BISHOP REMI DEROO: A PILGRIM OF VATICAN II
FEBRUARY 8, 2013

Introduction

Good afternoon and welcome to another educational forum sponsored by the Elephants in the Living Room. I have the privilege of introducing one of my fellow bishops, the retired Bishop of Victoria, British Columbia, Bishop Remi DeRoo, who has become known as a Pilgrim of Vatican II. He was named as a bishop in 1962 when he was 38 years old, and he is one of the few bishops alive today who was present as a bishop at Vatican Council II. So when he speaks about the Council, it’s from his experience as one who participated in a very important way during those sessions of those four years. During the Council, on at least four occasions, he made spoken interventions on issues that were before the 2500 bishops gathered in St. Peter’s; and he submitted a number of other written interventions, so he had a very real role in developing the sixteen documents that came from the Vatican Council.

Bishop DeRoo was a founding member of the World Conference for Religion and Peace, and Vice-President of that organization in 1988. He was also a member of the Bishops’ Conference in Canada, a chair of their Social Affairs Commission, and became very active in social justice issues. His most recent book is Chronicles of a Vatican II Bishop; it gives you much insight into what happened at the Vatican Council from the perspective of someone who was there to help make that happen. Currently, Bishop DeRoo is travelling around the world, the United States and Europe and Canada, speaking about the Vatican Council, and helping us to understand what happened at the Council, and what we need to do today to continue the positive work of that Council. And so it gives me great pleasure to present to you the Pilgrim of Vatican Council II, Bishop Remi DeRoo. (Applause)

A Pilgrim of Vatican II

Pearl, I want you to stand up so everybody can see you. Pearl Gervais is my co-worker, and I want you to count the number of people in the room, Pearl, because people will never believe me when I tell them I spoke to a room full of elephants; so I want a proof, a witness to testify how many elephants were in the room. (Laughter)

I’m going to speak for an hour or so, in a stream of consciousness. I’m going to touch on a few rather delicate topics, so what I really think about that, you’ll find in writing; and I’ll stand by the book, Chronicles of a Vatican II Bishop. I may not necessarily be satisfied that I’ve put it in the best of words, but I’ll do my best.

Let me begin by saying our whole approach to life, the way we perceive reality and how we’re affected by things that happen, is conditioned by our image of God. Now there are two main images possible for God. One of them is the older version that we used to have before Vatican II, which I will simply, for lack of a better term, I will call the propositional image of God. That’s the image of God that I learned in my catechism, okay? questions and answers, like the act of faith, “Oh my God, I firmly believe all that the holy Roman Catholic Church believes and teaches,” etc. etc. That’s an image of God whereby you can explain God with a series of propositions and it’s pretty much head stuff; it doesn’t have much to do with the heart, and less to do with the body.

You remember when Protestants accused us Roman Catholics of not knowing our Bible? There was an element of truth in that; but there was also truth in the response we gave: “Now just a minute; it’s the Catholic Church that put the Bible together; and we have the head of the Church, and the bishops, to tell us what the Bible means, to make sure we don’t get it all wrong. So there!” A dialog of the deaf: two ships passing in the night.

Gradually, however, the Holy Spirit led us to realize that Revelation is not a book; no matter how wonderful the Bible is, it’s an absolute saving treasure, it’s a sacrament; in fact, it’s a love story. That brings us to the other image, relational – the one that emerged from Vatican II, after a lengthy and very heavy debate on the whole question of authority in the Church, and Revelation, and the role of the Bible. As a result of that, we came to the conclusion that no matter how wonderful these treasures are the Bible and the authority, and the teaching office etc., there’s something far more important; and that is to know that Revelation is not a book, it’s not a serious of propositions, it’s not a catechism. Revelation is a person, the person of Jesus Christ, alive and speaking to us today. That means that everything we experience in the Church through the Holy Spirit, the gift of Jesus Christ, is sacramental. And that is a very important dimension of Vatican II as well: the rediscovery of the sacramental nature of all our Christian life. I’ll touch on that very briefly.

People with different images of God have different images of Church; the whole thing around the reception or non-reception of Vatican II is largely related to the kind of image people have. People who have a propositional image of God are very concerned about law, and order, and orthodoxy, and the strict written sense of the word. People with a relational picture of God are more concerned with how we relate to God, and what we do with our bodies and our hearts as well as our heads. Keep that in mind when you’re discussing with people who may have very different perceptions of what’s going on. It’s probably because they have a different image of God.
This is not a history lecture here today, however important history is. This is not an academic lecture, about theology, or anything like that. This is a conversation; and it’s meant to be pastoral – aiming not so much about the fact of Vatican II, or the implications, but what Vatican II can mean, means to you today, and hopefully will continue to mean; and also what that does, and what it means, for your spirituality. My invitation in this hour lecture is basically an invitation to you during this Year of Faith, which Pope Benedict XVI has called for, to look at your own spirituality, because you each have a spirituality. Our Christian life, and salvation, is spirituality.

We are spirit and flesh. Let’s not use the expression body and soul anymore. It’s misleading. It’s based on Greek philosophy; it gives the impression that there are two elements, and one is more worthy than the other. It’s led to some horrible theology about the body. Let’s forget that! Remember, you are a spirit, a spirit enfleshed on a pilgrim journey; you come from the Father and you return to the Godhead, however you call God, as Mother. Pope John Paul I said that God is actually more Mother than Father. There is more of the maternal in the Scriptures than there is of the paternal. It’s quite legitimate to use feminine images for God; in fact, I’m doing it more and more to try and redress the imbalance that I know is in my mentality, because I was brought up in a very macho kind of a world, and I had to learn to open up the domain of my heart as well, and keep the body moving in matters of social justice. Speaking of social justice, I appreciated your kind words, Tom, which you made here; but I also want you to know how we in Canada admire you for the work that you’re doing.

In retrospect you can sum up Vatican II in three words; a French word, an Italian and an English word. The French word is ressourcement. The best way to understand ressourcement, apart from resources, is to trace the stream back to its source – a fresh spring of water bubbling up out of the earth. Recall the story of Jesus with the woman at the well, telling us that those who accept his word from their hearts, would flow, bubble up, in springs of living water – the dynamic of a little spring that bubbles up with energy. Ressourcement: return, return to the fountain, return to the bubbling up little stream of eternal life, returning to our roots. That was one of the things we hoped to do. It took us all the way back to the Fathers and the Mothers of the Church.

Note that our patriarchal system didn’t recognized all the great women scholars. There were probably as many women, Mothers of the Church as there were historically recognized Fathers of the Church. And one of the best things recent popes have done is to begin to name women as Doctors of the Church. I particularly like the case of Therese of the Child Jesus as a Doctor of the Church. This woman who dies at the age of 24, and who’s never gone beyond the four walls of a monastery, who dreamed of being a missionary in the world, today is a Doctor of the Church. That tells us something. That tells us particularly that faith is much more a matter of the heart than it is just cerebral truths about God, or even the actions of the body.

The second word is in Italian: aggiornamento. It comes from the word day, as in bon giorno - good day, how do you do. It means updating; it means renewal; it means appropriate adaptation; it means many, many things that all have to do with the dynamic of making the living word of the Church more acceptable today, particularly to the rising generation who are not interested very much in truths as academic realities, but more interested in seeing how our faith is brought into action in this contemporary world.

That word, aggiornamento, led us, under leadership of Cardinal Sueneens of Belgium, to recognize, that since the Church is part of the world, we could not really speak only about the Church without a concern for the world. The whole pastoral dimension of the Council really came to the surface. It’s interesting how the Spirit was guiding us. This belatedly born document became the longest one of the whole Council. The reason was because the style changed from the original traditional deductive method of starting from principles, to the inductive, starting from real experience. Now you can’t begin to describe reality in only a couple of words. So we necessarily had a much longer style of writing and substance of writing in the document on The Church in the Modern World. Part One deals with principles, and those are as valid today as they were fifty years ago.

Part Two gets into specific issues, which will always need updating; for instance, war and peace, medical ethics, modern technology and communications. Fifty years ago we didn’t even suspect what the World Wide Web would do, and particularly what the rising young generation would be doing with all this fantastic material in terms of exploring the world. We couldn’t predict the powerful Hubble and other modern telescopes that are floating up there in space, which are sending us, millions of year’s later, pictures of the actual birthing of stars. You know, it brings tears to my eyes just to say it. What a wonderful experience this is to be able to look at the birthing, the coming into existence, of a star millions of years ago. Before the light waves came close enough for our cameras to capture them, millions of years had gone by. And image what all this is going to do for the future.

We are only beginning a fantastic romantic journey of discovery. I was visiting with a group of Jesuits in Tucson, Arizona, where they have all these magnificent telescopes, one of them run by the Vatican. The Jesuit astronomers spend six months in Tucson, Arizona, because of the cloudy weather in Italy. One morning I was out for a walk with an elderly Jesuit. He’s a mathematician, and his specialty was doing the mathematics of the birthing of the universe. He tells me, “You know, Remi, when I come to my office in the morning and I turn on my computer, I go into awe and admiration at the beauty of what I see before me.” What was he looking at?
Mathematical equations describing the beginning of the universe! It is beyond me! It’s over my head! But I will never forget that lesson in spirituality. Talk about spirituality at work; here is this man who is actually worshipping God as he works with his computer to try and understand better where the universe came from.

The third word that underscores Vatican II is development, a word that we inherited from John Henry Cardinal Newman, a wonderful figure. A man who, having left the Anglican Church, led by truth, because he read history, and realized that only the Catholic Church had consistently faced certain errors in history. In doing so, he articulated the notion of developments in doctrine. He made this point in Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine (1845). In another work, Grammar of Assent (1870) he stated, “There never was a time when revelation was not continuous and systematic, with distinct ideas in an orderly succession.” So the Anglicans called him a traitor, and the Catholics tried to discount him because he was a convert. Happily, Pope Leo XIII recognized his genius and made him a Cardinal. You may want to go back and read some of John Newman’s works – wonderful. And the beautiful hymns: Lead, Kindly Light, The night is dark, and I am far from home, Lead Thou me on! I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me. What a beautiful act of faith.

The Vatican Council produced sixteen documents; I will refer mainly to the four constitutions.

**Verbum Dei: Revelation**

In terms of the creative energies of Vatican II, the most important document is Revelation. I gave you part of it already. Revelation is not a series of propositions, no matter how important are the dogmas, and the catechisms and all those things. Most important is the fact that God chose to reveal, because God is love; and love is effusive; it cannot be held in. If you’re deeply in love, it comes out. It shows. You’ve got to do something about it. And it’s free. I can’t walk up and say, “Nancy, I order you to love me.” You know what would happen! (Laughter)

It is very important to realize that God is first and foremost relationship. That’s why Jesus revealed the Trinity to us. It is a mystery, which took time to develop, to unfold, simply because it’s so rich. It’s so dense, in the sense of depth of meaning, difficult to understand, a mystery! As you know, a mystery is a truth, not a falsehood; it’s a truth, which is so rich, so important, that we cannot fully grasp it; and the deeper the mystery, the longer we contemplate it. Part of heaven will precisely be deepening that relationship with God, and that understanding of all the beauty of the Trinity, which will retain us forever, because it is beyond sense, and history, and time.

I was speaking of Cardinal Newman’s hymns. One of the most exciting things happening right now, and we can credit the younger generation for that, is that the Bible is being written in hymns, and psalms, and sung. More people are learning their Bible by singing bible hymns than ever before in history. That’s extraordinary, because it is bringing music back into its teaching role in the domain of faith; and incidentally, in case there are some who are hesitant about singing in church, song and music, according to Vatican II, are not additives; they’re not peripheral; they’re not secondary to the liturgy; they are part of the liturgy. Part of the liturgy is actually sung. And that means we have to pay a great debt of gratitude to all those wonderful new songwriters like David Haas in Minneapolis with the Music Ministry Alive. That is a gift to the Church, and I hope more of that will happen.

There are so many songs now that are becoming popular, popularized by these modern song writers. This is one of the ways in which the world is learning about Vatican II, but also is learning the Gospel. Singing the Gospel is even better than reading it, or even just speaking it. A friend of mine once made the comment, “Stand at the door of the church as the people walk out. You probably won’t hear them singing the sermon, but you might hear them singing the song that they heard in church.” So you’ll understand better then that music and singing are part of the liturgy, not additions to the liturgy.

So make the connection now with your spirituality. You are today, right here, right now, in the process of developing a spirituality, which is the beginning of your experience of heaven. What will you be doing in heaven? You will be continuing exactly what you are doing right now; because you are in the state of grace, and you are loving God, and you are using all your senses, hearing, seeing, to deepen the understanding. So you’re growing in the knowledge and the love of God; and that will be your eternal happiness. Put that in marriage terms. Many of you have had the beauty and the experience, the joy of a honeymoon. Well, heaven is a honeymoon without end; it’s as simple as that! It’s a living, dynamic reality where your relationship with God will continue to grow, just as hopefully your relationship with your partner grew during your honeymoon. Okay?

**Verbum Dei** calls for Scriptural scholarship. That was hailed as a great discovery by Vatican II, but it was actually the reclaiming of something that Pius XII had said in 1946. Earlier than that, in 1943, he wrote an encyclical, Divino Afflante Spiritu, about Scripture, where he permitted Catholic scholars to engage in research in Scriptures. Then we had a race to try and catch up with the Protestant scholars! Today, that’s all over; now they are all together. In fact, now we have an ecumenical Bible; it’s taken for granted.

But a very interesting little story about how that started. There was a group of French scholars discussing the Letter to the Romans, and particularly Romans: Chapter 3, verses 27-28: “My just man, my just person, lives by
faith." They had a little parlor game during a committee meeting: Let's try and translate that in such a way that every Church can accept it. And they succeeded. And guess whose text they finally accepted? Luther! It's Luther's version of Romans 3:27-28 which was accepted as the best rendition. That was published in a French Bible, the first ecumenical Bible. It has the French acronym TOB. It's known among scholars as the TOB; and it has on that page, the Letter to the Romans, three columns of tiny print, footnotes, to explain how the different churches read that expression, “a just person lives by faith,” in slightly different ways, but still substantially in agreement. See, that's where the scholars have helped us tremendously in the field of ecumenism.

Lumen Gentium: the Church

The Church is a mystery that precedes even the liturgy. The Church is the mystery of the Incarnation, made visible by people accepting in faith the reality and attributes of God. The Church engages all those who have come to the knowledge of God, regardless of denomination; Baptism is the key here. All baptized faithful are members of the Church – a major Development since Vatican II. Before then we suspected that Protestants were going to hell. Our image of God said that. Since Vatican II we have recognized that the other so-called non-Catholic churches – I hate the word non-Catholic – the other Christians are also not only churches, in the sense in which we understand church, but more than that, sources of salvation. Talk about a big leap forward at Vatican II: to recognize that not only were the other churches sisters and brothers in faith, but they were actually sources of salvation to their own members: a good faithful Protestant is being saved, just like we are.

Now, where does that leave us with our claims that we have the only true Church, and all that? Well, we have to reexamine our language. In no way are we denying the fact of the reality of Revelation. We rejoice in the fact that we know that we have received God's revelation in Christ Jesus and in the Church – the mystery of the Body of Christ, as Pius XII had already phrased it, and which even now still deepens. We do not have the right to think we are better than the other churches. On the contrary, it places upon us the responsibility of proving by our lives, and the way we reach out in loving relationship, and the way we think and speak, that we have been touched by the fullness of Revelation and consequently are living model lives as Christians. And until we are model Christians, we have no excuse to think our Church is better. Yes, its true; and I repeat: it is true! We have the assurance that the fullness of Revelation came to us in Christ Jesus. We need look for no new revelations; but that doesn't make us better than anybody else. It simply means we have been privileged, and we have the responsibility to act accordingly. I regret to say that we are falling down in that regard, and I don't think the world sees the Roman Catholic Church exactly as a model for all to admire. And it's not all their fault!

This is very important for ecumenism: the Vatican Council tells us there is a hierarchy of truths among the many truths of salvation. The divinity of Jesus Christ is more important than not eating meat on Friday. Get it? Most of our quarrels among Christians are all about eating meat on Friday. It would be better if we argued a little bit more about understanding of the divinity of Christ. Let's get to the important things. That's what ecumenism is all about. Let's talk about the things that unite us, instead of quarreling over the ways we express our faith: this devotion is better than that devotion; my rosary is longer than yours. (Laughter) You see how it is important? Things like you are doing here today; the work you're doing, you know, clarifying what are the important truths.

And remember the wonderful words of the most brilliant theologian from England at the Council, who was an abbot, Christopher Butler. Christopher became a Catholic and then became the abbot of Downside. Christopher Butler read three Oxford degrees, and got a First in all three. He was a self-taught scripture scholar, and in the time when the Church was silencing the great scripture scholars, he among others was criticized. Some said he should have been the Cardinal, but it didn’t work that way. Anyway, in the course of defending the scholars in the presence of all the other bishops, in advocating for the freedom of research, he threw out this lapidary phrase in Latin (I'll spare you the Latin): "Why should we fear that somehow truth would speak against truth?"

Sacrosanctum Concilium: The Liturgy

The liturgy constitution is extremely important. The document on Liturgy was the best prepared of all the documents. You have to read the document itself, especially Articles 1 & 2. In Article 1 you have a program for the whole Vatican Council. It reminds us that Vatican II, the entire Council, was a Liturgy in itself. It started with Eucharist every morning in one of the many rites – more than 20 rites of our Church. (We of the Latin rite sometimes think we are superior because we're more numerous. But we are only one of several.) After that, there was the enthroning of the Scriptures. The Book of the Gospels was held up high so everyone could venerate, and then put on the ambo. All our discussions were in the presence of the open Gospel to remind us that what we were doing was really an act of Liturgy. In the last sentence in Gaudium et Spes, there is a clear statement that every human being, even a non-believer, simply because he or she is human, is in some way linked to the Paschal Mystery of Christ Jesus. What a development for the Church to come to that conclusion – that there is no single human being of good will who is not in some way linked to the Paschal Mystery!
Another rediscovery of Vatican II is that at the heart of the whole liturgical year there must be the Paschal Mystery, and every Sunday of the year is oriented around the Paschal Mystery. One of the dangers that happened before Vatican II (and we’re slipping back there again!) was that so many special issues were assigned to different Sundays, that practically every Sunday was some kind of Sunday for this, Sunday for that, and in the process, we lost the heart of the liturgy, which is the Paschal Mystery. For instance, when we have a Sunday dedicated to God’s mercy, that may sound good and nice, but I am very concerned if we start assigning one specific devotional, or one particular doctrine, to a Sunday, we are going to end up again with a kind of a chessboard of Sundays, with all kinds of names, and nobody knowing what Sunday is there for in the first place. Sunday is there as a re-enactment of the Paschal Mystery. And that is why the Sundays are arranged around the story of Christ’s life – life, death, resurrection – and the Holy Spirit. By the way, from a pastoral point of view, the Way of the Cross, 14 stations: a very serious theological mistake to stop at station 14.

So you tell me, “All right! Jesus Christ died for my sins, okay? And rose and returned to heaven. So what! Doesn’t mean anything to me! He’s in heaven! Too bad! We’ve lost him!” You’ve got to complete that event with the Pentecost. In John 14:12 Jesus said to the disconsolate, brokenhearted apostles, because he was leaving, “I must go. I have to go for you, because if I don’t return to the Godhead, the Spirit will not come. But from the Godhead I will send you the Spirit; and you will do even greater things, even greater works.” The first time I read that I couldn’t believe it. I said that’s a misprint. How could we do greater things than Jesus? Until I said to myself, “Oh dumb you! Remember the Mystical Body.” (I wrote a book on this, “Even Greater Things.”) Through the Mystical Body, Jesus is gathering the whole of humanity around him, and through the power of the Spirit which he, Jesus, has given to all of us, the work of the Lord is being continued; and even greater things are happening than what could happen historically with one person, Jesus, walking on foot in a tiny little country.

Remember! Put yourself in that context of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Those gifts of the Holy Spirit are the Body of Christ, all of us members of Christ continuing even greater things. Now go back to John’s Gospel, I think it’s Chapter 5, where Jesus is chastised because he did a miracle on a Sabbath. Imagine! On the Sabbath and in the Temple; horror of horrors! Instead of defending himself, what did Jesus say? “My Father is always working and I too am at work.” Go back to the Temple scene where the child Jesus is lost in the Temple; and Mary and Joseph, disconsolate, find him. “Why did you do this to us? Didn’t you know we were worried?” His answer, no apologies: “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (or work) Already he is saying it’s a Bar Mitzvah. It’s important symbolically. He’s grown up. Bar Mitzvah! He makes his public statement, what he’s all about, “I’m here to do the Father’s work.” Yeah! “So I missed the ride home; but I was busy.” (Laughter) And on the cross, what does the dying Jesus say? “Father, I finished my job,” consummatum in Latin; “It is done.”

 غالبوم وسبيس: كنيسة العالم المعاصر

Article 22 of the Church in the Modern World is a magnificent article you’ve got to read, and re-read, and read again, and learn by heart. It’s Jesus as the model of the human. If you know article 22 by heart, you’ll never be at a loss for words, if somebody asks you, like off the cuff, to give a little talk to some group, any group – yep! Women, mixed, children; it doesn’t matter. If you have Gaudium et Spes, 22 tucked away in your little memory, you’ll know immediately beautiful things that you can say to anybody.

The other very important section is that on Conscience. You’ll find it in the Church in the Modern World, and also in the document on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae). The best thing is to send you to the text, because I couldn’t improve on the text; but in a nutshell, it’s that inner sanctuary where we are alone with God, and where the Spirit really guides us.

Another other point is that Vatican II made it very clear that we recognize the fact that the Church is in history. In other words, Revelation and the work of the Church is not a given once and for all. See, part of the opposition at the Council was precisely that thesis, that we had the fullness of Revelation in the Bible, and with the authority of the Church, etc.; and we need not go anywhere else. One of the reasons why many people in the Vatican didn’t want another Council is precisely because the Pope had been declared as infallible. So with an infallible Pope, and competent managers, we’d rather not have the bishops meddling in our business. You see the point? (Laughter) That was one of the main reasons for opposition: “All these bishops, coming from all over the world, with their fancy ideas, and telling us what to do! We know how to run the Church; and the Church is fine!” This was the feeling of my dear friend – and indeed he was a friend – Cardinal Ottaviani, who is the most well known of the leaders of the opposition, of the conservative wing, who ended up being a tiny minority, but a very powerful minority. When he was made a bishop he chose as his motto the Latin words, Semper Idem, which means: “Always the same.” Well that’s understandable. If you have a perfect Church, the Church doesn’t change. Everything else changes, but not the Church. The Church is a solid rock that doesn't move.

There’s some truth in that, because we have the assurance of the Holy Spirit that the Spirit will not allow the Church to go astray. But that’s a different thing from saying that every last statement must be seen as infallible.
And that creeping infallibility is a real problem, even today, because all kinds of documents come out of the Vatican; and they are trying to restrict our perception of the meaning of Vatican II. That battle is still going on!

They've forgotten the lesson that Pope Paul VI gave us when, towards the end of the Council, at the main altar in St. Peter’s, Pope Paul VI concelebrated with all these scholars and theologians, who had been silenced, and were only brought into the open again by Pope John XXIII. Every Sunday morning, the Canadian bishops would invite some leading scholar to bring us up to date on their latest research. I still remember Fr. Yves Congar, who had written a very powerful book, *True and False Reform*, some thirty years before the Council. He had been silenced, forbidden to teach, and he told us with a smile on his face that Pope John XXIII had given him permission to now publish this book that had been forbidden, and he said all he had to do was update the preface. Imagine! He was a brilliant mind thirty years before Vatican II. Many of the things that Congar wrote about had also been accepted by Pope Pius XII. Back in 1946, here is what Pius XII said to a group of Cardinals in the month of February, if I remember right, one of his speeches, “The faithful must be aware that not only do they belong to the Church, but they are the Church.” And I have a visual memory. I still remember the printed text. There’s a dash and the words are repeated: “They are the Church,” and then he continues on in language about soldiers of Christ, and so forth, being in the trenches, and getting the best information from the trenches.

The Council also made a very important statement on freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*). The United States bishops took the lead, thanks to Fr. John Courtney Murray, who struggled for years against bitter opposition to maintain the thesis that democracy and Catholicism were compatible. Can you imagine? But before the Council, many people did not believe it. Many bishops were against the idea of democracy; they remembered Pius IX had condemned it. Vatican II accepted the thesis. Nobody doubts it now, but it was a big struggle: that one can be a member of a democracy and be a good Catholic; and there is no opposition between religion and politics.

Why not converse with our friends of other Christian churches? They have some truth. Vatican II recognized it. Non-believers also have some truth. I worked four years as a provincial director of the Commission of Human Rights for the province of British Columbia. The socialist premier invited a Roman Catholic bishop to head up his first Human Rights Commission. Interesting! We had some people who practiced no religion whatsoever; but when it became human rights, they were right there. And I heard them say things that were absolutely inspired. The Spirit can work through everybody. In fact, one of the big problems right now, I'm afraid, is that there are people in our own Roman Catholic Church who are standing in the way of the Spirit. So what happens then? Well, the Spirit moves elsewhere. I think the departure of a whole raft of young people, who are leaving the Church, or simply not attending, is because we are not seen as open to the Spirit’s movement. They’re following the Spirit elsewhere. I’m sure of that. They are finding the Spirit elsewhere in different manifestations. My own nephews and nieces, many of whom do not go to church, or are out there doing all kinds of wonderful things in the world. The world’s become a global village, where they are at home. Is our Church there at home with them?

**Conclusion**

For fifty years I have been lecturing on Vatican II; and one of the greatest consolations of my life as a bishop has been to meet groups of people, people like yourselves, who are alive and conscious to Vatican II, and will continue to tell the story. So you must continue to tell the story. Tell it to the younger people. Tell it to your friends. Because if you do that, then you will be a sign of hope to many people; and that’s why I hope all of us will continue to keep the message. It’s by our lives and our example, that we really pay the proper respect to the sacred Scriptures; that in the choice of hymns, for example, we focus on the Paschal Mystery.

In a nutshell that is a bird’s eye view of my experience at Vatican II. I am only one of many; but it’s my understanding. And I hope that by reading the book (*Chronicles of a Vatican II Bishop*) you will be able to further your knowledge, and that you will continue reading more about the Council. There are some excellent books in English, particularly in the last ten years. You can find out more about the Council, and it might be very interesting for you to start, if you haven’t already got a discussion group, probably start discussing.

I want you to read the end of *Gaudium et Spes*, Article 22, the last 2 or 3 sentences:

> “Since Christ died for everyone, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, listen; we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners in a way known to God in the Paschal Mystery.”

That’s why we have to be very careful when we talk about Christ dying for us. He didn’t only die for a few. Christ died for all. And the Latin word properly translated, “*pro vobis et pro multis*;” *multis* means: the multitudes, not just the few. Thank you very much.  

*(Applause)*

Transcribed by *Bar Packer* 02-13-2013; slightly abridged and edited for syntax by *Victor Clore*