

- viii Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 29th June 2009, n21
- ix WHO - 2012 Report based on 194 member states, ½ billion or 12% of global population obese; compare UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2010 report: 925m = 13.6% of estimated 6.8bn worldwide
- x *Id*
- xi Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis*, 1997, n 64
- xii Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), Austin Flannery (Gen Ed), Scholarly Resources Inc, Delaware, 1975, n 37
- xiii Vatican Council II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), Austin Flannery (Gen Ed), Scholarly Resources Inc, Delaware, 1975, n 9
- xiv cf Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, 25 '...the recent Synod [Extraordinary of 1985] has favoured the creation of diocesan pastoral councils, as a recourse at opportune times. In fact, on a diocesan level this structure could be the principal form of collaboration, dialogue and discernment as well. The participation of the lay faithful in these councils can broaden resources in consultation and the principle of collaboration - and in certain instances also in decision-making - if applied in a broad and determined manner.' - *opportune times, could, can, certain instances*
- xv cf Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles Laici*, 23. Principle of Lay Office - Pastors should entrust to laypeople those offices and roles 'that do not require the character of orders'. These include exercising the ministry of the Word, presiding over liturgical prayers, conferring baptism and distributing communion. No sense of collaborative governance

Fifty Official Years of the Hertfordshire Circle

The Hertfordshire Circle officially celebrated its 50th anniversary a few months ago – though anecdotal evidence suggests the Circle might really be even older! On September 28th Bishop John Sherrington (Bishop in Hertfordshire) and Father Tim Edgar celebrated a special Mass at St. Bartholomew’s Church in St. Albans. Despite several absences through pre-arranged holidays around 50 people attended the event, including some members of long-standing. At a reception in the church hall afterwards Bishop John talked informally to many of the guests and he presented illuminated certificates to founder and long-standing members of the Herts. Circle. He then cut the birthday cake, which had been beautifully decorated with various symbols associated with John Henry Newman. The afternoon ended with a glass of champagne and a toast to the Circle.

Bishop Sherrington’s Address

I am delighted to celebrate this Mass with you as you celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Newman Association’s Hertfordshire Circle. As we celebrate your Golden Jubilee, we recognise the different ways in which you have been seeking for the truth, whether as individuals or together as a group. Through seeking the truth, you have desired to know and understand your Christian faith more fully in order to find meaning in your lives and to give “reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). As Blessed Pope John Paul II writes in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

Revelation therefore introduces into our history a universal and ultimate truth which stirs the human mind to ceaseless effort; indeed, it impels reason continually to extend the range of its knowledge until it senses that it has done all in its power, leaving no stone unturned.

In the gospel which we have just heard (Luke 9: 18-22), Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do the crowds say I am?” and more personally, “Who do you say I am?” This

is a question which is addressed personally to each one of us. Peter responds "The Christ of God." As we each answer the question which Jesus addresses to each one of us, we can reflect on some of the many ways in which the Second Vatican Council has helped us to build on the past and deepen our understanding of the answer to this question.

The Constitution *Dei Verbum* opens up for us a richer understanding of revelation in the light of scripture and the tradition of the Church. As a Church we continued to renew our understanding of the scriptures and opened them up for our prayer, in the liturgies of the Mass and the sacraments. Whilst it was often said that Catholics in an earlier period did not read the Bible, the Council building on the insights of Pope Leo XIII *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) and Pope Pius XII *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) has led Catholics to read, understand and pray the scriptures. We are the richer for this and so can answer the question that Jesus poses more fully.

As we contemplate the person of Jesus Christ, we learn the truth about him and his relationship with ourselves. As Blessed Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio*:

Contemplating Jesus as Revealer, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stressed the salvific character of God's Revelation in history, describing it in these terms: "In this Revelation, the invisible God, out of the abundance of his love, speaks to men and women as friends and lives among them so that he may invite and take them into communion with himself... By this Revelation, then, the deepest truth about God and human salvation is made clear to us in Christ, who is the mediator and at the same time the fullness of all Revelation".

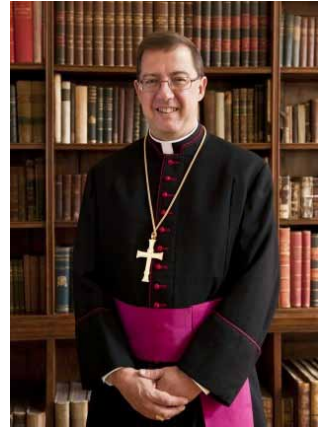
Who do the crowds say I am? This question can also be addressed to ourselves. Who am I? Who do others see me as a Christian?

Our understanding of the Incarnation helps us to understand our own dignity and place in the social body, the human family. As the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* states: "*The truth is that only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come, Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling.*"

The foundation and richer understanding of the human person found in *Gaudium et Spes* helps us to understand more fully the mystery of the human person and human dignity. The gift of the Holy Spirit makes us temples of the Holy Spirit and so a rich Trinitarian understanding is developed of persons in relationships of love with other but scarred by sin. This has led to new understandings enriched by the philosophies of personalism. *Gaudium et Spes* uses the word "covenant" to describe marriage. Blessed Pope John Paul II contributed to the theology of the body and to the corpus of Catholic social teaching which offers a significant contribution to the complex worlds of ethics in business and finance. These areas of life are crying out for ethical foundations.

At another level we can reflect on the relationship of Christ and his Church. The Council helped us to recover from the tradition, which includes Johann Möhler

and Blessed John Henry Newman, a much richer understanding of the Church as “mystery” and the insight of the Church Fathers. The first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* is entitled “The mystery of the Church” and opens with the words, “Christ is the light of the nations”. From this opening, there is developed a rich understanding of the Body of Christ, composed of the people of God. We have come to new understandings of the “communio” and mission of the Church as well as developing the dialogues which have contributed to significant relationships with the Orthodox, the Oriental Catholic Churches, the Anglican Communion and the Methodists. Vatican II also contributed to a deeper understanding of the ministry of the episcopate in communion with the Pope, a work which needed to be completed after Vatican I.



We called to become holy: “all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect” (*Lumen Gentium*). Our baptism into the Church is a baptism into the Body of Christ and a call to vocation and mission. As we read in the *Decree on the Laity*,

But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.

They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardour of the spirit of Christ.

I believe Pope Benedict’s address in Westminster Hall was a most profound moment for our faith. Symbolically it brought together many fruits of the Council and the life of the Church since its opening fifty years ago. The Pope urged us to enter fully into the debates of our time with reasoned arguments for the common good:

This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and on-going dialogue, for the good of our civilization... Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation. (Pope Benedict, Address, Westminster Hall, 2010)

Finally, I encourage you during the Year of Faith to deepen your faith and love and your pursuit of the truth. I hope that you will “rediscover the joy of believing and enthusiasm in communicating the faith”.

Bishop John Sherrington