

BECOMING THE CHURCH OF VATICAN II

ORMOND RUSH

ACU Short Course: "Towards the 2020 Plenary Council"

THE VISION OF VATICAN II

1. **Pope Francis on Vatican II:** "I have chosen the date of 8 December [as the start of the Holy Year of Mercy] because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelization that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world."

Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus, 11 April, 2015

2. "Today, here in Rome and in all the dioceses of the world, as we pass through the Holy Door, we also want to remember another door, which fifty years ago the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council opened to the world. This anniversary cannot be remembered only for the legacy of the Council's documents, which testify to a great advance in faith. *Before all else, the Council was an encounter. A genuine encounter between the Church and the men and women of our time. An encounter marked by the power of the Spirit, who impelled the Church to emerge from the shoals which for years had kept her self-enclosed so as to set out once again, with enthusiasm, on her missionary journey. It was the resumption of a journey of encountering people where they live: in their cities and homes, in their workplaces.* Wherever there are people, the Church is called to reach out to them and to bring the joy of the Gospel, and the mercy and forgiveness of God. After these decades, we again take up this missionary drive with the same power and enthusiasm. The Jubilee challenges us to this openness, and demands that we not neglect the spirit which emerged from Vatican II, the spirit of the Samaritan, as Blessed Paul VI expressed it at the conclusion of the Council. May our passing through the Holy Door today commit us to making our own the mercy of the Good Samaritan."

Pope Francis, Homily for Opening of the Holy Door, 8 December 2015

3. **Vatican II on Dialogue within the Church:** "[The church's mission] requires us first of all to create in the church itself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, and to acknowledge all legitimate diversity; in this way all who constitute the one people of God will be able to engage in ever more fruitful dialogue, whether they are pastors or other members of the faithful. For the ties which unite the faithful together are stronger than those which separate them: let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything."

Gaudium et Spes, 92

4. **Vatican II as a Change of Ecclesial (and Ministerial) "Style":** "Among the words are brothers/sisters, friendship, cooperation, collaboration, partnership, freedom, dialogue, pilgrim, servant ('king'), development, evolution, charisma, dignity, holiness, conscience, collegiality, people of God, priesthood of all believers. Liberty, equality, and fraternity as well as other formerly unwelcome guests knocked at the door [of Vatican II] and gained

entrance to the feast. A simple pairing of the models implied by this vocabulary with the models it replaced or balanced conveys the import of this [issue of 'style']. It suggests, indeed, that at stake were almost two different visions of Catholicism: from commands to invitations, from laws to ideals, from definition to mystery, from threats to persuasion, from coercion to conscience, from monologue to dialogue, from ruling to serving, from withdrawn to integrated, from vertical to horizontal, from exclusion to inclusion, from hostility to friendship, from rivalry to partnership, from suspicion to trust, from static to ongoing, from passive acceptance to active engagement, from fault-finding to appreciation, from prescriptive to principled, from behaviour modification to inner appropriation."

John O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 306–307

5. **Lumen Gentium 12:** "The holy people of God has a share, too, in the prophetic office of Christ, when it renders him a living witness, especially through a life of faith and charity, and when it offers to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips that honour his name. The universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one, cannot be mistaken in believing. It displays this particular quality through a *supernatural sense of the faith in the whole people (supernaturali sensu fidei totius populi)* when 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful laity', it expresses the consent of all in matters of faith and morals. *Through this sense of the faith* which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the people of God, under the guidance of the sacred magisterium to which it is faithfully obedient, receives no longer the words of human beings but truly the word of God; it adheres indefectibly to 'the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints'; it penetrates more deeply into that same faith through right judgment and applies it more fully to life."
6. **Pope Francis on "the Holy Faithful People of God" and the *Sensus Fidelium*:** The image of the Church I like is that of the holy, faithful people of God. This is the definition I often use, which is the image of *Lumen Gentium*, no. 12. Belonging to a people has a strong theological value... The people themselves are the subject. And the Church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows. *Sentire cum Ecclesia* [to think and to feel with the Church], therefore, is my way of being a part of this people. And all the faithful, considered as a whole, are infallible in matters of beliefs, and the people display this *infallibilitas in credendo*, this infallibility in believing, through a supernatural sense of the faith of all the people walking together. This is what I understand today as the "thinking with the Church" of which St Ignatius speaks. When the dialogue among the people and the bishops and the Pope goes down this road and is genuine, then it is assisted by the Holy Spirit. So this thinking with the Church does not concern theologians only... And, of course, we must be very careful not to think that this *infallibilitas* of all the faithful I am talking about in the light of Vatican II is a form of populism. No, it is the experience of the "holy mother the hierarchical Church", as St Ignatius called it, the Church as the people of God, pastors and people together. The Church is the totality of the people of God.

Pope Francis, *My Door Is Always Open. Interview with Antonio Spadaro*, 49–50.

7. **Pope Francis on the *Sensus Fidelium*:** "In all the baptized, from first to last, the sanctifying power of the Spirit is at work, impelling us to evangelization. The people of God is holy thanks to this anointing, which makes it infallible *in credendo*. This means that it does not err in faith, even though it may not find words to explain that faith. The Spirit guides it in truth and leads it to salvation (*Lumen Gentium*, 12). As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith—*sensus fidei*—which helps them to discern what is truly of God. The presence of the Spirit gives Christians a certain connaturality with divine realities, and a wisdom which enables them to grasp those realities intuitively, even when they lack the wherewithal to give them precise expression."

Evangelii Gaudium, 119

8. **Pope Francis on Trusting the Laity:** "Let us trust in our People, in their memory and in their 'sense of smell', let us trust that the Holy Spirit acts in and with our People and that this Spirit is not merely the 'property' of the ecclesial hierarchy."

Letter of Pope Francis to Cardinal Ouellet, 19 March 2016

9. **Pope Francis on Consulting the Faithful:** "Such was the conviction [regarding the *sensus fidei*] underlying my desire that the people of God should be consulted in the preparation of the two phases of the Synod on the family, as is ordinarily done with each *Lineamenta*. Certainly, a consultation of this sort would never be sufficient to perceive the *sensus fidei*. But how could we speak about the family without engaging families themselves, listening to their joys and their hopes, their sorrows and their anguish? Through the answers given to the two questionnaires sent to the particular Churches, we had the opportunity at least to hear some of those families speak to issues which closely affect them and about which they have much to say."

17 October 2015, Address for 50th Anniversary of Synod of Bishops

A SYNODAL CHURCH

10. **Pope Francis on the equality of the baptised:** "[The church is] the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Temple in which God works, the Temple in which, with the gift of Baptism, each one of us is a living stone. This tells us that no one in the Church is useless... we are all necessary for building this Temple! No one is secondary. No one is the most important person in the Church, we are all equal in God's eyes. Some of you might say 'Listen, Mr Pope, you are not our equal'. Yes, I am like each one of you, we are all equal, we are brothers and sisters!"

L'Osservatore Romano (3 July 2013) 3

11. **Listening to the Holy Spirit:** "Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches."

Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22

12. **Pope Francis on a Listening Church:** "A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening 'is more than simply hearing' (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 171). It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (Rev 2:7)."

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13. **Pope Francis on Ministry as Service and Inverting the Pyramid:** "Synodality is a constitutive element of the Church. In this Church, as in an inverted pyramid, the top is located beneath the base. Consequently, those who exercise authority are called 'ministers', because, in the original meaning of the word, they are the least of all. It is in serving the people of God that each bishop becomes, for that portion of the flock entrusted to him, *vicarius Christi*, the vicar of that Jesus who at the Last Supper bent down to wash the feet of the Apostles. And in a similar perspective, the Successor of Peter is noting else if not the *servus servorum Dei*. Let us never forget this! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross. As the Master tells us: 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave' (Matt 20:25–27). *It shall not be so among you:* in this expression we touch the heart of the mystery of the Church, and we receive the enlightenment necessary to understand our hierarchical service."

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14. **Pope Francis on Synodality at the Local Level:** “In a synodal Church, the Synod of Bishops is only the most evident manifestation of a dynamism of communion which inspires all ecclesial decisions. The first level of the exercise of synodality is had in the particular Churches. After mentioning the noble institution of the *Diocesan Synod*, in which priests and laity are called to cooperate with the bishop for the good of the whole ecclesial community, the Code of Canon Law devotes ample space to what are usually called ‘organs of communion’ in the local Church: the *presbyteral council*, the *college of consultors*, chapters of canons and the *pastoral council*. Only to the extent that these organizations keep connected to the ‘base’ and start from people and their daily problems, can a synodal Church begin to take shape: these means, even when they prove wearisome, must be valued as an opportunity for listening and sharing. The second level is that of Ecclesiastical Provinces and Ecclesiastical Regions, Particular Councils and, in a special way, Conferences of Bishops... The last level is the universal church...”

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15. **Pope Francis on the Petrine Ministry within the Inverted Pyramid:** “I am persuaded that in a synodal Church, greater light can be shed on the exercise of the Petrine primacy. The Pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized, and within the College of Bishops as a Bishop among Bishops, called at the same time — as Successor of Peter — to lead the Church of Rome which presides in charity over all the Churches. While reaffirming the urgent need to think about “a conversion of the papacy” (JPII in *Ut Unum Sint*), I willingly repeat the words of my predecessor Pope John Paul II: ‘As Bishop of Rome I am fully aware [...] that Christ ardently desires the full and visible communion of all those Communities in which, by virtue of God’s faithfulness, his Spirit dwells. I am convinced that I have a particular responsibility in this regard, above all in acknowledging the ecumenical aspirations of the majority of the Christian Communities and in heeding the request made of me to find a way of exercising the primacy which, while in no way renouncing what is essential to its mission, is nonetheless open to a new situation’.”

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16. **Pope Francis on ‘the main game’:** “Our gaze also extends to humanity as a whole. A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Is 11:12) in a world which — while calling for participation, solidarity and transparency in public administration — often consigns the fate of entire peoples to the grasp of small but powerful groups. As a Church which ‘journeys together’ with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of *the function of authority as service* will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.”

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