

*Fr. Perozich comments –*

*Here are 3 articles: one published today, another in 2012, and a third in 2018 reflecting on what happened AFTER the second Vatican Council rather than the council itself.*

*Randall Smith attributes radical change to men who, he claims, thought they were brighter than those men who came before them.*

*Smith also attributes the rapid change of technology and the abandonment of classic morality in society that affects everyone it touches including the men at the council and those after them who should have learned FROM the council rather than trying to tweak the council to fit their desired outcomes..*

*Robert Royal's 2012 article ends with a quote from Pope Benedict XVI: **“The Council was a time of grace in which the Holy Spirit taught us that the Church, in her journey in history, must always speak to contemporary man, but this can only happen through the strength of those who are profoundly rooted in God, who allow themselves to be guided by Him and live their faith with purity; it does not happen with those who adapt themselves to the passing moment, those who choose the most comfortable way.”***

*Theologian Eduardo Echeverria in article 3 dispels false teachings on conscience, and reestablishes the church's traditional understanding.*

## What Happened After Vatican II?

By Randall Smith

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2022

What happened after Vatican II? Contrary to what some assume, it was in many ways the culmination of the great Thomistic reforms inspired by Leo XIII and was populated by some truly great theologians. There had been a generation of reflection on “Christian humanism” as a potent response to the “atheist humanism” that had arisen in the nineteenth century.

The work of a generation of liturgical reformers was poised to produce tremendous renewal. The Catholic *ressourcement* movement was resurrecting interest in the great works of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and new critical editions and translations of those works were being made.

John XXIII was right. It was the right time for the Council. No time before or since would have been as propitious – if the moment were properly seized. The documents inspired the incredible papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI and have been a great gift to the Church. Those who wish to deny that the Second Vatican Council was a “real” ecumenical council, fine. God bless you. Look in the mirror. The person you see there is a Protestant.

So what happened after the Council? The Sixties and Seventies happened. The cultural disruption was immense. In 1962, when John XXIII called for the Council, men were still wearing coats and ties. The Beatles didn't arrive in America until 1964. And when they did, *they* were still wearing coats and ties.

By 1968, the drug culture and sexual revolution were in full swing, and student protests had erupted around the world. French intellectuals still talk about the revolution of '68 that brought down the French government. The Vietnam War had entered an even-more deadly stage. Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were both assassinated that year. Yeats' description of an earlier age fit those years (as it does again in ours):

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

To what should we compare the Post-Conciliar period? It would be as if the Fathers at the Council of Nicea had finished their work defining that the Son was “one in being” with the Father in opposition to the Arian heresy, only to find that nearly the entire Church had embraced that heresy, including the Emperor Constantine, and **for a hundred years after had to fight a rear-guard battle defending the authentic teaching of that amazing Council – which, of course, is exactly what happened!** And ever since, groups have been bowing out after they hit a council they don’t like: some after the first four, others after the first seven, a few after the first twenty.



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But keep this in mind: If you were a 63-year-old bishop when the Council was convened, you would have been born in 1900. So when you were young, most people still would have been traveling by horses and carts. But you would have flown to the Council on a jet plane, and the opening would have been beamed around the world on television. There were hydrogen bombs, the structure of DNA had been revealed, and computers and oral

contraceptives had been invented. You would have lived through two World Wars, the Holocaust, and the forced starvation of ten-million Ukrainians. Given all that, it would have been easy enough to wonder whether the old ways would really work anymore in this “brave new world” of horrors and wonders.

A Jesuit friend says he uses the eight days of his Ignatian Spiritual Exercises to make big decisions, because he knows that when the troubles come, and he’s feeling depressed or despairing, he should avoid taking important steps. Instead, he lets the time of peace and prayer keep him grounded through the chaotic times. This was what Catholics should have done during the Sixties and Seventies: taken the wisdom of the Council back home with them and trusted it instead of trying to make big decisions in the midst of spiritual and moral chaos.

**If they had learned from the Council instead of constantly trying to tweak its nose in the direction they thought the Church should go, they likely would have avoided numerous problems, such as the burst of sexual abuse. Instead, a 2000-year tradition of spiritual discipline and understanding of spiritual struggle, supported by centuries of development in canon law, was all chucked aside for modern pseudo-psychological nostrums. *(a medicine, especially one that is not considered effective, prepared by an unqualified person. "a charlatan who sells nostrums")***

So, the history of the period after the Council can now be written. **The Church was betrayed by a**

generation of Church leaders who ignored the wisdom of the Council and took the occasion of the confusion of the Sixties and Seventies to indulge their own egos, posing outwardly as champions of social justice while secretly enriching themselves, betraying their oaths of chastity, and looking the other way as others betrayed theirs. Bourgeois bishops posed as populists, and, like so many populists before them, refused to surrender their power to the next generation of authentic reformers until that power was pried from their cold, dead hands.

Historians will not be kind. Descriptions will likely read like this:

**“The post-Vatican II Church was dominated by too many bishops who squandered the opportunities presented by the Council and delayed the authentic renewal the Council had envisioned for decades, plunging the Church into several generations of chaos, darkness, and division. One of the greatest ironies of that age was that, at the time, those involved thought highly of themselves as ‘the best and brightest,’ surpassing all the old, outworn intellectual currents that had come before them. Looking back, most historians consider it one of the saddest periods in Church history, a period of cultural and social disintegration in the world during which the Church should have been making converts preaching the Good News to all**

**mankind, but instead, lost itself in internal squabbles and fickle attempts to deal with widespread institutional corruption.”**

*\*Image: Pope John XXIII rode in the procession to St. Peter's Basilica at the start of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 1962 (Paul Schutzer The LIFE Picture Collection/Shutterstock)*

## Vatican II: The Yes and the No

Robert Royal

MONDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2012

During Richard Nixon's 1971 visit to China, Chinese premier Zhou Enlai was asked what he thought about the French Revolution (1789). He reportedly said: "It is too soon to say."

Many thought this an amusing expression of millennial, oriental perspectives – though several China experts say the interpreter badly flubbed things and Zhou (a tough modern Communist, after all, not a Confucian scholar) was referring to recent student rebellions in Paris (1968).

Some Catholic commentators have tried to hedge their views on the Second Vatican Council (1962-5) with a similar caveat. In the long perspectives of the Church, they say, it's too soon to say what it will ultimately mean.

This past Friday, the Church "celebrated" the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Council and opened the

Year of Faith, even as it had just been engaged in a Synod on the New Evangelization – a New Evangelization necessitated, in part, by some of the negative consequences of the Council.

A half-century into the mission, it's clear that the long-term argument is a distraction. The Council's primary importance, for good and bad – and there was a lot of both – was what it did during the last third of the twentieth century.

The long-term impact will depend on what present and future Catholics do with the Council – hence the Synod and other measures.

In many ways, the search for the True Meaning of Vatican II is a lot like the “search for the historical Jesus.” Much depends on the assumptions, especially the unconscious ones, you bring to the task, which cannot be carried out with merely historical or analytical methods anyway.

The texts, important as they are, notably fail to convince people who think that the “spirit,” not the letter, is the Council's real meaning. John Paul II already had to convene a Synod of Bishops in 1985, which declared that spirit and letter should not be set against each other, and that **Vatican II had to be interpreted in continuity with tradition and the earlier councils.**

But you'd have to be virtually brain dead not to know that, almost thirty years later, these are still very live issues in the Church. In the state of Washington at the moment, sixty-three ex-priests are publicly opposing the Church's attempt to stop the legalization of gay marriage with a

**classic post-conciliar argument: it violates Jesus' welcoming embrace of all.**

**For many Catholics, here and around the world, the main effect of the Council is still to have reduced Christianity to this sort of simplistic monomania.**

I was in Rome last week and there was a lot of enthusiasm about the New Evangelization, as there should be, but also much unacknowledged nervousness. The bishops at the synod said some incisive and, occasionally, profound things. But talk is easy. Action, in our circumstances, much harder. And only vigorous action will bring the legacy of the Council into a different course.



**Fr. Joseph Ratzinger with Fr. Yves Congar at Vatican II**

The great theologian Henri de Lubac, S.J., one of the inspirations of the Council, warned after the event, **“The Yes said wholeheartedly to the Council and to all its legitimate consequences must, in order to remain consistent and sincere, be coupled with a No that is just as resolute to a certain type of exploitation that is, in fact, a perversion of it.”**

*La nouvelle théologie* brought a lot to the Church. Not only de Lubac, but Congar, Chenu, Daniélou, Boyer,

von Balthasar, and **others discovered something really valuable in the tradition.**

**It was no small thing that, at the height of its powers in the twentieth century, the Roman Catholic Church in solemn synod put forward the universal call for holiness, an increased emphasis on the role of the laity in the world, and the vision for a more pastoral and communitarian Church, rather than a juridical one.**

And all of it – **as Pope John XXIII intended in convening the Council – was to supplement settled Catholic theological and moral teaching and make it more effective in engaging the world.** Joseph Ratzinger, a sharp observer even as a young man, remarked at the time that two early tasks of the Council were: to dispel the notion that everything was fine in the Church and to overcome an “anti-Modernist neurosis.”

The Council certainly did both. But those who warned about where the new course would take us – and who were and are often mocked as hopeless reactionaries – were right in their dire predictions.

Specifically, the recognition that the Church needed to be a less legalistic and more pastoral community led many to think that rules were *per se* a sign of lack of charity. But as I’ve often said, **trying to be pastoral without knowing concretely what helping people means, is like being a doctor with a good bedside manner – who is ignorant of medicine.**

And the Church’s “opening to the world” was often taken to mean not only that an excessive wariness about

modernity was to be jettisoned, but that **modernity itself was to become the standard by which to judge things in a supposedly “mature” and engaged Church.**

John Paul II and Benedict XVI have cleaned up a lot of the mess, but a lot more remains, as the Synod deliberations well show. Much of the New Evangelization is aimed at formerly Christian societies

Benedict held a meeting Friday for the surviving bishops who had been participants in the Council, at which he virtually summed up the experience of the last fifty years: **“The Council was a time of grace in which the Holy Spirit taught us that the Church, in her journey in history, must always speak to contemporary man, but this can only happen through the strength of those who are profoundly rooted in God, who allow themselves to be guided by Him and live their faith with purity; it does not happen with those who adapt themselves to the passing moment, those who choose the most comfortable way.”**

# Conscience, Newman, and Vatican II

Eduardo J. Echeverria  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2018

In his February 9th address at the Von Hügel Institute, St. Edmund Campion College, Cambridge University, Cardinal Blase Cupich claimed that at the heart of the so-called “new hermeneutic” of chapter 8 of Pope Francis’s *Amoris Laetitia* is the role of conscience for discerning what God is asking of me *here and now*.

In one sense, of course, there is nothing disturbing about focusing on the situation of the person-specific role of conscience. John Henry Newman also observed that “conscience is not a judgment upon any speculative truth, any abstract doctrine but bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done.” Newman adds, citing Thomas Aquinas, “‘Conscience’, says St. Thomas, ‘is the practical judgment or dictate of reason, by which we judge what *hic et nunc* is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil’.”

For Thomas and Newman, then, the particular judgment of conscience about the morality of given acts is about doing good and avoiding evil.

Unlike Thomas and Newman, however, Cardinal Cupich distinguishes conscience’s role in this sense from conscience’s ability to grasp objective moral truths. He interprets conscience as an *oracle* in which the situation and person-specific judgments of conscience are equated

with the voice of God: “Their decisions of conscience represent God’s personal guidance for the particularities of their lives. In other words, **the voice of conscience – the voice of God – or . . . what Newman called ‘the aboriginal Vicar of Christ’**, could very well affirm the *necessity of living at some distance*[here and now] from the Church’s understanding of the [moral] ideal.” (emphasis added)

So, the individual’s subjective conscience hears God telling him that he is justified in doing that which is inconsistent with what is objectively right and avoiding what is objectively wrong. According to Cupich, then, conscience justifiably retains the final word in opposition to the objective truth. **Despite his protest, Cupich’s “new hermeneutic” regarding pastoral reasoning is a version of situation ethics.**

The Cardinal is, furthermore, wrong about Newman’s account of conscience. For Newman, although he refers to conscience as the voice of God, conscience is an organ, not an oracle. **Like perception, memory, reasoning, and human testimony, conscience involves a way of forming beliefs and evaluating them.**



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**Conscience, explains Newman, is “a principle planted within us, before we have had any**

**training, though such training and experience is necessary for its strength, growth, and due formation.”**

Newman adds, likening conscience to other ways of forming beliefs and evaluating them, conscience is “a constituent element of the mind, as our perception of other ideas may be, as our powers of reasoning, as our sense of order and the beautiful, and our other intellectual endowments.” **Significantly, he concludes, “as Catholics consider it,” conscience is “the internal witness of both the existence and the law of God.”**

In this light, we can see why **Newman rejects conscience as “the right of self-will.”** “Conscience has rights because it has duties.” In other words, **conscience cannot “ignore a Lawgiver and Judge, [as if it were] independent of . . . obligations.”**

This conclusion brings us to Cardinal Cupich’s claim that this “new hermeneutic” has fully embraced the “understanding of conscience found in Vatican II’s *Gaudium et spes* §16.” “Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths.” Here, too, Cupich wrongly interprets conscience not only as an oracle rather than an organ, but he also wrongly asserts that an individual is justified in doing that which is inconsistent with what is objectively right and avoiding what is objectively wrong.

But Cupich couldn’t be more wrong not only about *Gaudium et spes* §16, in particular, but also the role of

universally binding moral norms – the natural law – in Vatican Council II.

**Like Newman, *Gaudium et spes* §16 understands conscience to be “the internal witness of both the existence and the law of God.” It states: “In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged.”**

Similarly, we read in *Dignitatis Humanae* §3 that the highest norm of human life is God’s divine law – eternal, objective, and universal.” In addition, “Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth. . .in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience.”

*Gaudium et spes* §79 focuses on “the permanent binding force of universal natural law and its all-embracing principles [see *Gaudium et spes* §27]. *Man’s conscience itself gives ever more emphatic voice to these principles. Therefore, actions which deliberately conflict with these same principles . . . cannot excuse those who yield to them.*” (emphasis added).

Vatican II is emphatically contrary to Cardinal Cupich’s account of conscience.

**Moreover, subordinate to God’s divine, eternal, objective, and universal law that summons man to “love and to do what is good and avoid evil,” is Vatican II’s true norm for guiding human choices and actions.”** In *Gaudium et spes* §35 we read that this norm “is that in accord with the divine plan and will, *human activity should harmonize with the genuine good of the human race*, and allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it.” (emphasis added)

I have written elsewhere about Cupich’s lopsided anthropology, moral culpability and justifying particular judgments of conscience – crucial for the moral logic of pastoral reasoning in *Amoris Laetitia*.

**Pace Cardinal Cupich, by any fair reading, there is no justification in Newman or in Vatican II for removing the universally binding validity of particular norms in specific judgments of conscience.**

**\*Image:** *The Good Samaritan (after Delacroix)* by Vincent van Gogh, 1890 [Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, Netherlands]