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Editorial

After 50 Years: Being a Church in the World

Continuing the reflections on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, in this issue we deal with the two constitutions on the Church, namely, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*.

In a certain sense *Lumen Gentium* can be said to be the most important achievement of Vatican II. All the other documents, in one or another, deal with the Church and are related to this document. It may be also interesting to note that of all the documents of Vatican II, none underwent more dramatic revision from the first draft to the finally approved text than *Lumen Gentium*. It went through three major drafts, corresponding to the first three sessions of the Council. These drafts show a major development in the self-understanding of the Church. It may be interesting to note how Cardinal Montini of Milan (later Pope Paul VI), speaking to the people of his diocese, presented the dramatic shift after the first session, in the vision of the Church:

Yesterday the theme of the Church seemed to be confined to the power of the Pope. Today it is extended to the episcopate, religious, the laity and the whole body of the Church. Yesterday we spoke of the rights of the Church by transferring constitutive elements of civil society to the definition of the Church as a perfect society. Today we have discovered other realities in the Church — the charisms of grace and holiness for example — which cannot be defined by purely juridical ideas. Yesterday we were above all interested in the external history of the Church. Today we are equally concerned with its inner life brought to life by the presence of Christ in it.¹

¹ As given in Maureen Sullivan, *The Road to Vatican II: Key Changes in Theology*, New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2007, 89-90; Cfr. *L'Osservatore Romano*, December 10-11, 1962, 6.

Though Cardinal Montini said this much before the final text of *Lumen Gentium* was drafted and promulgated, his words reflect the real spirit of the document.

Gaudium et Spes — the only document for which the Council Fathers had no prior preparation — is often presented as the most celebrated document of Vatican II. Whereas *Lumen Gentium* can be said to be the Church's attempt to understand itself in its various internal relationships and dynamics, *Gaudium et Spes* can be understood as the Church's attempt to understand itself particularly in relation to the world, especially in reference to politics, economics, justice, poverty, science and technology and culture. Both are complementary, since only with a clear sense of self-identity can one understand one's relationships and their implications. Instead of confronting and challenging the world, the Church sincerely seeks to encounter the world through a creative and optimistic dialogue. It marks a new era in the Church's relationship with the world.

Articles in this issue deal with the teaching of these two documents, its contemporary relevance and the challenges that the Church faces today. Nathaniel Cruz, in his article, "A Critical Appraisal of Actualizing the Vision of *Lumen Gentium*," discusses the implications of the understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ and the Church as 'communion'. Well aware of the need of the "correct interpretation" or "proper hermeneutics" of the Council, he highlights some possible perplexities in understanding the Church. The Church is a divine-human mystery as Christ is. Just as an over-emphasis on one of the natures of Christ would lead to an erroneous understanding of Christ, an over-emphasis on any of the divine-human dimensions would give rise to imbalances. Cruz also points out that whereas in the past the understanding of the Church's mission was linked to the activity of conserving those who belonged to her, LG highlights the Church's universal mission, and calls for an integration of the concept of the Church as communion with those of the Church as People of God, as Sacrament and as Body of Christ.

"The Impact of Vatican II on the Identity of the Church in Africa: The African Synods in Comparative Perspective" by Tim Carey shows how Vatican II might be understood as a major motivating factor for the African synods, as it engaged the broad concept of the Catholic church as community as well as man's relationship to the overarching society both locally and globally. He says that The

African synods (1994 and 2009) highlighted some of the basic issues facing the mission and nature of the Catholic church in Africa. While the first synod characterized the ministry of the African church through the model of 'family in God' the second synod was charged with tackling such systematic issues as reconciliation, peace, and justice in light of regional conflicts confronting many countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa. By considering the influence of Vatican II on the African Synods, Carey reflects on the "lasting identity of the church in Africa."

Caroline N. Mbonu opines that the teachings of Vatican II are yet to find their way to the grassroots in many areas of the Nigerian church and that even the model of church as family adopted by the 1994 African synod remains largely at the level of the theological discourse. In her article, "Being a Church in a Secularised World: You are the Salt of the Earth... You are the Light of the World (Matthew 5:13-16)," based on a review of the secular environment and an exegetical study of Mt 5:13-16, she emphasises that how the Nigerian Church can be salt to the earth and light to a world in a country that is increasingly becoming secular in religious expressions takes on an urgent significance for the Church.

Reflecting on *Gaudium et Spes*, Raphael Gallagher demonstrates "The Art of Being Pastoral as a Moral Theologian." Gallagher points out that though *Optatam totius* 16 is important in considering moral theology 'in the light of the Second Vatican Council', *Gaudium et spes* provides a richer textual source to understand the decisive break with the manual tradition. Here it is implied that we should conceive moral theology more in terms of the practical theology of the Christian life. He addresses the methodological issue of how one moves from a text like *Gaudium et spes* to a theological consideration of moral problems that arise in different social and economic contexts. According to him, the art of being pastoral in moral theology is to understand, "first, the condition of the human person in whatever context she finds herself and lead her gently to the fuller truth which is offered in Christ." According to Gallagher, the core concern of *Gaudium et spes* is a consideration of the human person, analysed from a particular perspective in different historical circumstances in an ecclesiological framework that ultimately leads to the Person of Christ as the Word and Light for humanity.

Chady Rahme examines the human ability to symbolize, that is, to link the elements of this world to the spiritual dimension of life and argues that symbols could lead to a rediscovery of a very important dimension of evangelization. His "Rediscovering Symbolism in Asian and Christian Culture" includes an explanation on how a symbol is a metaphysical operator, motivating the human mind to seek the absolute through the beautiful and thus leading reason to rediscover the divine. According to him, rediscovering the symbolic dimension becomes a way of re-evangelization. As many religions make use of symbols, this could facilitate dialogue among them and shows that a rediscovery of symbols in Christian and Asian cultures could be the key to rediscover the link between the sensible entities in this world and the entities that are beyond the senses.

Chet Mitchell Jechura's "Normative Anthropology after *Gaudium et Spes*: Insight for a Liberative Ethic" presents the lasting impact made by the Second Vatican Council on the development of moral theology. He says that the shift from the rigidity of the moral manuals to an emphasis on conscience formation and moral discernment in light of dynamic human experience contributed to the privileging of theological anthropology and reflection on the body in theological ethics. Beginning with how *Gaudium et Spes* signalled toward the necessity of the church developing a liberative ethic, he proceeds to proposing insights for generating a liberative ethic that is anthropologically informed.

Although *Gaudium et Spes* tells us to read the signs of the times, it does not show how to read these signs, says Delfo Canceran in his "Reading the Signs of the Times." The signs that we have to decipher are not simple but complex and hence we need a reading strategy in dealing with these signs. Canceran believes that we need the mediation of the social sciences in reading the signs of the times and from that starting point, we can proceed to the theological interpretation of these signs. That is, we need the dialectical relationship of the social and theological sciences in interpreting the signs of the times. Canceran attempts to supply the lacuna left open by the document so that the readers are guided or informed by these reading strategies and proposes various ways in reading the signs. However, he adds that in the end the people are responsible for reading these signs. According to him, "reading the signs of the times is a participative endeavour of the people of God in their search for truth in a democratic space of the (local) churches."

In his article "Being a Church in a Secularized World — Taking off from Vatican II," Theodore Mascarenhas analyses the response of the Church to secularization. He points out that the Second Vatican Council announced to the world an whole-hearted involvement of the Church in the affairs of the World. Mascarenhas points out the difficulties in the current situation and the situation of a believer and that of a Catholic in today's world and the responses that the believers try to provide today. He concludes by pointing out that the Catholic church believes that there is no conflict between faith and reason and both should work together for the betterment of man and of the world.

"Philippine Catholicism and Secularization: Face-off, Denial or Dialogue?," by Rhoderick John S. Abellanosa deals with the current situation of the Catholic Church in the Philippines vis-à-vis the country's movement toward secularization and explores how the Catholic Church in the Philippines, mainly represented by its hierarchy, has responded to this challenge in three ways: face-off, denial and dialogue. He argues that if the Church should be true to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, it must neither confront nor deny its interlocutors in the secular sphere but rather dialogue in goodwill the non-Catholic sectors in the Philippine society. He also calls the Church to engage in self-assessment and underscores the need of ongoing reform. Taking others into trust, the Church should make itself understandable to them.

Following the articles based on Vatican II, we have three articles on other themes. Referring to Gavin D'Costa's statement that Dupius was a neo-Rahnerian, Gerald O'Collins explores the question, "Was Jacques Dupuis a Neo-Rahnerian?" O'Collins describes the great contributions of Dupius, especially to the theology of religions, and shows similarities and differences between Dupius and Rahner. He highlights particularly four important points where Dupius differs from Rahner. After a careful examination of Dupuis' work on the theology of religions, O'Collins points out that "while developing some views that find similar counterparts in Rahner's writing, he also differs from him in significant ways" and holds that "we do not throw light on Dupuis' theology by labelling him a "Rahnerian" or a "neo-Rahnerian."

Stephanie Ann Puen, in her article, "The Church's Ministry in Contemporary Society: Soundings from Henri Nouwen," says that

while the Catholic Church is still considered a credible institution, many of its ministers and church goers may feel that they are not effective at all. She reads so referring to the Church in the Philippines, especially in light of the Church scandals, the recent survey in the Philippines on mass attendance (Social Weather Station - SWS) and the Reproductive Health Bill debate in the Philippines. Many may question the meaning of being a minister in our society and culture today. According to Stephanie Ann Puen, Henri Nouwen's idea of the wounded healer, wherein the Church is able to minister to others by confronting the Church's own woundedness and creating space for the other through hospitality can provide a useful model. Puen underscores that the "Church is always in need of repentance and renewal—she is a wounded Church, and is in a constant state of aggiornamento."

"Faith as dialectical interplay of affection and cognition in Newman and '*Pandama*' (integrative sensing) of Filipino Christians" by Rebecca Cacho proposes a new approach to faith linking the Filipino concept of '*pandama*' with Newman's understanding of faith. Cacho points out that all theological reflections are rooted in a specific time, culture and history of people and hence theologies that fail to recognize people's contexts would never touch their hearts. She says that the Church should consider culture as sacrament of God's ongoing revelation. Cacho shows that Filipinos make sense of the realities of life in general and their experiences in particular through *pandama*, which implies sensing realities by using both our feelings and thoughts together. According to her, a striking difference in Newman's theology of faith and the Neo-scholastic theology is its proclivity towards "feelings" while the latter gives priority to the rational-logical perception of faith.

The dialogue with the "joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted" (GS, 1) is to continue. Learning to dialogue with the world is an ongoing process. Let us hope that the reflections on the Church in this issue will be helpful in this ongoing process of dialogue.

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Editor-in-Chief