



The Universal Call to Holiness: Engaging with the Secular

Peter Phillips

Abstract

The recent movement of apparent restorationism seems to suggest that the Church represents an enclave where people can find a holy place, a narrowing of the universal call to holiness that was the mandate of Vatican II. This is not a task for Christians alone; it is a call for all people to rediscover the true nature of the human being in the world. Such a profoundly worldly vocation makes a radical demand for a holiness grounded on baptism and the charisms with which the Holy Spirit endows the people of God. 'To be secular is the special characteristic of the laity' (*Lumen gentium*, 3). There is an important rediscovery of the sacred taking place here: Christians are called to transform the world in and through God in a genuine and secular spirituality.

Keywords

Vatican II, holiness, charism, secular, Congar, de Lubac.

Benedict XVI, in a now famous allocution to the Curia before Christmas 2005, suggested problems raised in implementing Vatican II were caused by the clash of two contrary hermeneutics: 'a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture' contrasting with 'a hermeneutic of reform'.¹ The former, he argued, risked ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and post-conciliar Church in its apparent appeal to the spirit of the council which rides above the careful compromises of the texts themselves. This bi-polar interpretation of the council leaves me uneasy; underlying it is the suggestion of a battle of two opposing sides, for and against, a correct or incorrect interpretation. The feeling of being in battle can so easily bring with it the feeling also of being embattled, playing on a sort of defensiveness, which

¹ Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia (Dec 22nd 2005). Available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/december/2005/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia_en.html [accessed January 21st, 2013].

is often our experience of the Church today. Benedict's position is inevitably rather more subtle than a cursory reading of his allocution might suggest: his 'hermeneutic of reform' does not exclude change and development;² nevertheless it is refreshing to recall John Paul II's insistence on the note of novelty (*novitatis*) the Council introduces.³ The Council itself and its reception by the Church is a rich and multi-faceted experience. It must be remembered that all the texts were accepted by the Council Fathers with near unanimous votes; the minority as well as the majority accepted the juxtaposition and balancing of different theological ideas, a product of the 'moral unanimity' so carefully sought after by Paul VI. That there are different nuances in the texts is a pointer to the fact that the Fathers wished to leave disputed points open to further research. The Council did indeed introduce new experiences in the life of the Church: liturgy; a new familiarity with the riches of the Scriptures; the determination to engage in dialogue with other Church communities, and faith groups; a new understanding of the relationship between Church and State, and many others.

Text belongs in context, and we cannot understand the Council unless we read the documents against the horizon from which they emerged. The change from *est* to *subsistit in* to be found in *Lumen gentium* 8 was made especially to acknowledge elements of the reality of the Church preserved in non-Roman Catholic communities, not simply to emphasize how such elements subsist completely only in those bodies in communion with the bishop of Rome; though this point was certainly not excluded.⁴ Gustave Thils sketches a useful hermeneutical principle:

Fidelity to Vatican II would require that we (a) bring to bear on a question under discussion all the doctrines accepted and promulgated, each in its proper relationship to the whole; and (b) point out the trajectory these doctrines travelled in the course of the debates, so

² See, for example, Gavin D'Costa, 'Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam', *new Blackfriars*, 94, (2012), note 7, page 210. A very different interpretation of this allocution is given by Joseph Komonchak, 'Novelty in Continuity: Pope Benedict's interpretation of Vatican II', *America*, February 2nd 2009. Available online at <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/684/novelty-continuity> [accessed February 10th 2013].

³ John Paul II, *Sacrae Disciplinae Leges*, the Apostolic Constitution establishing the new Code of Canon Law, January 25th 1983. Available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp_ii_apc_250119_sacrae-disciplinae-leges_en.html [accessed January 21st, 2013].

⁴ The bibliography on this subject is vast: see, for example, Francis A. Sullivan, 'A response to Karl Becker, S.J., on the meaning of *subsistit in*', *Theological Studies*, 67 (2006), pp. 395–409; 'Questio disputata: Further Thoughts on the Meaning of *subsistit in*', *Theological Studies*, 71 (2010), pp. 133–147; Karim Scheklens, '*Lumen Gentium*'s "*subsistit in*" revisited: The Catholic Church and Christian Unity after Vatican II', *Theological Studies*, 69, (2008), pp. 875–893.

that we may see which acquired increasing importance and which consistently lost in importance.⁵

An understanding of the intention of the council Fathers allows us a better grasp of the text itself: the 1985 Extraordinary Synod on the Council insisted that ‘it was not legitimate to separate the spirit from the letter of the Council’.⁶ This, of course, works both ways: we can only understand the documents if we learn to understand the whole event of the council.

Any re-reading of the Church’s doctrine repositions what has gone before: the new patch tends to tear at the seams of the old material; the new wine threatens to burst the old skins. The true scribe can bring out of his pack both new and old, as Jesus reminds us. The introduction of *homoousios* by the Fathers of Nicaea, the first-time use of a non-Biblical word to define the truth of Biblical faith, a more comprehensive and appropriate witness to this faith than biblical expressions could, after the challenge of Arius, now provide, caused tremendous clamour. Pope Benedict reminds us of this in his same speech, citing Basil’s well-known depiction of the period between Nicaea and Constantinople as a ‘night battle’, the naval battle in the darkness of storm tossed sea. It is perhaps revealing that Pope Benedict recalls one particular image referred to by St Basil:

The raucous shouting of those who through disagreement rise up against one another, the incomprehensible chatter, the confused din of uninterrupted clamouring, has now filled almost the whole of the Church, falsifying through excess or failure the right doctrine of the faith...⁷

The passage has particular resonance with the braying voices which disturbed him in the student confrontations of 1968 and seem to have left an indelible imprint on his consciousness. Newman, reflecting on the same image from St Basil, develops a more subtle scenario:

Controversy, at least in this age, does not lie between the host of heaven, Michael and his Angels on the one side and the powers of evil on the other; but is a sort of night battle, where each fights for himself, and friend and foe stand together.⁸

Newman’s picture is more complex, and, perhaps because of this, more true both to our hermeneutic of the Council and to the approach

⁵ Gustave Thils, ‘... en pleine fidélité au Concile du Vatican II’, in *Le foi et le temps*, 10 (1980) cited in Alberigo, Jossue and Komonchak *The Reception of Vatican II*, (Catholic University of America Press, 1987), p. 40. See also Ormond Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, (New Jersey, Paulist Press, 2004).

⁶ Final Report, 1.5.

⁷ St Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, XXX, 77; PG 32, 213 A; SCh 17 ff., p. 524.

⁸ John Henry Newman ‘Faith and Reason, contrasted as Habits of Mind’, in *University Sermons*, (London: SPCK, 1970), p. 201.

of the Church to the world about us. We cannot always clearly name who is for us, or who is against us. We must not impose our own interpretation on the one to whom we are listening; we need to hear carefully what the other is saying. Yet it must be said that both Benedict and his mentor, Newman, would be one in their acceptance that ‘half the controversies in the world are verbal ones; and could they be brought to a plain issue, they would be brought to a prompt termination’.⁹ We need plain speaking above all.

Having said this, however, it is important to record the disappointment noticeable among many in the aftermath of the Council. Paul VI appears to have become more sensitive to issues raised by the so-called minority as the Council unfolded; Henri de Lubac, one of the great prophets of the Council, became disillusioned even before the ending of the Council. Today, a clash between a world-denying Augustinianism and a world-affirming Thomist interpretation is frequently referred to. Such oppositions were played out between the supporters of the journal *Concilium* (founded in 1964; first published the following year) and the newly formed *Communio* (1972). Richard Gaillardetz well sums this up:

These theologians shared a concern that the council’s commitment to ecclesial renewal through a ‘return to the sources’ had been eclipsed by the postconciliar stress on *aggiornamento*.¹⁰

Benedict XVI, himself associated with the *Communio* group, tends to emphasize a bi-polar hermeneutic. As John Allen comments in his biography of Cardinal Ratzinger, his defenders were accustomed to point out that ‘*aggiornamento* was a liberal impulse, *ressourcement* more conservative’.¹¹ The Cardinal was understood as opposing one term to the other whereas in reality the two are bound together: *ressourcement* is the way to achieve *aggiornamento*. A deeper understanding of the past enables us better to understand the present, and to rediscover the vitality which lies at the heart of the life of the Church, sweeping away the Denzinger style manual theology of desiccated neo-baroque scholasticism. I find the most revealing contrast, however, in the distinction Lieven Boeve makes between a ‘capacity to translate the mystery’ and a call for ‘initiation into the mystery’.¹²

I find Boeve’s distinction particularly helpful, distinguishing as it does between those who call for an engagement with the culture(s)

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁰ Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*, (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2006), p. 92.

¹¹ John A. Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger*, (New York: Continuum, 2000), p. 57.

¹² Lieven Boeve, *God Interrupts History: Theology in a Time of Upheaval*, (Continuum, New York, 2007), p. 54, cited in Colleen Mary Mallon, ‘Gracious Resistance: Religious Women Charting an Ecclesial Path’, *When the Magisterium Intervenes*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), p. 82.

we encounter around us, and which shape our lives, and those who oppose a so-called secularism with an artificially constructed ghetto. Echoing Pope Benedict's call in his Westminster Hall address for dialogue between secular rationality and religious belief, James Sweeney argues:

Evangelization is more than instilling beliefs; it is opening up a Way and crafting practices of life to embody that Way. For better or worse, these evangelical practices must engage with the practices that structure life in the secular world. Setting criteria for that, and opening up an effective and realistic path, is the challenge facing the Church today.¹³

Such a statement can be contrasted with, for example, recent attempts to insist that we can appropriately create a holy space by using unfamiliar and archaic words in liturgical translation. Here is the underlying theme of those who aspire to a restorationist agenda. It is a question of where we identify a genuine call to holiness.

The focus of the dogmatic constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, is primarily on the universal call of all humanity to holiness. This was a point Abbot Christopher Butler made during an intervention on the Council floor at the end of October 1964 during the debate on chapter IV of *De Ecclesia*.¹⁴ He suggested that this was the first time the solemn magisterium has declared that all members of the Church are called to sanctity. This is an important moment. He went on to add that such a call to holiness is intimately linked to the theology of grace for grace is not only the source of holiness but its ultimate goal in the mystery of God's very self. But Church is called to sanctity, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the world for the Church is indeed the sacrament and symbol of the unity of the whole human race. That this has not always been sufficiently brought to the fore is clear from the emphasis on the Church as mystery and the call to a deepening of spirituality and the witness of holiness demanded of the laity and their pastors which is spelt out in the Extraordinary Synod on Vatican II held in 1985. Section 2A of the synod's concluding report highlights chapters I, V, VII and VIII of *Lumen gentium*. It is just these chapters of *Lumen gentium* which have been treated with scant attention in the last decades. It is to these that the New Evangelization is perhaps guiding us towards.¹⁵

The various revisions of the text which became *Lumen gentium* gradually put baptism at the centre of the picture. Through the

¹³ James Sweeney, 'Faith in Culture', *New Blackfriars*, 94 (2013), pp. 140–158, passage cited fro p. 156.

¹⁴ October 31st. *Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970–1978, [henceforth A/S], vol. 2/4, p. 75.

¹⁵ Hermann Pottmeyer, 'The Church as Mysterium and as Institution', *Concilium*, 188, (1986), pp 99–109.

sacrament of baptism a layperson has a role to play both in the Church and in the world. The baptised share the threefold ministry of Christ as priest, prophet and king in their call to proclaim the healing presence of Christ to the world about them (*Lumen gentium*, 10–13). Section 12 of *Lumen gentium* emphasizes that it is primarily ‘the universal body of the faithful who have received the anointing of the holy one (see John 2, 20 and 27) cannot be mistaken in belief. It displays this particular quality through a supernatural sense of the faith in the whole people when “from the bishops to the last of the faithful laity”, it expresses the consent of all in matters of faith and morals’, clearly setting the teaching mission of the hierarchy within the body of the believing Church, not above and over against it.¹⁶

This becomes more evident when we acknowledge the shift from the apparently propositional, ahistorical view of revelation underlying *Lumen gentium* 25 to the more personalist, historical understanding underlying the text of *Dei verbum*. Newman spells this out for us in talking of:

... a certain body of Truth, pervading the Church like an atmosphere... partly written, partly unwritten, partly preserved in intellectual expressions, partly latent in the spirit and tempered of Christians; poured to and fro in closets and upon the housetops, in liturgies, in controversial works, in obscure fragments, in sermons, in popular prejudices, in local custom... her accustomed and unconscious mode of viewing things, and the body of her received notions [rather] than any definite and systematic collection of dogmas elaborated by the intellect.¹⁷

Equally importantly *Lumen gentium* reasserts the Pauline recognition of the role of charisms.¹⁸ While acknowledging that there are ‘hierarchical gifts’ pertaining to the ordering of the community the text also insists on the presence of ‘charismatic gifts’ given by the Spirit “to each individually as he will” (I Cor 12, 11), and among the faithful of every rank he distributes special graces by which he renders them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which help the renewal and building up of the Church, according to that word “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for

¹⁶ Abbot Christopher Butler in a later written intervention on *De Revelatione* reinforces this point by indicating that the mistaken deletion of words in a quotation from Pius XII’s apostolic constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, gave the wrong impression that the deposit of faith was entrusted only to the magisterium and not to the Church in its entirety (A/S 3/3, pp. 812–816). This mistake was rectified in the promulgated text (*Dei verbum*, 10).

¹⁷ John Henry Newman, *Via Media*, ed. H. D. Weidner, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 268–9.

¹⁸ I am grateful to Richard R. Gaillardetz & Catherine E. Clifford, *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teaching of Vatican II*, (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 2012) for the following.

the common good (1 Cor 12, 7)”¹⁹ It is the pastor’s task to test such charisms but above all not to extinguish the Spirit. This is a theme which reverberates throughout the Council texts. Moving away from the narrower model of Catholic action which understood the laity as closely assisting the bishop in his ministry and which was supported by some of the Council Fathers, the biblical theology of charism mandates lay men and women to take up their own role in the Church. John Paul II, in his first encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, comments: ‘Indeed, in the church as the community of the People of God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit’s working, each member has “his own special gift”, as St Paul teaches. Although this “gift” is a personal vocation and form of participation in the Church’s saving work, it also serves others, builds the church and its fraternal communities in the various spheres of human life on earth’.²⁰ Karl Rahner makes the point:

In the Church to which charismatic elements belong, subordinates are not simply those who have to carry out orders from above. They have other commands as well to carry out: those of the Lord who also guides God’s Church directly and does not always in the first place convey God’s commands and promptings through ecclesiastical authorities.²¹

The laity has gained a genuine voice. The decree on the laity echoes *Lumen gentium*:

Laypeople have their office and right to the apostolate from their union with Christ their head . . . Through receiving these gifts of grace, however, unspectacular, every one of the faithful has the right and duty to exercise them in the Church and the world for the good of humanity and for the building up of the Church . . . Since the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church is Christ sent by the Father, it is clear that the fruitfulness of the apostolate of the laity depends in their living union with Christ . . .²²

The decree on priestly life encourages pastors sincerely to:

acknowledge and promote the standing of the laity and their role proper in the Church’s mission. They should fully respect the rightful freedom which belongs to all in human society. They should readily listen to lay people, considering their wishes as those of sisters and brothers, recognizing their experience and competence in various fields of human activity, so as to join with them in reading the signs of the times.²³

¹⁹ *Lumen gentium*, 12.

²⁰ *Redemptor Hominis*, § 21.

²¹ Karl Rahner, *Free Speech in the Church*, (1953) trans. G. Lamb, (Sheed & Ward, London & New York, 1959), p. 13.

²² *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 3–4.

²³ *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 9.

The layperson has also a specific task being church in the world: 'to be secular is the special characteristic of the laity' as *Lumen gentium* 3 has it:

It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will. They live in the world, in each and every one of the world's occupations and callings and in the ordinary circumstances of social and family life which, as it were, form the context of their existence.²⁴

Such a profoundly worldly vocation makes a radical demand for holiness. One's call to holiness is discovered not by turning away from the world but by plunging into the whirling eddies of secular experience. It is no easy calling. The task of bishops and presbyters is to support their brothers and sisters in this mission. All Christians, lay and religious, are called to a holiness discovered in the situation in which they live and work.

This is not a task for the Christian alone: it is a call for all people to rediscover the true nature of the human being in the world. This is proclaimed in *Gaudium et spes*, in a text which became central to the vision of John Paul II, and quoted in many of his encyclical letters: '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 high calling'.²⁵ *Gaudium et spes* puts this statement in the context of Augustine's call to every human heart: 'you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they repose in you' (*Confessions* 1, 1; *Gaudium et spes*, 21) and continues:

Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is therefore a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God.²⁶

Still Archbishop of Cracow, Karol Wojtyła claims that *Gaudium et spes* completes *Lumen gentium*:

because it reveals what the Church essentially is and displays the dynamism of the Church's mystery with greater fullness... The redemptive work of Jesus Christ which determines the inmost nature of the Church is in fact the work of the redemption of the world.²⁷

²⁴ *Lumen gentium* 3. See also *Lumen gentium* 37; *Gaudium et spes* 43.

²⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Karol Wojtyła, *Sources of Renewal*, (London: Collins, 1980), p. 69. See also John Paul's reflection on this passage of Augustine in *Redemptor Hominis*: 'In this creative restlessness beats and pulsates what is most deeply human – the search for truth, the insatiable need for the good, hunger for freedom, nostalgia for the beautiful, and the voice of conscience' (§ 18).

There is a profound rediscovery of the sacred taking place here: perhaps better, a profound rediscovery of the secular. This is precisely Jesus' point. There are no longer any sacred places, for the whole world is holy: the body of Jesus replaces the Temple; commitment to him is the keeping of the Torah. Every space is holy which affords a welcome to those who preach the good news. Jesus eats and consorts with those beyond the safe haven of the community: the lepers, the prostitutes, the tax collectors. And as he did, so must we, as we live out the pattern of his life.

Congar adds an important word of caution, however: without the recognition of the gratuitous gift of grace calling the world to a transformation beyond its own powers, 'the church is reduced to the role of revealing the meaning of the world'.²⁸ We need signs and symbols to call us to transcendence: 'a sacred pedagogy', of which each historical period and each culture can and ought to contribute their own examples to the repertory of sacred forms coherent with their spirit and their resources'.²⁹ To do this we must refuse to regard the sacred as a matter of attachment to things and it demands a 'critical discernment of forms of worship', the living experience of the faithful [being] the place where the value of these forms is verified'.³⁰

De Lubac develops a similar critique. In a draft, 'Tripartate Anthropology', unpublished during his lifetime, but which he considered of great importance, De Lubac points to a balance of religion, morality and mysticism which is the hallmark of Catholic experience. Taking as his cue I Thess 5.32 ('may your entire being, spirit, soul and body, be kept safe and blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ') he explores at length this tripartite understanding of the human being. To disregard any of these terms is destructive of Catholic life; morals, for example, excluded from the other can all too easily fall into a dry and lifeless moralism, religion becomes mere religiosity.³¹ De Lubac goes on to quote that saintly founder of the European ideal, Emmanuel Mounier, who recalls that 'morality has no other end but the spirituality of which it keeps house'.³² One of his chief concerns about the period following the Council is the apparent upsetting of this carefully poised equilibrium. But this was no just the product of

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³¹ Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), pp 187–194.

³² Cited *Theology in History*, p 196.

the Council. Remarks first published in 1942 usefully illustrate this theme,³³ to which he returned time after time.

De Lubac makes four points. Like Newman, he called for a well-educated Catholic laity. He pointed to the serious lack of adult Christian education, which for most Christians remains ‘that of a child, wholly elementary, rudimentary, a mixture of childish imagination, poorly assimilated abstract notions, scraps of vague and disconnected teaching. In the second place, he also returned to a theme taken up in his first book, *Catholicism: the danger of narrowing the theological task to ‘doing theology against...’* which inevitably distorts.³⁴ Here controversy provides the central model: ‘the dominant concern is less to seek an understanding of faith, to be nourished on mystery, than to respond to and oppose heresies. Here, too, a polemical concern has outpaced the concern to build a complete and truly positive doctrine’.³⁵ Thirdly, de Lubac calls for an end to the false dualism which sets the secular over against the supernatural which as Christians ‘through a tragic misunderstanding, we more or less fall in with this game’. Although recognizing an absolute distinction between nature and the supernatural, he argues that ‘this is in one sense an abstraction... all is sacred by destination and must therefore begin by being so through participation’. Again he claims: ‘nature was made for the supernatural, and, without having any right over it, nature is not explained without it’. Remember Hopkins:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.

De Lubac, in a footnote to this discussion, quotes a powerful passage from the writings of Gustave Thibon:

Too often Christians, instead of impregnating the world with God, restrict themselves to superimposing God on the world, and, as a result of this split between the secular and the sacred, the things of heaven, deprived of concrete ties, slide over the surface of formalism or of dreams, while the things of the earth, cut off from their eternal source, find themselves handed over to the ravages of corruption and anarchy. Nature and grace must now acknowledge each other in our hearts, a place must be made for God who is everywhere.³⁶

³³ ‘Disappearance of the Sense of the Sacred’, first published in *Bulletin des aumôniers catholiques. Chantiers de la jeunesse*, 31 August 1942, *Theology in History*, pp 223–240.

³⁴ Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism*, translated by Lancelot C. Sheppard, (Burns, Oates & Washbourne, 1950), pp 164–167.

³⁵ *Theology in History*, p 225.

³⁶ Gustave Thibon, *L’Échelle de Jacob*, 9–10, cited Henri de Lubac, *Theology in History*, p. 232.

Finally, de Lubac calls for an understanding of revelation not in terms of propositions rationally worked out as a specialized scientific language known only to the experts, but as an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ, who is himself the mystery of God in God's very depths. As Butler was to say in an intervention to the Fathers of Vatican II, the source and origin of Christian revelation was not found in the words of Christ, but in Jesus Christ himself, though not excluding his words [*revera fons et origo revelationis christianae non est solum sermones Christi, sed ipse Jesus Christi – qui tamen non habetur sine sermonibus suis*].³⁷ De Lubac echoes Congar's plea for a rediscovery 'of the Mystery of Christ in its sobriety and seriousness at the altar', and warns of the danger of a 'sentimentalism which is characterized notably by *the abuse of devotions*':

This failing arises in worship when the essential lines of the liturgy are as if swamped or monopolized by secondary details, when the ritual of sacraments (baptism, confirmation, anointing) is scarcely understood by most of the people and scarcely opens them at all to mystery, when preaching seems to play an ornamental role in ceremonies, a little like the organs, green plants, tapestries, lights and verger, when an opulent or shoddy luxury replaces the beauty that would spring from a praying people.³⁸

Such Council texts and such commentary on them call for a radically new understanding of the role of pastors in the Church: pastors must in the first place be those who listen to the faithful and to the world around them. St Cyprian reminds us that 'a man is teachable if he is meek and gentle and patient in learning. It is thus a bishop's duty not only to teach but to learn. For he becomes a better teacher if he makes daily progress and advancement in learning what is better'.³⁹ We need to recognise and honour the charisms which are given by the Holy Spirit to all members of the Church. It is worth noting that, as James Coriden remarks, the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* fails completely in acknowledging such charisms:

The exclusion of the Holy Spirit and charisms from the code was not due to ignorance or casual neglect; it seems to have been a conscious choice. It is difficult to detect the real reasons for this deliberate exclusion. It may have been motivated by a fear of a mysterious charismatic element that might have been difficult to verify or control, and that might prove disruptive or dangerous. Or the revisers of the code may have been reluctant to acknowledge any source of authority in the

³⁷ November 21st. A/S, 1/3, pp. 264–267.

³⁸ *Theology in History*, p. 237.

³⁹ Cyprian, *Epistle*, 74.10 cited in Richard R. Galliardetz, ed., *When the Magisterium Intervenes*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2012), p. 283.

Church other than the exclusively Christicentric and hierarchic sources recognized for centuries. They may have been unwilling to recognize the Spirit who dwells within each one of the Christian faithful and gives them gifts for the building of the Church.⁴⁰

When we turn to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* we do indeed fare a little better. The *Catechism* does acknowledge the charisms which are found amongst the faithful, but relatively briefly as ‘a wonderful rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they are really genuinely gifts of the Holy Spirit’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 800), but elsewhere seems to imply that they are relatively rare, insisting that they are ‘*special graces* . . . whatever their character – sometimes it is extraordinary, such as the gift of miracles or of tongues . . .’ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2003). Perhaps we need to recognize and honour the genuine charisms involved in the ministry of teaching; with the leadership of parish teams and programmes; the charisms which call people to a (sometimes heroic) holiness of life; bringing up a family; those of caring for the sick and elderly loved one; and those shown forth in many more areas of parish life. Leonardo Boff reminds us that ‘the routine as well as the extraordinary is covered by the term *charism*.’⁴¹ Cardinal Hume, at the Synod on the Family, spoke up forcefully asking the Church to listen seriously to the voice of married people:

[the] prophetic mission of the family, and so of husbands and wives, is based on their experience as married persons and on an understanding of the sacrament of marriage, of which they can speak with their own authority. This experience and this understanding constitute, I would suggest, as authentic *fons theological* from which we, the pastors, and indeed the whole Church can draw. Married couples have then a two-fold title to a special authority in matters concerning marriage: first, they are minister of the sacrament, and, secondly, they alone have experienced the effect of the sacrament, which enables them to participate in the love of Christ for his Church sacramentally.⁴²

⁴⁰ James Coriden, ‘The Holy Spirit and Church Governance’, *The Jurist*, 66, 2006, p. 372, cited in Ormond Rush ‘The Prophetic Office of the Church’ in Richard R. Gaillardetz, *When the Magisterium Intervenes*, (Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2012), p. 104.

⁴¹ Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power*, (Crossroad, New York, 1985), p. 158. Boff’s discussion of charism offers an important contribution to the discussion, (*op. cit.* pp 156–164). See also Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesio-genesis*, (Collins, London, 1986), pp. 27–30, 93–95, where he cites Gotthold Hasenbüttl’s definition of charism as ‘the concrete call, received through the salvific event, exercised in the community, constituting that community in ongoing fashion, building it, and serving human beings in love’ (p. 27).

⁴² *The Tablet*, October 4th 1980, p. 978.

As Yves Congar reflected in the opening weeks of the Council such a vision of the Church calls for a new kind of bishop:

characterized by the presence of the Church in the World. Not only in creating structures for parishes and other works, but, in addition to these structures, ensuring that the bishop is in touch with the problems of the world, together with his priests, who will keep him informed and whom he will inform, organize, animate, supervise and encourage. ... This in turn implies 1) the existence of a mature laity; 2) the presence of the Church, not in the form of clerical authority but in the form of a prophetic awareness of what it means to be human.⁴³

The discipline demanded of a disciple is not a living out of our lives according to a set of carefully honed rules, but offers the freedom of travelling light. Thomas Merton's comments about monastic discipline refer equally to the life of all disciples. There comes a point in all our lives when we have to accept the scary maturity involved in:

The loneliness and disorientation of one who has to recognize that the old signposts don't show him his way, and that in fact he has to find his way by himself without a map. True, the monastic [or Christian] life provides other signposts and other maps: but the trouble is that too often the signposts point merely to a dead end and the maps are like those curious constructions of fourteenth-century cartographers which inform us that 'here be many dragons'. The real function of discipline is not to provide us with maps, but to sharpen our sense of direction so that when we really get going we can travel without maps.⁴⁴

Prayer, says the Irish theologian, Enda McDonagh, 'is the way we let God loose in the World';⁴⁵ it offers that disturbing call to a way of life which offers an 'invitation to be vulnerable for others'.⁴⁶ We are led to a deepening of understanding by a growing sensitivity which allows us to engage with how others see things whether they be our own contemporaries or those who have struggled to model Christ in different times and places. Having reflected on the situation around us we are called to act. We need to discern what actions constitute believing in Christ in this world of ours. What activities allow us to bring healing and consolation? What takes us out of the rut of our narrow complacency and challenges us to ever widening horizons as men and women struggle for liberation in its most profound sense?

⁴³ Yves Congar, 29th Oct 1962, *My Journal of the Council*, (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2011), p 126.

⁴⁴ Thomas Merton, *Contemplation on a World of Action*, (New York: Image Books, 1973), pp. 126–127.

⁴⁵ See, Enda McDonagh, *Doing the Truth*, pp. 40–57

⁴⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ, The Christian Experience in the Modern World*, (London: SCM, 1980), p. 229.

What actions are, for us and our fellows, foretastes and sacraments of the reign of God? God did not reveal God's self simply as an intellectual exercise, but in order to save us by helping us to transform our lives in and through his love. We are looking for a genuine, secular spirituality.

Peter Phillips
Sacred Heart The Cross
Moreton Wirral
CH46 9QB
United Kingdom
pwphillips3@btinternet.com