

## **Vatican II – Saturday Morning Sessions**

### **Session 9: Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2013**

#### **Review of the journey: January to June 2013**

##### **Part 1: Key words and issues**

*Each individual was asked to reflect on the feedback and their own personal notes from the preceding Saturday morning sessions. They were asked to write down, in two or three sentences, what they thought were the most important things to come out of each session.*

*The first part of this session involved each person sharing these reflections with their group. The key words and issues emerging from what individuals shared were recorded.*

##### **Part 2: Group Statements**

*Drawing on the key words and issues recorded, each group was asked to make two statements that summarised what, for their group, the experience of the last six months had been about. Here is the output from each group.*

###### Group 1 & 5

*Due to holidays, etc, Groups 1 and 5 came together for this session, hence they made joint statements.*

1. The call to holiness (wholeness) has to come first and will result in a community which loves and serves one another.
2. The vision of John 23<sup>rd</sup>: now is the time, under the guidance of Francis, to fully implement Vatican II and the laity has to make that vision come alive.

###### Group 2

1. Content: These sessions on Vatican II have been a fantastic learning process for everybody, irrespective of age or whether a member of religious community, a cradle catholic or as an adult – something for all to learn.

All this learning is continually rubbing off on us. And it has given us the inspiration to learn and do more – more of the same please.

2. Process: This process has helped us escape from frustration, given us a sense of renewal of hope, renewal of joy and a real positive experience of being Church. We have made great friendships through coming together and sharing, not only in own group but also in the larger group. There is a real sense of being Church when we gather.

### Group 3

1. We have a renewed appreciation of the vision of John 23<sup>rd</sup> and Vatican II.
2. We have grown in the hope and desire to move more deeply into this vision, seeing embers rekindled.

### Group 4

1. Vatican II has promoted a more open spirit in the Church. There is now a feeling of having permission to question and challenge. This includes questioning the structure and hierarchy of church. However, a mechanism to effect change is still required and to put it into place.
2. Vatican II is ongoing but perhaps the Church has lost part of the impetus of Vatican II and even at times forgotten about the spirit of Vatican II. Also perhaps part of the difficulty is that the bishops who returned to their diocese from the Council didn't fully understand Vatican II! The bishops were therefore unable to pass on the spirit of change that Vatican II pointed towards and perhaps more time was needed to do that.

### Group 6

1. Affirmation of authentic place of the laity who are educated and informed with a realistic view of the church.
2. Crisis can lead to opportunity and this is a time for aggiornamento. Vatican II not finished, but is dependant on the Holy Spirit.

### Group 7

1. As a group the four Rs sum up our experience - we are **relieved** that, at long last, after 50 years we are **refreshed**, **rewarded** and **renewed** regarding the foresight of John 23<sup>rd</sup>. We have been informed and inspired by the process over last 6 months. We welcome and applaud the opportunity in these cluster parishes where the culture and ethos has existed to encourage and discuss more deeply our faith. The process and structure have been both enabling and encouraging and, as a small group, we reflected on how genuinely and generously and courageously we have shared on this faith journey.

### **Part 3: Plenary Session feedback**

*The first part of the plenary sessions involved the full group sharing their thoughts on the statements that had been made by each group (in Part 2, above).*

- There is a sense of trust and commitment here amongst us and a real entering into what we are doing. Energy comes from the feedback and from what we share when we are together. This learning continues rubbing off on us, giving us inspiration to learn and do more. More of the same please.
- We have been given life and support over these past few months with everything that has been happening in our archdiocese.
- Been invited to take my place in the Church.
- It has been a relatively small group that has taken up the opportunity to participate in this experience. Should the learning from Vatican II not be more widely spread – e.g. in the teaching of children and people preparing to become Catholics? This might invigorate a wider range of people if they knew more about Vatican II.
- Felt despondent when things went pear-shaped in the diocese. Wrote a poem – ‘I dreamed a dream’. The poem finished with expectancy and hope – that somehow ‘the dream’ would be realised. Coming here to these session ‘the dream’ has been given encouragement and momentum and I feel very much part of something bigger and that there is life and strength in our Church, in our Cluster and that we have found our voice. My dream is that we will keep our voice and our voice will grow and we will be a light for those around us.
- Permission to question and challenge is a vital part of life and society today. People need to question and challenge what is happening in the world. The Church should be a place where this is happening. We can see that happening here. This is a sign of hope.
- The importance of a sense that if you do question and challenge you are not being disloyal (to the Church, Pope, etc).
- Having the mechanism to question is excellent; but, in order to effect change, a mechanism to effect it has still to be put into place. Channels of good communication are not necessarily evident and still need to be fashioned. A good start has been made here in the last six months, but it needs to be ongoing.

- There is a question about authority. The authority is from God but how do we receive and relate to that authority within the Church. Do we say that everything the pope or a bishop says is what we must do? Where is the authority coming to us and how do we live it out?
- Very moved by what has been said today – a powerful feeling of the Spirit at work. The authority is **here**. What has happened here would not happen without the Spirit of God being in our midst - and He is the authority. A change is happening in each and every one of us – that is enough authority.
- If we are not questioning and challenging, we are not loving. It is good to know that we are loving!
- Leadership is service. The authority is within each of us to serve each other through the Spirit. In that sense, do we need somebody to tell us? No, we have it within us.
- There is authority and there is authentic authority. What we have learned in the last six months is that there has been a lot of false authority, people making authoritative statements who had no right, who had massaged the truth for their own ends. In contrast, authentic authority is rooted in the Spirit, not in any temporal organisation or group of people. As long as we are open to the Spirit, we have authority to speak.
- Very struck by how educated and informed people attending these sessions are. This is wonderful. Education is very important. Hope that we continue to educate ourselves and be informed.
- Feel lucky to be here. If you talk to people from other parishes they don't seem to be doing anything like this. I am proud that we are doing this and that I am part of it. These sessions have given a renewed sense of 'if everybody else isn't doing it, that is okay; this is what we are being called to do'. This is, in many ways, tied up with the new translation issues – the questions about who do we listen to; who do we obey; how do we live it out. We need to be bold.
- Glad to have lived long enough to be here!
- Thinking of John XXIII's opening statement, about when he first dipped his toe in the water and started the whole thing rolling. That must have been scary – he was a brave man. If we dip our toes in the water, other things will happen. Nobody did it for him; he did it himself – we should take a leaf out of John XXIII's book.

- The parish structure here is very welcoming. However, there is the question of how to sustain the enthusiasm of this group if something happened to the parish priest. When the priest is changed in other parishes it can be very much a case of a new broom coming in and sweeping clean! We therefore need to be able to sustain this by whatever Spirit is operating in this group.
- In our Cluster it has been long and hard to get to where we have reached. But there is no way anybody (a new priest) could come in and take it away. It will be easier to hold on to it than it was achieving it in the first place.
- Are there plans to continue these sessions? I would like there to be more of this.
  - Yes, we will continue. We have the material (Bill's resources) to run sessions for a long time. However, we are looking to a future where we are not dependent on other people's intellect. We hope that, at end of day, what this experience equips us with are the tools for us to interpret life and what God is saying to the world. We are going to be writing rather than reading books – writing up our experience!
- We can write the Acts of St Catherine's, St Gregory's and St John Vianney's!
- We are privileged to have this opportunity. Other parishes have, unfortunately, not had the opportunity that we have had. Could we take what we have learnt to other parishes to encourage them to start it up?
- When Bill comes in September will the sessions be open to other parishes and the wider archdiocese?
  - Yes, they will be open. But, we need to discover what kind of numbers from our Cluster parishes want to be here so that we can gauge how many from elsewhere we can accommodate.

*At this juncture Fr Mike asked: is there any way we can distil even further what we have done? Can we establish a list of things that we think are the key moments and key insights?*

*The following thoughts were shared.*

- It is important to feel that you have permission to do something. Fr Mike spoke about authentic authority being rooted in the Spirit and not rooted in any temporal group. This is a wonderful distillation of what we are saying.

- There is a deeper point too: Vatican II promoted a more open Spirit in the Church and there is now a feeling that we have permission to question and challenge things. The idea of permission is very important. When we look at the Church and our own experience of being Catholics over the years, the feeling that we have permission has come about very slowly – it is a process. We feel we now have more permission that we used to have. It is only when you have permission within the heart, soul and mind to question that you have the confidence to do that. As a result of what we have done over the past six months, we feel more confident than we used to.
- Sometimes when we talk about permission there can be a juvenile mentality. Maybe we can use the word empowerment instead of permission? What the Council, the Church has done is to empower people. The problem is that it empowered people and then took the power away! Empowerment is a more positive way of looking at the idea of permission.
- Empowerment comes from our baptism. We are each invited to a deep renewal, rooted in our baptism, in which we are coming deeper into what it is to be human and to be Church. It is the gift of the Spirit which gives us permission.
- Permission, empowerment and listening need to happen in the Church at all levels today.
- Authority coming from the Spirit and a real sense of Church: we talk about the gifts of the Spirit but we haven't been good at identifying them in each other. We are now taking our proper place here in these parishes. We have been able to sit here over the past six months and express different views, yet somehow there is a unity within the diversity of what we have been saying. This has happened because we have become open and trusted in the Spirit.
- Baptism bestows upon the faithful a right and a duty to a full and active participation in the liturgy. This is one of our discernments from our feedback sheets. Everything will flow from this.
- We are a varied group of people with different personalities, but the wonderful thing over the past six months is how **every** single person has opened up and in a way that, perhaps, some never dreamed they would have been able to. This is to do with the gifts of the Spirit. Nothing can stop us from bringing the Kingdom to birth in our lives and in our midst if we have that openness.
- There is a real desire in these meetings to move forward.