

Warsaw Teachings

Saturday February 8, 2014

Session 2: After the Council

A Council for Renewal does not automatically renew the Church. What has to happen for decisions of church leadership in Council to lead to real renewal of Christian life throughout the church? There has to be (1) the desire to make the teachings a foundation for church life; (2) the willingness to implement the Council's decisions; and (3) a growing understanding of the priorities and the working of the Holy Spirit.

For many people, the Second Vatican Council quickly produced a lot of changes, but not yet signs of new life. Changes in the liturgy (local languages, new Ordo, more participation, lay readers), new structures (diocesan and national commissions for liturgy, for ecumenism, for catechetics, for justice and peace), new attitudes to others outside the Catholic Church (other Christians, Jews, people of other religions).

It is normal for the decisions of a Church council to require a few generations to penetrate deeply the life of the whole Church. This is what happened with the Council of Trent in the 16th century; e.g. with decision to institute seminaries, with requirements about bishops living in their dioceses.

Necessary Elements in Renewed Vision translating into Real Conversion to New Life

1. The Emergence of the Kerygma

For the basic Gospel message about Jesus to emerge from the general body of Catholic teaching (Creed, Catechism) as the Good News that pierces hearts and produces conversion. Kerygma precedes didache (teaching), but has to be followed by didache. The kerygma produces faith and initiates conversion; didache anchors the kerygma and conversion in a Christian world-view.

2. Right Relationship between Word and Sacrament

Real renewal of life requires a clear preaching of the Word. Faith comes from hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). Word precedes sacrament, but has to be followed by sacrament. Sacrament is the Word enacted, embodied; it is the Word in sign form. By the liturgy (Word and sacraments) faith becomes embodied and lived out corporately.

3. *Living the Liturgy as Trinitarian communion preparing the fullness of the Kingdom of God*

Real renewal requires living as beloved sons and daughters of the Father, redeemed by and united to Jesus our head, through the life-giving action of the Holy Spirit. Renewal requires a clear vision of the goal, of the coming glory when Jesus comes again, of the fullness of salvation of body, soul, and spirit.

4. *Real renewal requires authority and ministry to be understood and lived as service*

Only when the ordained ministers understood their role totally in terms of service can all the baptized enter into their full role in the mission of the Church.

5. *Full renewal requires the emergence, reception and openness to the charismatic initiatives of the Holy Spirit*

This point means much more than openness to Catholic charismatic renewal.

6. *All church renewal has to be preceded by and sustained by increased intercession.*

7. *Catholic renewal requires a reception of the gifts to which other Christian traditions have borne witness. It requires a rediscovery of the roots of Christian faith in the life of Israel and the Jewish people.*

Ecumenism and renewal of the Church are inseparable.

8. *Renewal requires an honest confession of the failures, abuses, weaknesses, and distortions that have occurred in the Church through the centuries.*

Renewal as Totally a Work of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is needed for each one of these points to happen.

1. It is the Holy Spirit that uncovers the Kerygma for us. It is the Holy Spirit that imparts the power to the preaching of the kerygma.

2. It is the Holy Spirit that opens up the Word of God as the Word of the living God. It is the Holy Spirit that pierces hearts as the Word is preached. It is the Holy Spirit that reveals the meaning of the sacramental signs, and how they embody the gospel message of Jesus.
3. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the Father to be our Father, who reveals Jesus as our Lord, our Saviour, and as coming King. It is the Holy Spirit that opens up the biblical promises about the Messianic Kingdom that is to come.
4. It is the Holy Spirit that alone gives the desire to serve, and that purifies all tendencies to self-service and to domination, as we empty ourselves for Jesus.
5. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to recognize his initiatives and impulses.
6. All intercessory initiatives are raised up by the Holy Spirit.
7. It is the Holy Spirit that enables us to recognize what truly comes from God in other Christian traditions.
8. It is only the Holy Spirit that convicts of sin and gives a humble spirit of repentance, without any element of condemnation.