

The Privilege of Being a post-Vatican II Catholic



Vatican II forced into the open a re-imagining of Catholicism

the fruit of many years of pastoral praxis and biblical, liturgical and theological investigation into the founts of our tradition

- This had been happening here and there, but, prior to the Council, it was easily missed and by-passed.

Catholicism, in the Roman rite, was thought of as all-encompassing.

a complete belief-system that answered all our questions.

set the direction for our lives.

Fidelity to the 'faith of our fathers'

We were educated and encouraged to live our life within the institutional frameworks that were imagined as fixed and settled.

Many of us learned to love well within this institution and our confidence in it was strengthened by the valuable life-experiences that we experienced.

This security could not survive the diversity of life-experiences opened up by

modern travel,

the information explosion,

awareness of the complexity of the world

the real values found outside the system within which we had grown up.

The river we were in reached the sea, as did many other rivers.

We saw the world from outer space as one globe.

We came to know that people very different from us found meaning and a beautiful life in ways that were foreign to us.

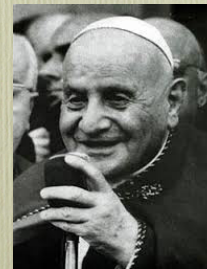


We wanted to discover what it was that they saw.

If some of us preferred to put our head in the sand and pretend that nothing has changed, our children won't have it.

Their search for meaning can't be locked into any system, however rich, however graced, and they don't respect us for opting for a vision that they see as narrow.

The Vatican Council, in its main thrust, faced the challenge. There were compromises and hesitations, but no one can read 'The Church in the Modern World' without sensing a graced opportunity to re-imagine Catholicism.



The greatest tragedy facing Catholicism today is not those who are curious about and who want to explore the real values that they experience outside the system.

It is the huge failure especially of Church leaders to dare the challenge of a new way of looking at our rich tradition and our mission.

Our best hope lies in the large number of Catholics, including many Church leaders, who have embraced the modern world and dared to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus in it.

Christian ecumenism

'Ecumenism is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and the experience of synodality. Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness'(Evangelii Gaudium n. 246).

Vatican II Decree on Ecumenism 'Unitatis Redintegratio'.

Re-integration is needed because unity has been broken and everyone has suffered loss, including Catholics.

True, as Catholics, we have much to offer. Equally true, as Catholics we have lost much and have much to receive.

Our energy must be to draw closer to Jesus
closer to the rich founts of our faith
and to welcome other Christians
to journey with us
so that together we can re-discover
and 're-integrate', to everyone's benefit.

This is a very different attitude. It is also a humbler
one, and, in the light of experience, a more real one.

We had to learn it.

To the next generation it is totally obvious. Nothing
is lost by this movement, except prejudice born of
lack of information.

Those who dare the journey of 'reintegration' are
sometimes, wrongly, accused of 'relativism'.

The Church is not saying that there is no
objective truth and that it doesn't matter what
you believe. It is not saying that everything is a
matter of opinion.

'The Spirit breathes where it wills'. God's Spirit is
alive wherever there is truth and love, and that truth
and love are found in every culture, in every religion,
in every people.

We can enrich each other by sharing our richness,
and we can help each other recognise the error and
the lack of love that is also found in every culture,
in every religion, in every people.

The Catholic Church is always in need of reform, as are all other institutions, and we can be helped in this by people in other Christian communities, in other religions.

and by those who see themselves as atheists, having rejected the only 'god' they have been exposed to, which, in all likelihood, was a false 'god' anyhow. They did well to reject it.

That 'God' is indeed 'the heart and the beyond of everything' makes sense to the younger generation. A smaller 'god' makes no sense to them (thank God!). If we want to talk about 'salvation', they know that we have to consider the biosphere.

Pope Francis' Encyclical on Care for our common home

Everything belongs to everything else, and fundamentally, everything is sacred in its own way.

God is, in the words of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin 'the heart and the beyond of everything.' We should remember that not many were listening to Teilhard prior to the Council, and there were Church authorities who tried to silence him!

Religion as lived in the first part of last century was powerless to prevent two world wars.

Religion today that is locked into one culture is experienced as destructive, wherever we look, be it the Middle East, Sudan, Northern Ireland, the USA or any other part of our world.

Young people are not going to buy it, unless they opt to disengage from the world for reasons of apathy or insecurity.

The modern Church teaches that the one God in whom we believe – the God who is love – is mysteriously gracing every human being and drawing everyone in communion.

For this to be real it must be happening where people are, from within their culture including their religious culture.

This is a big shift in imagining Catholicism from that of our childhood and early education.

The fact that God is calling everyone to Himself does not mean that everything within every culture is good.

Every culture needs constant purification, but we must work at removing the ‘beam’ from our own eye before we start attempting to remove the ‘speck’ out of the eyes of others!

The fact that God is calling everyone to salvation, and from within their own lives, including their religious lives, need not inevitably lead to relativism.

It does not mean that we, as Catholics, have nothing to say to our world, nothing to offer. On the contrary, there has perhaps never been a time when missionary work has been more important.

Arguably there has never been a time when people’s spiritual search has been more intense.

What it does mean is that we have to connect with this search, and focus on sharing meaning.

A security that fails to respect and engage people’s profound longing is valueless, if not decidedly harmful.