



VATICAN II, THE CHURCH, & THE HOLY SPIRIT

Christian Faith & Theology



ACU Short Course – Sydney
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James McEvoy

Making sense of our common life



- ❧ In the period from 16th to the mid-20thC, the Catholic Church understood itself primarily in institutional terms: **in terms of its visible structures, especially the rights and powers of its officers.** This understanding emerged partly from the historical context, and was partly determined by the church's own response to attacks on the papacy and hierarchy.
- ❧ The institutional outlook reached its culmination in the second half of the 19thC (a 'perfect society').
- ❧ But what does this institution express? What does the institution stand for or live out?



Charles Taylor

Born: 1931, Montreal, Quebec, Canada - Educated: McGill U, Oxford U

Taught: Oxford, McGill - Author: *A Secular Age* (2007); *The Language Animal* (2016)

Social Imaginaries



Think of this transition in terms of a shift in “social imaginaries”:

❧ “What I am trying to get at with this term is something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. **I am thinking rather of the ways in which they imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations which are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images which underlie these expectations.**” Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 171.

Making sense of our common life



- ❧ The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) put this institutional understanding in a far broader context, and spoke of the church as:
 - ❧ The Body of Christ
 - ❧ The People of God
 - ❧ The Sacrament of Salvation for the World
 - ❧ A Servant Church
 - ❧ The Herald of the Gospel
 - ❧ [The Community of Disciples]
 - ❧ ['Communio']

Key developments in Vat II's *Lumen gentium*

- ✧ It begins with the church's theological foundations in the triune life of God.
- ✧ The chapter on the people of God precedes that on the hierarchy, highlighting the priority of church unity and the equality of all church members
- ✧ In affirming the universal priesthood of all believers, it retrieves an ancient but long neglected biblical insight.
- ✧ It acknowledges that non-Catholic Christians are incorporated into the life of the church.
- ✧ The principle of collegiality affirmed.
- ✧ The positive role of the laity in the life of the church is affirmed.

Making sense of our common life



✧ This evening we focus on three theologies of Church:

- The Church as Sacrament of Salvation
- The Church as Communion of Divine Love
- The Church in the World – in dialogue with the world

“I continue to believe that, in the light of Scripture and Catholic tradition, and especially in the perspectives of Vatican II, the institutional aspect of the Church should not be treated as primary.” Avery Dulles.



Sacrament of Salvation



Vatican II on the Church

Lumen Gentium, no. 1

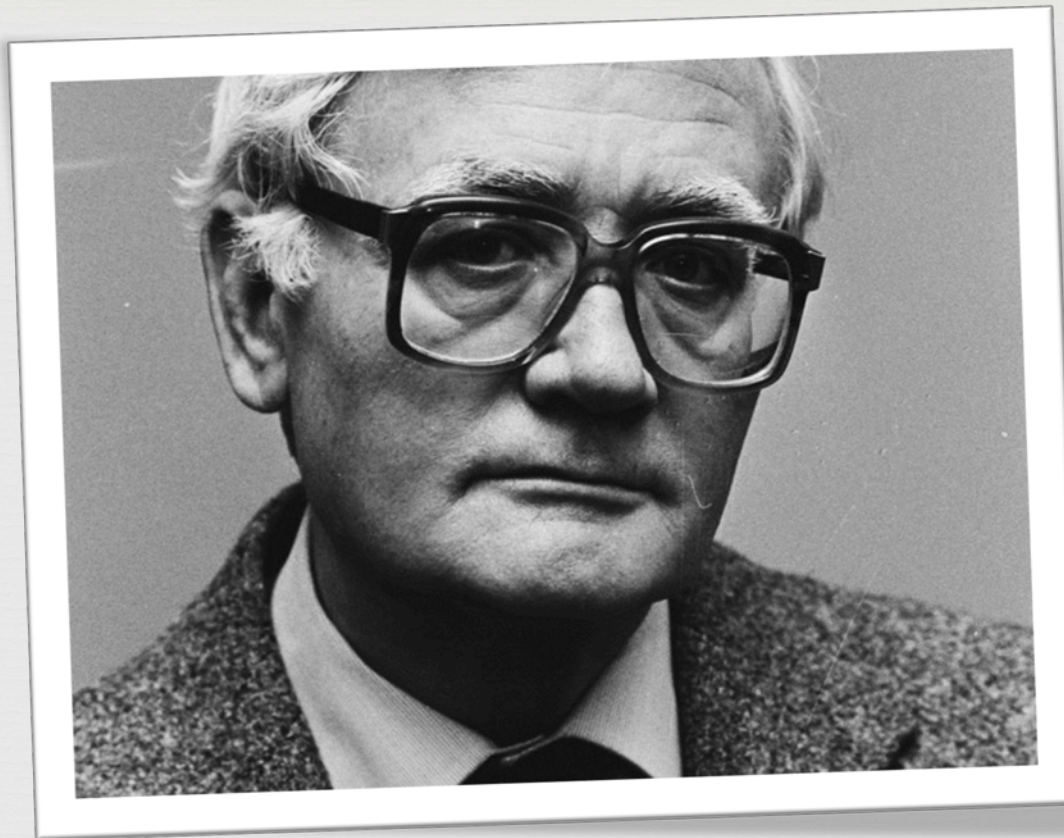


“Since the church is in Christ as a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity, the council, continuing the teaching of previous councils, intends to declare with greater clarity to the faithful and to the entire human race the nature of the church and its universal mission.”

Lumen Gentium, no. 9

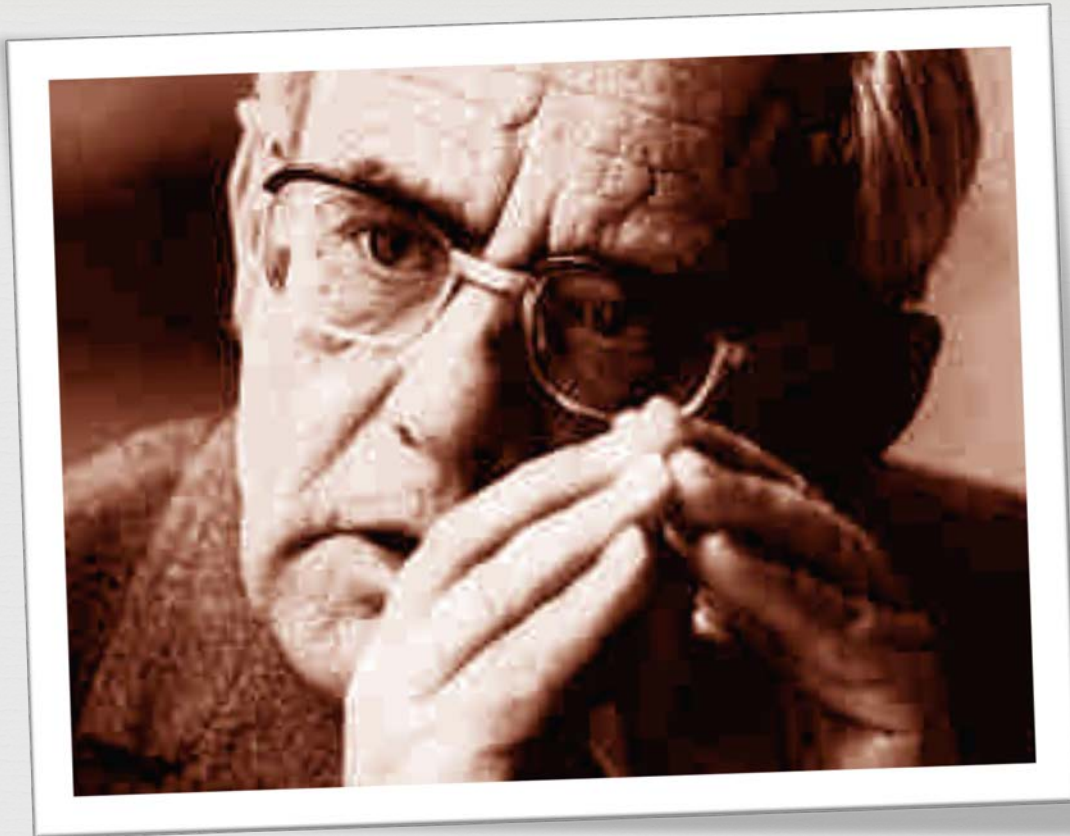


“God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church **that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity.**”



Edward Schillebeeckx OP

Born Antwerp, Belgium, 1914 - Died Nijmegen, Netherlands, 2009



Karl Rahner SJ

Born Freiburg im Breisgau, 1904 - Died Innsbruck, 1984



What were the flowers?

Symbol...



1. Not simply a sign, which is indicative and conventional
2. Symbols are multivalent: they open up a range of meaning
3. “Symbols give rise to thought” (Ricoeur). They inform our memory & experience, and give rise to reflection & criticism.
4. Can include stories, parables, objects, dreams, art
5. Involves participatory knowledge; is transformative

Symbol...



6. Symbols open up reality in a way not accessible to discursive thought. Paul Tillich says “a symbol opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed to us” and “unlocks dimensions and elements of our soul which corresponds to the dimensions and elements of mystery.”

Symbol and Sacrament



- ❧ Twentieth-century theology and philosophy have been keenly aware of the symbolic nature of human existence.
- ❧ A symbol is that through which a person expresses herself in a way intrinsic to her own self-realization.
- ❧ Through word and action, people become themselves. Bodily movement, gesture, and language is an expression of the human spirit and its realization.
- ❧ Because we necessarily express ourselves in order to be who we are, human existence is intrinsically symbolic.

Christ: Sacrament of the Father & Fullness of Humanity



- ✧ John 1:14 – “The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.”
- ✧ When God chose to be revealed in the Word, what appeared was the humanity of Christ.
- ✧ The humanity of Jesus was a “**symbol**” (or **sacrament**) for his divinity in the way that 20thC thought understood symbol.
- ✧ “The Logos, as son of the Father, is truly in his humanity as such, the revelatory symbol in which the Father enunciates himself, in this Son, to the world – revelatory because the symbol renders present what is revealed.”

Rahner, “Theology of Symbol,” TI 4.

Irenaeus on Salvation



Because Jesus is the eternal Son incarnate in whose image humanity is made, what is achieved in his life, death, and resurrection is not only a sign for humanity (that it can be free), but an actual transforming of humanity's conditions, a new beginning for the human journey. And the goal of this liberation is...a maturing and deepening of the human relationship with God: the journey from image to likeness.

McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 85.

Christ: Sacrament of the Father & Fullness of Humanity



Christ is both the fullness of humanity
(transcendent, as we are, and that transcendence fulfilled)
and the primordial sacramental word of God,
the word which not only spoke of the love and mercy of
God but actually made them present in his person.

The Church: Sacrament of Christ



∞ As Christ is the sacrament of the Father, so Rahner sees the Church as the sacrament of Christ:

The abiding presence of that primordial sacramental word of definitive grace, which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign. By the very fact of being in that way the enduring presence of Christ in the world, the church is truly the fundamental sacrament, the wellspring of the sacraments in the strict sense. From Christ, the Church has an intrinsically sacramental structure. Historically visible in space and time with its double aspect as people of God and as juridical and social organization of this people.

Rahner, *The Church and the Sacraments*, 18.

Church: Sacrament of Salvation



- ❧ The church, because it is the symbol of Christ's presence in history, is central to God's plan for the salvation of humanity.
- ❧ The offer of grace, the offer of God's own life, is made through the community of faith, the church.
- ❧ Rahner stresses the grace of God is offered to humanity in every corner of the earth through the Spirit of God
- ❧ Nonetheless, this grace is the grace of Christ, expressed in the faith of the believing community.

Church: Sacrament of Salvation



- ☞ Therefore, the church must find expression in every human culture for the salvation given in Christ.

“The church does not always signify this equally well. It stands under a divine imperative to make itself a convincing sign. It appears most fully as a sign when its members are evidently united to one another and to God through holiness and mutual love.” Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 72.

- ☞ Therefore, no place for triumphalism!
- ☞ As a sacrament, the church has both visible & invisible aspects: manifest links with all particular churches, **and** the actual expression of people’s faith, hope, & love.

Vatican II



“Since the church is in Christ as a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of the unity of all humanity, the council, continuing the teaching of previous councils, intends to declare with greater clarity to the faithful and to the entire human race the nature of the church and its universal mission.”

Vatican II, “Dogmatic Constitution on the Church,” *Lumen Gentium*, 1



Communion



Vatican II on the Church

The Hospitality of Abraham

Andrei Rublev
c.1400



The Church as Communion



□ THINK | PAIR | SHARE □

Take time to think:

1. What role do family, friends, and community play in your life?
2. How have they contributed to your sense of self?

The Church as Communion



1. Communion as fellowship with God
2. Communion as participation in the life of God through word and sacrament
3. The church as a unity in communion
4. The participation of all people in the church's communion
5. The communion of the church as a sacrament for the world

Intro:

Desire for Communion



- ❧ Community or communion is a fundamental human reality and a fundamental longing
- ❧ Technology keeps us in touch like never before; yet there's a great danger of loneliness and isolation.
- ❧ As humans, we are fundamentally communal beings; we would be less than human without each other – not simply instrumentally but really ('constitutively')
- ❧ One of the guiding ideas of Vatican II was the understanding of the church in terms of communion / *communio*

1. Communion as Fellowship with God

- ✧ Although Vatican II wrote about the church in terms of *communio*, this is not primarily a description of the church's structure.
- ✧ *Communio* refers primarily to the meaning at the heart of the church – the “mystery” of the church
- ✧ That “mystery” or meaning is spelt out in Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* [see next]:

1. Communion as Fellowship with God



- a) The eternal Father has created us in love to share his divine life (participation, fellowship, community) (*LG*, no. 2)
- b) The communion, which is the whole purpose of God's presence with us, is realized in a unique way in the person of Jesus Christ and his historical life. (*LG*, no. 2) In him, God became human so that we might share God's life.
- c) The Holy Spirit is poured out onto the world and the church, so that what happened in Jesus Christ can be continued in us. (*LG*, no. 48).

1. Communion as Fellowship with God

In summary:

- ✧ The mystery of the church means that in the Spirit we have access through Christ to the Father...
- ✧ ...so that we can share (or be in communion with) God's life.

This means:

- ✧ ...that it is not the church which is the answer to the human longing for community. That longing is in fact a striving for something which finds its fulfilment only in God's friendship and love.

2. *Communio* as participation in the life of God through word & sacrament

- ✧ In the New Testament, *communio* means fundamentally: participation in the good things of God (not community).
- ✧ 1Cor 10:16f: “...The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body.”
- ✧ As eucharistic communion, the church is not merely the reflection of the Trinitarian communion; it also makes that communion present.
- ✧ The eucharist is the sacramental & symbolic expression of the whole mystery of God’s life among us.

3. The Church:

Unity in Communion

- ✧ Points 1 & 2 lead us to the technical term about the church as *communio*: fellowship (*communion*) with God finds expression in the *communion* of local congregations.
- ✧ The church's unity is a unity in communion; room for a legitimate variety of local churches in our unity in faith.
- ✧ The universal church and the local church are mutually inclusive – they dwell within one another mutually.
- ✧ The one church exists only in local churches and is formed from these...so the communion of the individual churches is the concrete form and realization of the one universal church.

4. Communion of the faithful: participation & co-responsibility of all

- ❧ The meaning of *communio* affects the whole life of the church – the common existence of the people of God is its heart.
- ❧ Perhaps the engagement of lay people in the life of the church is the most valuable development in church life since the '60s.
- ❧ But “the lack of communication, the mutual disregard, the disinterest and the drifting apart” since the '60s is deeply problematic for the church. “It often feels like taking part in a dialogue between the deaf.”

4. Communion of the faithful: participation & co-responsibility of all

☞ “At present it is obvious that something has gone very wrong with Vatican II’s great idea, the *communio fidelium*. In this situation, the first task of the church’s ministry and its service for unity seems to me to be to restore dialogue and communication, and to introduce the binding doctrine of the church, as far as possible by means of reasoned argument, into the process of communication within the church, in order in this way to build up once more a full and undivided *communio*.”

Kasper, “The Church as Communion,” 163.

5. The church's *communio* as sacrament for the world



- ✧ The communion that the church exists not for itself, but for the transformation of the world.
- ✧ Irenaeus (2nd C, Bishop of Lyons) through the communion of the church, God wants to renew everything in Christ.
- ✧ The church, as a communion, is a message and a promise for people and the world today.

Review & Feedback



- 1. What did you see as most important in this session?**
- 2. What new perspectives did you gain?**
- 3. How would you explain what you learnt to a friend?**



Church in the World



Vatican II on the Church

Medieval Model



Through several powerful church leaders and the rise of Canon Law, the church played an increasingly strong role in society from c.1150.

- Key understanding: An attempt to foster a civilization where the structures, institutions, and culture were all supposed to reflect the Christian nature of society – i.e.: **Christendom**
- Depended on a strong alliance between the church and state – “an almost symbiotic integration” (McManners)
- This fusion committed the church to patterns of action that today we see as the antithesis of the gospel: the church’s “mission of conversion becomes routine, its mysteries social observances...”

Modernity: 1789 ...



- From the early 19thC until the eve of Vatican II, the church's response to a world that was changing (rise of democracy, industrialisation, human rights, nationalism, etc.) was born out of the vision of Christendom.
- And its struggle to proclaim the good news in this era meant that it lived in an adversarial relationship with modernity, condemning the emerging liberal culture, and particularly the modern ideas of freedom of conscience, freedom of the press, and the separation of church and state.

Preparatory Documents



- ❧ Prepared by the Theological Commission in preparation for the Council; didn't explicitly discuss church-world relationship
- ❧ 'De Ordine Morali,' 'De Ordine Sociali,' 'De Communitate Gentium,' and 'De Deposito Fide Pure Custodiendo (x)'
- ❧ All envisage the world as an enemy against which the Council must defend Christian life.
- ❧ (x) condemned evolution, polygenism, and 19 other errors.
- ❧ Bishops' responses criticized them as too negative but this had no effect
- ❧ Schemas never adopted as drafts in redaction of *Gaudium*.

Final text-introduction



“The council, in witnessing and giving expression to the faith of the whole of God’s people brought together by Christ, cannot give more striking evidence of this people’s feelings of oneness, concern and love towards the whole human family, of which it is a part, than by **entering into conversation with** it on these various problems, contributing enlightenment derived from the gospel and supplying the human race with the saving resources which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the church receives from its founder.” (no. 3)

Final text–chapter 4



Four dimensions of **dialogue** with the world:

1. With individuals: recognising that people are searching to make sense of existence, the church is “entrusted with making manifest the mystery of God...discloses to us the meaning of existence.” (no. 41)
2. With the community: the church’s “mission of a religious nature produces a function, enlightenment and resources which can be of service in constructing and strengthening the human community.” (no. 42)

Final text–chapter 4



Four dimensions...:

3. Dialogue should shape the life of every believer. “The split between the faith which they profess and the daily lives of many people is to be counted as among the more serious misconceptions of our day.” (no. 43)
4. Dialogue between the church and the world is two way. The believing community must keep itself open to the world. [*quote over page*]

Final text–chapter 4



4. [cont'd]

“It is for God’s people as a whole, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and especially for pastors and theologians, to listen to the various voices of our day, discerning them and interpreting them ... so that the revealed truth can be increasingly appropriated, better understood and more suitably expressed.” (no. 44)

'Signs of the Times'



“To discharge this function [continuing the mission of Christ] the church has the duty in every age of **examining the signs of the times** and interpreting them in the light of the gospel, so that it can offer in a manner appropriate to each generation replies to the continual questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related. There is a need, then, to be aware of, and to understand, the world in which we live, together with its expectations, its desires and its frequently dramatic character.” (no. 4)

'Signs of the Times'



☞ So:

- ☞ The church must be receptive of and responsive to history
- ☞ God acts in history – through the Word and in the Spirit
- ☞ History is not a series of examples that correspond to an external, ideal world
- ☞ History is the place where God makes God's self present
- ☞ Therefore, the church must be open to the action of God in history

Church–world dialogue



∞ Therefore:

In the dialogue of salvation, the church understands itself as founded in the gospel, responding to the desires and struggles of this particular period of history, while listening for the voice of the Spirit in the world.

The Practice of Dialogue



- ❧ Dialogue or conversation plays a fundamental role in human existence. It's not merely an activity through which we share perspectives and negotiate common arrangements.
- ❧ The best contemporary philosophy offers a far richer and deeper account of dialogue – It sees human existence as fundamentally dialogical.
- ❧ Dialogue is the dynamism through which people discover and form their identities.
- ❧ Human existence is, in itself, “a kind of enacted dialogue” (Stephen Mulhall).

Key Features of Dialogue



- 1 True dialogue requires a **profound openness** to and engagement with the perspective of another (individual, group, or culture) attempting to understand the world on their terms.
 - ✧ If only my voice can be heard, I'm talking to myself.
 - ✧ This means that those who proclaim the gospel must be ready to bring out the real strength of the other's stance – they must be ready to be moved by what moves the other.
 - ✧ JP II: the Holy Spirit is offered to all, “not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions”

Key Features of Dialogue



- 2 As we work at openness, we realize that we had both understood and misunderstood the other. We had a lucid view of some elements, but totally misunderstood others.
 - ☞ Dialogue, therefore, leads me to reflect on and refine my own expectations and assumptions. It leads me to retrace my steps, and **reconsider my own take on the world.**
 - ☞ “No understanding the other without a changed understanding of self” – Charles Taylor

Key Features of Dialogue



2 Summary:

Christians dialogue with people of other faiths to understand what animates them, what runs most deeply and powerfully through their lives.

Christians then ponder what they have learned about the other in the light of their own encounter with Jesus Christ.

Key Features of Dialogue



- 3 The process of dialogue—of growing in appreciation of the other—not only changes individuals' perspectives, it **brings dialogue partners into a new unity.**

☞ “In a successful conversation they both [the dialogue partners] come under the influence of the truth of the object and thus are bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were.”

☞ Gadamer, “Truth & Method,” 379

Key Features of Dialogue



- 3 And...rather than perceiving the emerging communion as the “results” of dialogue, we would better understand that the dialogue *itself* transforms conversation partners into a communion.

The *communion* cannot be detached from the path through which it was reached. That is: a central aspect of the communion we now have is the kind of dialogue that does, or can, take place within it.