

ICCRS Leadership Course

1. Historical Overview from the Early Church to Vatican II

Monday June 6, 2005: 15h00 – 17h30

Two questions that can help us to approach Church history:
What is Vatican II correcting and restoring? What is
Charismatic Renewal correcting and restoring?

Some say that CR is a corrective to the rationalism of the Enlightenment that weakened faith in the supernatural and the miraculous.

Some say Vatican Two brings to an end the period of the Counter-Reformation. It replaces the polemics and the defensiveness of the Counter Reformation with the dialogue and openness of the Council. It brings to an end the liturgical freeze of Trent. It accepts the Reformation challenge concerning the place of the Scriptures and the need of the Church for ongoing reform.

Others may say that with the acceptance of the ecumenical movement Vatican Two represents a decisively new epoch after the divisiveness of the second millennium. (cf. John Paul II in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*).

Others say the restoration goes back beyond Trent and the Reformation. There is a move away from the scholastic theology of the High Middle Ages back towards the more biblical theology of the patristic era (also the formative age for the liturgies of the Church). The liturgical reforms of the Council also take us back to the first millennium (new eucharistic prayers).

But the Jewish issue takes us further back still. At the Council, the Catholic Church repudiated replacement teaching and for the first time gave a teaching about her relationship to the Jewish

roots. The replacement teaching was becoming common currency as far back as the second century.

The restoration of charisms as part of the equipment of the Church through CR also takes us back to this period.

Affirming Divine Guidance but Avoiding Triumphalism

This way of approaching the history of the Church makes clear that the history of the Church is not a continuous triumphal progress going from good to better to best. We have to look at our history in the light of faith and with the discernment of the Holy Spirit. As Catholics, we believe that the Holy Spirit guides the Church at all times, and that (the doctrine of infallibility) there are certain God-given protections for the Pope, the bishops and the whole Church. This combination of divine guidance and avoidance of triumphalism fits with a renewal emphasis. The Church is always in need of renewal (Decree on Ecumenism, para. 6); and so we can look at Church history in this light, seeking to identify the key movements of renewal through the ages.

Movements of Spiritual Renewal

1. **Monasticism.** (From 3rd century eremitical: 4th ce. cenobitical) “if you would be perfect, then”

Influence of East on West: John Cassian (c. 360 – post 430) from east to Marseilles area: influence on Rule of St Benedict (530s, d. c. 550). By 9th c, Benedictine Rule is dominant in Western monasticism. Cistercians founded in 1098 as a stricter form of Benedictinism. By death of Bernard (1153), there were 345 Cistercian houses. Deliberately in remote places, plainly furnished, no precious materials.

2. **The Canons Regular** (From 11th century)

A reform movement originating in the 11th century in close connection with the Reforms of St Gregory VII. Origins particularly in N. Italy and S. France. It brought together clerics into a community life under a rule involving poverty, celibacy and obedience, inspired by early Christian model. Many came together in the 12th century to form the Augustinian Canons following the Rule of St Augustine. Norbert of Xanten founded the Canons Regular of Prémontré in 1120. Canons Regular of the Lateran founded in Pope Alexander II in 11th cent. An alternative to monasticism, but a development among the clergy.

3. The Friars

The mendicant friars represent another radical adaptation within the Church. There was a focus on the apostolic life, on simplicity and poverty in life-style and public proclamation of the Gospel in ministry. Francis of Assisi gathered the Friars Minor around him, gaining definitive papal approval in 1223. Even then lay people were gathering around the friars as a “third order”. The Dominicans take definitive shape at Bologna in 1220. Also dedicated to poverty and preaching, but with more focus on study. Also formed a “Third Order”. Name and privileges of friars given to Carmelites (1245), to Hermits of St Augustine (1256) and to Servites (1424).

4. The Devotio Moderna

“The revival and the deepening of the spiritual life which from the end of the 14th century spread from the Netherlands to parts of Germany, France and Italy. It originated in the circle around G. Groote, and found its classic expression in Thomas à Kempis’s ‘Imitation of Christ’. It laid great stress on the inner life of the individual and encouraged methodical meditation, esp on the Life and Passion of Christ. St Augustine, St Bernard and St Bonaventure were among its acknowledged spiritual guides. The Modern Devotion made

its way among the people chiefly through free associations of secular priests and lay people, called ‘Brethren of the Common Life’, whereas among the religious the Windesheim Canons were its principal representatives.” (Art. in ODCC).

5. Counter-Reformation Reform

Clerks Regular: Theatines (1524), Barnabites (1530), Jesuits (1534). Clerks who take vows, live in community and engage in active pastoral work. Perfecting pastoral work by ordered discipline. First communities of Clerks Regular were mostly Italian.

Spirituality of the Counter-Reformation expressed especially in the Jesuits and in the Carmelite Reform in Spain.

6. The Passionists and the Redemptorists

7. Role of Apparitions (from 18th century)

1673 – 75: Revelations of Sacred Heart to St Margaret Mary Alacoque

Marian Apparitions: Rue du Bac: St Catherine Labouré (1829); La Salette (1846); Lourdes (1858), Fatima (1917), Banneux and Beauraing (1930s); Medjugorje (from 1981)
Revelations of Divine Mercy to St Faustina (1930s).