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THE CHURCH RESPLENDENT IN CHRIST

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*Fr. Edward Berbusse, SJ is no stranger to these pages. In this beautiful essay on the mystery of the Church, he probes the profound teaching of *Lumen Gentium* and shows how this document is grounded in Catholic Tradition. In so doing, he reveals the unique position of the See of Peter and its essential role in the service of *unitas* as willed by Christ.*



IN THE FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLOSING OF VATICAN II, POPE PAUL VI DIRECTED an *Apostolic Exhortation* (1970) to the bishops “in peace and communion with the Apostolic See,” reminding them of the pastoral words of *Gaudium et Spes* (sec. 54): “The Church of Christ takes her stand in the midst of the anxieties of this age, and ... intends to propose to our age over and over again, in season and out of season, the apostolic message.” He was very aware that “the faithful are troubled in their faith by the accumulation of ambiguities, uncertainties and doubts about its essentials.” The Holy Father then spoke of specific problems: the Trinitarian and Christological dogmas, the mystery of the Eucharist and the Real Presence, the Church as the institution of salvation, the priestly ministry, prayer and the sacraments. His concern also extended to the moral requirements in marriage and life, and to the radical demythologizing of Holy Scripture. The modern tendency, he said, is to “reconstruct from psychological and sociological data a Christianity cut off from the unbroken Tradition which links it to the faith of the apostles, and a tendency to extol a Christian life deprived of religious elements. In a whole series—either before or after this exhortation of 1970—the Pontiff gave guidance to the Church through either encyclicals or declarations of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith.¹ He stressed the right of the people to receive the word of God, the whole word, “of which the Church has not ceased to acquire deeper comprehension.” Here he touched upon a theme that was profoundly explained by Cardinal Newman in his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*.² The Pope insisted that the unchangeable teaching must command faithful respect; that “the deposit of faith itself ... is one thing; the way in which these truths are presented is another, although they must keep the same sense and signification.”

The Church, ever in union with Christ, has an intrinsic and perduring structure that was given by Christ and entrusted to the bishops who, in collegiality, and ever in union with the successor of Peter, keep the Tradition. The faithful consequently are bound to this teaching, discipline and liturgy; they are to love their bishops. So the Council taught: “Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to Divine and Catholic truth.” (*Lumen Gentium*, 22ff.) Paul VI warned the bishops of prevailing relativism, “an arbitrary selection ... reducing God’s design to the limits of our human views,” and “restricting the proclaiming of His word to what our ears like to hear.” They were reminded that sociological surveys which discover thought-patterns of a people of a particular place, “cannot of themselves constitute a determining criterion of truth.”

They were to be wary of theologians and exegetes who lapsed in their fidelity to the Christian Tradition. While freedom of conscience was valid for personal decisions in relation to the faith, it was not to be determinative of the content and scope of Divine Revelation. Scientific research in hermeneutics is a way of “investigating the revealed data”; but the data transcends the exegesis in both its origin and content. True theology, he said, “rests upon the written word of God, together with sacred Tradition, as its perpetual foundation.” Here the Pope cited the Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation (*Dei Verbum*, 24) of Vatican Council II. Paul was most careful to remind the bishops that “it is not to the learned that God has confided the duty of authentically interpreting the faith of the Church; that faith is borne by the life of the people whose bishops are responsible for them before God.” The bishops were advised of St. Paul’s Letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 4:1-5): “Refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience.” How much the bishops of today must be “brave under trials” and “preach the Good News” as their life’s work. This is the role of the bishop in the perduring structure that Christ has given to His Church. They will be severely tried to weaken before the brilliance of theologians who distort the nature of Christ and His Church; scholarly Scriptural exegetes will lure them into a demythologizing of Christ; orthopractic liberation theologians are today tempting the bishops to accept a form of Christian renewal that wishes to draw upon Marxist analysis to produce a deceptive form of justice. None of these lures are of Divine origin. The bishops, who greatly need the prayers of their flock, need discernment that is primarily found in the Mystery of the Church.



MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

It is in the mystery of the Church that we look upon its most profound origin, life and fulfillment in Christ. In this mystery is found the splendor of the Church, the transcendent font of life that, while nourishing the faithful people of God, is ever hidden in Eternity.

This is the name given to the first chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), the foundational document of the 16 documents that constitute the teachings of Vatican Council II. In 1972, in his Sources of Renewal, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla spoke of it as “the key to the whole of the Council’s thought.” It presents “the complex variety of ways towards the enrichment of faith, leading from Vatican II into the future.”³³ The Church is universal, unrestricted; it must “correspond to the Divine Plan of salvation and the work of redemption. As we read in the Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76): “The Church, by reason of her role and competence, is not identified with any political community. . . . It is at once the sign and safeguard of the transcendental dimension of the human person.” It is with this Good News of Christ that John Paul II visits the People of God in every country of all continents that they may return to the contemplation of the Mystery of Christ in His Church, be enriched in their Faith and ever more fully participate in Divine Truth.

The dogmatic Constitution on the Church begins with the words, “Christ is the light of humanity.” He, the Divine Person, subsisting in two natures, establishes His Church, as a means of salvation; deepens the Divine dialogue with His creatures. And this reaching out to man is through His Church from which visibly shines the light of Christ, and is “in the nature of a sacrament,” a sign and instrument for communion with God and unity among men. This sacred synod of Vatican II set out to explain the Church’s nature and mission, “in accord with the tradition laid down by earlier councils.” The Latin says it beautifully: “*praecedentium Conciliorum argumento instans*”³⁴ Then the Conciliar Fathers explained the role of the Trinity in this work of Divine Love. The Father “at all times held out to man the means of salvation,” to be accomplished in the Eternal Son, “image of the invisible God, and firstborn of every creature.” This Church would call all in Christ and through Him draw all to adoptive sonship; it would grow as He reached out to them from His Cross, renewed in the Sacrifice of the altar. And, lest some be fearful and

without hope, the Fathers repeated: “All men are called to this union with Christ.”⁵ The Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, becomes the “Spirit of life, the fountain of water springing up to eternal life.” He “guides the Church in the way of all truth ... bestowing upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts.” Here, in this first chapter, we see the preparation for the succeeding two: the People of God and the Church Hierarchical. While the people of God will ever receive many gifts, both ordinary and extraordinary, they will need and essentially depend upon the established structure, the teaching Church of bishops who are in union of collegiality and dependent on the successor of Peter for completion of unity. This Cardinal Newman called the *sacramentum unitatis* and trenchantly argued:

If the whole of Christendom is to form one Kingdom, one head is essential; at least this is the experience of eighteen hundred years. As the Church grew into form, so did the power of the Pope develop; and wherever the Pope has been renounced, decay and division have been the consequence. We know of no other way of preserving the *Sacramentum Unitatis* but a centre of unity.⁶

And this Church has impressed upon it the marks of the working of the Holy Trinity; it cannot defect from that integrity. And so, said the Synodal Fathers, quoting from St. Cyprian of the 3rd century: “The universal Church is seen to be ‘a people brought into unity from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.’”⁷

This Church is a cultivated field, the tillage of God which has received the “seed,” the word of the Lord sown in it. It is a flock of which God is the shepherd. It is the building whose cornerstone is Christ, and whose workers are the apostles; and, as “living stones we here on earth are built into it” (1 Pet. 2:5). Baptism brings us into likeness to Christ; and “in the breaking of the Eucharistic Bread, we are taken up into communion with Him and with one another.”⁸ We form one body, with only one Spirit whose gifts are for the preservation of that oneness. The primacy of gifts is in the grace of the apostles “to whose authority the Spirit subjects even those who are endowed with charisms” (1 Cor. 14). This visible society, this spiritual community forms one complex reality, bonded in elements both human and Divine. And so the “social structure of the Church serves the Spirit of Christ.” Here the Council Fathers teach: “This is the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic.... It subsists in

the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him.” The Fathers give place to true ecumenism by observing that “many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines”; such gifts, however, “belong to the Church of Christ . . . forces impelling toward Catholic unity.” Certain dissident theologians attempt to change this sole Church of Christ, the Catholic Church, into only one model, while other ecclesial bodies are said to express other models. Such fallacious reasoning overlooks the obvious meaning of the Conciliar teaching, a reading that takes words out of context, fails to see other sections of *Lumen Gentium* (as chapters 3 & 4) which sustain Papal teaching; and ignores the references that give interpretation. One who reads carefully will see that Vatican II reaches back to the *Mystici Corporis* (1943) of Pius XII, to the dogmatic constitution of Vatican I (1870) and to the Tridentine Profession of Faith (1564) in which one confesses that the holy, catholic and apostolic Roman Church is the mother and teacher of all.⁹ This integrity of teaching has been described by Cardinal Wojtyla as

... an organic cohesion expressing itself simultaneously in the thought and action of the Church as a community of believers. It expresses itself, so that ... we can rediscover and, as it were, re-read the magisterium of the last Council in the whole previous magisterium of the Church, while on the other we can rediscover and re-read the whole preceding magisterium in that of the last Council.¹⁰

Here lives this one Church, “given strength ... so that she may reveal in the world, faithfully, however darkly, the mystery of her Lord until, in the consummation, it shall be manifested in full light.”¹¹



THE PEOPLE OF GOD

This mystical love of God for His children reaches out at all times and in every race to “anyone who fears God and does what is right.” His desire is to make them into a people, as He joined in covenant with the Israelite race. In this He pre-figured the “new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ.” In His Blood, Christ instituted the new covenant, as one and in

the Spirit. Immediately the Council Fathers etched the oneness of this people, with its ecumenical apostolate of evangelization. The Messianic people, “although it does not actually include all men, and at times may appear as a small flock, is, however, a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.”¹² Since Christ is high priest to God the Father, so His new people must be a “kingdom of priests.” It is to be a priesthood in and of sacrifice: the common priesthood of the faithful who receive the sacraments, pray, give witness of a holy life and engage in active charity, while the ministerial/hierarchical priesthood “forms and rules the priestly people by effecting the Eucharistic sacrifice.”¹³ Since Christ is also prophet, His holy People must share in His prophetic office, by living a life of faith and love. This is described by the Fathers as an “anointing that comes from the holy one.” When so united in Christ, this “whole body of the faithful” cannot err in matters of Belief. It is a gift, a sense of faith (*sensus fidei*) shared by the whole people, “from the bishops to the last of the faithful.”¹⁴

This infallibility of the Church is not autonomous to each member of the faithful, but depends upon the Spirit of truth who holds them in covenant; they for their part must submit to the Holy Spirit who gives them the *magisterium* (sacred teaching authority) for their guidance. The whole creedal teaching of the Church, the entire moral commandments, the discipline of the sacraments in both conferral and ministry is dependent on those who rule the Kingdom of Christ. These are the bishops, each of which must be in collegial union with the others and most especially with the Apostolic See, the Bishop of Rome and Vicar of Christ for the whole Church.

While the sacraments are the ordinary and greatest gifts in the Church, the Holy Spirit also distributes “special graces” (called “charisms”) to be used for “the renewal and building up of the Church.” They are “fitting and useful for the needs of the Church”; but such “extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly desired nor is it from them that the fruits of apostolic labors are to be presumptuously expected.” One is here aware of the Council’s cautioning of those who would expect, as a necessity, the gift of tongues, their interpretation or other extraordinary experiences. Instead, they should submit to the judgment of those in charge of the Church as to the “genuineness and proper use of these gifts.”¹⁵

Since there is one People of God and since “all men are called to belong to the new People of God,”

how can men relate to this unique oneness? They do relate. The Council teaches that all belong (*pertinenti*) or are related (*ordinantur*): “the Catholic faithful, others who believe in Christ, and finally all mankind, called by God’s grace to salvation.”¹⁶ In a series of seven categories, the Fathers of the Council delineate the degree of incorporation or relation of peoples to the one Church of Christ which is the Catholic Church. First, there are the Catholic faithful who are fully incorporated and “accept all the means of salvation given to the Church” and her entire organization: Faith, sacraments and ecclesiastical government. They are joined in the physical structure that is ruled by the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. Secondly, catechumens who desire in the Holy Spirit to be incorporated, and so are joined with her.¹⁷ Third, the baptized who have not preserved unity/communion under Peter’s successor, but who love Holy Scripture, have zeal and Baptism “which unites them to Christ.” Many possess the episcopate and so celebrate the Eucharist; they are indeed “in some real way joined to us in the Holy Spirit.” Fourth, the Jews of the promises and covenants who have not yet received the Gospel are “related to the People of God in various ways.” Moslems who “profess the faith of Abraham” and adore the one, merciful God are related. A sixth category consists of those who “in shadows and images seek the unknown God”; God is not remote from them. And those who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel or the Church, yet “seek God with a sincere heart” and try to do His will (*operibus adimplere ... conantur*), “those too may achieve eternal salvation.” Lastly, Divine Providence does not deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those “who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God.” They are recipients of grace, but must strive to lead a good life. They too are enlightened that they may come to eternal life.¹⁸

This extraordinary teaching of the Church reveals its universal love for all men; it commits itself to reaching out to all men with ecumenical zeal. The universal salvific will, as it was Christ’s, is the Church’s as she sends heralds of the Gospel to all men. This is the urging of the Holy Spirit within her: the desire to incorporate all men into Christ, “so that in love for Him they may grow to full maturity” (*usque ad plenitudinem crescant*). And so, though all come to God by His grace and with the labor of an honest conscience, in ways unknown to us, “each disciple of Christ has the obligation of spreading the faith to the best of his ability.”¹⁹

THE CHURCH HIERARCHICAL

In its role of apostolical zeal that reaches out to all men, the Church has a visible structure of bishops who, in succession to the apostles, shepherd the People of God ever increasing the sheepfold. A variety of offices are constituted and their holders invested with a sacred power. These are the bishops who have Peter's successor as their head; in his sacred primacy and infallible teaching office unity is assured. And so "bishops, successors of the apostles ... together with Peter's successor, the Vicar of Christ and visible head of the whole Church, direct the house of the living God:"²⁰ In the writing of Cardinal Journet, we read:

The Father, Christ, the apostolic body composed of Peter and the other apostles, the people-these are the links of a chain proclaimed by the whole Gospel. And impulse of extraordinary power began ... passing first into Christ ... from Christ into the apostolic body.... It subsists like a unique living thing from generation to generation.... The religion of the Gospel is not egalitarian, but apostolic; it is not a religion without intermediaries, but hierarchic.²¹

In correction of the errors of the Reformers of the 16th century, who were teaching that there is no special priesthood and with it a hierarchy-recognizing only a "general priesthood" of all the faithful-the Church in the Council of Trent declared: "There exists in the Catholic Church a hierarchy instituted by Divine ordinance. (Denz. 966) These hierarchical magisterial powers of the Church embrace a teaching, pastoral and sacerdotal power. Again, in 1794, Pius VI rejected as heretical the Gallican teaching of the pseudo-synod of Pistoia that the power of the Church was transferred immediately to the totality of the faithful, and from the Church to their pastors. (Denz. 1502) In 1907, in the *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Pius X condemned the Modernist proposition that the Catholic hierarchy is a result of a general historical development, (Denz. 2091) and in 1943 Pius XII rejected the separation of the Church of charity from the juridical Church, saying: "There can be no real opposition or conflict between the invisible mission of the Holy Spirit and the juridical commission of Ruler and Teacher received from Christ, since they mutually complement and perfect each other." (*Mystici Corporis*, sec. 66). Lastly, in *Ecclesiam Suam*, (1964) Paul VI taught:

The community of the faithful can be profoundly certain of its participation in the Mystical Body

of Christ when it realizes that by Divine institution, the ministry of the Hierarchy of the Church is there to give it a beginning, to give it birth, to teach and sanctify and direct it. It is by means of this Divine instrumentality that Christ communicates to His mystical members the marvels of His truth, and of His grace. (sec. 37)

In conformity with this constant teaching, Vatican II repeated the tradition, saying: "Following in the steps of the First Vatican Council" this Synod teaches that Jesus Christ set up the Church by entrusting the apostles with their mission, as shepherds in His Church, and with the power to pass on this authority. These shepherds He constituted in the "form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which He placed Peter."²²

Certain Scripture scholars take exception to this clear traditional teaching of the Church by suggesting that "the sacramental 'powers' were given to the Christian community in the persons of the Twelve; and the Church may also recognize the sacramental authority of others who were not ordained by the Twelve." The reason given for such deviant teaching is: "If the sacramental power resides in the Church, it can be given to those whom the Church designates or acknowledges, without a lineal connection to the Twelve"; and, finally, "the affirmation that all the bishops of the early Christian Church could trace their appointments or ordination to the Apostles is simply without proof."²³ The rashness of such statements indicates that, despite the learned use by exegetes of their scientific tools, they labor under a proclivity to fallibility; and soneed the guidance of the Magisterium which was established to interpret the harmony between Scripture and Tradition. It is necessary to recall Vatican II's teaching in *Dei Verbum*:

It is clear that, in the supremely wise arrangement of God, sacred Tradition, sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church are so connected and associated that one of them cannot stand without the others.²⁴

It was the Apostles who were commanded to preach the Gospel, to communicate the gifts of God to all men; they handed on by the spoken word, by the institutions they established, both from the lips of Christ and from the prompting of the Holy Spirit²⁵ Others "associated with the apostles . . . (and) under the inspiration of the same Holy Spirit, committed the message of salvation to writing. It is apostolic teaching that is to be

preserved and handed on; it is the apostles who warn the faithful to keep the Tradition that comes from them.²⁶

It is strengthening to see that other Scriptural scholars are not so temerarious in their studies, and are clear in seeing that the New Testament, “unlike the Qumran literature, is not a document separate from the community . . . the living Tradition.” In one²⁷ of these we are reminded of Pope St. Clement I of Rome (92-101) who said

Christ was sent by God and the Apostles by Christ. Both things then came in proper order... Our Apostles knew that there would be contention over the bishops' office ... so ... they instituted the above-mentioned (officers) and afterwards gave them a permanent character so that when they died, other approved men should succeed to their ministry.

Here is a case of Apostolic succession, from the unique See of Peter which intervenes in the Church established by Paul thirty years before in Corinth. It is not only apostolic succession, but unity of that succession's teaching—assured by Peter's See—which is necessary. Today we are witnessing a whole cloud of apocalyptic scholars and non-scholars

who would raise up, within the one Church, a variety of models of the church and a plurality of teachings. The confusion would be insurmountable if it were not for the apostolic succession in the bishops who hold union with Rome. The *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II states this unequivocally: “That Divine mission, which was committed by Christ to the Apostles, is destined to last until the end of the world.... Apostles were careful to appoint successors in this hierarchically constituted society.”²⁸ Though they had “various helpers in their ministry,” they provided that on their death “other proven men should take over their ministry.” These men are the bishops; and, “in virtue of the unbroken succession ... are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line.” The Fathers of the Council call upon the witness of St. Irenaeus (2nd century) to the fact that “the apostolic tradition is manifested and preserved in the whole world by those who were made bishops by the apostles and by their succes-

sors down to our own time.” It was the Apostles, not the Church in some democratic proceeding, that passed on, by imposition of hands, episcopal consecration. And this conferral is the office of sanctifying, teaching, ruling which can be exercised “only in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college.” As was clearly taught in the Council of Trent (Denz. 960), “The powers bestowed on the Apostles have descended to the bishops.”²⁹

BOND OF UNION IN PETER'S SEE

As we have already said, collegiality of bishops is impossible without the *sacramentum unitatis*. This was given by Christ to Peter; and in like manner is held by the Roman Pontiff. Consequently, no bishop nor the college of bishops has authority, “unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor,” because he, “by his office as Vicar of Christ and as pastor of the entire Church, has

full, supreme and universal power over the whole Church.” So insistent is the Council on the fullness of Papal powers that it continues to repeat the formula, most especially in sections 22 through 25 of the *Lumen Gentium*, with such expression as:

Together with their head, the Supreme Pontiff, and never apart

from him, they (the bishops) have supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff.³⁰

By definition in Vatican I, the Church as ever holds that Christ appointed Peter to be the first of all the Apostles ... to the primacy of jurisdiction. (Denz. 1823) Those today who reject this teaching align themselves with a host of historical adversaries: Marsiglio of Padua and John of Jandun, Wycliffe and Hus, the protesting Reformers, Gallicans, Old Catholics and late 19th century Modernists.

While bishops, in their own churches, are the visible source and foundation of unity and constituted as models of the universal church, they are obliged to enter into collaboration with one another and with Peter's suc-



cessor.³¹ In their ministry they are to fulfill a canonical mission according to legitimate customs acknowledged by Peter's successor; and to object or refuse such Apostolic communion disenfranchises the bishop's use of his office.³²

In section 25 of the *Lumen Gentium*, we find the strongest expression of the bishops as shepherds who are "to be revered by all as witnesses of Divine and Catholic truth." The faithful have an obligation to "submit to their bishops' decision, in matters of faith and morals, and to adhere to it with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind." Even here the Council Fathers qualify the obedience to the bishop with the phrase, "who teach in communion with the Roman Pontiff." Immediately thereafter they teach that

This loyal submission of the will and intellect must be given, in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra*; in such wise that his supreme teaching authority be acknowledged with respect, and sincere assent be given to decisions made by him, conformably with his manifest mind, which is made known principally either by the character of the documents in question or by the frequency with which a certain doctrine is proposed, or by the manner in which the doctrine is formulated.³³

When, in July 25, 1968, Paul VI promulgated the Church's teaching on contraceptive birth control, there was a vociferous reply from dissident elements in the Church, even though the Holy Father made clear that this was the constant teaching of the Church, on a most serious moral matter; that the teaching authority of the Church is "competent to interpret the natural moral law"; that there was never any doubt about this teaching; and that he taught "By virtue of the mandate entrusted to us by Christ." To this protest against Papal teaching, a large group of Jesuit professors at Fordham University responded in loyal support of the Holy Father, citing as their source this section 25 of the *Lumen Gentium*. One of the professors, in an extended treatment of the "character" of the encyclical, pointed out that the language was absolute and exclusionary; that contraception was labelled "intrinsically evil" and "always illicit"; that the individual conscience must be formed by Church teaching, since to give it an absolute finality would be to deny evil where the Church has authority to teach. He further remarked that infallibility is not only from a solemn *ex*

cathedra definition; but also from the ordinary teaching of the Church; and in the case of moral matters it is most usual to look to the constancy, longevity and serious witness of the indefectible Church. Finally, consensus of theologians is the lowest of theological notes; and the greatest of theologians, St. Thomas Aquinas wrote: "We must abide by the Pope's judgment rather than by the opinion of any of the theologians, however well-versed he may be in Divine scriptures." (Quodl. IX, A. a. 6)³⁴ It was with singular oversight or intent of purpose that theologians then and today deny this irreformable Papal teaching.

The Council, especially in section 25 of the *Lumen Gentium*, reiterates this basic teaching of Papal infallibility:

When the Roman Pontiff, or the body of bishops together with him, define a doctrine; they make the definition in conformity with revelation itself, to which all are bound to adhere ... and this revelation is transmitted integrally either in written form or in oral tradition through the legitimate succession of bishops and above all through the watchful concern of the Roman Pontiff.

Again the Fathers teach that "the Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful ... he proclaims in an absolute decision a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals." And so his definitions are "irreformable by their very nature and *not by reason of the assent of the Church*, in as much as they were made with the assistance of the Holy Spirit promised to him in the person of blessed Peter himself; and so are in no way in need of the approval of others; and do not admit of appeal to any other tribunal."³⁵ How resplendent in the Holy Spirit is the Church which speaks the Word that is Christ, always guided by the Spirit of God, and ever constituting its One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic nature. We, as members who share in the Word and in the Body and Blood of Christ are transformed into that which we receive. The Church must, by such constitution, be one, not pluralistic, in doctrine, one in the sacramental means of sanctification, and one in the rule that shepherds the sheepfold. God is One; His created bride must be one in Him. This conservation of oneness is the bishop's task, primarily for the whole Church and then for the particular Church assigned to him. The bishop has this power properly, ordinarily and immediately from his consecration in Orders; but his exercise is "ultimately

controlled by the supreme authority of the Church.” The Holy Spirit preserves their prerogative, while protecting it from deviation by Christ’s Vicar of the whole Church. The faithful should cling (*adhaerere*) to the bishop, as the Church to Christ, and Christ to the Father, so that “all things may agree in unity (*per unitatem consentiant*) and bring forth abundant fruit to the glory of God.”³⁶ Priests must “constitute, together with their bishop, a unique sacerdotal college (*presbyterium*) ...(and so) render the universal Church visible.”³⁷

If the Church is to be a witness to Christ, to be visible and resplendent, then priests and bishops must live in charity and union with Christ’s Vicar. It is sadden-

ing for fellow priests and serious scandal to the laity when the clergy break ranks, and teach false doctrine by word and example. When St. Paul summoned the priests of Ephesus to Miletus (about 30 miles away), he was moved by the Spirit to urge them to protect their communities against the teachings of false prophets. With prophetic foresight he said: “From your own number, men will present themselves distorting the truth and leading astray any who follow them.” (Acts 20:30) It is under the guidance of the Spirit that John Paul II tirelessly visits the People of God; and can truly say, as Paul did, “I have never shrunk from announcing to you God’s design in its entirety.” (Acts 20:27)



NOTES

1 *Apostolic Exhortation*, on Fifth Anniversary of close of Vatican II, 1970.

2 John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Image, 1960).

3 Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 35, 18.

4 *Constitutiones, Decreta, Declarationes* (Rome: Vaticanus II, 1966), *Typis Polygotis Vaticanis*, “Constitutio Dogmatica de Ecclesia,” sec. 1. *Instans argumento*—standing on the argument (teaching); from the “Lumen gentium” (hereafter, L. G.).

5 *Vatican Council II*, Austin Flannery, O.P., ed. (New York: Costello, 1975). L.G., sec. 3.

6 Newman, *Essay*, p. 163.

7 L.G., sec. 7.

8 L.G., sec. 8.

9 Erroneous interpretations are found in Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1974). Also, in Leonardo Boff, OFM, *Church, Charism and Power*. Also, in Richard McBrien’s “Toning Down Vatican II,” in *Northwest Catholic Progress*, July 16, 1987, where he repeats Dulles’ error of distinguishing “is” and “subsists.” Both are of the belief that the one Church of Christ “goes beyond the visible limits” of the Catholic Church.

10 Wojtyła, *Sources*, 40.

11 L.G., sec. 8.

12 L.G., sec. 9.

13 L.G., sec. 10.

14 L.G., sec. 12.

15 *Ibid.*

16 L.G., sec. 13.

17 L.G., sec. 14.

18 L.G., sec. 15, 16.

19 L.G., sec. 17.

20 L.G., sec. 18, 19.

21 Charles Journet, *The Church of the Word Incarnate* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1955), I, p. 16.

22 L.G., sec. 19.

23Raymond Brown, *Priest and Bishop* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970). In a quite forthright article, “Difficulties in Using the New Testament in American Catholic Discussions,” *Louvain Studies*, Fall, 1976, Fr. Brown has large assertions to make: e.g., “Mt. 16:18 was originally a post-resurrectional saying and ... it cannot be used to determine the intentions of Jesus during His ministry in regard to the Church.” In the Gospels, he says, “there is a much more noticeable difference among the sayings of the risen Jesus than among the sayings of the earthly Jesus.” And it is “apparent that we are dealing with the phraseology of the late first-century Church” (p. 151).

24*Dei Verbum*, sec. 10. Fr. Brown finds in this document an acceptance of the idea that “the final Gospels go considerably beyond the ministry of Jesus and that later Christology had been retrojected into the accounts of the ministry” (p. 147).

25*Dei Verbum*, sec. 7. Here one must reflect on whether it is a probability that the fallible proneness of modern Scripture exegetes can displace the infallible teaching of Tradition in its formulation by the Magisterium. Anglican Bishop Stephen Neill’s *The Interpretation of the New Testament, 1861-1961* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964) gives us a masterly survey of New Testament “criticism,” of the great variety of schools of thought, influenced by a variety of philosophies. When one has threaded through this, it is safe to conclude that a possibility of certitude is unlikely for those who prescind from Tradition and Magisterium.

26*Dei Verbum*, sec. 7-8.

27Manuel Miguens, “Apostolic Succession?,” in *Triumph*, April 1972. Other writings: Cardinal Lawrence Sheehan’s article in the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review*, Nov. 1975. Edith Black, “Historicity of the Bible: Pt. I,” in *Homiletic*, Dec. 1980. Of great import on methodology and on the relation between scriptural studies and Tradition, in respect to the Gospel account of the Nativity of Christ, is Rene Laurentin’s *The Truth of Christmas: Beyond the Myths* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s, 1986).

28L.G., sec. 20.

29L.G., sec. 21.

30L.G., sec. 22. Emphasis added.

31L.G., sec. 23.

32L.G., sec. 24.

33L.G., sec. 25.

34Joseph F. Costanzo, S.J., “Papal Magisterium and *Humanae Vitae*,” in *Thought* (Fordham University), Autumn 1969. Other articles by Father Costanzo are: “Academic Dissent: An Original Ecclesiology,” in *The Thomist*, Oct. 4, 1970, in which he unveils the deviant ecclesiology of Charles Curran and his associates who rejected *Humanae Vitae*’s teaching. Also, “Papal Magisterium, Natural Law and *Humanae Vitae*,” in *The American Journal of Jurisprudence*, vol. 16 (Notre Dame Law School, 1971).

35L.G., sec. 25.

36L.G., sec. 26.

37L.G., sec. 28.