

# WINONA

## RETREATS AND THE DOUBLE COUNCIL'S...

On October 11, 2002, it will be, or was, exactly 40 years since the solemn opening in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome, of the Second Vatican Council. All Catholics agree that that Council soon wrought an on-going revolution in the Church. They do not all agree whether it was a revolution for the better or for the worse.

Few dispute that the revolution was one of modernization, or adaptation to the modern world. Promoters of adaptation said that the Catholic Church not only can, but also must, move with the times. Enemies of adaptation protested that the Catholic Church is irreconcilable with the essential ideas that make modern times.

Because friends and enemies of adaptation were so bitterly opposed to one another in the four sessions of the Council (1962-1965), then for the Council to issue documents which everybody – or nearly everybody – could agree on, the documents had to be a kind of compromise between ancient and modern. That is why they are mixed in content, and ambiguous in expression. In fact ambiguity is the hallmark of this Council, caught between ancient and modern.

Now to understand ambiguity, or language with a double meaning, one needs to understand each of the two things being meant. Let us assume that the ancient Catholicism is easily discernible from 1900 years of Church history prior to Vatican II.

### ... MODERN SPIRIT

The question then becomes, to understand Vatican II, what are the essential new ideas that it is mixing in with the millennial Catholicism?

That is the question addressed by the schematic overview within this flyer. The flyer does not pretend that these modern ideas are alone present or even all explicit in the documents of Vatican II. It seeks only to present the coherence of the modern half of the double meaning of Vatican II.

The schema opposite, designed to present in their coherence the grand new ideas, and modern thrust, of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, divides into three main columns, based on the famous three-word slogan of the French revolution of 1789: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

Religious Liberty and Collegiality (corresponding to Liberty and Equality) serve to break down or dissolve ("solve") the old Catholic truth and authority, while Ecumenism (corresponding to Fraternity) will put together ("coagula") the broken pieces into a new unity or whole, which will be the Newchurch.

Liberty dissolving truth comes before Equality dissolving authority, because the mind must be liberated from truth (seen as constricting) before the will can be liberated from authority (felt as domineering). That is why the foundational document of Vatican II is "Dei Verbum" (on Revelation), because it contains at least implicitly the disastrous modern error that truth is inside man and not outside him. Correspondingly, right and wrong are within man and not above him, which means the break-down of all objective authority, which leads necessarily to the need for blind obedience to Vatican II to hold the Conciliar Church together.

Truth being placed within man leads back implicitly to man being put in the place of God, which is the foundational error of modern man ('God is truth', plus 'I am God', gives 'I am truth').

From this perspective, "Gaudium et Spes" may be the most uninhibitedly modern of the Council documents and so the most typical of the thrust or "spirit of the Council", but it is merely the capstone of the Council: glory to modern man (GS §30)!

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS SEMINARY  
RR 1 Box 97 A-1, Winona MN 55987, USA