

Together Sharing Christ

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April, 2012

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How will that be done?

You will be notified by e-mail (or the e-mail tree if you are on it) that a new issue is available.

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Many Thanks!

NOTE:

Several years ago, the Education Committee had Father Lawrence give a series of talks on the gospels. Each year since then, TSC has reprinted the talks for the gospel for that liturgical year. Those talks have now been put on the website for easy reference.

After the Easter season, the Church will be returning to the Gospel of Mark for this year's Ordinary Time Sunday readings. Please refer to the website for Father Dick's three talks on Mark's Gospel.

Letter from the Pastor

April 23, 2012

Shalom!

It's been almost a year since one of these packets has gotten out to you, and a lot has happened. Those of you who are here on Sundays (or Saturdays) have hopefully been kept more or less up to date by the bulletin and the announcements, For those of you who are out-of-state, or even out-of-country, let me suggest that you check in regularly with our website, www.Stvchurch.org. Even those of your who are here every week will find a lot of useful information, frequently updated by our various committees, out there floating on the internet.

For instance, right now there is a great five-minute summary of our Holy Week experience, in living color and sound, put together for us by Jerome Bird, that can be reached by a link from the homepage.

The most important news of the past year is that we have hired a Pastoral Associate, Mr. Chris McCullough. He has been on board almost eight months now, and is fitting in extremely well. He is getting to know our members, working with the rest of the staff, and helping Barbara Hodnett keep yours truly upright and pointed in the right direction, at least most of the time. He is a pleasure to work with, he has a great theological and pastoral visit, and I look forward to continuing to work with him, both before and after my semi-retirement (more on that later).

I guess the biggest thing going on, in terms of potential impact on our future, is our joint planning process with the other four downtown parishes, Basilica, St. Ignatius, St. Alphonsus, and Corpus Christi. So far, it has gone very well. All five of us realize that in this time of declining numbers of priests, we simply cannot continue the status quo. And all five of us also realize that we are each so distinctively different in our identity, flavor, and mission, that it would be enormously counter-productive to even consider closing or merging any of these parishes. So we have been working together to come up with a plan that allows all five parishes to maintain our identities and our missions with fewer priests. It has not been easy, but we have come up with a workable plan that has been approved by our parish council and by each of the other parishes. Our Vicar Bishop has presented this plan on our behalf to the Archbishop, and he has given permission for us to proceed in our planning on this basis.

I would suggest that you read carefully the text of our report, which is included in this packet and posted on the website. You will note that it suggests an eventual reduction in our Mass schedule. When I semi-retire to a less active status, an event now estimated to occur in June of 2013, we will discontinue the Midnight Mass. This will be quite a loss

for us, as the *Printers' Mass* has been a tradition here for almost a hundred years. But attendance has been falling ever since the Saturday afternoon Masses started forty years ago, and is now down to a point where it would not be reasonable to ask another priest to come in and preside at such a small liturgy after I am no longer able to do it.

A bigger change is even farther off. I fully expect to be able to preside at the 7:15, 9:30 and 11:45 liturgies as long as God gives me health and strength. But when I am unable to continue, either because of death or very frail health, we will need to share a priest with Corpus Christi, and that will mean the end of our 11:45 Mass, because that would conflict with the principal Mass there. But do not panic. My doctors have been keeping me in really quite reasonable health for an overweight man of my age, and I do not intend to let that situation change any time soon if I can help it. I look forward to five, or ten, or even fifteen or more years of service here. Of course, God may have other plans, and guess who will win that argument, so it is good to make plans now for all eventualities, however remote we hope they are.

One more big thing to tell you about if you have not already heard it. Instead of participating in the big Archdiocesan capital campaign, the Archdiocese has given us permission to conduct a campaign to establish a financial aid endowment for our school, St. James and John. A campaign committee has been formed, and we currently expect a rollout in June, at which time you will get all the details. Suffice it to say for now that we fully expect to be able to create a large enough source of financial aid for our parents as to make the school truly sustainable. This is great, because education of poor kids is something we have a 150 year track record in doing very well, and something that is desperately needed in East Baltimore today. We'll keep you posted.

Thanks again to all the people who worked to make the Triduum such a wonderful celebration – it took the efforts of over a hundred people, and was worth every hour they put in.

And thanks to you for being so patient about our production schedule for this little publication.

Have a great Easter season. Remember, the party continues all the way to Pentecost.

Peace and love,

Pastor

Central City Catholic Churches Interim Report

January 18, 2012

Since March of 2011, the pastors of several parishes located in and around the center of Baltimore have been meeting regularly to discuss potential collaboration among the parishes. Since June of that same year, these meetings have included lay representatives of the parishes' congregations. The parishes involved are The Basilica, St. Alphonsus, Corpus Christi, St. Ignatius, and St. Vincent de Paul. In addition, the Shrine of St. Jude participated initially; but they have chosen not to continue within this group.

Over the course of these discussions, pertinent information about each parish has been shared. This included information about each parish's founding and historical development; characteristics of its ministry and liturgies; demographics of its past and current congregation; financial information, including unique funding sources and annual budgets; staffing and personnel arrangements, and number, nature and condition of facilities. A brief summary of this information is included in an appendix to this report.

Each of these five parishes has a unique identity and character that sets each apart from the other four as well as from parishes outside the downtown area. The parishes all identified themselves as intentional parishes, whose congregations are drawn as much from those residing outside of their immediate geographic areas as from within. While the parishes have recognized a commonality, because of the unique and strong identity of each, they do not believe that combining any of the parishes would prove workable.

Each of the parishes appears financially solvent and stable, with no precipitous drop off in Mass attendance, and sound infrastructure and physical plants, notwithstanding the age and historic nature of many of the buildings involved.

During these meetings, participants discussed the archdiocese's stated concerns about diminishing Mass attendance, about the vitality of parishes and their liturgies, and about the aging and declining numbers of priests in the archdiocese. The consensus among the parishes is that there exist currently opportunities for collaboration in several areas and that future coordination among the parishes will allow them to mitigate the challenges stated.

First priority must be given to the developing clergy shortage. At present there are six full-time priests assigned to the five parishes: one archdiocesan priest each to Basilica, St. Alphonsus, Corpus Christi and St. Vincent de Paul, and two Jesuit priests to St. Ignatius. The Jesuit provincial, queried by St. Ignatius' pastor, assures us that the Jesuits intend to keep two of their priests there for the foreseeable future. The number of available archdiocesan priests, however, is likely to diminish over time. All of the four current pastors are over 60 years old, and in view of the current projections of archdiocesan clergy availability over the next fifteen years it is unlikely that they can be replaced on a one for one basis as they die or retire or are asked to move on to other assignments. Prudence suggests, therefore, that a plan be developed to maintain these parishes and their ministries with a reduced number of clergy. This in turn will

necessitate a revision of weekend Mass schedules, as it will be impossible to maintain the current schedules with a reduced number of priests.

To deal with these realities in a way that will be both mindful of the needs of the Church and understood and accepted by the people, it is essential that plans be developed at the local level, with full participation of the clergy and laity of the parishes involved. Critical even in the early stages of this collaboration has been the involvement of the laity. While still nascent, this involvement is expected to grow in the immediate future, with information about the parishes' intended cooperation to be shared with parish/pastoral councils and the congregations. The ready dissemination of information about the group and explanation of the rationale for the steps it intends to take should facilitate cooperation among the congregations. This model will also make future accommodation among these parishes more likely and more readily implemented.

The Coordinating Committee of the Central City Catholic Churches therefore met on October 6 2011, with our Vicar Bishop, Most Rev. Denis Madden, and proposed to him the following:

1. That the five parishes of the Catholic Churches of Central City be recognized as a planning cluster, even though some of them are in different Regions,
2. That these parishes develop a plan that will preserve their identities and unique ministries while recognizing and adapting to the diminishing number of clergy,
3. That the plan should provide for the clergy staffing of these parishes when four, three and a half, three, two and a half, and two archdiocesan priests are available for the cluster (where a "half" represents a retired or semi-retired priest, or a priest with substantial other duties),
4. That the plan should provide for adjustment of weekend Mass schedules for all five parishes in light of the declining number of priests,
5. That the plan should be formulated in full communication with, and with the participation of, the clergy, staff and laity of all five parishes,
6. That the plan should be competed, approved by the parishes, and submitted to the Vicar Bishop by Easter, 2012, and
7. That the Coordinating Committee should then turn its attention to the numerous opportunities for ministerial improvements and resource conservation that can be attained by sharing of staff, volunteers and programs among the five parishes.

The Bishop responded that such a plan would be very much in keeping with his hopes, and those of our Apostolic Administrator, Archbishop O'Brien, for realistic planning at the grass roots level, and he encouraged the Committee to proceed. The Committee therefore agreed to disseminate this plan-for-a-plan to the councils, staffs and parishioners of the five parishes, and to continue to meet to develop a plan on this basis.

At the subsequent meetings we discussed the clergy needs of the parishes in the light of forecast for clergy availabilities. There emerged in these discussion a number of similarities between the Basilica and St. Alphonsus. Both are shrines. Both have a large number of visitors

(i.e., people from outside the parish who are tourists or pilgrims or both). Both are fairly traditional in their outlook, and take most of their leadership from their clergy staff. It was suggested that one priest might be found who would be a good fit to serve as Rector of the Basilica and Pastor of St. Alphonsus, or Director of the two Shrines. Special consideration would need to be given to the needs of the Lithuanian congregation and the Tridentine congregation at St. Alphonsus, and questions of pastoral as well as administrative staff would need to be worked out, but the pairing of these two parishes would seem to be a good way to go if the number of priests would have to be reduced.

This sparked the observation that Corpus Christi and St. Vincent de Paul also have a number of similarities. Both parishes rely on non-resident members rather than either neighborhood parishioners or visitors. Both are fairly progressive in their outlook, and are accustomed to a lot of leadership coming from the lay members of the community. It was therefore suggested that one priest might be a good fit for both of these parishes, or that one shared or two separate lay ecclesial ministers might be well accepted at these parishes, with a part-time priest for each (perhaps a retired priest, or a seminary or college professor could be a good fit). Here as well questions of pastoral and administrative staffing would need to be addressed.

Finally, it was observed that St. Ignatius, with its staff of two Jesuit priests (and often one or more other Jesuits either in residence or passing through), could be seen as a resource for the entire cluster. If one of the Jesuit priests were fluent in either Latin or Lithuanian, for instance, he might regularly cover that Mass at St. Alphonsus in addition to his work at St. Ignatius. Also, it might be possible for St. Ignatius to do more than its even share in providing cover for other parishes in the event of clergy vacation or illness (though surely all priests in the cluster will have to help each other out in this regard p.r.n.).

The question of Mass schedule changes depends on the number of available clergy, and the question of the time-line on which such changes might take place needs to be considered in light of the existing priest personnel and their plans. Msgr. Bastress, though the oldest serving priest in the Archdiocese by far, has the vigor of most men half his age, and has no plans to retire unless and until forced to do so by ill health. Fr. Lawrence, on the other hand, has already announced to his parish his preference for moving to senior priest status on the 40th anniversary of his pastorate there (June, 2013), and continuing his ministry at St. Vincent's on a reduced schedule thereafter. Msgr. Valenzano and Fr. Demek have no plans to retire in the near future, nor to request reassignment, but it is impossible to predict whether or when they may be asked to take a different assignment as the Archdiocese continues to struggle with its clergy shortage.

This suggests that we should plan for the Basilica-St. Alphonsus pair of parishes in a way that allows for the continuation of the clergy status quo indefinitely, but allows for reduction to one priest serving the two parishes on short notice should either parish become vacant through reassignment or ill health of its pastor. There should be a plan for the reduction of the weekend Mass schedule to rely on one priest, plus a little help from St. Ignatius. This will be accomplished by dropping the English Mass at St. Alphonsus, advancing the time of the 10:30 at the Basilica by a quarter-hour, and consolidating the four Sunday morning Masses at St. Ignatius into two.

The plan for the Corpus Christi- St. Vincent de Paul pair of parishes should anticipate a reduction of the Mass schedule at St. Vincent's to what its Senior Priest can do, beginning in June

of 2013, and a plan should be in place for a Mass schedule for these two parishes that can be feasible for either one full-time or two senior (or other part-time) priests. This will mean the elimination of the midnight Mass at St. Vincent’s in June, 2013, and, at some point in the future, the elimination of the 11:45 Mass at St. Vincent’s and the moving of the 10:30 at Corpus Christi to 11AM..

The existing weekend Mass schedule for the five parishes, a total of 19 Masses, is:

	Basilica	St. Alphonsus	St. Ignatius	Corpus Christi	St. V de Paul
Vigil	5:30		4:30	4:00	7:15
Sunday	8:00	8:30 Lithuanian	8:00		12:15am
	10:45	10:00 English	9:00	10:30	9:30
		11:30 Tridentine	9:30		11:45
	4:30		10:30		
			6:00		

Adjustments to this schedule will be made as clergy changes dictate, with the following resulting schedule, a total of 14 Masses, to be:

	Basilica	St. Alphonsus	St. Ignatius	Corpus Christi	St. V de Paul
Vigil	5:30		4:30	4:00	7:15
Sunday	8:00	8:30 Lithuanian	8:00		
	10:30	11:30 Tridentine	10:15	11:00	9:30
	4:30		6:00		

In sum, our discussions has led us to a view of the cluster in at least three perspectives:

1. Five separate parishes, each with its own heritage, historic buildings, distinct traditions, devoted membership and unique ecclesial flavor. This is why our final plan preserves all five communities and their churches.
2. Two pair of somewhat similar parishes plus a resource parish, with shared staffing and coordinated Mass schedules.
3. One cluster that brings together the five Catholic churches serving the center of the City of Baltimore, which needs to continue to meet in some form similar to the present committee to keep exchanging ideas and working on ways to coordinate staff and programs.

We, the pastors and parish councils of the Central City Catholic Churches, do therefore hereby endorse this plan for our future and ask that it be accepted by our Vicar Bishop and by the Apostolic Administrator.

Easter Vigil 2012

Each year, St. Vincent's observes an all-night Easter Vigil. We begin with the kindling of the New Fire in the bonfire-sized metal sculpture on the parking lot, then process to church for the singing of the Exultet. Through the night we trace the salvation history which leads to the coming of Jesus and his Easter Resurrection. Approximately every hour and a half, we have a service of Scripture readings, Psalm recitation and hymn, and a reflection or activity that helps us reflect on the reading. These are followed by an hour or so of quiet reflection in church, snacking and socializing in the undercroft, or a quick nap. People come and go, as they're able, throughout the night, with a handful going the entire course.

Over the years, activities have included art work with crayons, sculpture with Play-Doh, dance, film, dramatization, guided reflections, poetry, slide show, usually accompanied by reflections from the parishioner-planners. Here are some from this year.

Reading: Genesis 1:1—2:4 Planner: Chris McCullough

Title: In the beginning . . .

This reading is such an appropriate place for us to start because for us it begins at a place familiar to us in our Lenten journey. After reflecting on the meaning of covenant for Lent, we have a sense of how God establishes a covenant with us. Scripture certainly outlines that for us, and we have heard that in our readings about Noah, Abraham and Moses. We have found in our reflections, that covenant is a covenant of love. But one could ask, “where does God’s love begin?” Does it begin with Abraham? or even Noah? This reading can help us with that question. It is about our origins. Scholars point out that this story while appearing at the beginning of the Bible, is not, in fact, the first book written in the Bible. It may well be the last one written in its period. Anyone who has written a major paper knows that it is easier to write the introduction after the body of the paper is written. This story is the introduction to the story of salvation history. It was crafted as an introduction to that story, a story of God’s covenantal love for us. After the Exodus, the Israelites knew that God was doing something big for them. Their insight was that this act of salvation was not a one time or momentary thing, but rather something God had been doing all along. God had been with them since the beginning of time. We could say that the covenant was not possible without this beginning point of God’s creative activity.

This story is the unique retelling of the creation of the world through the eyes of faith. Contrary to other accounts of creation, they wanted to express their understanding of their unique relationship with their God. And so we have this wonderful story of creation. The imagery is rich. God orchestrates creation over the “Void” and the “Surface of the deep”. God puts the world into an order putting expanses in the middle of the waters, bringing light to the world, and bringing forth creates to “swarm” the earth. The fantastic thing about this whole story is that all of this happens by way of God’s word. It is a rhythmic tale of God speaking and things coming to be, each occurrence of which is punctuated by the passing of another day. In the process of speaking creation, God says “let there be . . .”. And when it comes to be God sees that it is good. And each succession of goodness is marked by another day. God creates by speaking and declaring it good.

This story is our beginning point and yet it is not a static moment in time. For our translation does not say “in the beginning,” like the translation that I was familiar with when I grew up with says, but rather it says, “when God began to create.” It implicates that in the course of God being God, God chose to create this reality in which we live. It is a *process* that happens over the course of time. And yet creation is not an ancient thing that happened long, long ago. It is something that is ever-new. Why? Because we are co-creators with our God. We have built within our bodies the ability to create.

Given this divine participation, we may ask ourselves, “What are we created to be? How do we find our place in creation? How are we called to “speak” and participate in the “good” of God’s creation?” The story gives us some insight. We are told that we are to rule or master this creation of God. I am more familiar with the translation that claims we should have dominion over creation and subdue it and the earth. It can dangerously be interpreted that the world is at our disposal to use and abuse as we see fit. Even the more subtle terms of “mastering” and “ruling” over creation of this translation can lead us into a way of being that is self-centered and not centered in the covenant of god’s creative love. Since we are people of the covenant, “What does it mean to rule over or master creation?”

I would suggest that the meaning comes in the balance of the two creation stories. You see, we can try to soften the language of dominion and subduing, but in fact, the land the Israelites inherited was a land that needed to be subdued to bear fruit. It is hard, dry, rocky land. It is land that takes some effort to get a yield from it. In taking the second story of creation we see that there is some focus on the matter we are created out of. We are not created apart from the earth, but in fact are made from the earth itself. We are made in the image of God by way of being carved out of the soil of the earth and given life by the breath of God. We are made of the same stuff that everything else is. Remember the old Ash Wednesday phrase “Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

The Hebrew word used in the second story of creation is “avad” which means “to serve” rather than master or rule. The role we are given then is to master God’s creation by serving it. So it is not a place of privilege or power over and against God’s creation that we are given. It is a place of service. It is a place of interdependence with creation. As hard as that can be for our independence minded American ears, we must form ourselves for service. Indeed that is the example we recalled on Holy Thursday, that Jesus our savior comes as an example of that service.

In closing I would like to share the best part of our place in that creation. We all are unique. God has placed within each one of us, a unique call that can enrich and benefit all of creation.

We are part of the covenant of God’s love. “What are we created to be? How do we find our place in creation? How are we called to “speak” and participate in the “good” of God’s creation?” Our role in that creative process of God is to come to know our place and our God by living out our uniqueness and individuality. In doing so we seek to build on and depend on the gifts of others. In that way we weave a rich tapestry of service that gives back to others and God. It is a service of praise that enables us to see ourselves and God’s creation as good.

Reading: Genesis 22

Planner: Maureen Daly

Title:

The Gift that God Desires

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

My Scripture reading was Genesis 22, a story sometimes called the "Binding of Isaac" or the "Testing of Abraham." I call this story "The Gift that God Desires."

In the reading, God asks Abraham to offer his son to God. Abraham understands that God wants a burnt sacrifice. Abraham plans to take Isaac to an altar on the top of a hill, to cut his throat and then burn the body on wood piled up on the altar. He sets out for the hill with Isaac, a knife, and wood to burn. For part of the journey Isaac carries the wood. Isaac asks his father where the sacrificial animal is. His father answers that God will provide. Abraham prepares to kill Isaac. Before he strikes the fatal blow, an angel of God stops him. A ram caught in the bushes is sacrificed instead. Abraham is praised for being willing to give his son to God. Isaac lives and has descendants who are a people dedicated to God.

This story has been painted many times. I showed slides of paintings along with slides of soldiers and victims of war.

I see the story as an example of the violent and limited imagination of Abraham corrected by the life-affirming message from God. I see in this story a parallel to what we ask of our young, idealistic people who are eager to serve in large causes for the common good.

I honor the service of those in the military because I know they sacrifice a great deal with bravery and at great personal cost. I know that many come home traumatized by what they have seen and done. I hold responsible the people of the United States and the violent vision we have for how to make use of those who put themselves at the country's service. The soldiers put themselves at our service as Isaac obediently follows the directions of his father. We are Abraham. We give the soldiers the work that they do. We the people of the United States have a violent imagination when we think of how to use the willing lives of young people in idealistic service.

On Good Friday I walked the Stations of the Cross around downtown Baltimore with the Catholic peace group Pax Christi. In that walk I met Abby and Allison, two young women who have recently begun attending Mass at St. Vincent's. These young women have both served abroad in peaceful programs: one in the Peace Corps in Turkmenistan and one in Argentina working with the mothers of the disappeared civilians. They are both educated young women with health, energy and ideas. They both work right now in programs serving the people of Baltimore. They are paid very little and they are doing important work. These are two courageous and generous young people. There are many thousands like them across this country. In the United States in 2012 there are 1.4 million people in uniform; there are 8,000 serving in the Peace Corps. As a society I believe that the United States needs to cultivate a more nonviolent imagination when we look for ways to use the lives and energies of those who want to serve.

God asked Abraham for the life of his son. God wants our lives. God wants us to live for God and in service to God and others, not to kill and be killed. I honor all those who offer to serve. I

am horrified by what we ask them to do and by what they do in our name. I want us to change our imaginations as God forced Abraham to change his. Along with Abraham, I want us to imagine a new way to give a life.

Reading: Isaiah & Ecclesiastes Planner: Deb Bertram

Title: Peace

The idea of peace dominates the Bible. In fact, the very first pages of scripture indicate that peace was the common denominator in the Garden of Eden. That is, before sin. Humanity was at peace. The animals were at peace. The earth was at peace. God was at peace with humanity.

When human sin interrupted that peace there in the garden, there was established a separation between humanity and God—and that peace . . . for all of history. But God has not allowed it to stay like that. At the cross, Jesus became our peace by taking all the sin of humanity upon himself to make peace between us and God. The Bible also teaches us that some day He will come again and his title will be fulfilled as Prince of Peace with an established kingdom.

However, there is no peace in our world. Even though we have a God of peace, we constantly hunger for it. And sadly for so many of us there is no peace in our personal lives or our personal souls.

My quest for peace has taken a few directions. In my youth during the Viet Nam War era, my longing for peace took the avenue of civil protest. It was an era of strong social consciousness and dissent, and the cause of peace was everywhere. And yet today there is no peace. An epiphany moment came for me when I read the following words of Mother Theresa:

Let us not use bombs and guns to overcome the world. Let us use love and compassion. Peace begins with a smile. Smile five times a day at someone you don't really want to smile at at all. Do it for peace. Let us radiate the peace of God, and sow his light, and extinguish in the world and in the hearts of all men [sic] all hatred and love of power.

By narrowing my focus to my immediate surroundings I slowly realized that out of necessity, peace needed to be established in my own heart and soul and my small world. The little things within my control were the things I should work on. All of us must intend to work in a special way for peace. In order to bring about that peace of which Jesus spoke when he said, "Peace I give to you. My peace I give to you."

Editor's Note: If, over the last few years, you have picked up on any of my comments (spoken or written) concerning Vatican II, my passion about this Council should come as no surprise. I cannot view the Council as a "done deal" that accomplished what it sent out to do and can now be relegated to the shelf as ancient history. Nor can I ignore what I see as determined, systematic attempts (originating largely in the Vatican and the episcopate it has appointed) to undermine the vision of what the Church is and ought to be.

In this, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Council, readers of this packet can expect something on Vatican II in every issue. This first offering presents a picture aimed at giving some feel for the internal dynamic of the event.

Vatican II – An Initial Look

Excerpted from "Vatican II and Its History" by Giuseppe Alberigo. *Vatican II: A Forgotten Future. Concilium 2005, Issue 4. London: SCM Press. Reprinted with permission. Editor-in-chief of the five volume History of the Second Vatican Council, published in six languages, Giuseppe Alberigo was at the time of this publication professor of history at the Political Sciences faculty of the University of Bologna, Italy, and secretary of the Institute for Religious Sciences in Bologna and was serving on the editorial board of several religious publications. He is editor-in*

In 1959 Pope John XXIII invited the Catholic episcopate to take on an active role at the level of the universal Church in the preparation of the future Council: it was the Pope himself who insisted on guaranteeing the effective freedom of this consultation. During the months the process lasted, however, the secrecy of Pius XII's style of government still prevailed, while the transition from this to an attitude of inquiry was having trouble in making headway.

The Pope wanted Vatican II to be the bishops' Council, but what did this mean? The distance between the view of a small number who proposed that such a re-evaluation had to be theologically based and that of those who were content with disciplinary adjustments, aimed at making each bishop a pope in his own diocese, was immense. . . . This tendency, shared by the great majority, pointed to the completion of Vatican I, while the first sought, more or less explicitly, an effective collegiality.

Almost all the bishops came to the Council in some trepidation. Their reasons were various: they did not know the city of Rome; in the *aula*, the huge basilica of St Peter, they were seated next to unknown neighbours (in alphabetical order of surnames), as John Carmel Heenan, Bishop of Liverpool, observed in his notes.

This was our first day in our allotted places. Hitherto we had sat where we wished and naturally most bishops sat with colleagues from the same hierarchy. . . . Because we were in new places, each felt very isolated. There was no English archbishop anywhere near me. After a few days when we came to know each other I realised that immediately behind me sat the Archbishop of Karachi. He is a highly intelligent and rather young man. We were able to discuss many propositions. But on that [first] morning we were all strangers to each other.

Furthermore, they had difficulty understanding Latin—particularly that of “foreigners”—and their understanding of the arguments under discussion was limited and, to be honest, out of date, so that they soon enough found the debates boringly repetitive—particularly those who were not very agile in distinguishing among various points of view. Finally, hardly anyone knew what the “project” of the Council was, nor long they would have to be far away from home, incurring considerable discomfort and expense. The numerous diaries kept bear witness, especially in the beginning, to a passive, 'student' attitude. They were taking part in a solemn and significant event, but they could not clearly discern its plan.

They found the General Congregations 'tiresome' occasions to attend, given that their main function was to listen: the overwhelming majority of bishops never spoke at all during the three hundred Congregations. Their diaries, here and there, note their daily fatigue, which brought on boredom and the occasional nap. . . . Some were even impatient and acerbic. Several hundred bishops however were involved in the Commissions, where there was far more frequent occasion to be active. Then there were the meetings of Episcopal Conferences, at which—at least—they did not have the problem understanding Latin or other badly understood or completely unknown languages.

With all this, Vatican II turned out to be the greatest achievement of the Catholic episcopate and the Holy Spirit. In the end there is no denying that only the conversion of the bishops, under the guidance of the Spirit, made possible the progress (or, perhaps one should say, the 'overturning') from the inert and timid passivity of the replies sent to Rome by so many hundreds of bishops in 1960 to the body of decisions, approved by the Council. It is right and proper to recognize the limitations and even defects of the Council's conclusions, but it is impossible not to see with the naked eye the qualitative leap that occurred between the views with which the bishops replied to John XXII's invitation, which indicated the problems the Council would have to tackle, and the image of Christianity and the Church that the Council put forward, precisely as a result of the consensus of virtually all of these same bishops. Slowly and almost imperceptibly, a general climate developed, in which a large number of bishops were predisposed to see Vatican II as a unique occasion for the renewal of the Church, along the lines indicated in the preceding decades by the liturgical, biblical, and ecumenical movements, by the question of human resources, and under pressure of the secularization of society.

The excitement of the climate generated in Rome by the prolonged presence of over two thousand bishops, with an equal number of *periti*—theologians, canon lawyers, historians—and a huge number of journalists demonstrating the extent of public interest, in its turn played an ever increasing role in informing the bishops and helping them to make up their minds. While in their official place of work, the *aula*, the great majority of bishops could only play a passive listening role, very soon, 'outside', numerous more interesting and accessible venues were found: conferences, study sessions, assemblies of Bishops' Conferences, exchanges at meals or on buses during the daily journey to and from St Peter's. These were all circumstances in which the bishops moved out from their limited—if not narrow horizon of running a diocese, discovered the larger (perhaps unknown) problems of the universal Church, encountered spiritual and pastoral experiences other than their own, and could not fail to face up to a wide, uneven, and many-faceted world.

The four years of shuttle between diocese and Council (three months in Rome, nine at home) delivered the opportunity to compare the attitudes adopted in the Council on the burning issues (collegiality, episcopal consecration, responsibility for the universal Church, relations with the

laity, war and peace) and the criteria followed within their local diocesan churches. The comparison was often embarrassing, requiring a readiness to self-criticism to which bishops were hardly accustomed. An unfamiliar experience that caught many bishops off guard was that of conflicts. Too many of them were used to a quiet and even flat vision of Christianity and the Church, regarding differences of opinion and conflictive ideas as a defect typical of lay society. In any case, they saw the Council as an ordered assembly, soon to be over, as indeed Roman Curial sources had encouraged them to do. According to their diaries, the actual experience of participating in Vatican II proved to be full of powerful implications and feelings: joy, concern, pride, apprehension. Day by day, a conciliar understanding matured in the minds of the great majority. An understanding that the Council and the hopes it had awakened were in the hands of the bishops, that they—with the Pope—were really responsible for the proclamation of the gospel at that moment in history, that—in short—each one of them had a role to play in an extraordinary event, one they had never imagined.

Worth Revisiting

From The Holy Longing: the search for a Christian spirituality, the book chosen by the Education Committee for group discussion this year.

Spirituality is not something on the fringes, an option for those with a particular bent. None of us has a choice. Everyone has to have a spirituality and everyone does have one, either a life-giving one or a destructive one. No one has the luxury of choosing here because all of us are precisely fired into life with a certain madness that comes from the gods and we have to do something with that. We do not wake up in this world calm and serene, having the luxury of choosing to act or not to act. We wake up crying, on fire with desire, with madness. What we do with that madness is our spirituality.

. . . . We all have a spirituality whether we are religious or not. Spirituality is more about whether we can sleep at night than about whether or not we go to church. It is about being integrated or falling apart, about being within community or lonely, about being in harmony with Mother Earth or being alienated from her. Irrespective of whether or not we let ourselves be consciously shaped by any explicitly religious idea, we act in ways that leave us either healthy or unhealthy, loving or bitter. What shapes our action is our spirituality.

And what shapes our actions is basically what shapes our desire. . . Spirituality concerns what we do with desire. It takes its root in the eros inside of us and it is all about how we shape and discipline that eros.

Mother's Day Proclamation, 1870 – Julia Ward Howe

If you are able to identify a poem/song by Julia Ward Howe it's probably "Battle Hymn of the Republic." Written in 1860, Howe's lyrics present a no-holds-barred defense of war, equating God's actions with those of the Union army: "trampling out the vintage," "loosening the fateful lightning," "a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel."

Ten years later, having witnessed the reality of war in the U.S. and having heard of the horrors of the Franco-Prussian War, Howe's attitude took a dramatic about face. She was the first person to call for a Mother's Day, and her proposal for its observance envisioned it as a dramatic action for peace. Here is her 1870 poem.

Arise then . . . women of this day! Arise, all women who have hearts!
 Whether your baptism be of water or of tears!
 Say firmly:
 "We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies,
 Our husbands will not come to us, reeking with carnage,
 For caresses and applause.
 Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
 All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and patience.
 We, the women of one country,
 Will be too tender of those of another country
 To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

From the voice of a devastated Earth a voice goes up with
 Our own. It says: "Disarm! Disarm!
 The sword of murder is not the balance of justice."
 Blood does not wipe our dishonor,
 Nor violence indicate possession.
 As men have often forsaken the plough and the anvil
 At the summons of war,
 Let women now leave all that may be left of home
 For a great and earnest day of counsel.
 Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.
 Let them solemnly take counsel with each other as to the means
 Whereby the great human family can live in peace . . .
 Each bearing after his own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar,
 But of God --
 In the name of womanhood and humanity, I earnestly ask
 That a general congress of women without limit of nationality,
 May be appointed and held at someplace deemed most convenient
 And the earliest period consistent with its objects,
 To promote the alliance of the different nationalities,
 The amicable settlement of international questions,
 The great and general interests of peace.