

St. Therese Catholic Church

What Now? Vatican II and the Renewal of the Church

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Importance of Vatican II

- The Second Vatican Council was the most important event in the Catholic Church in the twentieth century (163).
- The council was not a liberal or conservative movement. It transcends political categories and cannot be genuinely interpreted through the opinions of mass media or worldly ideas (163).
- **Key:** The council was a continuation of a long tradition in the Church. It is a renewal of tradition and evangelistic posture of engagement with the world (163).

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Implementation of Vatican II

- As with previous councils, Church renewal is a **two-step process**: The council itself and the implementation of the council (bringing it to parishes and to people's lives). In short, there is the Council and "receiving" the Council. It typically takes at least 50 years to properly implement an ecumenical council.
- In many places, authentic renewal and reform did in fact bloom as a result of the council. In places like Poland, Africa, and Asia, the council was implemented very well. There was a flowering of faith in these places.
- In the Western world, there was a very different mentality of implementation. In some places, the reform and renewal envisioned by the Church was hijacked by some with a different agenda.

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Implementation of Vatican II

- Unfortunately, some used the council documents as cover for nefarious experiments in the liturgy, causing much confusion and loss of faith. Catechetical instruction also suffered.
- Paul VI worked diligently to authentically implement the conciliar decrees, but, as he met stiff resistance from primarily European and North American bishops and theologians, he questioned whether there was another force focused on disrupting the New Pentecost. In a homily given on June 29, 1972, he referred to the opposing force to the Council as Satan.

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Implementation of Vatican II

- **Pope John XXIII:** “I want to open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in.”
- **Key:** By opening the windows, you still need screens to prevent bugs and flies from taking over the house! Hence, the need for prayer and discernment.



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False Narratives and Controversies

Paracouncil – theologians, media, and spirit of the age	Traditionalism - Reactionary
Ideology (pastoral, spirit of the council) over Church’s authority and doctrine	Ideology (tradition) over Church authority
Denigration of pre-Vatican II practices and spirituality (that’s “pre-Vatican II”)	Denigration of post-Vatican II practices and spirituality
Embrace of fashionable rather than True, Good, and Beautiful	Embrace of old-fashioned rather than True, Good, and Beautiful
Lowers standards of the Faith Gradualism of the Law vs. Law of Gradualism	Narrows standards of Faith
Key: Common ground is that Vatican II was a rupture with the Tradition	

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False Narratives and Controversies

Paracouncil – theologians, media, and spirit of the age	Traditionalism - Reactionary
Correct in that Vatican II did not simply repeat what had already been said	Correct that after Vatican II, many essential truths were forgotten in many places
Pre-Vatican II was not a Golden Age	Post-Vatican II was not the Golden Age
The Holy Spirit and the Council saw a new for reform and renewal	The Holy Spirit does not lead the Church into the mentality of the world
Key: The Mass exodus of those leaving the priesthood (over 100,000) and religious life (tens of thousands) in the 1960s and 1970s and an explosion in child abuse attests that something was very unhealthy at the core of formation and the Church's life	Key: The anger and judgmentalism of some traditionalists has not drawn people to Christ and the beauty of our Catholic faith. St. Francis de Sales once said, "A spoonful of honey attracts more flies than a barrelful of vinegar."

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Current Crisis of the Church

- 3% of Catholic parishes say evangelization is a top priority
- As of 2015, 15% of Americans identify as "Former" Catholics. According to a research study in 2015, the Pew Research Center revealed that 13% of Catholics are now cultural Catholics (name only) and 28% are ex-Catholic (total 41%).
- For every 1 person who joins the Church in America, 6 leave
- We are in a crisis of *membership* and by providence, God gave us a Council dedicated to the Church and its mission
- **Source:** <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/09/15/half-of-u-s-adults-raised-catholic-have-left-the-church-at-some-point/>

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How do we respond?

- No solution in post-Vatican II *ideologies*
 - 'Restoring' pre-Vatican II Church is a dead end – bunker Catholicism lacks confidence in the God and His creative work.
 - 'Adapting' the Church to the world is a dead end – Catholic lite leads to Catholic zero.
- Trust in the great work of the Holy Spirit!

Key: "What took place at Vatican II was the will of God...we must not question whether the council was valid. We must rather question how the council's application went awry, and what we can do to reclaim it." (163-164)

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Vatican II as Source for Renewal

- Four Calls of Vatican II
 - Call to Liturgy (Beauty)
 - Call to Holiness (Goodness)
 - Call to Know God (Truth)
 - Call to Mission

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The Beauty of the Liturgy

- *Sacrosanctum Concilium* sought to open the liturgical mystery to the full, active participation of faithful.
- The Church calls us to immerse ourselves in Christ's Paschal Mystery and join in Christ's High Priestly worship of the Father.
- A living encounter with God the Father through Christ and in the Spirit.
- This is the true beauty of the liturgy.

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The Beauty of the Liturgy

- How wonderful that the faithful are asking for beautiful liturgies. St. Teresa of Calcutta reminded us that there is a "terrible hunger for love" in the modern world.
- We might also say that there is a terrible hunger for beauty. If for many decades and centuries truth was listed first among our "transcendental" desires, we may say that in our time beauty has come to the fore. Now, more than ever, it behooves us to "begin with the beautiful."
- **Synod Letter:** I urge my brother priests, in collaboration with your deacons and parishioners, to make your liturgies dignified and beautiful (Hebda, page 27).

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The *Ars Celebrandi*

- *Ars celebrandi*: “art of celebration” - “our whole attitude and demeanor” of liturgical celebration (166)
- The objective truth and beauty of the liturgical mystery *should* inspire prayer, reverence, and *joy*
- *Begins* but does not end with the priest (nor the choir, nor the lectors...)
 - We *all* contribute to this art of celebration
 - The celebration of the liturgy starts as we prepare ourselves at home and then gather together at church
- Do we approach liturgy as a burden? Or a gift?
- Do we make Sunday a day of chores and hasty work? Or of rest and joy?
- Do we invite family, friends to join us in liturgy?

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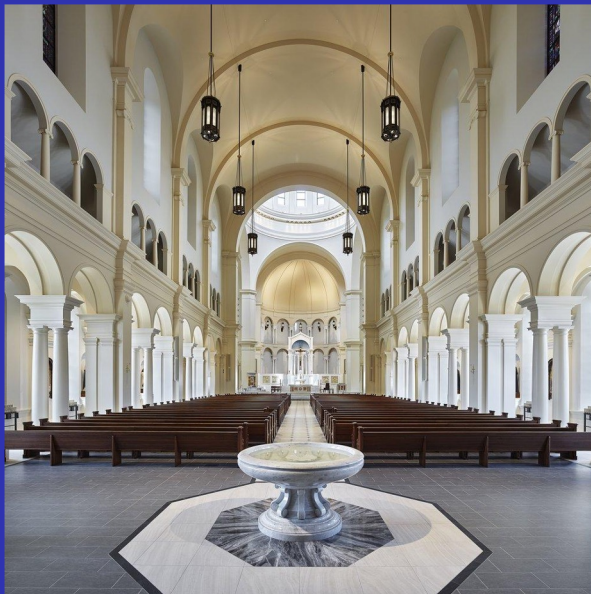
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The Beauty in the Liturgy

- The beauty of the liturgical mystery calls for a beautiful setting:
 - Music
 - Architecture and furnishings
 - Visual art
 - Language (whether Latin or vernacular)
 - **Key:** The sanctuary should speak of the beauty and transcendence of God.
- Sensible beauty draws us to spiritual beauty
- Need for greater discernment of fitting styles and forms
 - Timeless rather than fashionable
 - Recognize philosophical underpinnings of art and architecture

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Holy Name of Jesus Cathedral
Diocese of Raleigh, 2017



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St. John the Apostle
Leesburg, VA (2012)



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The Beauty of the Liturgy

- The liturgy is *source* and *summit* of Church's life and our lives.
- Our regular participation in Christ in liturgy should transform all of us into images of Christ.

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The Call to Holiness

- All Christians in whatever state or walk in life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity, and this holiness is conducive to a more human way of living even in society here on earth." (LG 40)
- **Key:** In every age, it is the saints who renew the Church! Saints who love Christ and abandon themselves to His radical love.

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The Call to Holiness

- Holiness is a measure of perfection
 - God's own perfection
 - "Measureless measure," never to be finally reached
- **Key:** No 'bare minimum' Catholicism
- **Matthew 5:48:** "Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect."
- **St. Thérèse:** Holiness consists simply in doing God's will, and being just what God wants us to be.

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The Call to Holiness

- **Three Evangelical Counsels**
 - All Christians called to poverty, chastity, and obedience
 - According to their state in life
- **Prayer**
 - Formal prayers
 - Pope Francis: "Prayer of familiarity"
 - Contemplative/mental prayer
- **Virtues**
 - **Theological:** Faith, Hope, Love
 - **Cardinal:** Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Temperance
 - *Humility, humility, humility*

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The Call to Holiness

- Do you want to be a saint?
 - **St. Thérèse:** God cannot inspire unrealizable desires. I can then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness.
- Do you pray regularly?
- Do you examine your relationship to material goods, sex, career and social standing according to the teachings of the Christ and the Church?

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The Call to Holiness

- Diversity of paths of holiness reflect infinite holiness of God
- Ordained, religious, laity called to strive for holiness in their particular state
- Vatican II gave special attention to state of the laity whose holiness is pursued within the context of worldly pursuits and occupations.
 - Especially in *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the decree on the Lay Apostolate

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The Call of the Laity

- “Lay people should so use [the aids of prayer, liturgy] that, while doing what is expected of them in the world in ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate their union with Christ from their ordinary life, but actually grow closer to him by doing their work according to God’s will. This is the path along which lay people must advance, fervently, joyfully, overcoming obstacles with prudent, patient effort. Family cares should not be foreign to their spirituality, nor any other temporal interest...” (AA 4)
- **St. Francis de Sales:** “God commands Christians, the living plants of his Church, to bring forth the fruits of devotion, each according to his or her position and vocation.” (Introduction to the Devout Life)

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The Call to Know God

- Our call to holiness is a call to true joy, beatitude, *bliss*
- False promises of “following our own bliss”
 - No objective truth (moral or religious relativism)
 - Truth tied to individuals’ views and feelings, changeable
 - We end up wherever our impulses lead us (“slave to sin”)
 - We have made gods of ourselves - and we can’t carry that burden!
 - Loss of meaning and purpose in so many, especially the young (anxiety, depression, suicide are on the rise)

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The Call to Know God

“We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s ego and desires.”

~Pope Benedict XVI



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The Call to Know God

- *Dei Verbum* calls us to encounter God in *His* revelation
 - Not our feelings, sentiments, “experience”, or any other subjective measure
 - We cannot and *do not have to* create our own truth
- We are blessed to receive the gift of God’s revelation to us
 - “Obedience of faith” needed to receive it (Rom. 1:5).
- “By faith one freely commits oneself entirely to God, making ‘the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals, and willing assenting to the revelation given by God.’ (DV 5)

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The Call to Know God

- Obedience, from Latin *ob+audire* = “to listen to”
- “Obedience of faith” means first and foremost faithfully, trustingly *listening to God*
 - Faith not so much a feeling or even a set of firm opinions
 - It is a commitment to listening to God, letting God lead us
 - **Faith:** We believe in God and believe all that he has revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself (CCC 1814).
- *Dei Verbum* reminds us that we hear God speak through his Word, in Scripture and Tradition
 - DV calls us out of ourselves and to Christ
 - Shows us the path of bliss is in self-giving love

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The Call to Know God

- Do you view your obedience to God grudgingly? Or joyfully as a son and daughter?
- Do you regularly read and pray with Scripture?
- Do you try to know and understand the great Tradition of the Church?
- Fr. Mike Schmitz will begin Catechism in a Year in 2023!

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The Call to Evangelization

- Perhaps *the* distinguishing theme of Vatican II
- Leaps off almost every page
 - Exemplified in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Ad Gentes Divinitus*, the decree on the Church's Missionary Activity
- Entire Church is called to proclaim the Gospel

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The Call to Evangelization

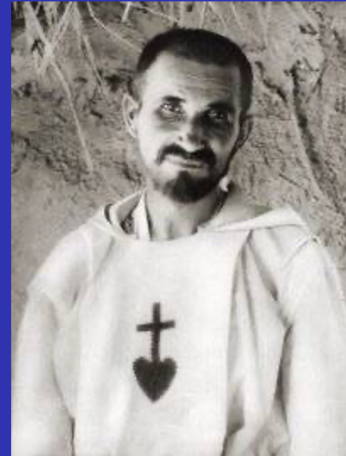
- “All Christians by the example of their very lives and the witness of the Word, wherever they live, have an obligation to manifest the new person which they put on in baptism, and to reveal the power of the Holy Spirit by whom they were strengthened at confirmation, so that others, seeing their good works, might glorify the Father...” (AG 11)
- **Synod Letter:** The Church exists to evangelize, and only three percent of Catholic parishes are intentional about doing so! This sad statistic forces us to ask, “How did we get to this point?” (Hebda, page 31)

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The Call to Evangelization

- Evangelization is not only matter of verbal preaching
- We proclaim the Gospel by our *lives*
 - Our way of living makes our words credible
- **St. Charles de Foucauld:** Live so that others ask, “If such is the servant, what must the Master be like?”



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The Call to Evangelization

- What should your life ‘look like’?
 - **Courage**
 - To speak about God, Christ, the Church, to be known as a Catholic
 - To reach out to the lost
 - Do not hide your light under a bushel
 - **Humility**
 - Those to whom we are proclaiming the Gospel are just as loved by God as we are
 - We are each a sinner - presume you are the worst

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The Call to Evangelization

- What should your life 'look like'?
 - Joy
 - "Gospel," *euangelion* mean "Good News"
 - We cannot proclaim the Good News if we don't act like it is Good!
 - **Pope Francis**: An evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral.
 - Love
 - Will the good of the other
 - Reject polarization, tribalism - each and every person is our brother or sister
 - Compassion for plight and struggle of others

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The Call to Evangelization

- Do you think of yourself as an evangelist?
- Do you consciously live as a witness of your Faith?
- If someone visited your home or spent time with you, would they be able to tell that you are Catholic?
- Do you prepare yourself to "give an explanation to anyone who asks for a reason" for our faith?" (1 Pet. 3:15)

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The Call to Evangelization

- Evangelization is not only a matter of individuals
- Vatican II calls us to see cultures, nations, the world as our fields of evangelization
 - We are to evangelize culture as well as people
- “The Second Vatican Council sought to open the doors of the Church - not so that the Church could become more worldly, but so that the world could become more holy. Each of us receives a call to be a missionary evangelist at the moment of our baptism.” (172-173)

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The Call of the Laity

- “It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will...There they are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven, by the spirit of the Gospel, by fulfilling their own particular duties.” (LG 31)
- **Key:** The laity provide the leaven of Christ for the world that is like flat bread!

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The Call to Evangelization

- “The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him.
- What kind of love would not feel the need to speak of the beloved, to point him out, to make him known? If we do not feel an intense desire to share this love, we need to pray insistently that he will once more touch our hearts.”

~Pope Francis

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The Call to Evangelization



Fr. Andrie
Evangelizer



Brendan
Non-Evangelizer

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