

VATICAN COUNCIL, 1962-1965, OPENING

ADDRESS, POPE JOHN XXIII.

AG29'81

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE LIBRARY

LIBRARY
MARY'S COLLEGE
DAME, INDIANA

*Second
Vatican
Council*

Catholic Church, Pope
(1958-1963, John XXIII)
ADMO21



Address Delivered by His Holiness
POPE JOHN XXIII

at the Solemn Opening of the
Second Vatican Council

October 11, 1962



Address Delivered by His Holiness
POPE JOHN XXIII

At the Formal Closing of the First
Session of the Second Vatican Council

December 8, 1962



A Message from the Council Fathers
Second Vatican Council

Vatican Translations



NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.,
Washington 5, D. C.



**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN XXIII
AT THE SOLEMN OPENING OF THE
SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
OCTOBER 11, 1962**

Mother Church rejoices that, by the singular gift of Divine Providence, the longed-for day has finally dawned when—under the auspices of the Virgin Mother of God, whose maternal dignity is commemorated on this feast—the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council is being solemnly opened here beside St. Peter's tomb.

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH

The councils—both the twenty ecumenical ones and the numberless others, also important, of a provincial or regional character which have been held down through the years—all prove clearly the vigor of the Catholic Church and are recorded as shining lights in her annals.

In calling this vast assembly of bishops, the latest and humble successor of the Prince of the Apostles who is addressing you intended to assert once again the Church's *magisterium* [teaching authority], which is unailing and perdures until the end of time, in order that this *magisterium*, taking into account the errors, the requirements and the opportunities of our time, might be presented in exceptional form to all men throughout the world.

It is but natural that in opening this universal council We should like to look to the past and to listen to its voices, whose echo We like to hear in the memories and the merits of the more recent and ancient pontiffs, Our predecessors. These are solemn and venerable voices, throughout the East and the West, from the fourth century to the Middle Ages, and from there to modern times, which have handed down their witness to those councils. They are voices which proclaim in perennial fervor the triumph of that divine and human institution, the Church of Christ, which from Jesus takes its name, its grace and its meaning.

Side by side with these motives for spiritual joy, however, there has also been for more than nineteen centuries a cloud of sorrows and of trials. Not without reason did the ancient Simeon announce to Mary the mother of Jesus, that prophecy which has been and still is true: Behold this child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted ¹. And Jesus Himself, when He grew up, clearly outlined the manner in which the world would treat His person down through the succeeding centuries with the mysterious words: He who hears you, hears me ², and with those others that the same Evangelist relates: He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me scatters ³.

The great problem confronting the world after almost two thousand years remains unchanged. Christ is ever resplendent as the center of history and of life. Men are either with Him and His Church, and then they enjoy light, goodness, order and peace. Or else they are without Him, or against Him and deliberately opposed to His Church, and then they give rise to confusion, to bitterness in human relations, and to the constant danger of fratricidal wars.

Ecumenical councils, whenever they are assembled, are a solemn celebration of the union of Christ and His Church and hence lead to the universal radiation of truth, to the proper guidance of individuals in domestic and social life, to the strengthening of spiritual energies for a perennial uplift towards real and everlasting goodness.

The testimony of this extraordinary *magisterium* of the Church in the succeeding epochs of these twenty centuries of Christian history stands before us collected in numerous and imposing volumes, which are the sacred patrimony of our ecclesiastical archives, here in Rome and in the more noted libraries of the entire world.

THE ORIGIN AND REASON FOR THE SECOND VATICAN
ECUMENICAL COUNCIL

As regards the initiative for the great event which gathers Us here, it will suffice to repeat as historical documentation Our personal account of the first sudden bringing up in Our heart and lips of the simple words, "ecumenical council." We uttered those words in the presence of the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, in the basilica dedicated to him. It was completely unexpected, like a flash of heavenly light, shedding sweetness in eyes and hearts. And at the same time it gave rise to a great fervor throughout the world in expectation of the holding of the council.

There have elapsed three years of laborious preparation, during which a wide and profound examination was made regarding modern conditions of faith and religious practice, and of Christian and especially Catholic vitality. These years have seemed to Us a first sign, an initial gift of celestial grace.

Illuminated by the light of this council, the Church—We confidently trust—will become greater in spiritual riches and, gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, She will look to the future without fear. In fact, by bringing Herself up to date where required, and by the wise organization of mutual cooperation, the Church will make men, families and peoples really turn their minds to heavenly things.

And thus the holding of the council becomes a motive for wholehearted thanksgiving to the Giver of every good gift, in order to celebrate with joyous canticles the glory of Christ Our Lord, the glorious and immortal King of ages and of peoples.

The opportuneness of holding the council is, moreover, venerable brothers, another subject which it is useful to propose for your consideration. Namely, in order to render Our joy more complete, We wish to narrate before this great assembly Our assessment of the happy circumstances under which the ecumenical council commences.

In the daily exercise of Our pastoral office, We sometimes have to listen, much to Our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that Our Era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse and they behave as

though they had learned nothing from history, which is, none the less, the teacher of life. They behave as though at the time of former councils everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea and life and for proper religious liberty.

We feel We must disagree with those prophets of gloom, who are always forecasting disaster, as though the end of the world was at hand.

In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading Us to a new order of human relations which, by men's own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God's superior and inscrutable designs. And everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church.

It is easy to discern this reality if we consider attentively the world of today, which is so busy with politics and controversies in the economic order that it does not find time to attend to the care of spiritual reality, with which the Church's *magisterium* is concerned. Such a way of acting is certainly not right, and must justly be disapproved. It cannot be denied, however, that these new conditions of modern life have at least the advantage of having eliminated those innumerable obstacles by which at one time the sons of this world impeded the free action of the Church. In fact, it suffices to leaf even cursorily through the pages of ecclesiastical history to note clearly how the ecumenical councils themselves, while constituting a series of true glories for the Catholic Church, were often held to the accompaniment of most serious difficulties and sufferings because of the undue interference of civil authorities. The princes of this world, indeed, sometimes in all sincerity, intended thus to protect the Church. But more frequently this occurred not without spiritual damage and danger, since their interest therein was guided by the views of a selfish and perilous policy.

In this regard, We confess to you that We feel most poignant sorrow over the fact that very many bishops, so dear to Us, are noticeable here today by their absence, because they are imprisoned for their faithfulness to Christ, or impeded by other restraints. The thought of them impels Us to raise most fervent prayer to God. Nevertheless, We see today, not without great hopes and to Our immense consolation, that the Church, finally freed from so many obstacles of a profane nature such as trampled her in the past, can from this Vatican basilica, as if from a second apostolic cenacle, and through your intermediary, raise her voice resonant with majesty and greatness.

PRINCIPAL DUTY OF THE COUNCIL: THE DEFENSE
AND ADVANCEMENT OF TRUTH

The greatest concern of the ecumenical council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously. That doctrine embraces the whole of man, composed as he is of body and soul. And, since he is a pilgrim on this earth, it commands him to tend always toward Heaven.

This demonstrates how our mortal life is to be ordered in such a way as to fulfill our duties as citizens of earth and of Heaven and thus to attain the aim of life as established by God. That is, all men, whether taken singly or as united in society, today have the duty of tending ceaselessly during their lifetime toward the attainment of heavenly things and to use only for this purpose the earthly goods, the employment of which must not prejudice their eternal happiness.

The Lord has said: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice"⁴. The word "first" expresses the direction in which our thoughts and energies must move. We must not, however, neglect the other words of this exhortation of Our Lord, namely: "And all these things shall be given you besides"⁵. In reality, there always have been in the Church, and there are still today, those who, while seeking the practice of evangelical perfection with all their might, do not fail to make themselves useful to society. Indeed, it is from their constant example of life and their charitable undertakings that all that is highest and noblest in human society takes its strength and growth.

In order, however, that this doctrine may influence the numerous fields of human activity, with reference to individuals, to families and to social life, it is necessary first of all that the Church should never depart from the sacred patrimony of truth received from the Fathers. But at the same time she must ever look to the present, to the new conditions and new forms of life introduced into the modern world which have opened new avenues to the Catholic apostolate.

For this reason the Church has not watched inertly the marvelous progress of the discoveries of human genius and has not been backward in evaluating them rightly. But, while following these developments, she does not neglect to admonish men so that, over and above sense—perceived things, they may raise their eyes to God, the Source of all wisdom and all beauty. And man who was commanded to "subject the earth and rule it,"⁶

should never forget that most serious command: "The Lord thy God shalt thou worship, and Him only shalt thou serve" ⁷, so that it may not happen that the fleeting fascination of visible things should impede true progress.

The manner in which sacred doctrine is spread, this having been established, it becomes clear how much is expected from the council in regard to doctrine. That is, the 21st ecumenical council, which will draw upon the effective and important wealth of juridical, liturgical, apostolic and administrative experiences, wishes to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any attenuation or distortion, which throughout twenty centuries, notwithstanding difficulties and contrasts, has become the common patrimony of men. It is a patrimony not well received by all, but always a rich treasure available to men of good will.

Our duty is not only to guard this precious treasure, as if we were concerned only with antiquity, but to dedicate ourselves with an earnest will and without fear to that work which our era demands of us, pursuing thus the path which the Church has followed for twenty centuries.

The salient point of this council is not, therefore, a discussion of one article or another of the fundamental doctrine of the Church which has repeatedly been taught by the Fathers and by ancient and modern theologians, and which is presumed to be well known and familiar to all.

For this a council was not necessary. But from the renewed, serene and tranquil adherence to all the teaching of the Church in its entirety and preciseness, as it still shines forth in the acts of the Council of Trent and First Vatican Council, the Christian, Catholic and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a step forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciences in faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and through the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the Deposit of Faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a *magisterium* which is predominantly pastoral in character.

HOW TO REPRESS ERRORS

At the outset of the Second Vatican Council, it is evident, as always, that the truth of the Lord will remain forever. We see,

in fact, as one age succeeds another, that the opinions of men follow one another and exclude each other. And often errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun.

The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays, however, the spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnations. Not, certainly, that there is a lack of fallacious teaching, opinions and dangerous concepts to be guarded against and dissipated. But these are so obviously in contrast with the right norm of honesty, and have produced such lethal fruits, that by now it would seem that men of themselves are inclined to condemn them, particularly those ways of life which despise God and His law or place excessive confidence in technical progress and a well-being based exclusively on the comforts of life. They are ever more deeply convinced of the paramount dignity of the human person and of his perfections, as well as of the duties which that implies. Even more important, experience has taught men that violence inflicted on others, the might of arms and political domination, are of no help at all in finding a happy solution to the grave problems which afflict them.

That being so, the Catholic Church, raising the torch of religious truth by means of this ecumenical council, desires to show herself to be the loving mother of all, benign, patient, full of mercy and goodness toward the children separated from her. To the human race, oppressed by so many difficulties, she says like Peter of old to the poor man who begged alms from him: "Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, that I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk"⁸. In other words, the Church does not offer to the men of today riches that pass, nor does she promise them a merely earthly happiness. But she distributes to them the goods of divine grace which, raising men to the dignity of sons of God, are the most efficacious safeguards and aids toward a more human life. She opens the fountain of her life-giving doctrine which allows men, enlightened by the light of Christ, to understand well what they really are, what their lofty dignity and their purpose are, and, finally, through her children, she spreads everywhere the fulness of Christian charity, than which nothing is more effective in eradicating the seeds of discord, nothing more efficacious in promoting concord, just peace and the brotherly unity of all.

THE UNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN FAMILY
MUST BE PROMOTED

The Church's solicitude to promote and defend truth derives from the fact that, according to the plan of God, who wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth⁹, men without the assistance of the whole of revealed doctrine cannot reach a complete and firm unity of minds, with which are associated true peace and eternal salvation.

Unfortunately, the entire Christian family has not yet fully attained to this visible unity in truth.

The Catholic Church, therefore, considers it her duty to work actively so that there may be fulfilled the great mystery of that unity, which Jesus Christ invoked with fervent prayer from His Heavenly Father on the eve of His sacrifice. She rejoices in peace, knowing well that she is intimately associated with that prayer, and then exults greatly at seeing that invocation extend its efficacy with salutary fruit even among those who are outside her fold.

Indeed, if one considers well this same unity which Christ implored for His Church, it seems to shine, as it were, with a triple ray of beneficent supernal light: namely, the unity of Catholics among themselves, which must always be kept exemplary and most firm; the unity of prayers and ardent desires with which those Christians separated from this Apostolic See, aspire to be united with us; and the unity in esteem and respect for the Catholic Church which animates those who follow non-Christian religions.

In this regard, it is a source of considerable sorrow to see that the greater part of the human race—although all men who are born were redeemed by the blood of Christ—does not yet participate in those sources of divine grace which exist in the Catholic Church. Hence the Church, whose light illumines all, whose strength of supernatural unity redounds to the advantage of all humanity is rightly described in these beautiful words of St. Cyprian:

“The Church, surrounded by divine light, spreads her rays over the entire earth. This light, however, is one and unique, and shines everywhere without causing any separation in the unity of the body. She extends her branches over the whole world. By her fruitfulness she sends ever farther afield her rivulets. Nevertheless, the head is always one, the origin one, for

she is the one mother, abundantly fruitful. We are born of her, are nourished by her milk, we live of her spirit" ¹⁰.

Venerable brothers, such is the aim of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which, while bringing together the Church's best energies and striving to have men welcome more favorably the good tidings of salvation, prepares, as it were, and consolidates the path toward that unity of mankind which is required as a necessary foundation in order that the earthly city may be brought to the resemblance of that heavenly city where truth reigns, charity is the law, and whose extent is eternity ¹¹.

CONCLUSION

Now, "our voice is directed to you" ¹², venerable brothers in the episcopate. Behold we are gathered together in this Vatican basilica, upon which hinges the history of the Church where Heaven and earth are closely joined, here near the tomb of Peter and near so many of the tombs of Our holy predecessors, whose ashes in this solemn hour seem to thrill in mystic exultation.

The council now beginning rises in the Church like daybreak, a forerunner of most splendid light. It is now only dawn. And already, at this first announcement of the rising day, how much sweetness fills Our heart. Everything here breathes sanctity and arouses great joy. Let us contemplate the stars, which with their brightness augment the majesty of this temple. These stars, according to the testimony of the Apostle John ¹³, are you, and with you We see shining around the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles, the golden candelabra. That is, the church is confided to you ¹⁴.

We see here with you important personalities, present in an attitude of great respect and cordial expectation, having come together in Rome from the five continents to represent the nations of the world.

We might say that Heaven and earth are united in the holding of the council—the saints of Heaven to protect our work, the faithful of the earth continuing in prayer to the Lord, and you, seconding the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order that the work of all may correspond to the modern expectations and needs of the various peoples of the world.

This requires of you serenity of mind, brotherly concord, moderation in proposals, dignity in discussion and wisdom of deliberation.

God grant that your labors and your work, toward which the eyes of all peoples and the hopes of the entire world are turned, may abundantly fulfill the aspirations of all.

Almighty God! In Thee We place all Our confidence, not trusting in Our own strength. Look down benignly upon these pastors of Thy Church. May the light of Thy supernal grace aid us in taking decisions and in making laws. Graciously hear the prayers which We pour forth to Thee in unanimity of faith, of voice and of mind.

O Mary, Help of Christians, Help of Bishops, of whose love We have recently had particular proof in thy temple of Loreto, where We venerated the mystery of the Incarnation, dispose all things for a happy and propitious outcome and, with thy spouse, Saint Joseph, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist, intercede for us to God.

To Jesus Christ, Our most amiable Redeemer, immortal King of peoples and of times, be love, power and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ *Luke* 2, 34.

² *Ibid.* 10, 10.

³ *Ibid.* 11, 23.

⁴ *Matt.* 6, 33.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Cfr. *Gen.* 1, 28.

⁷ *Matt.* 4, 10; *Lk.* 4, 8.

⁸ *Acts*, 3, 6.

⁹ *I Tim.* 2, 4.

¹⁰ *De Catholicae Eccles. Unitate*, 5.

¹¹ Cfr. St. Augustine, *Epistle* 138, 3.

¹² *2 Cor.* 6, 11.

¹³ *Apoc.* 1, 20.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



**ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN XXIII
AT THE FORMAL CLOSING OF THE FIRST
SESSION OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL
DECEMBER 8, 1962**

Venerable Brethren:

The first session of the work of the council, begun on the feast of the Divine Motherhood of Mary, comes to an end on today's feast of the Immaculate Conception in the radiance of the grace of her who is God's mother and our own.

She provides the mystic link between today's ceremony and that of the splendid opening of the council on the 11th of October, while her two feasts sound the keynote of Our prayer of thanksgiving.

The deep significance of these two feasts is all the more striking when one reflects that Our predecessor, Pius IX, the Pope of the Immaculate Conception, inaugurated the First Vatican Council on this same feast day of Our Lady. It is good to commemorate these happy coincidences, which, in the light of history, help one to recognize how many of the Church's great events take place in Mary's presence, in testimony and assurance of her motherly protection.

The council, in its reality, is an act of faith in God, of obedience to His laws, of sincere endeavor to correspond with the plan of redemption according to which the Word was made flesh of the Virgin Mary. And as today we pay reverence to the most pure stem of the root of Jesse from which the flower has sprung

—“The flower from his root shall rise up”—our hearts are filled with a joy that is all the greater in that we see this flower blossoming in the season of Advent.

Now that the bishops of the five continents are returning from this hall to their beloved dioceses to continue the pastoral service and guidance of their flocks, We should like to dwell a little on what has been done so far and, encouraged and enlightened by this, to map out the future while waiting for the fulfillment of what yet remains to be done to bring the great enterprise to a happy conclusion.

We will consider these three points: the beginning of the ecumenical council; its continuance; and the fruits which are expected of it in the way of spreading faith and holiness and apostolic activity in the Church and in modern society.

The opening of the ecumenical council is still vivid in our minds—the vast assembly of bishops of the entire Catholic world, a gathering unique in history. The one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church was revealed to all humanity in the splendor of her perennial mission, in the solidity of her organization, in the persuasiveness and attractiveness of her teaching. Furthermore it is with pleasure that We recall the delegations from various nations representing their governments in the solemn inauguration of the council. On this subject We would once again like to express Our thanks for the way in which the whole world has been an admiring witness of these events and for the reports that have come to Us from all over the world in expressions of respect, esteem and gratitude.

Since this is the end of the first phase of the work begun on that memorable day, the 11th of October, it is only fitting to reflect on what has been accomplished.

The first session was like a slow and solemn introduction to the great work of the council—a generous willingness to enter into the heart and substance of Our Lord’s plan. It was necessary for brothers, gathered together from afar around a common hearth, to make each other’s closer acquaintance; it was necessary for them to look at each other squarely in order to understand each other’s hearts; they had necessarily to describe their own experiences, reflecting the conditions of the apostolate under the most varied climates and circumstances, in order that there should be a thoughtful and profitable interchange of views on pastoral matters.

In such a vast gathering it is understandable that a few days were needed to arrive at an agreement on a matter on which

in all charity there existed with good reason sharply divergent views. But even this has a providential place in the triumph of truth, for it has shown to all the world the holy liberty that the sons of God enjoy in the Church.

It was not by chance that the first schema to be considered was on the sacred liturgy, which defines the relationship between man and God. Since it is the highest form of relationship, it must be based on the solid foundation of Revelation and the apostolic teaching, so as to proceed for the good of souls with that broadness of vision free from the superficiality and haste which sometimes characterize the relationships between men.

And then five more schemata were presented, a fact which alone makes one realize the extent of the work thus far completed. Indeed it is right to conclude that a good beginning has been made.

It will then be a question of extending to all departments of the life of the Church, social questions included, whatever the conciliar assembly may decide, and applying its norms to them with "generous assent and prompt fulfillment"¹. This most important phase will see pastors united in a gigantic effort of preaching sound doctrine and applying the law, which they themselves desire, and for this task will be called forth the collaboration of the forces of the diocesan and regular clergy, of the congregations of religious women, of the Catholic laity with all its attributes and potential, in order that the acts of the Fathers may be seconded by the most joyous and faithful response.

It will be a "new Pentecost" indeed, which will cause the Church to renew her interior riches and to extend her maternal care in every sphere of human activity. It will be a new advance of the Kingdom of Christ in the world, an elevated and persuasive reaffirmation of the good news of redemption, a clarion call of God's kingship, of the brotherhood of men in charity, of the peace promised on earth to men of goodwill in accordance with God's good pleasure.

These, Venerable Brethren, are the feelings of Our heart, which issue in hope and prayer. Now that the labors of this first session of the council are over, you are going back to your own countries and to the precious flocks committed to your care. As We now wish you "Godspeed," We desire that you should be Our faithful messengers in expressing to your priests and people the greatness of Our affection.

On this occasion there come to mind the words of greeting and hope which Pius IX addressed one day to the bishops of the First Vatican Council: "See, brethren, what a blessed and joyful thing it is to go forward in harmony in the house of God. May you always so progress. And as Our Lord Jesus Christ gave peace to His Apostles, so I also, His unworthy vicar, give you peace in His Name. Peace, as you know, casts out fear; peace shuts its ears to what is said without real knowledge. May this peace be yours all the days of your life."

In these past months of companionship here together we have experienced the savor of these words of Pius IX. There is much yet to be done, but you know that the Supreme Shepherd will have loving care of you in the pastoral activity which you exercise in your own dioceses, an activity which will not be dissociated from the preoccupations of the council.

In drawing your attention to the threefold activity, which is the task of all, it was Our intention to stir up your enthusiasm. The glorious opening of the council provided the first introduction to the great enterprise. In the coming months the work will go on unflinchingly, as also will the earnest reflection, so that the ecumenical council may be able to bestow upon the family of mankind those fruits of faith, hope and charity which are so ardently expected from it. This threefold character clearly shows the unique importance of the council.

A heavy responsibility therefore rests upon our shoulders, but God Himself will sustain us on the way.

May the Immaculate Virgin be with us always; may Joseph, her most chaste spouse, patron of the ecumenical council, whose name from today shines in the canon of the Mass all over the world, accompany us on our journey in the same way that he accompanied the Holy Family with his support in accordance with God's will. And with them Saints Peter and Paul, and all the Apostles with John the Baptist, and all the popes, bishops, and doctors of God's Church.

CONTINUATION OF THE WORK

And now, Venerable Brethren, one's glance turns trustingly to that phase of the work, seemingly silent, but nonetheless important, which opens up during these nine months of interval after your return to your Sees.

Meanwhile, it pleases Us to contemplate each of you in your separate diocese, and a deep satisfaction fills Our heart, for We

know that, returning from Rome, you bring to your Christian peoples the shining torch of confidence and of charity, and that you will remain united with Us in fervent prayer.

This calls to mind the words of Ecclesiasticus, referring to the high priest Simon: “. . . He himself stood by the altar, and about him was the ring of his brethren”². It is thus that our activity continues now, in this mutual blending of prayers and wills.

Today’s celebration does not bring the work to an end, rather the work that awaits all of us is of the greatest importance, which certainly was not the case during the recesses of previous councils. The conditions of modern life, however, make it easy to have rapid communications on all types of business, personal and apostolic.

That activity will continue is made clear by the institution of a new commission composed of members of the Sacred College and of the episcopate and representing the universal Church. This commission’s duty is to pursue and direct the work during these months and, along with the various conciliar commissions, to lay the firm foundations for the happy final outcome of the ecumenical sessions. Thus the council really remains open during the next nine months of suspension of the ecumenical sessions properly so called.

Each bishop, although preoccupied with his pastoral administration, should continue to study and investigate the schemata provided and whatever else may be sent later. In this way the session which will begin in the month of September of next year—at the new hoped-for meeting in Rome of all the Fathers of the Church of God—will proceed more surely, more steadily and with greater speed, thanks to the experience of these two months of 1962, so that there is hope that the conclusion awaited by all Our faithful children may be reached in the glory of the incarnate Son of God in the joy of Christmas in the centenary year of the Council of Trent.

The vision of this grand prospect, which reveals the whole course of the coming year so rich in promise, stirs up in the heart a more ardent hope for the realization of the great goals for which We have convoked the council: namely that “the Church founded on faith, strengthened in hope, and more ardent in charity, may flourish with new and youthful vigor, and, fortified by holy ordinances, may be more energetic and swift to spread the Kingdom of Christ”³.

FRUITS OF THE COUNCIL

Even if the stage of putting the council into effect is not imminent—for that we must wait until the work of the council is over—it is nonetheless consoling to turn one's gaze towards the benefits that are anticipated: benefits for the Catholic Church; renewed attention on the part of all those countless children of ancient and glorious civilizations, which the light of Christianity does not desire to destroy, but in which she could—as has happened at other times in history—develop the richest seeds of religious vigor and human progress.

Our heart casts its glance in that direction, Venerable Brethren, and We know also that your heart has the same solicitude as Our own.

We are in this Basilica of St. Peter in the Center of Christianity, at the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles. But We recall with pleasure that the cathedral of the Diocese of Rome is the Lateran basilica, the mother and foundation of all churches, dedicated to Christ, the Divine Saviour. To Him, therefore, Who is the immortal and invisible King of all ages and all peoples, be glory and power forever⁴.

In this hour of heartfelt joy it is as if the heavens are opened above our heads and the splendor of the heavenly court shines out upon us, filling us with superhuman certainty and a supernatural spirit of faith, joy and profound peace. In this light, as We look forward to your return, We salute all of you, Venerable Brothers, “with a holy kiss”⁵, while at the same time We call down upon you the most abundant blessings of Our Lord, of which the apostolic blessing is the pledge and promise.

¹ Prayer for the Ecumenical Council.

² *Ecclesiasticus* 50, 13.

³ Papal letter to the German episcopate, January 11, 1961.

⁴ cf. 1 *Tim.* 1, 17; *Apoc.* 1, 6.

⁵ cf. *Rom.* 16, 16.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL FATHERS SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

We wish to convey to all men and to all nations the message of salvation, love and peace which Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, brought to the world and entrusted to the Church.

In fact, it is for this reason that we, the successors of the apostles, all united in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, forming one single apostolic body whose head is the successor of Peter, are gathered here at the invitation of His Holiness Pope John XXIII.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we intend in this meeting to seek the most effective ways of renewing ourselves and of becoming increasingly more faithful witnesses of the Gospel of Christ.

We will strive to propose to the men of our times the truth of God in its entirety and purity so that they may understand it and accept it freely.

Conscious of our duties as pastors, we wish deeply to meet the demands of those who seek God "and perhaps grope after Him and find Him though He is not far from any one of us."¹

Faithful, therefore, to the mandate of Christ, who offered himself a holocaust "in order that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory . . . but that she might be holy and without blemish"² we shall devote ourselves with all our energies, with all our thoughts towards renewing ourselves and the faithful entrusted to us, that the image of Jesus Christ, which shines in our hearts "to give enlightenment concerning the knowledge of the glory of God"³ may appear to all people.

We believe that the Father loved the world so much He gave His Son to save it; and that He freed us from the slavery of sin through this same Son, "that he should reconcile to himself all things, whether on the earth or in the heavens, making peace through the blood of his cross"⁴ that we might be called and truly be His sons.

Moreover, we receive the Holy Spirit from the Father that, living the life of God, we may love God and our brothers, with whom we are united in Christ.

We, therefore, the followers of Christ, are not estranged from earthly concerns and toils. Indeed, the faith, hope and

charity of Christ urges us to serve our brothers in imitation of the example of the Divine Master who "has not come to be served, but to serve" ⁵.

Neither was the Church born, therefore, to dominate but to serve. ". . . He laid down His life for us; and we likewise ought to lay down our life for the brethren." ⁶

While we hope that the Faith may shine more clearly and brightly from the work of the council, we also expect a spiritual renewal which may provide a happy impetus for human welfare; that is, the findings of science, the progress of the arts and of technology, and a greater diffusion of culture.

United here from every nation under heaven, we carry in our hearts the anxieties of all peoples entrusted to us, the anxieties of body and soul, sorrows and desires, and hopes. We turn our mind constantly toward all the anxieties afflicting men today.

Our concern is directed especially to the more humble, the more poor, the weaker, and, in keeping with the example of Christ, we feel compassion for the throngs who suffer hunger, misery and ignorance.

We are constantly attentive to those who, deprived of the necessary assistance, have not yet reached a standard of living worthy of man.

For this reason, in performing our earthly mission, we take into great account all that pertains to the dignity of man and all that contributes toward the real brotherhood of nations. "For the love of Christ impels us," ⁷ in fact, "He who has the goods of this world and sees his brother in need and closes his heart to him, how does the love of God abide in him?" ⁸

Here are two great problems facing us:

In his broadcast message of September 11, 1962, His Holiness Pope John XXIII stressed two points especially. First of all, he recommended everything that favors peace among peoples.

There is no man who does not detest war and who does not ardently desire peace. This is the greatest wish of the Church who is the mother of all. Through the voice of the Roman Pontiffs, she has never ceased to proclaim not only her love for peace, but also her resolve for peace, always ready to give herself wholeheartedly and effectively to every sincere proposal.

She tends, furthermore, with all her strength, to unite all peoples and to create among them a mutual esteem of sentiments and of works.

Is not this conciliar assembly—admirable for its diversity of races, nations and tongues—a testimony of a community bound by fraternal love which it bears as a visible sign?

We proclaim that all men are brothers, irrespective of the race or nation to which they belong.

Secondly, the Pope urges all to social justice. The doctrine outlined in the encyclical letter, "*Mater et Magistra*" (Mother and Teacher), clearly shows how the Church is needed by the world today to denounce injustices and shameful inequalities and to restore the true order of goods and things so that, according to the principles of the Gospel, the life of man may become more human.

We have neither the riches nor the powers of the earth, but we place our faith in the strength of the Holy Spirit, promised by Jesus Christ to His Church.

Therefore, we humbly and ardently invite all to collaborate with us to establish in the world a more ordered way of living and greater brotherhood. We invite all, not only our brothers of whom we are the pastors, but all our brothers who believe in Christ and all men of good will whom "God . . . wishes . . . to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."⁹

In fact, it is the divine will that the kingdom of God through the means of charity, shine even now, in a certain sense, upon earth, almost in anticipation of the eternal kingdom.

It is our ardent desire that the light of the great hope in Jesus Christ our only Saviour may shine, in this world which is still so far from the desired peace because of the threats engendered by scientific progress itself—marvelous progress—but not always intent upon the supreme law of morality.

¹ *Acts* 17:27.

² *Eph.* 5:27.

³ *II Cor.* 4:6.

⁴ *Col.* 1:20.

⁵ *Matt.* 20:28.

⁶ *I John* 3:16.

⁷ *2 Cor.* 5:14.

⁸ *1 John* 3:17.

⁹ *1 Tim.* 2:4.

