

A review of the Second Vatican Council in the form of an outline.

By Fr. Bruce Miller, JCL, August 2016 in Argentina; from the work of my mentor Fr. José Marins under whom I studied in 1972, with whom I ministered and travelled during a semester of seminary in 1975 all over Latin America, the Caribbean and the Southwest US. He attended Vatican II as an expert in pastoral theology, and was an architect of the following Conferences of Latin American Bishops: Medellin, Puebla, and Aparecida. He is now 84 years strong. The following is not simply a translation of the talks we are giving from the Spanish and Portuguese, some of which date back to the 70s, since history does not change. I am also bridging a cultural gap between North and South America, the First World and the Third World, so that the material also has meaning in the context of the US church and my parish and diocese.

The council lasted from October 11, 1962 to December 8, 1965 and was held in four separate sessions each fall.

Although Vatican II is the 21st council of the church, it is the first with truly worldwide participation. Bishops came from every country with the exception of Russia and China that were heavily communist and did not allow them to travel. All the previous councils brought bishops that were more or less from the Mediterranean area or Europe.

The USA was numerically well represented. It was easily among the wealthiest. Cardinal Cushing of Boston was known for his generosity to the poorest nations. The American hierarchy unfortunately was not well represented by its capacity to participate in the Latin interventions made by the bishops or to understand the documents and presentations in Latin. Cardinal Spellman of New York offered to bring in translators to the modern languages but that offer was rejected since no one else really had problems. It is said that he left and went back to New York and did not participate for lack of an ability to do so.

Bishop Greco was chairman of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine - CCD in the US. It was a powerful movement. Bishop Greco spoke perfect Italian and Latin. It is said that he was the first bishop ever photographed speaking at an ecumenical council.

He stayed at the Michelangelo Hotel just down the street from the Vatican and was called its Mayor. He communicated with the management and staff for all the Americans staying there. He also said mass at the nearby parish church and most thought he was just another Italian Bishop when he preached. In the afternoons which were free for lunch and a siesta, he had a lady come in to refresh his German.

His two visions for the council were to celebrate the sacraments in English and to propagate his

CCD in the Church around the world as a catechetical program. Recall that in the front of every New American Bible his name appears as the chair of the CCD. He had at his command a very large resource to fulfill his mission.

While he had the great linguistic capacity to follow the proceedings, he did not capture the vision as did the bishops of Europe or Latin America. He had priests of the diocese who were European and those Americans who had been trained in Italy. They may have been up to the task of engaging in the intellectual conversation of the council. He did not bring them with him.

The event

1. A break with the past. From the epoch of Constantine and the clergy-centered church to the People of God.

2. Movement from a medieval model to modern, scientific and even an experimental reality. Change was thematic. The Bible became central over the catechism. There had always been Bible reading in churches and in the classroom. The great stories were always known as well as the story of the salvation of the Jews and Christians, but the Jews were depicted as the killers of Christ.

3. After the Reformation and the beginning of Protestantism, something that Luther never actually intended, there grew up the defensive position of the Counter-reformation. It ended with the Council. The church moved forward without a preoccupation for defense and began a proactive dialogue with other Christians, Jews, Islam and non-believers.

4. Within the whole church there became an awareness of East and West, the two lungs of the church as Pope St John Paul II was to call them. During the council, mass was celebrated daily. Each day in rotation one of the churches was responsible for the celebrations: 26 Eastern churches took their turns and on the 27th day the Latin or Western church took its turn. By far the Latin church was and is the largest numerically, but it was clear the it was one among others as well in the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

5. OTHERS became another theme of the council. The historical Jesus, life of the early church, ministry of St. Paul became the guide that refocused the pastoral interests and social activities of the church giving rise to a commitment to the preferential option for the poor that had always been a charism embraced by some of the saints and great religious orders as found in both the Jewish and Christian scriptures. Now it became a driving force for the whole church.

6. Coupled with the theme of change and focused on others, especially the least ones, the church went where it had not gone before. It became missionary, joining in social justice movements contrary to its previous position of being closely allied with the establishment, the powerful and strong. It set aside its Greco-Roman inheritance in its attitudes and vesture and looked for the sacred in the new cultures it was embracing. What the council had thought and envisioned from the principles down, now from the "lived reality" up came similar conclusions.

6. Liturgy - the way the church believes is the way the church prays and vice-versa - was impacted. The design of churches changed and reflected the desire to form community. Everyone faced everyone because a community of believers was formed with Jesus present in their midst, in the Word proclaimed as much as in the Eucharist celebrated. Now the presider faced the community who concelebrated with him in a certain sense and which he led. Other priests concelebrated, but that notion vacillated as the community's participation in offering the sacrifice was analyzed. "Your sacrifice and mine." "Offer for themselves...."

It was a community sent in mission and Pope Benedict worked to announce not simply end of the mass but the fact that the congregation is sent out in mission made perfectly clear!

7. The bishop or pastor as a monarch died. Sometimes the death was terribly painful.

8. Collegiality and synodality arose. Now consultation became the norm and decisions became the product of deliberation by a group.

9. The church stopped trying to create hospitals, schools and universities, social services, and a multitude of other things in its own perfect society parallel to the world. The church became rather a kind of yeast causing a fermentation in the world to evangelize it. It is in this sense that the church proclaims the Reign of God in the world, assuming the mission of Jesus (Mk 1:15) entrusted to the church to go make disciples to the ends of the world. The Reign of God is not outside but in the world. The church is a community - fermenting change - evangelizing the world: socially, politically, economically - so that the world is being placed in a saving relationship with Christ. This relationship can be but is not necessarily within the church itself. Vat II was clear: those who live gospel values are saved. Where there is justice there is peace and there is Christ recognized or not. On justice there can be built mercy and love. True justice is always principle-based and does not admit relativism. No social program, political party, public institution, "charity" will get "it" right. There are no endorsements because the church is about the Reign of God, a relationship that is always calling for more profound change and a deeper faith in every individual and every grouping thereof.

10. Evidently, this mission cannot be solely in the hands of the clergy!

11. Who are the laity? The least ones. The materially poor. The spiritually poor: sinners. Those found where no one went before. The mission was to them and became from them.

By analogy: if a person is given a fish, there is nutrition for the moment; if taught to fish, there is nutrition for everyday, but nothing else; if a cooperative is formed, then there is a means to exchange the fish for other goods to meet other needs.... Those helped can become helpers and the Reign of God is spread. Change focused on others....

12. The church is no longer a station (some churches were actually designated as such) for the reception of sacramental services but became places of encounter with a community (think St.

Paul being sent to Damascus) so that the encounter with Christ could become yet more profound.

13. The church is no longer the goal, but the goal is the Reign of God that is "at hand".

14. There is more and more profound change and ever deepening faith as the church is no longer a mother who smothers and spoils with social privilege and economic prestige, but challenges and sends forth on treacherous and difficult pilgrimage those transformed for undertaking the work of spreading the justice of the Reign of God, leaving behind in their footsteps peace, mercy and those included, not excluded from this more abundant life!

15. Taking on the mission of Jesus ... required more than safe talk about eternity, purgatory, heaven and hell; the subjects did not lose importance, but they took their place in reference to "the signs of the times" - the application of gospel values to present realities. The Word of God was to be transforming so that hearts were called to change and faith was stirred so that the Reign of God would be made present in the here and now. We are not called to be reasonably happy in the here and now and supremely happy in heaven in such wise that we willingly suffer injustice while awaiting complete justice in the bye and bye. That kind of preaching is oppressive and does not advance the Reign of God. To undertake the responsibility of bringing the mission of Jesus to the ends of the earth is not a patient, long-suffering undertaking filled with rosaries and novenas, extremely good in themselves. Rather those devotions are to move us to undertake transforming action in every aspect of our lives, economic, political, social, familial. Perhaps that is why the Chaplet of Divine Mercy has been embraced with such vigor. "For the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world" begs the question: if this is our prayer to the Father, what are we willing to do by this grace for the sake of the sorrowful passion of Jesus to bring mercy built on justice to the world by bringing his reign to the ends of the earth? What limits are we willing to put on our love since he has first loved us to the full?

Notice that the still wonderful Hail Mary asks for our consolation now and at death. The prayer to which Pope St. John Paul introduced us was no less than one that turns our vision to the whole world. He was a bishop at and of Vatican II.

16. Now, the reason for Bp Greco's desired change to the vernacular was not so that the people could understand, a mental exercise. A technical and dead language was set aside in favor of a means of communication that was transforming those speaking and hearing so that the Reign of God to the ends of the earth would be spread and not just the worship of God would be offered by priest as the people assisted at mass having their attention called to those moments when the priest reached the more important elements by the sounding of a bell since they could hardly hear or see otherwise.... Yes, the mass was and is the perfect prayer in whatever way it is prayed. Pope Benedict as much as he may have loved the the more ancient rite, struggled to reformulate the deacon's announcement after the final blessing so that it was crystal clear that mass is always sending those gathered in the true presence of the Lord, in his presence in the Word and his presence in the Eucharist with hearts burning within to spread

the Reign of God - not being able to wait to tell the Good News to the ends of the World.

17. From a church constant and vigilant - on guard against change and established - to a church confident in its call to undertake the mission of bringing the Reign of God to the world and placing at the disposal of grace every human "cleverness" admired biblically in thieves, thus every knowledge, every technical means, every scientific advance.

18. The dogmas of the church were not erased; some required a more complete formulation.

19. The primacy and infallibility of the pope was never questioned.

20. The diocesan bishops were clearly recognized as the successors to the apostles and vicars of Christ in their on right. Thus John XXIII refused to be carried into St. Peter on the Sedan Chair (Sedia Gestatoria) and walked into St. Peter with his brother bishops, the first among equals and the successor to Peter. Pp Francis announced himself as Bp of Rome for that reason.....

As a result, the Roman Curia was put in its rightful place as merely an executive arm of the Pope with powers prescribed by him, but not over diocesan bishops.

21. "Aggiornamento", an Italian word that means openness as in throwing open the window to let in the fresh breezes of spring, became the oft quoted word of John XXIII.

22. Now there must be not only orthodoxy but orthopraxis (right action) that was prophetic, transforming the world so that the Reign of God was spread and right relationships between the Lord and people, as well as people and people (justice) would be promoted.

23. The pastoral activity of the church is not simply the intellectual study of doctrine, as important as that is. Pastoral activity happens in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy - an emphasis in the Jubilee of Mercy - and these works not only within the community but as they are exercised toward others - go where no one else goes.

24. Synodality or group decision making at all levels in the church.

25. Recognition of the values that do exist in the modern world - there are negatives, but not everything.

26. Karl Rahner, a great German theologian along with Ratzinger at the council, said that the church would die if it did not become contemplative. St. Pope John Paul was not only contemplative but a mystic -- he had a deep relationship with God, an ever deepening faith. Before the council the emphasis had not been on contemplation and mysticism, but on asceticism or the practices of penance and self denial, not bad in themselves, but not characterized by the high ideals and energy he had.

27. The Kerygma first ahead of catechesis. Kerygma is the person of the historical Christ and

that his message of the Reign of God is at had keep on changing and deepening in faith. Then, after this personal encounter with Christ, allow the early church to teach more about the faith of the apostles, St. Paul and their preaching. Having absorbed the sacred Christian scriptures, then the systematic catechesis follows. In this way the council reversed the traditional course that left the erroneous impression that Catholics did not know the bible - something totally untrue. Catechism overemphasized the data and the biblical and relational in the faith were subverted to it.

28. Missionaries became evangelizers, and they moved home. Missions had the connotation of something done far away. There was a realization that the post WWII world in what is now called the First World was becoming post-Christian in its values and was in need of evangelization. This project has a long way to go still! No longer is the First World sending missionaries to the Third World; the Third World is sending them to the First World!

29. The council was not simply rearranging pews in the church and redefining theological texts looking within. It spoke to the People of God and to all people even of other faiths and no faith in a positive way that no council had ever spoken before.

30. Some chose to only see the mass and sacraments in the vernacular; both species of the Eucharist offered to the faithful again; more. The church had become more: the Sacrament of Encounter with Christ and the historical Christ had become the Sacrament of Encounter with the Father. The church had become "her", the bride of Christ. Mary was the perfect model of her.

The Church

1. The universal church is a communion of the particular churches or dioceses in the Latin church and eparchies in the Eastern churches united by the ministry of Peter.
2. The church is the sacrament of encounter with Christ through the Holy Spirit, sacrament of encounter with the Father (Lumen Gentium, The Constitution on the Church, abbrev. LG 1).
3. The charisms or gifts of the Holy Spirit in the church are given to and for the community / church regardless of who may exercise them. The charisms do not make the church (LG 12).
4. The church is a missionary / evangelizing community, and exists for this purpose and her permanent purpose.
5. The goal of the mission is not the church. It is to bring the Reign of God at hand.
6. As such the People of God are not the object of pastoral action so much as the subjects who carry out pastoral action first by forming community in the world so that as yeast or foment in the world others are brought to remark: "see how they love one another!"
7. Belonging to the church is not so important, however, as living the Beatitudes as proclaimed by Christ. That does not mean that belonging to the community is not important, but that was not the first criteria established by Christ the Lord. Living as a witness to the Reign of God is.
8. Christians are in the church first to form themselves to continue the mission of Christ to the ends of the world so that living the Reign of God is not by chance but by design. Second, the community itself is an experience of the presence of Christ in the Midst, the Word and the Eucharist that impels and sends for the mission. Third it is community, St. Paul's Damascus, where those who have entered an initial relationship, may continue their conversion and deepen in faith.
9. The church is then not simply a nice addition but an essential element for building the Reign of God in the world.
10. Be cautious. No religion has the monopoly on God. For this very reason Vatican II was very clear that we must not be defensive, but proactive in respect and dialogue even when it is not mutual.
11. The Word of God is above the hierarchy of the church. The trick is not to improperly interpret that Word making it say things out of context. No church teaching properly understood is contrary to the Bible and vice versa.
12. All the baptized exercise the threefold mission of Christ. As such all the baptized share in his priesthood offering themselves in prayer and sacrifice; share in his teaching by forming themselves and handing on to others what has been learned (each one, teach one); and share at some level responsibility for decision making and leading themselves and others....
13. Those who share in the priesthood of Christ by baptism offer with the ordained priests the sacrifice, yours and mine or offer for themselves the sacrifice of praise to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit through, with and in Jesus.

14. The following of Christ also impels us to be of service to the least, the last and the lost. This preferential option for the poor can not be substituted by prayer. It must be a life-style and attitudinal change. It not a take or leave option. It pinches.

15. Jesus came to be followed as proof of our adoration.

16. The Word of God comes by means of different human authors and languages, styles and culture across a long history all while conserving the original grace of the Holy Sprit.

17. The celebration of the liturgy where God is present in the Midst, in the Word and in the Eucharist according to the council demands a community and presider to face one another because of this presence within and not out there somewhere.

18. It is important that people seek to listen to and understand the Word of God and that the prayers of the rituals are in language that they actually understand. With the music, the message should launch the community into mission, the mission of evangelization.

19. The ordained ministries are exercised in collegiality and synodality.

20. We are saved as the people of God.

21. In the smallest expressions of the church, the family there is found the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church of Christ (LG 26).

22. The Eastern churches now numbering 21 all had married priests. At the time of the council, the Western permitted church marriage for deacons not seeking priesthood. Now priests marry under special circumstances.

23. The highest norm of responsibility for a person is one's conscience.

24. Religious liberty was recognized as a human right by the church and a free gift from God.

25. The most significant thing for the church is to form itself into small communities united in particular churches / dioceses as the church of the Lord.

26. The church must discern what will unite it and what is capable of dividing it.

27. It was must always be willing to ask for the medicine of mercy to unite it.

28. To be prophetic requires something other than put downs and castigation from God.

29. Both the particular church at the diocesan level and the local church at the parish level, makes its own proposals, culture and traditions according to the desires of its people.

30. Infallibility is a gift to the whole people of God in the church.

31. It is the people of God that is holy and not the place where they gather!

32. Ordained ministers and extraordinary ones exist to serve the people of God and not vice versa.
33. The fine books that contain the Word of God and the gathered community should be treated with similar great respect as shown the Eucharist.
34. Local clergy should serve their own churches and not be brought in from other countries.
35. Ordained ministers come after the People of God not before them (LG Chap 2 & 3).
36. The Blessed Virgin Mary is part of the church as mother and model.
37. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes*, was first written in French, thought to be the world language, the diplomatic language at the time.
38. The Latin bible (the Vulgata) that was the point of reference for Scripture was found wanting and ordered revised.
39. The early church communities fashioned the scriptures culturally and put their own words in the texts.
40. Every person has the right to receive the Scriptures in his or her own native language.
41. The Pope is Bp of Rome
42. The bps are not vicars of the pope but of Christ himself and successors of the apostles.
43. The church is not a perfect society existing parallel to the world, it is a foment in the world.
44. *Gaudium et spes* was passed by the smallest majority - +/-2,200 to 300. The rest had only a handful of negative votes.
45. The church is not a people alongside others.