social theory

RATZINGER REPORT (1986)

- “the Church is composed of men who organize her external visage. But behind this, the fundamental structures are willed by God himself, and therefore they are inviolable. Behind the human exterior stands the mystery of a more than human reality, in which reformers, sociologists, organizers have no authority whatsoever.”
- “Behind the concept of church as people of God, which has been so exclusively thrust into the foreground today, hide influences that revert to the Old Testament, and perhaps also to political, partisan and collectivist influences.”

REACTIONS

- Gustav Thils: concerned that R. would juxtapose a human “façade” with a supposed true identity of the church as as “mystical, supernatural, supra-human essence;” betrays LG’s teaching that the church is one complex divine-human reality, a visible assembly and spiritual communion; an earthly community with heavenly gifts
- Jose Comblin, *People of God* (2002)
 - Sees a systematic resistance to Vatican II’s empowering ecclesiology; an effort to protect highly centralized structure of clerical power
 - A refusal to take seriously the humanity of the church; to acknowledge the agency of the baptized and their mission in the world

CHURCH-WORLD RELATIONSHIP

- Ratzinger's outlook marked by Augustinian view: insists on an essential difference between church and world; calls for a period of "restoration"
- "It is not Christians who oppose the world, but rather the world that opposes itself to them when the truth about God, about Christ and about man [*sic*] is proclaimed. The world waxes indignant when sin and grace are called by their names. After the phase of indiscriminate "openness" it is time for Christians to reacquire the consciousness of belonging to a minority and of often being in opposition to what is obvious, plausible, and natural for that mentality which the New Testament calls – and certainly not in a positive sense – the "spirit of the world." It is time to find again the courage of non-conformism, the capacity to oppose many of the trends of the surrounding culture, renouncing a certain euphoric post-conciliar solidarity." (Ratzinger Report, 36-37).

VATICAN II – LAW OF EVANGELIZATION (A TWO – WAY STREET)

- Just as it is in the world's interest to acknowledge the Church as an historical reality, and to recognize her good influence, so the Church herself knows how richly she has profited by the history and development of humanity. The experience of past ages, the progress of the sciences, and the treasures hidden in the various forms of human culture, by all of which the nature of man himself is more clearly revealed and new roads to truth are opened, these profit the Church, too. For, from the beginning of her history she has learned to express the message of Christ with the help of the ideas and terminology of various philosophers, and and has tried to clarify it with their wisdom, too. Her purpose has been to adapt the Gospel to the grasp of all as well as to the needs of the learned, insofar as such was appropriate. Indeed this accommodated preaching of the revealed word ought to remain **the law of all evangelization**. For thus the ability to express Christ's message in its own way is developed in each nation, and at the same time there is fostered a living exchange between the Church and the diverse cultures of people. (Gaudium et Spes, 44)

IMPLICATIONS OF “THE LAW OF EVANGELIZATION”

- In the Incarnation, God stepped into human history; into the concrete particularity of a given time and culture
- The task of proclaiming the gospel requires a continual effort of “translation” and adaptation
- The people best equipped to make those adaptations are those living in context (Constitution on Liturgy)
- God goes before us into every culture; our task is to discern there the presence and action of God’s Spirit
- There are insights in every culture and language that can help us to penetrate more deeply into the meaning of the Gospel (e.g.: FABC: through interfaith dialogue, we come to know Christ more deeply)

THE LATIN AMERICAN RECEPTION OF VATICAN II

- CELAM, Medellin (1968); Preferential option for the poor - solidarity; pastoral mission of “educating the conscience of believers”
- Bishops of Argentina (San Miguel, 1969)
 - “the church must see itself from the standpoint of the people ... in terms of its insertion as people of God, in the Argentine people. This would lead to ... the retrieval of Christian values that are in the people ... seeing from the standpoint of the people and adopting a people-centered approach to pastoral action.”
 - Sees the people as agents of their own liberation: “for inasmuch as the people are the subject and agent of history, which is linked with salvation history, the signs of the times become present and decipherable in the events that are proper to the people or that affect them?”
- CELAM, Puebla (1979)
 - Church is “a school that educates human beings capable of making history, who will join Christ in effectively moving the history of our peoples toward the kingdom”

POPE FRANCIS, *THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL* (2013)

- “The people of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture” (EG, 115)
- “It is imperative to evangelize cultures in order to inculturate the gospel.” (EG 69)
- The Argentinian Theology of the People” – Lucio Gera: “did not seek to change social and political structures in themselves, but to promote the discernment of the mission and of the ecclesial institution based on the explicit option for the poor and their culture.”
- The social location of the church is *in* the world; *in* the culture; *in solidarity* with the peoples

POPE FRANCIS, *REJOICE AND BE GLAD: ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS* (2018)

- In salvation history, the Lord saved a people. We are never completely ourselves unless we belong to a people. That is why no one is saved alone, as an isolated individual. Rather, God draws us to himself, taking into account the complex fabric of interpersonal relationships present in a human community. God wanted to enter into the life and history of a people. (RBG 6)
- All the baptized called to holiness in the ordinary; in every culture, they become a living witness to, and agent of the loving concern of God for all