

Christ the King Golden Anniversary  
Missoula, MT  
June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016

In 1965, Bishop Raymond G. Hunthausen returned from the fourth and final session of the Second Vatican Council. He was among the youngest of the 2500 bishops of the Council, frequently mistaken as a driver. And now, at age 95, he holds the distinction of being the last living American Bishop to have participated in all four sessions of Vatican II.

Last week I visited Archbishop Hunthausen at the assisted living facility in Helena, where he lives with his brother, Father Jack Hunthausen. While the Archbishop's body has become frail and uncooperative, his mind is lucid, and his memory crystal-clear.

During our visit, I told him that the parish community of Christ the King would be celebrating its Golden Anniversary. He asked me to convey warm greetings and congratulations to Father Jeff Fleming, the staff, students, and parishioners of the parish community.

Archbishop Hunthausen reminisced about those days following the Council, and recalled the time when he, in 1966, established Christ the King Parish with two particular purposes in mind.

The first was his desire to convey a strong public message that university students and staff are deeply valued in the Diocese of Helena. He therefore created plans to open a brand-new facility on these grounds, with a sister building project at Montana State University.

Second, he created this community as a kind of laboratory where the vision and values of the Second Vatican Council could be embraced and embodied, most especially among the student body – – future leaders within the wider community and diocese.

In those heady years following the Council, Christ the King Parish, its priests, staff, and parishioners took seriously this mission and mandate.

Pope John XXIII used the Italian word *aggiornamento* as a catch phrase to capture the spirit of the Council. Taken literally, the word means renewal or reform. In visual image, *aggiornamento* symbolizes opening the windows of the Church to let fresh air come in. But it also means allowing the light of the Holy Spirit to pour forth from the windows of the Church, so that God's radiant love can shine forth.

During the ensuing years, the vision of the Council became a constant leitmotif, a North Star, that guided the mission and ministries carried out in this community.

From 1961 until 1965, the Council Fathers produced four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations, all differing not only in rank but also in importance. Among the documents, the late Avery Cardinal Dulles considered the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* as the Council's most momentous achievement. Literally translated, *Lumen Gentium* means "light of the nations" referring, of course, to Jesus Christ as the light of the world.

The image of light also references Christ's mandate to you and me, that we must individually and collectively "place our light on lampstand, and let it shine before others, so they may see our good deeds and glorify our heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:15-16)

Today, as we celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Christ the King community, I would like to describe for you seven beams of light that emanate from the writings of the Second Vatican Council. You may wish to add your own.

I would suggest that these beams of light hold the potential to renew, recharge, replenish, and reinvigorate the life of every parish community, if we embody and embrace them anew as works inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

### **1. The Universal Call to Holiness**

In pre-conciliar times, the call to holiness was largely considered the domain of clergy and religious. This paradigm unintentionally relegated the laity to the sidelines of the spiritual life. The Council Fathers underscored the dignity of all the baptized, as they wrote "all Christians, in any state or walk of life, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and the perfection of charity." The Council's vision is clear and compelling, and the universal call to holiness is one of the reasons why Cardinal Dulles considered the dogmatic constitution as the Council's most important achievement. Holiness is our shared destiny, our common spiritual DNA. All are invited by the Lord himself to walk in His company as adopted sons and daughters. This is why the early Church Fathers called the sacrament of baptism the sacrament of enlightenment.

### **2. Liturgical Renewal**

In the days following the Council, the most obvious and apparent change experienced by ordinary Catholics was the introduction of the vernacular into the celebration of liturgy. But this was not the most important liturgical value introduced by the Council Fathers. They gave pastors and people the admonition that Christians should not be present at liturgy simply as strangers or silent spectators. Rather, they insisted on the "full, active, conscious participation" (SC14) of the laity in the celebration of liturgy. Beautifully prepared liturgy, prayerful music, strong homiletic preaching, sacred silence, and the full panoply of liturgical ministries are the expectation and the gold standard to be present at every liturgy and in every community across the globe. All activities of the Church, her mission, her ministry, and apostolic life should not only flow from the

Eucharistic liturgy, but constantly return to it as the “source and summit” of the life of the Church.

### **3. Theology of the Ampersand**

A third beam of light that emanated from the Council is the connection between liturgy and justice, worship and compassion, prayer and service, praise and mercy, contemplation and action; or, in scriptural parlance, “love of God and love of neighbor.” The Council Fathers gave impetus to the emerging body of Catholic Social Teaching, which reached its full flower in the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. The Council Fathers articulated the conviction that every person, without exception, is fashioned in the image and likeness of God, and has inherent value and in innate dignity. In the years that followed the Council, new concepts like solidarity, subsidiarity, the common good, and a preferential option for the poor became the theological foundation undergirding the charitable works of the Church. But it did not stop there. The Church recognized its responsibility to engage actively with civil leaders and the private sector to help address the underlying causes of poverty and injustice that keep generations of people enslaved in need. This teaching is so central to the life of the Church that Dorothy Day insisted, “God made heaven hinge on the way we act toward Him in his disguise of commonplace, frail, ordinary human beings.”

### **4. Shared Responsibility**

Bishop Hunthausen returned from the Council with a new vocabulary and a new way of carrying out the saving mission of the Church. He introduced concepts like cooperation, collaboration, consultation, collegiality, or in his words, “shared responsibility.” In pre-Council times, much of the heavy lifting in the Church was done by priests and sisters. The Council introduced a more expansive role for the laity, encouraging them to “exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, both in the spiritual and in the temporal order.” New structures followed this vision – in particular the creation of pastoral and finance councils and a wide array of consultative bodies and boards of directors. “Their activity is so necessary,” wrote the Church Fathers, “that without it, the apostolate of the pastor is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness.” Shared responsibility became another sign of *aggiornamento*.

### **5. Ecumenical and Interfaith Dialogue**

In a moment of agreement, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and theologian Hans Küng both agreed that there could be no peace among the nations until there is peace among the great religions. During the past 30 years, for a variety of reasons, ecumenical dialogue has taken a backseat across much of the globe. This sad reality is beginning to change. Pope Francis is modeling for us the import and impact of respectful dialogue, shared prayer, and common works of mercy. He and the Council Fathers are of one mind when they envisioned a world that prefers dialogue over diatribe, invitation over invective, and humility over hubris.

Ours must be a Church that intentionally cultivates respective dialogue and relationships among all peoples, even those who hold positions and perspectives which are radically different from our own. We now live in a global village, and ecumenical and interfaith dialogue are now more important than ever.

## **6. Reconciliation and Healing**

The Church must be a place of mercy and the home of forgiveness. In every community and institution, in every parish and human family, there are people who are wounded, angry, abused and aggrieved. Reconciliation is at the heart of the Gospel of Jesus. Pope John XXIII insisted that the Church should dispense the medicine of mercy generously and copiously, showing herself to be the "loving mother of all, benign, patient, forgiving, and full of mercy." This has been the constant theme in Pope Francis' writing and preaching, and a mandate that flows from the heart of the Lord himself. To paraphrase William Shakespeare, "The quality of mercy falls like gentle rain from heaven. It is twice blessed, blessing the one who gives and the one who receives." Reconciliation has the power to shed light in darkness, and effect healing in wounded souls.

## **7. The New Evangelization**

The years following the Council produced no small number of casualties, persons who, for a wide array of reasons, parted company with the Catholic family. The New Evangelization envisioned by the Council invites all the baptized to become as missionary disciples and to invite disenfranchised Catholics to come home. The New Evangelization asks all of us to introduce those who do not know the name of Jesus to encounter Him personally. In recent years, there has been a dangerous ecclesiology at play a model that espouses a "fewer but purer" mentality. I reject this premise outright. Pope Francis has written "the Church is the home of all, not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal church to a nest protecting mediocrity." We must never grow weary of inviting others to know Christ, and to announce that the doors of the Church are open in welcome and in warm embrace. Awakening the sleeping giant of the laity, and commissioning each person to embrace his or her role as evangelizer unlocks great doors of opportunity. The sainted Pope John Paul stated powerfully, "No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can avoid the supreme duty to proclaim Christ to all peoples." The gospel says it well -- "You must let your light shine forth for all to see."

Just over 50 years ago, this parish was founded one year after the Second Vatican Council ended. After final session of the Council, the Archbishop of Baltimore, Lawrence Cardinal Sheehan, wisely observed, "The Council has ended; the Council has just begun."

In the life of the Church, fifty years is a very short time.

Your Golden Jubilee is a good time to examine meaningfully and deeply the quality of your own commitment to the vision and values of the Second Vatican Council and the call for *aggiornamento* proclaimed by John XXIII. This vision has the power to strengthen our relationship with Christ, and to renew the spiritual lives of our families, parishes, and diocese.

On this jubilee day, I extend congratulations to you, Father Jeff Fleming, and to your predecessors, students, staff, and parishioners.

The real work of the Council has just begun.