

Vatican II and the Genesis of a Community of Missionary Disciples: A Vision Waylaid

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In “its deepest intuitions,” Vatican II was a missionary council whose stated purpose was to renew the church spiritually and institutionally and so prepare the Catholic community to evangelize a changed, more complex world. Church leaders’ subsequent failure to correctly understand the council’s biblically sourced, trinitarian view of mission’s object, its method and agency, led to a failure to implement Vatican II’s practical pastoral aims. Although the conciliar vision was committed to and embedded in the reformed liturgical rites where it continues to nourish and inspire Catholic life today, the absence of the institutional, ministerial supports needed to complete what the liturgy instills forever blocks achievement of the council’s aims. The experience of the US church provides a ready example of how Vatican II’s pastoral vision was waylaid and goes unrealized yet today.

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MISSIOLOGIST Stephen Bevans argues that “in its deepest intuitions, Vatican II was ‘a missionary council.’”¹ He attributes this to John XXIII who, in calling the council, wished to bring the church “into a new phase of witness and proclamation,” a desire that became

¹ Stephen B. Bevans, “Revisiting Mission at Vatican II: Theology and Practice for Today’s Missionary Church,” *Theological Studies* 74 (2013): 261–83 at 262. See also Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, “Evangelization and the Tenor of Vatican II,” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 37 (2013): 94–95; Stephen B. Bevans, “The Church in Mission,” *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 136–54. “Affirmation of the missiological character of the whole church was one of the most important teachings of the Second Vatican Council”; Richard Gaillardetz, “Ecclesiological Foundations of Ministry in an Ordered Communion,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*, ed. Susan K. Wood (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 26–51 at 30.

*Research scholar Georgia Masters Keightley’s essay “If the Church Makes the Laity, the Laity Makes the Church: Ecclesiology and the 99 Percent” appears in A Realist’s Church: Essays in Honor of Joseph A. Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2015).
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clearer in “the program that [the pope] outlined in various speeches and documents during the three years of the council’s preparation.”² Others throughout the church shared the pope’s concern, seeing the need to “renew and reform the Catholic church spiritually and institutionally ... for the sake of making the church a more effective sacrament of God’s mission in the world.”³ Paul VI brought Vatican II to its close saying, “Never before, so much as on this occasion, has the church felt the need to know, to draw near to, to understand, to penetrate, serve and evangelize the society in which she lives.” Emphasizing the council’s practical pastoral agenda, he concluded, “All this rich teaching is channeled in one direction, the service of mankind, of every condition, in every weakness and need. The Church has, so to say, declared herself the servant of humanity.”⁴

Given that “mission was very much at its heart,” Bevans proposes that the council and its documents are best read and interpreted through mission’s lens.⁵ Although mission was “a concept in transition” and the Council Fathers’ treatment of it appears fragmentary rather than systematic,⁶ he argues that such a reading is justified in that “each of the four major

² Bevans, “Revisiting Mission at Vatican II,” 264. But as Jared Wicks shows, Angelo Roncalli’s pastoral inclinations were ascendant long before he became pope; Jared Wicks, SJ, “Tridentine Motivations of Pope John XXIII before and during Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 75 (2014): 847–62.

³ Ormond Rush, “Toward a Comprehensive Interpretation of the Council and Its Documents,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 547–69 at 568.

⁴ Address made at the last general meeting of the Second Vatican Council, December 7, 1965, https://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651207_epilogo-concilio.html. Paul’s remarks “authoritatively confirm” that “a renewed vision of Church is a major question of the Council”; Jeremy Driscoll, “Reviewing and Recovering *Sacrosanctum concilium*’s Theological Vision,” *Ecclesia orans* 30 (2013): 363–90 at 381.

⁵ Bevans, “Revisiting Mission at Vatican II,” 262. Debate over how to interpret the council and its documents has raged since the council’s close, an extensive bibliography produced in its wake. The council promulgated sixteen documents “which cover an extraordinarily wide range of subjects and do so at considerable length. They are the council’s most authoritative and accessible legacy, and it is around them that the study of Vatican II must turn”; John O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 2.

⁶ There is a deliberate shift in the language of the documents, from “missions” in the plural to “mission” in the singular but the “different emphases, inconsistencies, and at times conflicting views” created ambiguity, per Lucien Richard, “Vatican II and the Mission of the Church: A Contemporary Agenda,” in *Vatican II: The Unfinished Agenda*, ed. Lucien Richard, Daniel Harrington, and John O’Malley (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 57–69 at 57. This may explain why “mission seems not to have been regarded as fundamental for the council’s interpretation” for the 1985 Extraordinary Synod per Bevans, “Revisiting Mission at Vatican II,” 262.

Constitutions” documents that the 1985 Extraordinary Synod judged to be primary sources for interpreting Vatican II, “begin with a new missionary statement of one sort or another.”⁷ For Bevens, reading the council in this mode becomes imperative given “today’s global ecclesial reality on the one hand and the ‘new chapter of evangelization’ into which we have entered.”⁸

Accepting Bevens’ thesis, this study explores what the council said about mission and the church’s charge to evangelize a changed and changing world. I will argue that failure to comprehend Vatican II’s biblically sourced, trinitarian approach that opened the way to a more profound understanding of mission explains later failure to achieve the council’s aims and so prepared the way for the challenges today’s church confronts. Still, any decision to approach the Second Vatican Council through a single optic must reckon with John O’Malley’s admonition that because “Vatican II was an enormously complex event,” it “cannot be reduced to simplistic formulas.”⁹ An ostensible challenge to that proposed here, for example, is Ormond Rush’s recent *The Vision of Vatican II*, which, although acknowledging that “the council intentionally focused on renewal and reform of the church,” nevertheless prioritizes hermeneutics, identifying “twenty-four fundamental principles that together provide a comprehensive interpretation of Vatican II and its documents.”¹⁰

In contrast to Rush and those for whom Vatican II remains an ongoing interpretive project, this study argues that the more significant, compelling question surrounds the assembled fathers’ expectation that their vision of a missionary church would not just be studied and interpreted but that it would be fully received and implemented.¹¹ Thus the functional read undertaken here examines the council’s practical program “to renew and reform the Catholic Church spiritually and institutionally” for mission’s sake. As I will show, such a review of the conciliar agenda—an agenda whose execution

⁷ Bevens, “Mission as the Nature of the Church: Developments in Catholic Ecclesiology,” *Australian eJournal of Theology* 21 (2014): 4.

⁸ Bevens, “Mission as the Nature of the Church,” 1.

⁹ O’Malley, “Vatican II Revisited as Reconciliation: The Francis Factor,” in *The Legacy of Vatican II*, ed. Massimo Faggioli and Andrea Vicini (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 3–25 at 6. See also Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Ormond Rush, *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles* (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 2019), xv.

¹¹ Undue attention to the hermeneutics of the council has led theologians to neglect the assembly’s stated concerns for the church’s everyday mission responsibilities; as Bernard Cooke later observed, the council was not just “a forum for creative theological reflection nor even for creative theological analysis”; Bernard Cooke, “Fullness of Orders: Theological Reflections,” *Jurist* 41 (1981): 405–421 at 406.

was deemed to be “more difficult and even more important than the work of the council itself” because it challenged the entire church “to translate the conciliar experience into the reality of Church life, thought and action”—is both necessary and instructive because it leads to understanding how and why the conciliar aims were ultimately thwarted.¹² This effort shares Pope Francis’ present missionary and pastoral concerns and aligns with his belief that “reception of the Second Vatican Council and the reform of the Church must enter a new phase.”¹³

Reading the council through mission’s lens requires particular attention to the pastoral principle formulated and set forth by John XXIII in his opening speech, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, which directed Vatican II’s work. Concerned that “the deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented,” the pope noted that henceforth mission must be carried out “in accord with a teaching authority which is primarily pastoral in character.”¹⁴ In acknowledgment that the gospel’s proclamation must take into account its hearers, this principle foregrounds the relation existing among those who transmit the faith, those who receive the faith, and the deposit of faith itself, as each is subject to and conditioned by history and culture.¹⁵

¹² Edward M. Gaffney, “Vatican II: The Pastoral Council,” *Mid-Stream* 5 (1966): 25–43 at 25–26.

¹³ From the foreword by Massimo Faggioli to *For a Missionary Reform of the Church: The Civiltà Cattolica Seminar*, ed. Antonio Spadaro, SJ, and Carlos Maria Galli (New York: Paulist Press, 2017) 7–10 at 7. On pages 34–48, see also Carlos Maria Galli’s “The Missionary Reform of the Church According to Francis: The Ecclesiology of the Evangelizing People of God.” Thomas Hughson attributes Francis’ charismatic leadership to “his personal and official reception of the Second Vatican Council,” in Thomas Hughson, “Vatican II: Francis and Reception,” *Modern Believing* 56 (2015): 421–34 at 422.

¹⁴ *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Pope John’s Opening Speech to the Council, October 11, 1962, trans. Joseph A. Komonchak, <https://jakomonchak.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/john-xxiii-opening-speech.pdf>. Scholars agree that the council saw this address as setting out the organizing principle for its work, “its pastoral character providing the hermeneutic par excellence for understanding both the conciliar event and its texts”; Gilles Routhier review of Christoph Theobald’s *La réception du concile Vatican II, Tome 1* in *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 85 (2010): 525–37 at 527.

¹⁵ Christoph Theobald, *La réception du concile, Vatican II, 1: Accéder à la source* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2009), 683; see also the lecture delivered at a symposium at Boston College, on September 26, 2013, “The Principle of Pastoralty at Vatican II: Challenges of a Prospective Interpretation of the Council.” At stake is not just the principle’s application but also a recognition that this involves “a real learning process ... between those who proclaim the Good News and those who receive it.” According to Rush, normativeness of the council texts rests “not in their theological or juridical literalness, nor in a spirit that sees nothing more to be gained from them” but appears in those “concrete pastoral or missionary applications that go right to the point where fresh formulations of

This article therefore looks for those instances where the pope's directive brought critical shifts in thinking along with such changes in ecclesial life and practice that a mission objective demanded. My quest is for what Christoph Theobald calls an "*ecclésiologie vécue*," that is, the council's vision of a pastoral church as this was to be received, actualized, and enulturated in the attitudes, behaviors, and ministries of a local community of the baptized.¹⁶

Of necessity, reading Vatican II from a mission perspective also presupposes *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) and the liturgical reforms it mandated, something hermeneutic studies regularly overlook.¹⁷ The fact is, informed by the work of the Liturgical Movement and the *ressourcement* theologians, the council rediscovered the liturgy to be an essential *locus theologicus*, and it was with this foundational insight that its work of reform and renewal truly began. The bishops were reminded that church mission originates with the trinitarian missions of the Son and Holy Spirit, the saving effects of whose sending are realized in the celebration of the rites of baptism, anointing, and Eucharist. Furthermore, aware that in and through regular celebration of all its rites ecclesial community is formed; aware that under its auspices mission becomes the local church's lived response to its graced encounter with the divine, the liturgy became the prime repository of the council's vision as well as means to its achievement. Consequently, Vatican II's liturgical reforms not only embodied and exemplified John XXIII's pastoral principle, but celebration of the revised rites deepened insight into the practical matter of mission's object, its method and agency, and who bears responsibility for this task. The project here is to search council documents for articulation of that celebrated and attested in/by the liturgical *theologia*

such and such a text become evidently necessary," in "The Theological Options of Vatican II: Seeking an 'Internal' Principle of Interpretation," in *Vatican II: A Forgotten Future? Concilium* 2005/4, ed. Alberto Melloni and Christoph Theobald (London: SCM Press, 2005), 87–107 at 105.

¹⁶ I.e., A theology of a pastoral church as received and duly lived by the local community. It has to do with a "style of life" that results from a dialogic encounter with the gospel and its call to a life of holiness as outlined in *Lumen Gentium* §39–42. Inherently relational, this distinctive Christian mode of living manifests itself as *philoxenia*/hospitality, that is, as a radical openness and care for others whose context is the ecclesial community that reveals itself through a specific process of encounters and mutual relations; Christoph Theobald, *Le Concile Vatican II: Quel avenir?* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 2015), 221–22.

¹⁷ Massimo Faggioli, "Sacrosanctum Concilium and the Meaning of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 437–52 at 440. Neglect of the theological and ecclesiological background of the council's liturgical reforms contributes to the disparate, even conflicting, interpretations of the council, both its intentions and its work.

prima, that is, the what, how, and who essential to the making of an evangelizing church, the misapprehension of which would preclude successful implementation of the council's pastoral agenda.¹⁸

The Council's Theological Starting Point: The Church's Trinitarian Origins

A concise answer to the questions "Why the Church?" "Why mission?"¹⁹ is provided in *Lumen Gentium's* trinitarian prologue (LG §2-5), its narrative account of the church's divine origins in the dual missions of Son and Spirit who, together and inseparably, carry out the Father's saving plan.²⁰ And if the council's rediscovery that the church exists to evangelize remains implicit in some conciliar texts, the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* is explicit: "The pilgrim church is of its very nature

¹⁸ As the concrete enactment of the Catholic faith, the liturgy is the primary theology of the church. Because this theology arises out of God's action on God's people in worship, what occurs here is "the ontological condition of theology ... because it is in the church, of which the *leitourgia* is the expression and life, that the sources of theology are functioning precisely as sources"; Alexander Schmemmann, "Theology and Liturgical Tradition," *Worship in Scripture and Tradition*, ed. Massey Shepherd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 175. Academic theology, *theologia secunda*, is a reflection on "what the liturgy says and does through its prayers and rites"; Kevin Irwin, "The Theological Keys of *Sacrosanctum concilium*: Reflections and Proposals," *Ecclesia orans* 30 (2013): 411-53 at 421.

¹⁹ Assessing the council's aftermath, Avery Dulles observed that "the most vigorously debated questions in ecclesiology have been those concerning authority and structures, methods and processes." Unexamined were the more essential questions: "Why the church, what is its purpose, importance and necessity?" He warned that "nothing will be gained by redistributing power or adopting new methods unless those who wield the power and use the methods have a correct vision of what the church is about"; Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism: Current Challenges in the Theology of the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 132.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, November 1, 1964, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. See also Pope Paul VI, *Ad Gentes*, 1965, §2-4, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html. Together *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* are the council's "great Trinitarian and ecclesiological frescoes"; Bertrand de Margarie, "The Trinitarian Doctrine of Vatican II," in *The Christian Trinity in History* (Still River, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), 223-25 at 223. In this 1967 essay, theologian Joseph Ratzinger argued that *Lumen Gentium's* trinitarian perspective must first be considered if Vatican II's missiology is to become clear: "*Konzilaussagen uber die Mission ausserhalb des Missiondekrets*," in *Mission nach dem konzil*, ed. Johannes Schutte (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1967). All council citations herein are taken from *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 2, ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990).

missionary, since it draws its origin from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the plan of God the Father.”²¹ As *Ad Gentes* (AG) §9 explains, “Missionary activity is nothing other and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God’s plan and its fulfillment in the world and in its history....” Both *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* are clear that mission is what the church does, what it must do to be itself, that indeed the community is constituted as ecclesial in the very act of proclaiming the saving death and resurrection of Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit.²² One can say that the council’s entire corpus represents the bishops’ attempt to explicate this foundational claim.

By rooting mission in the Trinity, the council resituated it within its proper *exitus-reditus*, eschatological frame. That is to say, ecclesial mission originates with the *processio* of Son and Spirit whose movement establishes the basic pattern of redemptive history.²³ As Aquinas explained, “In the same way that the procession of persons is the rationale for the production of creatures by the first principle, so likewise this same process is the rationale for the return of creatures to their end; since in the same way that we have been created by the Son and Holy Spirit, so likewise it is through them that we are united to our ultimate end.”²⁴ As *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* attest, “The Church in its relation to the Trinity is essentially an eschatological being: It exists and acts in virtue of its expectation of fullness.”²⁵

²¹ AG §§2, 35.

²² Karl Rahner argued that “the Church’s essence both supplies the hermeneutical principle for its history and, since it is essence in history, reveals itself through that history”; Karl Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II,” *Theological Studies* 40 (1979): 716–27 at 716. Although he identified “the Church’s first official self-actualization as a world Church,” both *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* confirm that the church *in se* is mission, that the church only becomes a world church precisely through its missionary activity.

²³ Neil Ormerod questions whether *communio* is the appropriate symbol/model for linking ecclesiology and trinitarian theology. “The divine unity is where God is most different from God’s creatures, even the creation we call Church.” We become aware of the inner trinitarian life through “our prior knowledge of the processions and persons within the Trinity.” Thus, a *missio* ecclesiology relates to trinitarian theology in terms of *missio* and *processio* rather than *communio* and *perichoresis*. “Communion may be our eschatological end in the vision of God, but in the here and now of a pilgrim Church mission captures our ongoing historical responsibility”; Neil Ormerod, “The Structure of a Systematic Ecclesiology,” *Theological Studies* 63, no. 1 (2002): 3–30 at 29.

²⁴ Aquinas, I Sent. d. 14, q.2., a.2, trans. Gilles Emery, *The Trinitarian Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 358.

²⁵ David Power, “Priesthood Revisited: Mission and Ministries in the Royal Priesthood,” in *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood: Theologies of Lay and Ordained Ministry* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), 111. In a 1982 interview, John Paul II explained

Eschatology thus is “the culmination of ecclesiology, and gives ultimate meaning to the Church and its mission.”²⁶

According to the gospels and early church tradition, the trinitarian missions become evidentially manifest in history with the Spirit’s descent on the Son at the Jordan, the two sendings converging and coalescing here. “Right from the time of the New Testament” (Acts 10:38), the descent of the Spirit on Jesus was recognized “to be an anointing for mission which should be understood not only in a prophetic and kingly key but also in a priestly key.”²⁷ The early church saw the three *munera* as expressive of Jesus Christ’s empowerment in the Holy Spirit and the ways he was empowered to mediate salvation. The church’s own missionary exigence is rooted in the Jordan event: via the sacrament of water and anointing, the Spirit’s dynamic action on Jesus is reiterated and replicated in believers, signifying the individual’s assimilation to the messianic kingship of Christ and “into the life pattern of the Anointed One.”²⁸ In the council’s words, “The lord Jesus ‘whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world’ (John 10, 36), gave his whole mystical body a share in the anointing of the Spirit with which he was anointed.”²⁹ Consistent with this understanding, Vatican II proceeded to identify baptism rather than orders or religious charism as the source of mission’s mandate and agency. *Lumen Gentium* §10 thus asserts that baptism consecrates every Catholic to a life “of witnessing to Christ throughout this world and explaining to those who ask the hope they have of eternal life” (see 1 Pet 3, 15).³⁰ This call to mission is reiterated and fulfilled proleptically in the eucharistic liturgy in that it is here “the act of our

that Vatican II helped synthesize his understanding of eschatology: “Whereas previously I envisaged principally the eschatology of man and my personal future in the after-life, which is in the hands of God, the Council constitution [on the church] shifted the center of gravity toward the Church and the world, and this gave the doctrine of the final end of man its full dimension”; quoted in Paul O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope: An Introduction to Eschatology* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 311.

²⁶ O’Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 332–33.

²⁷ Gerald O’Collins, SJ, and Michael Keenan Jones, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 243.

²⁸ Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 59.

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Presbyterium Ordinis*, December 7, 1965, §2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_presbyterium-ordinis_en.html.

³⁰ Baptism as a consecration to the missionary apostolate is reiterated in Pope Paul VI, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, November 18, 1965, §3, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html, and *Presbyterium Ordinis* §12.

redemption is being carried out,"³¹ which becomes "the chief means through which believers are expressing in their lives and demonstrating to others the mystery which is Christ and the sort of entity the Church is."³²

Taking its cue from this trinitarian framework as this is effectuated and made known through the church's liturgical celebrations, the council went on to consider specific ways the divine *οικονομία* patterns the church's life and work.

Mission's "What": Its Goal and Object

In an acknowledgment that mission, far from being just another ecclesial activity, is instead what the church is *in se*, but also in its recognition of the church as the pilgrim people of God oriented to the kingdom, the council revisited mission's goal and object. Doing so necessitated a decisive break with a theology that had come to overemphasize or even reduce Christ's redemptive work to the salvation of individual souls. Also to be dispensed with was an otherworldly vision of the future linked to an interpretation of salvation that promoted "an escapist or pietistic attitude to life and to the world."³³ Left behind was an eschatology that "seemed incapable of inspiring an incisive social ethics [or] a spirituality deeply involved in transforming the world."³⁴ In a return to the Pauline understanding (e.g., Rom 8:19-23, Col 1:15-20) the council recast salvation in both cosmic and communal terms, which entailed "the restoration of God's creational intent for humanity and the world, including the development of culture and society through humanity's interaction with the earth."³⁵ In the words of *Lumen Gentium* §36: "The Lord desires that his faithful laity should also extend his kingdom ... in which

³¹ Cited in Pope Paul VI, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC), November 18, 1965, §2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html and taken from the Roman missal at the prayer over the gifts for the ninth Sunday of Pentecost.

³² SC §2.

³³ O'Callaghan, *Christ Our Hope*, 310. John O'Malley concludes that in its "general orientation" the council's profile of the ideal Christian is more incarnational than eschatological, arguing that the council's "style choice fostered a theological choice"; O' Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 310-11. Although this suggests a disjunction between the two, read through the lens of mission's *exitus-reditus* aspect, their essential relation is evident.

³⁴ O'Callaghan, *Christ our Hope*, 310.

³⁵ J. Richard Middleton, "A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Case for a Holistic Reading of the Biblical Story of Redemption," *Journal for Christian Theological Research* 11 (2006): 73-97 at 76.

creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.”³⁶

In light of the council’s pastoral orientation, ecclesial mission also had to address the historical realities, the sociocultural contexts within which people reside and that determine their existence. Strikingly new here was not just Vatican II’s affirmation of the world and its processes; this approach required the fathers to give studied attention to the mechanics of the world’s redemption, which was informed by the European experience of modernity and insights drawn from a growing body of papal social teaching.³⁷ In effect, *Gaudium et Spes* (GS) was an elaboration of the way to future restoration of all in Christ set forth in *Lumen Gentium* §48–51. The former constitution examined specific situations wherein lay Catholics serve the world by utilizing their intelligence and technical expertise to ensure that human dignity is protected, the common good is promoted, and that culture’s advantages are made available to all. For a new day and age, mission called all Catholics to become agents of global social change.³⁸

Striking too was the fact that the council conceived mission’s objective in incarnational terms,³⁹ asserting that just as Christ did, the church must also insert and bind itself to the particular social and cultural conditions of a people.⁴⁰ In becoming man God’s son was socialized into the thought

³⁶ See also *Apostolicam Actuositatem* §7.

³⁷ In redefining its relation to world, Vatican II appeared to put the classic understanding of the church’s vocation in question. Joseph Komonchak attributes the council’s failure to integrate “what it called the church’s proper religious mission and its participation in the common human project on earth” to the uneasy compromise between French and German theologians “necessary for the constitution to gain a consensus.” See Joseph Komonchak, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” *Origins* 28 (April 22, 1999): 763–68 at 767.

³⁸ *Gaudium et Spes* is “a mission document par excellence” because of its underlying conviction that “the church finds its identity and purpose by being fully immersed in the service and dialogue with the world”; Bevans, “Revisiting Mission at Vatican II,” 266. This analytic shaped the constitution’s survey of the different areas of contemporary experience and its exploration of the various ways by which Catholics’ grace-filled care for the created world can foster and enable an authentic human existence for all.

³⁹ This follows from the council’s trinitarian starting point: both creation and redemption find their unity in the person of the Son, “the incarnate and redeemer Logos” who “accomplishes and fulfills the work of the creator Logos”; Marie-Dominique Chenu, “*Consecratio Mundi*,” *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 86 (1964): 608–18 at 615. AG §10 presents the incarnation as the paradigm for mission, that this is the way the church is constituted in local cultures/contexts.

⁴⁰ A good example of the pastoral principle applied is AG §11, which states that believers must “play their part in cultural and social life through the various interchanges and activities of human living. They should be familiar with their national and religious traditions.” Above all, they must come to know “the people among whom they live and

forms and norms of his Jewish/Mediterranean culture. In dialogue with the sociocultural influences of his time, accepting what was good in them and rejecting that which was detrimental to human beings, Jesus constructed a self that manifested what in God's terms it meant to be fully and authentically human. Under the power of the Spirit, by his personal witness, in the loving and compassionate way he related to and interacted with all those on society's margins, not only was his gospel made credible, but by this means Jesus rewrote and transformed the regnant sociocultural norms of his contemporaries.⁴¹ And, as the history of the Christian movement illustrates, it is precisely Christ's *modus agendi*, his incarnational way of being in the world, in "the concrete way of the Holy Spirit, the experienced transformative presence of God" that Christians, both as individuals and as a community, shape and guide history to its end.⁴² By words and deeds that overwrite the world's values and patterns of doing things, Catholics evangelize the world and ready it for the coming kingdom. By this means, persons and things together are "saved," that is, both are prepared for and move toward their final recapitulation in Christ.

Mission's "How": Its Methodology

The council documents also show the assembled bishops reevaluating evangelization's methodology. In doing so they turned to the biblical notion of "witness" (*testimonium* [Latin], μαρτυρία [Greek]) and the related terms "vocation" (*vocatus* [Latin], κλήσις = [Greek]) and "apostolate" (*apostolatus* = [Latin], αποστολή = [Greek]). Accordingly, Christian witness is the vocation, the call to the apostolic life received in baptism and confirmed in Eucharist; to be a witness is to be one sent to testify through a life of discipleship to the salvation that God has promised in Christ.

Witness

"Witness" is an important New Testament term because it refers specifically to personalized testimony, whether Jesus' own, that of individuals, or of the entire Christian body that leads to faith in Christ. Biblical scholar E. G. Selwyn

should associate" so that "by sincere and patient dialogue" they are able to give testimony to Christ.

⁴¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practise of Everyday Life* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1988), examines the tactics and strategies individuals use to override established cultural norms and practices.

⁴² Don Saines, "Wider, Broader, Richer: Trinitarian Theology and Ministerial Order," *Anglican Theological Review* 92 (2010): 511–35 at 533.

proposed that the term “μαρτυρέω” and its cognates are much more descriptive of the primitive and indispensable core of the Christian message than the related terms “κηρύσσω” or “εὐαγγελίζομαι.”⁴³ His reasoning? “Μαρτυρέω” was a legal term denoting “the personal involvement and assurance of the person making the witness,” which served as its defining, qualifying element.⁴⁴

“Witness” was an important term for the council as well. Reprising the New Testament’s emphasis on witness as personal and relational, *Lumen Gentium* §12 states that the baptized mediate God’s saving love to others “when [they] render him a living witness [*vivum testimonium*], especially through a life of faith and charity.” *Ad Gentes* §11 describes mission’s work as encompassing “the witness of [believers’] words [*testimoni verbi*]” and “the example of their lives” *Ad Gentes* §21 confirms that the chief task of the lay faithful is “to bear witness to Christ [*testimonium Christi*], which they are bound to render by their life and by their words, in the family, in their social group and in their professional circle.” *Gaudium et Spes* highlights witness’ corporate dimension by illustrating how this takes expression as an interactive dialogue between the community of believers and its context.⁴⁵ And in lieu of an evangelization centered on the exposition of doctrinal truth and disciplinary regulation, as μαρτυρία/witness, the church’s primary expression and self-realization becomes incarnate in a collective praxis of relationship, the corporate witness of a dedicated, personalized regimen of agapic service of the world and its affairs.

Apostle

For biblical scholars, “ἀπόστολος” is the NT term used to designate those sent out to bear witness to Christ and his gospel.⁴⁶ In this vein,

⁴³ See E. Selwyn, “Eschatology in 1 Peter,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, ed. D. Daube and W. D. Davies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 394–401 at 395.

⁴⁴ See Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), 106.

⁴⁵ Pope Paul VI, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html. Per Pope Paul VI, *Dei Verbum*, November 18, 1965, §2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html, God’s self-revelation is itself dialogic, that is, through the Word made flesh and in his holy Spirit: “God in his great love speaks to humankind as friends and enters into their life so as to invite and receive them into relationship with himself.”

⁴⁶ John P. Meier argues that the term ἀπόστολος “was probably not used by [Jesus] or his disciples as a fixed term for a particular group of his followers.” At most, it was used in

Vatican II's *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA) §2 states that "every effort of the mystical body" to direct the whole world to Christ and to bring all to share in the saving work of redemption "is rightly called apostolate [*apostolatus*]." Notably, the council uses this term almost exclusively to describe the lay vocation.⁴⁷ As the very title, that is, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (*Decretum de apostolatu laicorum*) attests, lay people too are apostles and, just as clergy and religious with whom they share baptism, they too are sent to bear witness and confess Christ. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* §2 describes their efforts as involving "labours for evangelizing and sanctifying people"; more particularly, laity are sent to imbue the social order with the spirit of the gospel and so perfect it. According to *Lumen Gentium* §31, laity are apostles within secular society: Catholics whose very situatedness *in* the world, *as* world conditions their life as Christians and orients their apostolic work to the quotidian. As Congar explained, "The faithful are not so much sent to [the world] as find themselves in it and form part of it. They are simply asked to be Christians in all that they are."⁴⁸

Vocation

Reflecting its trinitarian origins, mission is the vocation that has defined the church and its members from the outset. The Latin *vocatio* is the Vulgate translation of Paul's term "κλήσις" (from καλέω, to call) and in its earliest years, "εκκλησία" (a form of καλέω) was the term by which the

"an ad hoc sense when Jesus sent some disciples out on a temporary mission," for example, Mark 6:30 and Matt 10:2. "It was in the early church that 'apostle' was first used as a set designation for a specific group—though different authors used the designation in different ways. What is beyond doubt is that in the first Christian decades 'apostle' had a range of meanings that extended beyond the twelve." See John P. Meier, "The Circle of the Twelve: Did it Exist During Jesus' Public Ministry?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 116 (1997): 635–72 at 639–40.

⁴⁷ The online concordance, *II Vatican Council: A Full-Text Search Engine*, <http://www.stjosef.at/council/search/>, indicates that of the 194 uses of *apostolatus/apostolatum* in council documents, 113 of these appear in the decree on the laity. Given the sheer frequency of this term's use in respect to laity, some Council Fathers objected to speaking of laity as having an apostolic mission, arguing that the designation "apostolic mission" should be reserved to the apostles. See Peter de Mey, "Sharing the Threefold Office of Christ, a Different Matter for Laity and Priests? The *Tria Munera* in *Lumen Gentium*, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* and *Ad Gentes*," in *The Letter and the Spirit: On the Forgotten Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Annemarie Mayer (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2018), 155–79 at 160n25.

⁴⁸ Yves Congar, "The Laity," in *Theological Issues of Vatican II*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 239–49 at 246.

church was known: as “the community of those who are called,” ἐκκλησία was the very source of their identity and was precisely what and who the first Christians understood themselves to be.⁴⁹

On the one hand, vocation is an intimate, personal thing. It pertains to the believer’s response to God’s call to her and the commitment made in baptism to a life of Christian discipleship. Per the council, the Catholic’s calling is made personal by virtue of the Spirit’s gifts, which are unique to each.⁵⁰ But whereas in the past, this term designated the religious and clerical state, the council went out of its way to affirm that lay life in the world is no less a Christian calling. As *Lumen Gentium* §31 expressly states, “It is the special vocation [*ex vocatione propria*] of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering these in accordance with the will of God ... it is here that God calls them [*ibi a Deo vocantur*] to work for the sanctification of the world ... in this way revealing Christ to others principally through the witness of their own lives.”

But vocation is also constitutive of the church (*AG* §§1, 6) and is realized concretely through the agency of the local community (*LG* §26). *Ad Gentes* §6–7 notes that because God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” “all the baptized are called upon [*vocantur*] to be joined together in one flock so that they may give unanimous testimony [*testimonium*] before the nations to Christ their Lord.” Interestingly, the council’s most expansive treatment of Christian vocation and that of contemporary mission is found in its final document which is an extended exploration of the church’s calling today.⁵¹ Informed by the pastoral principle, *Gaudium et Spes* examines select areas of experience where vocation is lived and practiced. In classic terms, the constitution examines the church/world relation but does this in terms of the *consecratio mundi*, the preparation of the human and created realms for their eventual recapitulation in Christ. Consistent with the council’s trinitarian starting point, *Gaudium et Spes* situates mission in the “now but not yet” of the kingdom, a period during which—and as a result of the Christ-event—a dramatic renewal and reordering of the cosmos has begun. As the incarnate Logos, Christ accomplished the work of the creator Logos in redeeming and liberating

⁴⁹ *Lumen Gentium* §9 describes the church similarly: “God has called together [*convocavit*] the assembly of those who look to Jesus in faith as the author of salvation and the principle of unity and peace, and he has constituted the church [*constituit ecclesiam*] that it may be for one and all the visible sacrament of this saving unity.”

⁵⁰ One’s vocation may be lived out as married (*LG* §35), widowed (*GS* §49), as a religious (*LG* §47), or as a cleric (*LG* §28); it is also shaped by one’s choice of work or one’s participation in socioeconomic (*GS* §63) or political life (*GS* §75).

⁵¹ Per the concordance, of the more than sixty variants of *vocatio* that appear in council documents, half are found in *Gaudium et Spes*.

all creation from the slavery of sin and corruption so that it is once again capable of union with God. Until such time as God's reign is fully instituted, however, God's redeeming, saving grace is mediated via the apostolic servant witness of the women and men who form Christ's ecclesial body.

Mission's Who: The Agent

Its expanded concept of mission, its resetting of the church/world relation required the council to reconsider the evangelizer, the ecclesial "who" that enfleshes, makes real the Catholic community's missionary responsibilities. Generally speaking, the ecclesial community in its entirety is the agent of God's redemptive plan.⁵² Practically, mission is the mediation of God's salvific offer to others by all the baptized of a certain place—lay, religious, and ordained—who, united in love and fellowship, regularly gather around the eucharistic table in and for worship.⁵³ Furthermore, as the work of local communities, mission is context bound, its outreach determined by the specifics of time and place, the demands of each local culture and its history.

Nonetheless, although mission is the local church *in actu*, this becomes manifest in the lived testimony and in the collaborative service of individual baptized Christians. But in this, Vatican II represented a significant shift in thinking. For centuries, mission was regarded as a task accorded clergy and religious⁵⁴ whose object was the conversion of peoples and church planting

⁵² The messianic people have "been set up by Christ as a communion of love and truth; by him too it is taken up as the instrument of salvation for all, and sent as a mission to the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (see Matt 5, 13-16), *Lumen Gentium* §9.

⁵³ Although Vatican II rediscovered the local church, theologians had the bishop's church in view, whereas in lay experience, the local church means the parish and diocese are two distinct realities. Still, attention to the diocese raised awareness that mission is inherently local and is shaped by the culture and needs of individual circumstances.

⁵⁴ In his commentary on *Ad Gentes*, Suso Brechter observed that "right down to the present day," members of religious orders and congregations "have almost exclusively undertaken the entire missionary work of the Church"; Suso Brechter, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 4, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 87-88. It is notable that this decree was not "composed because all the bishops at the council felt the need to speak about missions and evangelization." That it exists is due to "an important and powerful group of men [who] felt a need to stress to the church that mission work was not something optional, carried on by self-appointed missionaries organized in para-church societies to work in far-off lands, but something essential to the very nature of the church as church"; William Burrows, "Mission in the Context of 'Conscientized Action' and Dialogue," *Missiology: An International Review* 13 (1985): 473-86 at 474.

in new lands.⁵⁵ The Council Fathers, however, unequivocally identified baptism rather than orders or religious charism as the source of mission's mandate and agency.⁵⁶ *Ad Gentes* §4 confirms that at this moment, the Holy Spirit instills "in the hearts of the faithful the same missionary spirit by which Christ himself was driven."

Given baptism's newfound prominence—and the fact that the majority of baptized are lay—the council elected to examine mission's agency in *Lumen Gentium's* chapter 4 treating lay ecclesiality.⁵⁷ These believers are described as receiving a share in Christ's messianic agency at the font: by the Spirit's anointing, they become participants in the *tria munera*, Christ's threefold office of priest, prophet, and king.⁵⁸ Consecrated and set apart, "the holy people of God" whom God calls to be witnesses and who are gifted with a sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) share in the *prophetic* role of Christ "in order that the power of the gospel may shine forth in the daily life of family and society."⁵⁹ The *royal* work of the baptized consists in all those things done to prepare for God's coming reign.⁶⁰ Endowed with the Spirit's charisms and illumined by the *sensus fidei*, Catholic laity serve the kingdom daily not just by overcoming their own proclivity to sin; they strive to eradicate sin's effects on secular structures and cultural institutions. These efforts culminate

⁵⁵ "The era of modern mission that began with Jesuit missionary efforts in Asia and Latin America was based on the idea that Europeans would go out 'to' the pagan nations [that is, *ad gentes*] and convert them to Christianity"; William Burrows, "Jesus and Christology: Mission and the Paradox of God's Reign," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39 (2015): 232–35 at 234. Then mission's "primary focal images were 'conversion' and 'expansion'"; William R. Burrows, "Reconciling All in Christ: An Old New Paradigm for Mission," *Mission Studies* 15 (1998): 79–98 at 79.

⁵⁶ Per *Lumen Gentium* §10, baptism is a consecration to mission: "For by the regeneration and anointing of the Holy Spirit the baptized are consecrated as a spiritual dwelling and a holy priesthood ... witnessing to Christ throughout the world and explaining to those who ask the hope they possess of eternal life." This claim is reiterated in *AA* §3 and *PO* §12.

⁵⁷ Although *Lumen Gentium* §9–12's description of the messianic People of God does not explicitly include Christ's royal function, *Lumen Gentium* §13 adds that collectively "the church as the People of God ... takes up and encourages the riches and customs of peoples in so far as they are good; and in taking them up it purifies, strengthens and raises them up."

⁵⁸ *LG* §§10, 34–36. The extensive collection of texts gathered by Paul Dabin for *Le sacerdoce royal des fideles dans la tradition ancienne et moderne* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1950) confirms the importance this figure had in the early rites and for patristic theologies of baptism.

⁵⁹ *LG* §35.

⁶⁰ "They should learn to offer themselves as they offer the immaculate victim—not just through the hands of the priest, but also they themselves making the offering together with him"; *SC* §48.

in believers' participation in Christ's *priestly* office and their offering of spiritual worship in, with, and through him at the Eucharist. Like Jesus, their priestly self-gift takes form as the prayers and the apostolic works associated with their everyday efforts that proclaim God's graced offer of salvation.⁶¹ Indeed, every prophetic or servant work of theirs done in the Spirit becomes an acceptable sacrifice to God through Christ.

The council's use of the *tria munera* to identify the divinely endowed agency instrumental to engendering a missional church was one of its most important yet misunderstood insights.⁶² Again, because of the figure's original association with Jesus' own priestly, prophetic, and royal commissioning at the Jordan, the council reestablished the intrinsic link between baptism's anointing and believers' own commissioning. And just as the *munera* represented the threefold dimension of Jesus' ministry, so too the council viewed these as ways the *christifideles* actualize their baptismal consecration and mediate God's salvific offer to others. Thus in presenting participation in Christ's *munera* as constitutive and therefore definitional of lay Catholic existence and in recognizing these baptized to live in that milieu now understood to be both venue and object of the church's becoming, the Council Fathers assigned missional responsibilities directly to them.⁶³ As *Lumen Gentium* explains, laity are the church *as* world precisely because of their secular character, that is, their very existence is formed out of the things, events, activities

⁶¹ "For all their works, if done in the Spirit, become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ: their prayers and apostolic works, their married and family life, their daily work, their mental and physical recreation, and even life's trouble if they are patiently borne" (see 1 Pet 2, 5); *LG* §35.

⁶² Most histories of the *tria munera* overlook its original association with baptism and anointing. Rediscovery of this figure by Catholic theologians in the years prior to the council may be attributed to the influence of the Protestant reformer John Calvin, who interpreted Christ's offices soteriologically, that is, he saw the three as the means by which Christ accomplished his work of redemption. Peter Drilling called attention to Calvin's critical role in initiating "the modern movement to pattern Christian ministry on the threefold function of Christ's ministry," which proved important for the council's deliberations"; Peter Drilling, "The Priest, Prophet and King Trilogy: Elements of Its Meaning in *Lumen Gentium* and for Today," *Eglise et Theologie* 19 (1988): 179–206 at 191. Peter de Mey points out, however, that the council used the *tria munera* inconsistently; it could refer to 1) all baptized-confirmed and eucharistic Christians; 2) to ordained ministers, and problematically 3) as the source of an "essential difference" that exists between the ordained and non-ordained. See Peter de Mey, "The Bishop's Participation in the Threefold *Munera*: Comparing the Appeal to the Pattern of the *Tria Munera* at Vatican II and in the Ecumenical Dialogues," *Jurist* 69 (2009): 31–58 at 31.

⁶³ Although *Lumen Gentium* §31 confirms that as members of the faithful, clergy and religious must also show concern for the world, because laity are "secular," they have primary responsibility here.

of every day. Led by God's Spirit and showered with charismatic gifts, these "priests of creation" are dismissed from the eucharistic assembly and sent to transform social systems and networks, and they are sent to liberate creation from its limits by unifying the spiritual and material, opening all to the possibility of communion with God.⁶⁴

If in the past, the hierarchical church ministered to the world by creating a Christian civilization whose institutions, organizations, and laws oversaw and protected human well-being, Catholic laity were now called to help build an authentically human world from within by bringing the gospel's influence to "all the strata of humanity" so as to convert humankind's "criteria of judgement, determining values, points of interest, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation."⁶⁵ And if in the past the world was simply the place where lay Catholics were called to live out their Christian vocation by doing good and avoiding evil, their vocation now takes form as a life in community that demonstrates the love and friendship Jesus himself extended to even the alien, the stranger. Inevitably, the attractiveness, the very irresistibility of this collective witness, metamorphoses into an ever-expanding worldwide community of love, fellowship, unity, and solidarity that brings fulfillment and finality to both believers and the world.

The Liturgy: Mission's Matrix and Instrument of the Council's Vision

The strongest argument for reading the Second Vatican Council through mission's lens, the argument that underscores the council's intent to reanimate and refit the church for evangelization as just described, is embedded in the liturgical reforms instituted by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As Faggioli forcefully argues, the primary lesson of this constitution is that liturgy itself, which "is the main source to which the Church needs to return in order to understand its essence and its mission."⁶⁶ *Sacrosanctum Concilium's* very first words—indeed, the first words to be promulgated by

⁶⁴ In a series of lectures presented at King's College London in 1989, John Zizioulas proposed that every Christian serves as a "priest of creation"; see John Zizioulas, *King's Theology Review* 12 (1989): 1–5, 41–45, and John Zizioulas, *King's Theology Review* 13 (1990): 5. See also Georgia Masters Keightley, "The Church's Laity: Called to Be Creation's Priests," *Worship* 84 (2010): 309–27 at 316.

⁶⁵ Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975, §19, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

⁶⁶ Massimo Faggioli, *True Reform: Liturgy and Ecclesiology in Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 39.

the assembly itself—set forth the council’s pastoral orientation and the what, how, and who of mission.⁶⁷ “For particularly cogent reasons” the council proposed to achieve its aims by “undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy.”⁶⁸

Peritus Godfrey Diekmann, explaining why the liturgy’s reform was essential to bringing the church “into a new phase of witness and proclamation,” noted the profound influence on the council of the Liturgical Movement that occasioned the rediscovery that “the most important self-manifestation of the church is the assembly of eucharistic worship” itself.⁶⁹ As a visible reenactment and actualization of the paschal mystery in every time and place, the liturgy was “the source, the center and the summit, the going-forth of the Church’s Trinitarian life, the very core of both its communion and its mission.”⁷⁰ True worship, in effect, “is the enactment of and participation in the trinitarian economy of salvation. It is the ‘upward’ movement of the church in response to the ‘downward’ movement of the Trinity.”⁷¹ As the 1971 Synod of Bishops would affirm, “The Eucharist constitutes the church and puts it at the service of the people,” in order that “all of humanity, all peoples, and all of human history come together as one family and one communion around the Table of the Lord till the end of time.”⁷²

Sacrosanctum Concilium testifies to the council’s rediscovery of liturgy as a primary venue of God’s salvific activity and a privileged site for believers’ real encounter with Father, Son, and Spirit. At the genesis of ecclesial reality, it is the very source of Catholic identity as well as the framework within which *christifideles* shape their lives. As Joseph Jungmann explained,

⁶⁷ The brief preamble (SC §1) “enumerates the essential objectives of the Constitution and of the entire Council”; Paul de Clerck and A. Haquin, “*La constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium et sa mise en oeuvre*,” *Revue theologique de Louvaine* 44 (2013): 171–96 at 173. “This intimate connection between the reform of the liturgy and the whole council is solidly indicated at the outset in the document’s title, which has no specific reference to liturgy but is simply *Sacrosanctum concilium*”; Driscoll, “Reviewing and Recovering *Sacrosanctum concilium*’s Theological Vision,” 370. Driscoll notes G. Dossetti’s argument that references in succeeding documents evidenced SC’s influence on the council’s renewed vision of the church, at 381n45.

⁶⁸ SC §1.

⁶⁹ Godfrey Diekmann, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John H. Miller (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1966), 17–30 at 19.

⁷⁰ Chito Arevalo, “The Eucharist and the Church,” www.clerus.org/clerus/dati/2002-03/25-999999/06SAIIEN.html.

⁷¹ Simon Chan, “The Holy Spirit as the Fulfillment of the Liturgy,” *Liturgy* 30 (2015): 33–41 at 33.

⁷² Quoted in *ibid.*, 33.

“It is above all in the liturgy that the mystery of Christ and the true picture of the church ensuing from it” become a life-giving reality for the faithful “making them better equipped to act in the world as Christians.”⁷³ Because “the liturgy does not merely talk about God, but manifests the assembly’s graced union with the Father, through Son, in Spirit,”⁷⁴ *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for restoration of the laity to “that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations” (SC §14). Here is an acknowledgment that not only does the liturgy’s very nature demand the conscious engagement of those present, but full and active participation in the church’s worship is indeed the laity’s “right and duty by reason of their baptism.”⁷⁵ Underscoring this claim, the renewed rites of initiation reflect early Christian belief that baptism’s water and anointing bestow full ecclesial agency, that is, participation in Christ’s own threefold office of priest, prophet, and king, receipt of the Spirit and its charismatic gifts and admission to the eucharistic assembly.⁷⁶ Restoration of the ancient catechumenate placed responsibility for Christian formation with the local eucharistic community, recognizing that it is here that the entire faithful “learn to fulfill the mission of Christ and his church” (AA §29). In principle, adult baptism was restored as the norm with emphasis placed on personal conversion and formation for Christian living rather than on instruction on doctrinal content.⁷⁷

⁷³ Josef Jungmann, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 1, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 1–87 at 9.

⁷⁴ Aidan Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1984), 116.

⁷⁵ SC §14.

⁷⁶ In a 1979 article noting that the liturgy’s reforms remain “unfinished and unbegun,” Kavanagh cited the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, which highlights the anomaly created by the West’s separation of confirmation from baptism. Because the two sacraments are now received together at the Easter Vigil, rather than reduplicate the anointing, the baptismal anointing is omitted. Kavanagh noted the significant loss of meaning created with the disappearance of reference to the neophyte’s being anointed “As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King.” Critical of what remains current practice, he argued that “traditionally nothing is more clear than that anointing is intrinsic to Christian baptism for it is here that one is marked or sealed with the messianic Spirit of prophecy, priesthood, and kingship—being thereby constituted a *Christos* ... it is the postpaschal appropriation of [Christ’s] consummated vocation by others”; Aidan Kavanagh, “Unfinished and Unbegun Revisited: The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults,” *Worship* 53 (1979): 327–40 at 330–31. Ironically, infant baptism is the practiced norm today and takes place in the midst of the assembly so that the anointing and its accompanying words commissioning the child to Christ’s threefold office are recited and witnessed by the entire assembly.

⁷⁷ Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation*, 114. Adult formation as the norm is confirmed in the 1997 *General Catechetical Directory* (no. 20) and the *US National Catechetical Directory* (nos. 32–33).

Based on norms specified in sections 21–45, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* mandated changes in the Mass to enable lay Catholics “to understand the holy things which the text and rites represent and to enter into them through a celebration that is expressive of their full meaning, is effective, involving and the community’s own.”⁷⁸ Simplifying and shortening the rites to make them “more lucid and intelligible”;⁷⁹ the return to the people of such ancient practices as the singing of hymns, responding to prayers, offering the gifts; removal of strictures surrounding reception of the Eucharist, but especially the prominent role accorded Scripture’s reading and homiletic interpretation: these participatory acts were a means “to get across the meaning of the liturgy more explicitly.”⁸⁰

But the liturgical reforms were also central to implementing the council’s mission agenda. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’s §37–40’s call for inculturation of the rites, for example, was an important step toward advancing the Catholic community’s dialogue with culture.⁸¹ Aware that language mediates and shapes a people’s thought forms and behavioral patterns, that language too is a bearer of a society’s cultural values and institutions, the council pressed for use of local vernaculars for “some prayers, readings, and instructions given to the people.”⁸² SC further stipulated that in renewing the rites,

⁷⁸ SC §21.

⁷⁹ SC §34.

⁸⁰ SC §§35, 3.

⁸¹ SC §37–40. Although theologians tend to consider *Gaudium et Spes*, *Ad Gentes*, and *Lumen Gentium* as primary resources for understanding conciliar teaching on inculturation, missionary theologian Mark Francis claims that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is the true “Magna Carta of inculturation”; Mark Francis, “Liturgy and Inculturation since Vatican II,” *Worship* 91 (2017): 24–42 at 26. Per Nathan Chase, the council saw the liturgy’s inculturation to be a way for the church to both “embrace cultural pluralism” and “to relate to cultures that were not based in the classical cultures of the Mediterranean world.” He notes that although the Zaire Rite was the only enculturated form of the Eucharist to be approved by Rome post-Vatican II, it continues to serve as “a prophetic witness” to the council’s belief in the liturgy’s capacity “to lead the faithful, using their own cultural symbols and practices, into the heart of the liturgy, into the paschal mystery”; see <https://cruxnow.com/interviews/2021/01>. See also Nathan Chase, “A History and Analysis of the Missel Romain pour les Dioceses du Zaire,” *Obsculta* 6, no. 1 (2013): 28–35. Shortly upon the close of the 2019 Synod on the Amazon, Pope Francis celebrated the Zairean liturgy at St. Peter’s, in this way affirming the synod’s recommendation that “a liturgical rite be developed for use by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon.” See Pope Francis, “The Synod on the Amazon and Liturgical Inculturation,” *Worship* 94 (2020): 145–53.

⁸² SC §36. For a theologian’s assessment, see Dennis Doyle, “The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration,” *US Catholic Historian* 30 (2012): 1–13.

elements drawn from a community's "history, traditions, their cultural patterns and artistic expressions" be incorporated into the language of prayer formularies, that such even inform composition of the prayers, their proclamation, their ritual expression.⁸³ As a result of this refinement of its vocabularies of word and rite, the church's liturgy became paradigmatic for the encounter of faith and culture. The expectation was that once fully enacted, the council's liturgical reforms would allow believers to render, in concrete and accessible ways and in diverse cultures, "the mystery of restored communion between God in Christ by the Spirit and our world in a Spirit-filled Body, the Church of Christ."⁸⁴

Its reforms also attest to the council's awareness of liturgy's indispensable role in forming witnesses and nurturing missionary disciples. Indeed, ritual theory substantiates *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §2's assertion that the liturgy "marvelously strengthens [believers'] power to preach Christ."⁸⁵ Per theory, liturgical rites are said to *depict a world as well as create one*. On the one hand, they prescribe the specific behaviors, the relational patterns that enable one to negotiate a world successfully.⁸⁶ Through regular performance of the Christian rites and through the habit memory ritual inscribes in bodies,⁸⁷ individuals reenact the world as redeemed in Christ, they enter into and discover here who they are as ecclesial persons; moreover, they learn "how it is to live in this world" through exercise of the priestly, prophetic, and royal agency baptism bestows. More exactly, their bodies learn to enact the Christ-like behaviors essential to being "the people of God": By

⁸³ Anscar Chupungco, "Liturgical Inculturation: The Future that Awaits Us," 1–11 at 2, <https://www.valpo.edu/institute-of-liturgical-studies/files/2016/09/chupungco2.pdf>. Such reforms were to be "consistent with the thinking behind the true and authentic spirit of the liturgy" (SC §37), preserve "the fundamental unity of the Roman rite" (SC §38), and be done under the guidance of local ordinaries. The result would be "the insertion of liturgy into a given culture in such a way that the liturgy absorbs the culture (and thus is able to speak from within the culture) and the culture absorbs the liturgy (and thus the Christian faith upon which it rests becomes more deeply integrated into the social fabric and worldview of that society)"; Rita Ferrone, "Our Eucharist Is a Feast," *Commonweal*, January 5, 2021, <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/our-eucharist-feast>.

⁸⁴ Aidan Kavanagh, "Liturgical Inculturation: Looking to the Future," *Studia Liturgica* 20 (1990): 95–106 at 105.

⁸⁵ For an introduction to the field, see Ronald L. Grimes, ed., *Readings in Ritual Studies* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1996); Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply into the Bone* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

⁸⁶ Theodore Jennings, "On Ritual Knowledge," in *Readings in Ritual Studies*, 324–34 at 328.

⁸⁷ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22–26, 93–95.

way of the liturgy's ritual acts, for example, hearing God's Word, tasting and sharing bread and wine together, seeing the poor through the eyes of Christ via material offerings, smelling incense rising in prayerful gratitude, a person experiences the tangible moments the liturgy provides for God's Spirit "to rest on" and inspire Catholic bodies for a lived and living witness. Precisely by means of the embodied sensate knowing ritual makes possible, believers are moved to perform the very deeds that are sign and witness of God's own parental concern. Furthermore, by means of ritual's reorganization of their bodily behavior, the *christifideles* come away with a deeper sense of their own vocation and their unique call to the missionary apostolate.

If, however, "a liturgy of Christians is nothing less than the way a redeemed world is, so to speak, done,"⁸⁸ it is also true that the mode of *being in the world* the liturgy shapes and nurtures, what Theobald calls "style of life," likewise engenders a mode of *being world*. The bonds of love and fellowship with which the Spirit gifts the eucharistic communion reveal not only what is possible for life in community, but they embody what it ought to be. A new world too, certainly a new way of being world, is born via the witness of believers whose liturgically formed attitudes and behaviors become messianic signs disclosing "the true meaning of human life and the bond that unites all humankind" (AG §11). Through "a specific process of encounters and mutual relations," relations that even though drawn from the everyday business of politics, the economy, technology become sacramental insofar as they are made instantiations of gospel teaching and exemplify life as lived under God's rule. Sent to transform society by healing its systems, sent to free creation from sin's disfigurement and ensure that its bounteous gifts are shared by all, the lay baptized live their Christian vocation in exercising their missionary agency.

The Conciliar Vision Waylaid: The US Church as Case in Point

Yet as Nicholas Lash argued, the state of the liturgy is also "the first and fundamental test of the extent to which the program, not merely of the decree *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, but of all the council's constitutions and decrees, is being achieved."⁸⁹ While Vatican II's missionary manifesto and its pastoral

⁸⁸ Kavanagh, *On Liturgical Theology*, 100.

⁸⁹ Nicholas Lash, *Theology for Pilgrims* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 227–28. "It is here, in the way we celebrate the Eucharist together, and relate what we are doing there to what we do and undergo elsewhere, that the doctrine of the Church expounded in the Council's Constitution *Lumen gentium*, the doctrine of God's word in *Dei verbum* and the account of Christianity's relationship to secular society in

agenda was received and sedimented within the revised rites, this vision—despite repeated efforts to reverse the liturgical reforms—continues to this day to inform and nourish Catholic life via parish liturgical celebrations. That said, the hierarchy's subsequent failure to implement the conciliar project properly and fully, highlights the breach created between Christ's call to discipleship and the inspired gifts for mission the liturgy engenders and the absence of the ecclesial ministries and institutional supports needed to develop and foster lay Catholics' baptismal agency. This absence impedes the liturgy's thrust to bring together "all of humanity, all peoples and all of human history" as "one family and one communion around the Table of the Lord until the end of time."⁹⁰ In short, it prevents the Roman church from becoming the missionary community the council intended and the one Pope Francis now strives to re-create.

Over time, aside from periodic calls for a "new evangelization,"⁹¹ current practice suggests that mission is again viewed functionally, a vocation of the few rather than the gospel style of life to which baptism consecrates and inducts all.⁹² Remarkable too is that despite the appearance of magisterial documents such as *Christifideles Laici* (1988), *Redemptoris Missio* (1990),

Gaudium et spes do or do not take shape, find flesh. It is in this that the state of the liturgy is the first and fundamental test of the extent to which the council's programme is being achieved."

⁹⁰ Chan, "The Holy Spirit as the Fulfillment of the Liturgy," 33.

⁹¹ Richard Rymarz attributes this phrase to John Paul II, which "is encapsulated in *Redemptoris Missio*" and specifically has in mind "those countries with ancient Christian roots ... where entire groups of the baptized have lost a sense of the faith ... and live a life far removed from Christ and his gospel. In this case what is needed is a 'new evangelization' or a 're-evangelization' (RM 33)"; Richard Rymarz, "John Paul II and the 'New Evangelization': Origins and Meaning," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 15 (2010): 1–22 at 2.

⁹² Roger Schroeder described the decade after the council (1965–1975) as being a time of crisis for mission, a period overflowing with cultural change that brought an end to the colonialism with which ecclesial mission had been so closely aligned. In this time of ferment, "there was need for a new theology and practice of mission"; "Catholic Teaching on Mission after Vatican II: 1975–2007," in *A Century of Catholic Mission: Roman Catholic Missiology 1910 to the Present*, ed. Stephen Bevans, vol. 15, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series (Oxford: Regnum, 2013) 112–20, at 112. Fabrizio Meroni, Secretary General of the Pontifical Missionary Union, recently argued that the *missio ad gentes* remains the paradigm, the model that "configures the entire evangelizing mission of the Church" whose uniqueness lies in "reaching those who have not yet encountered Jesus Christ and his gospel." Still he acknowledges it is tempting "to reduce mission to an adjectival juxtaposition of already existing and perhaps frail structures, rather than having the apostolic courage and audacity necessary to allow ourselves to be re-created and reformed with new modes of Christian presence ad witness." See Fabrizio Meroni, "Some Initial Observations on *Missio ad Gentes*: A Theological-

and *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007), which exhibit a strong missionary concern while emphasizing the liturgy's social and ethical implications, Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI nevertheless oversaw efforts to reverse the liturgical reforms the council believed fundamental to mission's engagement.⁹³ The question is, how exactly did the council's intentions and its expectations go awry?

The American Context: Background and Pastoral Challenge

Apart from implementing the liturgical reforms per Rome's timetable, the council's project to create a mission-centered church commanded neither the urgency nor thoughtful attention it demanded in the years following the US bishops' return from Rome. One explanation is that until 1908, the United States was a declared mission territory; this had long been the operative mindset and faith's dialogue with America's culture had advanced. This church had been built and overseen by émigré clergy who had to deal with the discrimination and injustices confronted by a growing, culturally diverse, and largely uneducated immigrant laity. In conjunction with religious orders of women and men imported from Europe, the US hierarchy established an extensive network of schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other charitable organizations to provide for the Catholic community's needs. In 1919, the bishops created the National Catholic Welfare Conference to be the church's public voice articulating Catholic teaching on the sociopolitical issues of the day. Given this history, there seemed no immediate need to involve laity in society's care or give them a responsibility for the moral

Pastoral Reflection on the Extraordinary Missionary Month, October 2019," *The Australian Catholic Record* 96 (2019): 387–99 at 389, 391.

⁹³ In "Cultures, Inculturation and *Sacramentum Concilium*," Nathan Mitchell argues that during a quarter-century of retrenchment, the flourishing of "cautions" and "concerns" about alleged liturgical "excesses" and "abuses" had less to do with the church's worship than they did "with the magisterium's ambivalent view of contemporary Western culture," that is, its "love-hate-relation with both the plurality of cultures" as well as with the process of inculturation itself. He finds some postconciliar documents to exhibit greater unease with inculturation as this pertains to "gospel, worship, and church life in familiar Western cultures" than when applied to "evangelization in missionary contexts"; Nathan Mitchell, "Cultures, Inculturation and *Sacramentum Concilium*," *Worship* 77 (2003): 171–81 at 174–77. In her commentary on John Paul II's 2003 *Ecclesia de eucharistia*, Susan Wood identifies points that constrain ecumenical dialogue, a conversation that Vatican II saw to be essential in "A Symposium on the Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* of Pope John Paul II," *Pro Ecclesia* 12, no. 4: 394–416.

direction of their individualistic, freedom-loving culture. For their part, laity were accustomed to viewing social ministry as belonging to clergy and religious, an outlook that has consistently “deterred lay initiative and participation.”⁹⁴

Another obstacle to lay engagement with the world was Vatican II’s call to religious congregations to reassess their founding charism and vocation with the result that large numbers of clergy and religious left their ministries to enter the public arena. According to one observer, no group of US Catholics “took more seriously Vatican II’s emphasis on the Church serving the world ... than religious orders of women and men.”⁹⁵ In the late 1960s and early 1970s, priests, brothers, and nuns engaged in civil disobedience, marching in support of civil rights or protesting the Vietnam War. With episcopal support, they got involved in public advocacy, organizing peace and justice centers for developing policy and lobbying for legislation implementing radical social change. But as these Catholics sought “to impose their own agendas on the laity,” this intrusion into what the council declared to be the laity’s sphere of activity did not escape criticism.⁹⁶ Monsignor George Higgins, council peritus and “perhaps the best known proponent of Catholic social action in the United States,” charged them with being “too enthralled with marches and demonstrations” and “too moralizing and quick to make prophetic denunciations” while ignoring the complexity of moral issues and thus the need for long-term education and structural reform.⁹⁷ Laity too criticized the willingness of so many priests and nuns to bypass their ecclesial commitments to pursue social causes. Their 1977 statement, “The Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern,” contested the clergy’s acting “as if the primary responsibility in the Church for uprooting injustice, ending wars and defending human rights rested with them as ordained ministers,”⁹⁸ arguing that “the Good News calling for peace, justice and freedom need to be mediated through the prism of lay experience, political wisdom and technical expertise.”⁹⁹ This refutation indicates that barely a decade after its close, one of Vatican II’s most significant achievements, its teaching

⁹⁴ Jerome Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful: How American Catholics Live Their Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 182.

⁹⁵ Charles Curran, *The Social Mission of the US Catholic Church* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 65.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁹⁸ “The Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern,” in *Challenge to the Laity*, ed. Russell Barta (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1980), 19–27 at 22.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

on the laity, “seems to have all but vanished from the consciousness and agendas of many sectors within the Church.”¹⁰⁰

In the final analysis, however, America’s bishops’ inability to create a mission-driven church must be attributed to their signal failure to read the liturgy as a *locus theologicus*. This resulted in their inability to discern, to appreciate, and to appropriate the council’s deepened insight into mission, its object, its methodology, and the inspirited agency conveyed by baptism’s anointing—all embodied in the reformed rites and mediated via their continued celebration by the local church. As a consequence, these pastors were unable to translate the council’s mission agenda into an effective acculturated praxis for evangelizing the American context. In particular, they were unable to resolve the disjunction between the renewed liturgy’s graced intuitions and US Catholics’ capacity to fashion a servant witness responsive to their times that was a pastoral imperative. The fact is, the impetus to mission that the liturgy implants in believers—because it is an embodied, sensate knowing—does not translate immediately or directly into the reflective, complex acts of *diakonia* that contemporary mission demands. To this point, recent surveys of the belief and practices of US Catholics regularly attest: although laity instinctively know that helping the poor is essential to being Catholic (in 2011, this was second in importance only to belief in Jesus’ resurrection),¹⁰¹ they just as consistently think “church involvement with activities directed to social justice” is not their concern.¹⁰² According to a 2017 survey, few

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 21. On the council’s reception in the United States and the claim that by the 1980s the forces of history had led “to the obscuring of Vatican II’s overall vision and the principles of its implementation”; see Joseph Chinnici, “Reception of Vatican II in the United States,” *Theological Studies* 64 (2003): 461–94 at 492.

¹⁰¹ Michele Dillon, “What Is Core to American Catholics in 2011?,” fig. 2, *National Catholic Reporter*, October 24, 2011, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/what-core-american-catholics-2011>.

¹⁰² William D’Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield, 2007), 24. A 2018 CARA study shows that belief in the need to engage in charitable works declines in direct proportion to a decline in regular Mass attendance. See Mark M. Gray and Mary L. Gautier, “Proud to Be Catholic? A Groundbreaking *America* Survey Asks Women about Their Lives in the Church,” *America*, January 16, 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/01/16/proud-be-catholic-groundbreaking-america-survey-asks-women-about-their-lives>. Such attitudes are in striking contrast to an American church prior to Vatican II wherein “the responsibilities of the people in the pews were taken increasingly seriously, or at least discussed with growing frequency under the rubric of the lay apostolate and Catholic Action”; see Debra Campbell, “The Heyday of Catholic Action and the Lay Apostolate, 1929–1959,” in *Transforming Parish Ministry: The Changing Roles of Catholic Clergy, Laity, and Women Religious*, ed. Jay Dolan, Scott Appleby, Patricia

laity “are even familiar with Catholic social teaching” and on contested social and political issues, “personal opinion is typically more influential” for decision-making than church teaching.¹⁰³ At bottom, respondents did not view their parishes as responsible for “remedying society’s ills”; neither did they put this at the forefront of “why they are religious and participate at church.”¹⁰⁴

Yet the clergy’s ministerial service on behalf of this new iteration of mission, the servant leadership (*Christus Dominus* §16; see Luke 22:26-27) required to enable lay evangelization of the secular was precisely the pastoral challenge Vatican II presented to US bishops and pastors. As council documents explained, because a society’s structures are permeated by sin, because they are a source of human oppression and suffering, of discrimination and exclusion, sociocultural realities become both mission’s object and the very medium and material of Christian witness. In practice, whether as public official, information technology expert, educator, or simply voter, baptism mandates American laity to use their education and expertise to cultivate a cultural milieu protective of creation, of human life and dignity. Per *Lumen Gentium*, their apostolic vocation is not limited to beatitudinal works of charity; precisely as lay, they are directly called “to make the church present and active in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth” (33). For US Catholics, discipleship is to be lived through complex decisions about the expenditure of personal and public funds; in designing policies that provide a safety net for those disadvantaged by capitalist markets; in pressing for reforms of discriminatory penal systems; in life practices that protect the environment. And, insofar as evangelization includes bringing “the Good News to all the strata of humanity” to convert “both the personal and collective consciences of people,” Vatican II opened the way to the creation of new ministries and other ecclesial entities necessary to help the local church bring to fruition what celebration of the renewed rites initiates.¹⁰⁵ These innovative forms were to assist believers to convert what occurs in and through the liturgy of the altar into a liturgy of the every day that takes form as the “eschatological public activity of those who at all times and in all places stand ‘before the face of God’ and from this position ... make the everyday round of so-called

Byrne, and Debra Campbell (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 222–52 at 222. On page 252, Campbell concludes, “A substantial segment of the American Catholic laity entered the 1960’s with the soaring confidence that they would be called upon to serve their church in countless unforeseen capacities in the years to come.”

¹⁰³ D’Antonio et al, *American Catholics Today*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Baggett, *Sense of the Faithful*, 185.

¹⁰⁵ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, §18.

secular life into the arena of the unlimited and unceasing glorification of the divine will.”¹⁰⁶

The Council on Bishops’ Pastoral Responsibility to Implement an “Integrated and Many-Sided Formation” and to Provide the Institutional Supports Leading to the Everyday Application of Baptism’s *Tria Munera*

To effect this conversion of the liturgy of the altar into the liturgy of the every day, the Council Fathers set out principles for rendering the baptismal, missional consciousness of believers into concrete acts of Christian service. Because this begins with an informed participation in the liturgy that is “the source from which believers can imbibe the true Christian spirit,” *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §14 states that those responsible for pastoral care must themselves be “thoroughly immersed in the spirit and power of the liturgy,” that therefore a priority must be “the liturgical formation of the clergy.” Although *Christus Dominus* (CD) §12–14 proceeded to emphasize bishops’ teaching responsibilities, their role in forming mature Christians, and their pastoral duty “to make people’s faith, enlightened by doctrine, a living faith, explicit and active,”¹⁰⁷ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* made these obligations explicit by delineating the fundamentals of a missionary catechesis. Pastors must provide church members with “an integrated and many-sided formation” (AA §28), one considerate of an individual’s age, circumstances, and talents as well as “the conditions in which people live, not only spiritual and moral but also social, demographic, and economic” (CD §17). Rooted in active participation in the sacramental liturgies, especially the Eucharist wherein charity, “the soul of the whole apostolate ... is imparted to them and nourished” (AA §3)¹⁰⁸ and in conjunction with an “instruction in sound doctrine,” laypeople must learn “to see, judge, and act in all things

¹⁰⁶ Ernst Kasemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 191.

¹⁰⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Christus Dominus*, October 28, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html. To further specify the duties of the local ordinary as defined in *Christus Dominus*, the Sacred Congregation for Bishops in 1973 published the *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, devoting an entire chapter to “The Bishop as Teacher in the Faith-Community”; Leonard Crowley, “The Teaching Power and Mission of the Church,” *Studia Canonica* 9 (1975): 215–34 at 221.

¹⁰⁸ AA presupposes SC §48’s instruction on the need for a liturgical catechesis that enables believers to have “a good understanding of this mystery [of faith]” that “through the ritual and prayers, they should share in the worshipping event, aware of what is happening and devoutly involved.”

in the light of faith, so as to form and perfect themselves, with others and so enter into effective service of the church” (AA §29).

Because lay witness is “exercised in all circumstances and in every sector of life” (AA §30), formation takes “its distinguishing mark from the secularity proper to the lay state and the spirituality belonging to it” (AA §29). Believers therefore must be “taught the true meaning and value of temporal goods,” become practiced in the right use of things and be concerned for the common good in accord with the principles of the church’s moral and social doctrine (AA §31). The council regarded such training essential because lay mission requires more than taking the prophetic stance, something the magisterium does when, publicly challenging cultural norms, it proclaims the vision, motivation, and norms for Christian action. Lay mission’s uniqueness, however, lies in its direct engagement with those very contexts disfigured by sin, where implantation of faith’s normative vision requires discernment and skill at making prudential judgments that result from dialogue, negotiation, coalition building, and the compromises leading to social reform.¹⁰⁹ To this end, *Gaudium et Spes* identified specific areas about which laypeople must be able to think and act in the language and categories of Catholic social ethics in their everyday encounters. Thus, as Christ’s disciples illumined by conscience and the *sensus fidei*, Vatican II charged the lay church with “healing and ennobling the dignity of the human person, strengthening the fabric of human society and investing the daily activity of men and women with a deeper sense and significance” (GS §40). Spiritually formed by the liturgy, informed by a missionary catechesis to act as the Body of Christ for the world, Christ’s faithful will be prepared to “completely and actively insert themselves into the reality of the temporal order and effectively play their part in its affairs while, at the same time, making for an effective presence as living members and witnesses of the church at the heart of temporal things” (AA §29).

¹⁰⁹ Lay evangelization of the secular aims at what Augustine called “*tranquillitas ordinis*,” that is, establishing the peace of order that mirrors “the harmonious fellowship” of the heavenly city; it is achievement of that earthly concord that derives from “an ordered obedience, in faith, in subjection to an everlasting law,” Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Books, 1972), XIX, 13. It must be noted that the idea of “peace as tranquility of order” was “a paradigm of singular importance” for John XXIII’s encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, especially in terms of its treatment of human rights”; Russell Hittinger, “*Quinquagesimo Ante*: Reflections on *Pacem in Terris* Fifty Years Later,” in *The Global Quest for Tranquillitas Ordinis: Pacem in Terris Fifty Years Later*, ed. Mary Ann Glendon, Russell Hittinger, and Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo (Vatican City: Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2013), 38–60.

US Bishops' Failure to Implement Council Directives on Forming Adult Christians

History shows that the American hierarchy did not adhere to the council's schema for forming missionary disciples. While the US church had success in implementing the RCIA'S catechumenate process for those coming into the church, the bishops disregarded the council's insistence that an integral formation for mission must be an ongoing, lifelong, adult-oriented process. For example, the detailed guidelines implementing council teaching set out in the *General Catechetical Directory* (1971) state that "catechesis for adults, since it deals with persons who are capable of an adherence that is fully responsible, must be considered the chief form of catechesis. *All the other forms, which are indeed always necessary, are in some way oriented to it*" (20).¹¹⁰ The *Directory's* original US adaptation, *Sharing the Light of Faith* (1977) made the same point: "While aiming to enrich the faith life of individuals at their particular stage of development, every form of catechesis is oriented in some way to the catechesis of adults who are capable of a full response to God's word" (32).¹¹¹ Despite these clear programmatic statements, adult formation proved secondary to the US bishops' concerns for the growth and maintenance of the impressive system of parochial schools, colleges, and universities devoted to the Catholic education of children through young adulthood that was a major achievement of their immigrant church. Even in the immediate postconciliar years, the prime objective of parish religious education programs was the sacramental preparation of the burgeoning numbers of children unable to enroll in Catholic schools. In summarizing late-twentieth-century efforts at "passing on the faith," Peter Steinfelds concluded that for the American church "adult education has never been the Catholic style" because "the idea that learning, reflecting, discussion is a major pillar of adult discipleship,

¹¹⁰ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, *General Catechetical Directory*, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_11041971_gcat_en.html, emphasis added. Paragraph 30 states that catechesis is a lifelong process: "Catechesis has the function of lending aid for the beginning and the progress of this life of faith throughout the entire course of a man's existence, all the way to the full explanation of revealed truth and the application of it in man's life."

¹¹¹ United States Catholic Conference, *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory of Catholics of the United States*, nos. 32-33 (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1974). In an oral intervention at the 1977 synod, US Bishop Raymond Lucker argued that because the catechesis of adults is key to the catechesis of children and youth, the evangelization and catechesis of adults is one of the church's most pressing needs; see Mariella Frye, "Reflections on the National Catechetical Directory for the United States and the Roman Synod on Catechetics in Our Time," *Louvain Studies* 7 (1979): 205-21 at 207.

along with prayer and service, simply hasn't registered" with the result that "religious education remains child-centered."¹¹² In 2003, catechetical scholar Jane Regan conceded "few have heeded the 30-year-old call for adult faith formation" in part because "no one has been too sure why adult faith formation is so important."¹¹³

Even in those dioceses where adult formation was tried, such programs tended to be informational and remedial and were divorced from the faithful's worship experience.¹¹⁴ Whether taking form as lectures, workshops, or classes, these simply replicated the "schooling model," making adult formation an instruction "in propositions of the tradition that [believers] did not receive or have forgotten from their last experiences of formal religious education."¹¹⁵ Despite educators' recurrent efforts to present faith as a matter of one's personal encounter with Christ (*fides qua*) over faith as simply beliefs about him (*fides quae*), sociologist James Davidson noted the US church's emphasis on religious literacy, and its dedication to the school model has underpinned "much of what takes place in religious education."¹¹⁶ The operative assumption that right belief naturally and implicitly leads to right action not only provides "the framework within which a great deal of social ministry takes place," but even now remains "the bedrock of most weekend homilies and a great deal of pastoral counseling."¹¹⁷

This pedagogy, however, falls far short of the mystagogical formation the council intended, the exemplification of which was fleshed out as the "Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults," a marriage of liturgical rite, communal reflection, and practical action.¹¹⁸ Reliance on the school model also stood in the

¹¹² Peter Steinfels, *A People Adrift* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), 237.

¹¹³ Jane Regan, "Adult Faith Formation: Will It Catch on This Time?" *America* 189, no. 9 (September 22, 2003): 18–21 at 20.

¹¹⁴ Beginning with the 1997 *General Directory for Catechesis*, however, there was an effort to use the stages of the catechumenate as the basis for an organized approach to evangelization.

¹¹⁵ Regan, "Adult Faith Formation," 19.

¹¹⁶ James Davidson, *Catholicism in Motion: The Church in American Society* (Ligouri, MO: Ligouri Publications, 2005), 130–31.

¹¹⁷ Davidson, *Catholicism in Motion*, 130.

¹¹⁸ Although per official documents, the baptismal catechumenate is held to be the model for all catechesis, efforts to implement a liturgical and mystagogical formation has never fully succeeded in the American church. Already by 1990, "a despondency had set in"; Balthasar Fischer, "The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults: Rediscovery and New Beginnings," *Worship* 64 (1990): 98–106 at 105. A review of recent journals, however, shows this method receiving new attention. And according to Carlo-Mario Sultana, the newly issued Vatican *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) uses the catechumenate to illustrate how "all the different forms of catechesis with different categories of people

way of bishops learning from those formation practices already known to the American church. There was much to be appropriated from the lay movements that sprang up throughout US dioceses in the 1930s through the 1950s. Groups such as the Catholic Worker, the Grail, Young Christian Workers, the Christian Family Movement, and Opus Dei brought a new sense of mission to an increasingly educated laity, products of Catholic educational institutions, who struggled “to merge social consciousness with the life of faith.”¹¹⁹ Driven to address dehumanizing working conditions, the situation of the poor and homeless, and racial and ethnic injustice, these Catholics sought to create “a new social order penetrated by a spirit of the gospels.”¹²⁰ More importantly, these movements took their spiritual sustenance from “the life of the church and the traditional spiritual disciplines such as liturgy, meditation on scripture, and personal prayer.”¹²¹ And with the support and encouragement of their clerical chaplains, these intimate para-liturgical gatherings gave lay Catholics regular opportunities to examine together their beliefs and everyday experiences. Furthermore, out of this dialectic of prayerful reflection and lived witness, these laity carved a spiritual path that was not only biblically and liturgically grounded, but they also defined a spirituality that was authentically *lay* and *secular*.

Ironically, the lay movements’ approach to adult formation could have readily been replicated if bishops had followed through with the establishment of the synods and councils per Vatican II’s recommendations (*LG* §37, *CD* §27, *AA* §26). These too were to be ecclesial spaces where in accord with “the knowledge, competence, or authority they possess,” in accord with “their right and duty to make known their opinion on matters which concern the good of the church,” laity could contribute to the planning and organizing and so share responsibility for the life of the local church and its mission. These would also have been opportunities for the prayerful collaboration of those learned in Scripture and Catholic social norms and those having expertise in the real-life situations, out of whose fraternal exchange ideas would emerge for meaningful Catholic social action. Unlike similar bodies proposed and

is planned and put into action”; Carlo-Mario Sultana, “A Pastoral Reading of the Directory for Catechesis,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* LXVIII (2021): 43–56 at 50. It also presents mystagogy as the means “to help and to accompany individuals in continuing to accept Christ in their life and who on their part seek to keep inserting themselves into the mystery of Christ, and to allow Christ to enlighten their lives, words and choices,” at 54.

¹¹⁹ Claire E. Wolfteich, *American Catholics through the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Lay Experience and Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 2001), 23.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

later mandated by canon law, however, both the diocesan and parish pastoral council were left optional, their US implementation entirely dependent on the predilections of individual bishops and pastors. Ultimately, Vatican II's proposal to create institutional spaces wherein laypeople had a deliberative voice and vote subsequently "met with resolute resistance" from Rome.¹²² In the words of Massimo Faggioli, "The twentieth century struggle to rediscover the ancient, patristic conciliar and synodal tradition in the Church seems to have had a short life."¹²³

Perhaps the most important resource for creating a missionary church that America's bishops failed to utilize was an increasingly enculturated Catholic laity whose interest, enthusiasm, and anticipation of change had been generated by media coverage of the conciliar debates. Moreover, the postconciliar experience of worshiping according to the renewed rites had awakened in many laity a new sense of being church, an awareness that they too were called to a life of holiness and vocation.¹²⁴ This, combined with the social and political turbulence of mid-century America, underlay the readiness to engage that typified lay response to the Call to Action assembly held in Detroit in 1976. Convened by the bishops, this bicentennial project entitled "Liberty and Justice for All" aimed at instituting an intra-church dialogue "to clarify and specify the implications for the church in the United States of a social ministry at the service of the justice of God."¹²⁵ During the two years of preparatory hearings held in dioceses and parishes nationwide, bishops listened as thousands of laypeople described their experiences of injustice; heard for a first time in these public settings were Hispanic, Black, and Native American Catholic voices recounting the inequities they regularly confronted.¹²⁶

Remarkably, throughout both the regional listening sessions and Detroit's deliberations, lay Catholics repeatedly called on their bishops to provide the

¹²² John Beal, "It Shall Not Be So Among You! Crisis in the Church, Crisis in Church Law," in *Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Catholic Church*, ed. Francis Oakley and Bruce Russert (New York: Continuum, 2004), 92.

¹²³ Massimo Faggioli, *The Rising Laity: Ecclesial Movements since Vatican II* (New York: Paulist Press, 2016), 102. Interestingly, synodality is a tradition Pope Francis seeks to revive.

¹²⁴ For a study of US reaction to the implementation of the liturgical reforms, see Mark Massa, *Catholics and American Culture: Fulton Sheen, Dorothy Day, and the Notre Dame Football Team* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1999), 148–71.

¹²⁵ Bradford Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church: Aims and Obstacles, Lessons and Laments* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 64–89. This theme was chosen in light of the 1971 synod statement on justice in the world and Paul VI's "call to action" in *Octogesima Adveniens*.

¹²⁶ See Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*, 71. As history shows, this type of synodal experience was not new to the American church.

pastoral innovations that council documents beginning with *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had identified as essential to underwriting the mission to the secular. During the initial consultations, in fact, the majority of lay suggestions had to do with the need for an adult formation “appropriate to the needs and concerns of the total church and the people involved”; especially desired were “constructive programs relevant to racial, ethnic and cultural concerns.”¹²⁷ At Detroit too laity stressed the need for “building church communities of character by forming individuals through the sacraments and religious education in ‘the gospel,’ in the teachings of the church, in spirituality and in the Christian moral life.”¹²⁸

But no less critical for laity was the establishment of various forums to continue the kind of dialogue and collaboration between clergy and laity such as they had experienced during Call to Action. Indeed, one of Detroit’s final recommendations called for implementation of a “process of listening, responding, implementing” that would become a regular part of US Catholic life to initiate, encourage, and enable “pastoral programs relating the ministry of the church to the broader community, the nation and the world.”¹²⁹ Such meetings were described as being significant opportunities to build trust between “the bishop and the people, the pastor and the people, and the powerful and the powerless.”¹³⁰

In the end, history shows that these lay requests went unheeded, Detroit’s work was dismissed, even forgotten, and as Vatican II receded into the past, disillusionment set in up and down the American church. This is not to say that the council had no lasting impact. Many laity found opportunities to fulfill their baptismal calling through service on diocesan peace and justice commissions and religious education committees; some worked through existing parish organizations like the Council of Catholic Women and the Knights of Columbus to update and broaden their agendas; some participated in local ecumenical groups whose focus was charity or advocacy for justice. And of course, council teaching opened the door for lay ministry within the church, upon whose flourishing the US Catholic community now utterly depends.¹³¹ And as lay movements like Communion and Liberation,

¹²⁷ Frank V. Manning, *A Call to Action* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides/Claretian, 1977), 14–15.

¹²⁸ Hinze, *Practices of Dialogue in the Roman Catholic Church*, 77.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Although Vatican II’s teaching on the *tria munera* opened the way to lay ecclesial ministry, popes and bishops expressed concern that if laypeople became more interested and involved serving within the church, this would not only lead to the “clericalization of the laity” but it would also deter them from assuming their responsibility for mission to the world. See Eamonn Fitzgibbon, “Clericalization of the Laity: A Prescient Warning

Focolare, and Cursillo gained a foothold, these too provided opportunities for lay spiritual formation and witness. Nevertheless, observing what appeared to be a growing apathy and lax practice of many postconciliar Catholics, conservative elements were quick to attribute this to Vatican II's liturgical reforms and so pushed to minimize or repeal them outright; persistent efforts were made to restore the Latin Mass and to redefine *actuosa participatio* in terms of personal interiority.¹³²

Both publication of the universal catechism in 1997 and John Paul II's advocacy for memory learning, which influenced the Vatican's 1997 revision of the *General Catechetical Directory*, signaled a shift away from the conciliar idea of faith formation as a layered, lifelong process and a return to a more traditional view of faith as assent and a matter of religious literacy. For most US Catholics today, faith formation takes form as brief, ill-prepared Sunday homilies; church teaching on social questions appears in documents issued by the bishops' state and national conferences, whose true aim is legislation, which are then distributed to pastors for parishioners' instruction.¹³³ These rarely read texts adopt a "one size fits all" pedagogy, give no consideration to the different "age, conditions, talents" or the laity's cultural diversity as recommended by *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.¹³⁴ They fail as an instruction in helping laity "to see, act, judge," and evaluate complex political and economic problems in the gospel's light or, more importantly, to do the kind of critical

of Pope Francis for the Catholic Church of Ireland," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 85 (2020): 16–34.

¹³² See Cardinal Arinze, "Active Participation in the Sacred Liturgy," *Antiphon* 9 (2005): 6–15. This was a keynote address delivered at the 2004 conference of the Society for Catholic Liturgy in Mundelein, Illinois, on September 23, 2004. In the cover letter promulgating *Summorum Pontificum* (2007), Pope Benedict XVI noted his intent to promote "an interior reconciliation in the heart of the Church." In reality, his action created a clash between a liturgy that mediated the hierarchical Tridentine vision of church and a liturgy that mediated Vatican II's vision of the church as the communitarian people of God.

¹³³ The USCCB website, <https://www.usccb.org>, is a primary resource for these documents and other materials. For an assessment of the conferences' work, see David Yamane, *The Catholic Church in State Politics: Negotiating Prophetic Demands and Political Realities* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005).

¹³⁴ "For decades, bishops, individually and collectively, have thrust the institutional church into active public advocacy in legislatures and courts on a few key issues" with the result that this "has compromised the church's public witness on the full range of moral-political matters essential to a just society." This "intense public activism on a narrow set of issues leaves lay Catholics ill-equipped to bring their faith to other issues central to the common good," Angela C. Carmella, "An Informed Laity: Understanding the Church's Political and Legal Advocacy," in *Voting and Faithfulness: Catholic Perspectives on Politics*, ed. Nicholas P. Cafardi (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2020), 277–96 at 278.

analysis that leads to social reform. On the other hand, this approach suits the current hierarchy well, many of whom seem convinced that the lay role is not to think or discern regarding complex social and public policy agendas but simply to *sentire cum ecclesia* by following episcopal teaching.

In the late 1990s with the approach of a new millennium, the American hierarchy had to confront the deleterious consequences their neglect of adult formation had had. Observing that “many Catholics seem ‘lukewarm’ in faith (cf. Rev 3:14ff) or have a limited understanding of what the Church believes, teaches, and lives” (35), that growing numbers had left the church for “other non-denominational, evangelical, or fundamentalist communities” (36), the bishops’ issued *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us*, a pastoral plan placing adult faith formation at the forefront “of our catechetical vision and practice” (6).¹³⁵ Yet despite the frank assessment that “a substantial change in emphasis and priorities” was critical to forging “a more balanced and mature catechetical ministry” (14), some twenty years later, surveys show that this teaching effort was completely ineffectual. American Catholics continue to know less and less about their faith or even why they are Catholic rather than simply Christian.¹³⁶ Lay exodus from the church continues apace, and of great concern is that participation in the church’s liturgical life continues to decline among those Catholics who do remain. The great tragedy is that while the ideal of a church on fire for Christ’s gospel burns strong within the liturgy, absence of an “integrated and many-sided faith formation” (AA 28) and the servant leaders dedicated to creating communities of missionary disciples leaves the US church bereft of any real missionary zeal.

Conclusion

This article argues that when read through the optic of mission, the Second Vatican Council’s intent to refit the church for its work of evangelization becomes clear. Informing the council’s deliberations, John XXIII’s pastoral strategy brought new insight into mission’s goal and object and its methodology; but especially important was retrieval of the ancient church’s belief that mission’s agency was bestowed through the water and anointing of baptism. Because the council’s approach to the church was more inductive than deductive, more ministerial than academic, this caused “a profound

¹³⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Publishing, 1999).

¹³⁶ Per a 2019 Pew poll, 43 percent of US Catholics surveyed do not believe Christ is truly present in the Eucharist, and only 28 percent knew about transubstantiation; see <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/05/transubstantiation-u-s-catholics/>.

reorientation of ecclesiology.”¹³⁷ At the very center of the conciliar vision was “the entire People of God as actively and responsively constituting the Church,” their baptismal consecration conferring on the laity “full worshiping and teaching and ruling rights according to rank in ‘the chosen race, the royal priesthood ’” (1 Pet 2:9), they were a holy people called to exercise their baptismal agency on behalf of the gospel’s spread.¹³⁸ Emphasis newly placed on the local assembly was also revolutionary in that attention to those gathered around the parish altar underscored that “the church’s pre-eminent manifestation or realization” occurs here, that mission itself begins with evangelizers formed by the liturgy and whose immediate context, defined by local socio-cultural traditions and circumstances, pastoral outreach must address.¹³⁹

In retrospect, the council did not anticipate how return to this biblical, trinitarian, eschatological understanding of mission would lead to the reanimation of a lay-centered, baptismal church, yet *this church* was exactly what the conciliar deliberations ushered into being. Neither did the assembly anticipate the degree to which changes to the church’s rites would effect a substantial resocializing and reconstruction of the ecclesial body.¹⁴⁰ Diekmann remarked at the time that if fully implemented, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*’s reforms would “most radically affect the future polity and life of the Church by its honest effort to restore full responsible citizenship to the layman.”¹⁴¹ Certainly, reform of the rites reconfigured the bodily moves and physical placement of the baptized in such a way as to convey to laity that they were full ecclesial persons and so revealed the church’s worship to be the co-offering of presider and people together rather than something done by the presider on the laity’s behalf. Via the rite’s prescribed words and physical moves, presider and people now faced each other during the eucharistic liturgy and all experienced themselves to be “in the deepest sense ‘priests’ and ‘ministers.’”¹⁴² And sent forth at Mass’ end to “Go and announce the

¹³⁷ Diekmann, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 19.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Cipriano Vagaggini’s prediction about the Council Fathers’ grasp of the profound implications of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* proved to be “overly optimistic”; Faggioli, “*Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the Meaning of Vatican II,” 440–41. This “shift of eucharistic agency from the priest alone to the whole assembly” was “seismic” and was one of the most momentous achievements of the Council”; Lash, *Theology for Pilgrims*, 277.

¹⁴¹ Diekmann, “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” 20.

¹⁴² One could argue that this displacement of the clerical celebrant explains the efforts to restore the Tridentine Mass form where there was no confusion over who was priest and minister.

Gospel of the Lord,”¹⁴³ “all the faithful as members of one body, knew themselves to stand “under Christ’s command to preach the gospel to every creature.”¹⁴⁴ In effect, “the traditional *lex credendi*—the law of belief about the nature of the church, a law that Prosper of Aquitaine recognized as being so profoundly shaped by ritual experience—had been powerfully reshaped by a new *lex orandi*,”¹⁴⁵ a law whose priority was the incarnation of Christ’s own mission of love and service bringing all things to final recapitulation in him.

Yet while this imaginary of a missionary people continues to be remembered and celebrated liturgically in parishes across the world, as the US experience shows, the hierarchy never managed to complete what the liturgical renewal began. As a result, the Second Vatican Council lives on today in the American church more as the object of study than it does as a pastoral vision realized. Responsibility for this lies squarely with the clergy’s continued resistance in accepting the lay baptized as full ecclesial persons no less called and consecrated to God’s service than they; it stems from their egregious failure as pastors to put in place the conciliar principles for forming disciples as outlined in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* as well as the institutional means permitting Catholic laity to become what their liturgical experience attests them to be. Instead, the clergy’s lack of understanding, even fear of an active and engaged lay church as evidenced by the US bishops’ response to the 1976 Call to Action led church leaders to disregard the pastoral obligations that the council handed them. But Catholic theologians too have been complicit by allowing their academic interests to supersede their own ecclesial responsibilities. They have failed to help the church translate Vatican II’s vision into an effective mission praxis, opting instead to make the council and its work objects for recurring study. Most surprising has been theologians’ neglect of pneumatology and a studied attention to the Spirit’s historical *processio*, especially as this manifests itself as an *ecclesiologie vecue*, that is, as a pastoral church realized, enculturated and become operative via the *ad intra* servant ministries that nurture and prepare local communities to become Christ’s servant body in and for the world.

The conclusion here is that only by a critical reappropriation and implementation of its declared aims, only when Vatican II’s missionary vision committed to its rites is allowed to take flesh instead of remaining imprisoned in its documents, can the Catholic Church halt its descent into that Valley of the

¹⁴³ One option for the Mass’ closing rite, see Edward Foley, ed., *A Commentary on the Order of Mass of the Roman Ritual* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 625, 637.

¹⁴⁴ Massa, *Catholics and American Culture*, 170.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Dead Bones about which Ezekiel spoke so graphically. The whole church must willingly listen and rehear the voice of God's Spirit as it spoke through the council and learn again that only when the entirety of Christ's ecclesial body lives its call to be a true *lumen gentium* can the human community come to know the personal living God; only then will these words of the prophet ring true: "The nations shall know that I am the Lord when in their sight I display my holiness through you" (Ezek 36:22 NRSV).