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## *Editorial*

### **AFTER 50 YEARS – REFLECTIONS ON VATICAN COUNCIL II**

The Second Vatican Council (11 Oct 1962 – 8 Dec 1965) can be said to be the most significant event in the modern era of the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII often said that it was time to open the windows of the Church to let some fresh air in. In his opening message, the Pope said, "The Church should never depart from the sacred treasure of truth inherited from the Fathers. But at the same time she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and the new forms of life introduced into the modern world." The Council was a moment of grace, a moment of great hope, a moment of renewal, a moment of "aggornamento," not only for the Church, but for the whole world. The Second Vatican Council is often presented as the most important event of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

The new life brought to the Church by the Vatican Council II cannot be questioned, though many may doubt how far the decisions of the Council were implemented. The history of the Church shows that many Councils were not easily accepted. This can be said to be true with regard to the Second Vatican Council as well. Like many other Councils in the past, the Second Vatican Council also has led to doubts, debates, difference of opinions and disagreements. The continuing debates and disagreements need not be taken as negative, but as the sign of the continued work of the Spirit of God who is ever present and ever active in the Church and in the world. Changes do

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<sup>1</sup>In 1962 the *Time* magazine selected John XXIII as the Man of the Year and argued that history would declare the Second Vatican Council as the single most important event of the 20th century.

not unfold always in a harmonious way. Perhaps it is true that we are yet to discern fully the great insights of the Council and implement with fidelity to God and his people the inspiration that the Spirit of God has given. At the close of the Council, many Council Fathers were telling that it would take a long time for the Church to discern and integrate the great contributions of the Council. History cannot be undone. We believe that truth will prevail and the Spirit of God who was at work at the Council guides the Church through the present to the future. As the great Pope John XXIII used to pary, "I've done the best I could in your service this day, Oh Lord. I'm going to bed. It's your Church. Take care of it!"

To commemorate the Golden Jubilee of the Second Vatican Council, under the auspices of *Asian Horizons*, Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram organises a four day international conference, "Revisiting Vatican II: 50 Years of Renewal," from 31 January to 3 February 2013 ([www.vatican2conference.dvk.in](http://www.vatican2conference.dvk.in)). Besides, from 2012 to 2015 *Asian Horizons* dedicates a few issues to discussions on the Second Vatican Council documents. The current issue of *Asian Horizons* focuses mainly on the historical, ecclesial and theological background of the Council and the impact of the Council on the Church, as well as a few relevant questions and challenges.

"How Novel Was Vatican II" by Norman Tanner situates the Second Vatican Council in the tradition of the Councils of the Church. He gives certain very interesting facts and information about the Council and concludes with the question of the possibility of another Ecumenical Council. Francis Thonippara, in his "Historical Necessity of the Second Vatican Council," presents Vatican II as first genuine attempt "to study from the part of the Church on herself in a critical and comprehensive way, first attempt to study her relevance in the world, an attempt to adapt herself to the challenges posed by the modern world," springing from the desire for renewal and the awareness of the need for an attitudinal change towards the world. His article focuses mainly on the immediate background of the Council. Alberto Melloni's "The Second Vatican Council" gives a very interesting and critical account of the history of Vatican II and its inner dynamics. Drawing extensively from a number of scholarly studies on the Council, Melloni describes the different phases in the history of the Council and the different forces at work, and how in spite of the conflicting interests and ideologies, the Council could respond to a great extent to the hopes of the people,

beginning a new era in the Church. The article also gives a very useful list of sources and references on Vatican II.

Roderick O'Brien, in his article, "Journal of a Soul: A Sourcebook of the Second Vatican Council" attempts to understand the great event of the Council in the backdrop of the life and spirituality of the great person behind the Council, Pope John XXIII. "Archbishop Joseph Parecattil in the Second Vatican Council: Envisaging a Pastoral Agenda for the Church in India" by Paul Pulikkan describes the contributions of Archbishop (later cardinal) Joseph Parecattil, "the most important spokesperson of the Syro Malabar Church in the Council" and "one who understood the call of *aggiornamento*". Pulikkan explains how Parecattil, through his interventions, tried to assert the uniqueness and richness of the Church in cultures and traditions outside Europe, so as to make the Church really "catholic".

James F. Keenan argues that to appreciate the achievement of moral theology at Vatican II we have to recognise how moral theologians in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century tried to develop new foundations for moral theology. In his article, "The Achievement of Moral Theology at Vatican II," he describes the contributions of Fritz Tillmann, Odon Lottin and Gérard Gilleman and how Bernard Häring and others continued their legacy. According to Keenan, Häring guided moral theology to its achievements at Vatican II. Keenan points out that the "style" is the most distinctive feature of Vatican II, and this "style" can be said to be the contribution of Häring. Frédéric Trautmann's "The Notion of Charity in Vatican II: Real Consideration, Complicated Integration" shows how "an integration of charity in the work of theologians of the renewal, the experts and the Council Fathers" brought radical changes in moral theology which was rather sin-centred. Trautmann describes the debates over the primacy of charity, the doubts and confusions that it created, but how finally it got accepted by the Council Fathers.

"Pastoral Paradigms that Necessitated a Major Reform by *Presbyterorum Ordinis*" by Cyriac Padapurackal describes the paradigms of priestly ministry - often distorted - that prevailed down through the centuries. He explains how Vatican II succeeded in offering a genuine image of pastoral ministry. "Remodelling Catechesis in Post Vatican II African Church: A Generation Approach" by Daniel Ude Asue re-examines how the faith was passed on before Vatican II, after Vatican II, and at present times with the aim of

renewing it in the spirit of Vatican Council II. He argues that what is passed on and what is not passed on consist in failure of integration of African culture and the gospel. In his article, "Vatican II after 50 Years: The Evangelizing Mission of the Post Vatican II Church" Jean-Marie Hyacinthe Quenum attempts to show how all the people of God, fifty years after Vatican II, are bringing the Gospel message of a brotherly and sisterly community of equals to various sectors of human life through liberation, integral development and commitment to care for the protection of the environment. According to him, the fullness of life for all requires the evangelization of political, economic and cultural areas of human societies. Jojo M. Fung, in his article, "Vatican II as an Ecclesial Pentecost," says that Vatican II was a occasion of grace, but it was only the beginning of an ongoing process. He criticises attempts to go back to the pre-Vatican era, highlights the response of contemporary theologians and puts forward the challenges ahead.

"Reaching the Horizon with an Understanding of *the Idea of Holy* in Illumination of Rudolf Otto" presents Rudolf Otto's attempt to analyse the essence of religion and describe the religious object as the presence of the *Holy*. According to Romero Luciano D'Souza, Otto provides a penetrating analysis of religious experience and a model of comparative religious research, that has stimulated much thought and that will continue to exert great influence throughout the world.

It may be fitting to remember here Ladislav Orsy's invitation in the *Epilogue* of his book, *Receiving the Council*:

Whereas the years from 2012 through 2015 will be the fiftieth anniversaries of the Council, they should be solemnly declared the years of the Council - when the entire people, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' (*LG*, 2, quoting St Augustine), recalls the memory of the 'Sacred Council', studies its determinations, and exposes itself to the transforming light and force of the Spirit - as the Council Fathers did. Over four years again, let the cry *Adsumus*, 'we are present and attentive', resound - not within the walls of St Peter's Basilica but throughout the face of the earth. The Spirit of God will not fail to respond.<sup>2</sup>

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Editor-in-Chief

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<sup>2</sup>Ladislav Orsy, *Receiving the Council*, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009, 153.