

**The Implementation of the Second Vatican Council:  
*The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and  
Sacrosanctum Concilium***

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When Pope John XXIII called for an ecumenical council in 1958, he shocked the world. As Richard P. McBrien writes, “The reaction to the pope’s announcement covered a spectrum from dismissiveness, to excitement and anticipation within various quarters of the Catholic Church.”<sup>1</sup> The cardinals that elected him three months prior expected John XXIII to be a transitional pope, not a groundbreaker. This would be the first ecumenical council since the First Vatican Council (1869-1870). The Second Vatican Council, also referred to as Vatican II, brought the world’s Catholic leaders and scholars to Rome, to revise Catholicism’s teachings and practices. Between 1962 and 1964, theologians and bishops from around the world would debate the teachings and practices of the church.

Vatican II was a pivotal moment in the Catholic Church’s modern history and was important for Catholics throughout the world. Vatican II was called in response to the violence and genocide inflicted on Europe by two world wars and the emergence of the Soviet Union and militant atheism in Eastern Europe. For Pope John, calling a council would address “spiritual needs of the present time.”<sup>2</sup> Although some Vatican officials believed that Pope John was misguided for calling the council, he pushed forward and began preparations for what would be addressed in the coming sessions.

The stated purpose of Vatican II was *aggiornamento*, which in Italian refers to updating or ‘coming to speed’. When bishops

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<sup>1</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 156.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

and theologians arrived in Rome in autumn 1962, they could not have predicted the impact they would have on the Church and its laity. As David O'Brien explains "In the short run, the disposition of the church lay with the council fathers; in the long run it lay with the 'people of God' themselves."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Church began to transition into a period that emphasized laity participation. Without the modifications of the liturgy, these changes would not have been possible.

Some may ask: *Why liturgy?* First, it is fundamental to discuss the impact that liturgical reforms had on Catholic lay people. No other document was discussed and debated more than those on liturgy. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* presented eight chapters of text, which covered every aspect of liturgical celebration: (1) General Principles; (2) the Eucharistic Mystery (the Mass); (3) Sacraments and Sacramentals; (4) the Divine Office; (5) the Liturgical Year; (6) Liturgical furnishings; (7) Sacred Music; and (8) Sacred Art. However, the burning issue that would be discussed in St. Peter's was the use of the vernacular in the Mass.

This work will focus on the decisions made by the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, known as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and referred to as the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. It will highlight how the reforms of the council were implemented, and how Vatican II was interpreted in various regions of the world. It will also underline the debate that the council fathers had inside and out of St. Peter's Basilica. Like Catholicism, the response to the Second Vatican Council was far from monolithic.

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<sup>3</sup> David J. O'Brien, *The Renewal of American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford Univ Pr, 1972), 3.

## The Council's Emphasis on Liturgical Reform

Some scholars believe that Vatican II was both an extension and a transcending of Vatican I because it “had mandated revision and emendation of liturgical texts”<sup>4</sup> Vatican II would emphasize the renewal of Catholic liturgy because of Vatican I’s inability to reform the Mass substantially. Therefore, it seemed inevitable that there was a need for *aggiornamento*.

The aim of the council and liturgical reforms was “To adapt the liturgy to the conditions of modern life and to foster Christian unity.”<sup>5</sup> The hope was that liturgy would nourish the post- World War II believers’ spiritual selves, and allow them to express their faith through it. This was not the case before Vatican II. What Vatican II demonstrated, was that Catholic theology, “which was for so long assumed to be ‘traditional’, was not traditional at all.”<sup>6</sup> The liturgical reforms were the first attempt at the new evangelization and the use of ancient scripts to allow all to understand how they should be interpreted in the liturgy.

Before analyzing the council, it is crucial to note that the liturgical reforms during the first session were forced to deal with the diversity of the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is not a monolithic institution. Although the Vatican is the center of the church and its central authority, Catholicism extends across the entire world. During the council bishops from all over the world came together in St. Peter’s Basilica, and they began to discuss the church’s future in an ever-changing world. The organizers’ decision to seat bishops beside each other who had been ordained in roughly the same period had a positive impact on the council. Instead of sitting by geographic location, bishops from

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<sup>4</sup> John W. O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 130.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>6</sup> McBrien, *The Church*, 213.

different corners of the world sat beside one another. This forced bishops from different countries and different liturgical backgrounds to take into consideration the needs of the bishop and his diocese sitting beside him. This initiative must not be ignored and its significance is critical.

Although the bishops represented the extreme diversity that was the Catholic Church, it was evident that the council was forced to keep in mind that each Catholic individual was a part of a tradition that went back two thousand years. As a result of the church's diversity, Catholicity was enriched. The use of vernacular in Mass instead of Latin caused the most debate during the three weeks of discussions around the liturgy. Many bishops asked why the mass must be said in an ancient language that only a small minority of individuals are familiar with.

The aims of the council in the discussions of liturgical reform are crucial to understand. Although it is not the goal of this work to discuss all of them in depth, they are worth mentioning. The liturgical discussions “affirmed that the call to holiness that God, through the Church, addresses to all men and women.”<sup>7</sup> The role of the laity emphasized the importance of the active participation of everyone in the congregation, and that such participation was the right and duty of every Christian.

During the first session the argument for the use of the vernacular was that “greater autonomy was to be granted to bishops in making adaptations appropriate to their cultures, which was a clear call for some decentralization.”<sup>8</sup> This opened the doors for bishops to develop their own liturgical methods and alterations based on their geographic region. In accordance with the Roman Rite, a promising, although not earth shattering, statement was released. It said that Latin should be retained in the liturgies of the Western church; however, since in some rites

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 132.

the vernacular was proving very useful for the people, it should be given wider role in liturgy.<sup>9</sup> For some, these were steps in a positive direction, and although they did not directly call for the use of vernacular in the Western Church, it did suggest the use of the vernacular in other regions that would benefit from its use.

The use of vernacular was debated in the council over the course of three weeks, from October 22 to November 13, 1962. There were 328 interventions from the floor and 297 submitted in written form. This was the longest debate of the council, and its outcome has led to what is possibly the most visible change from the laity's point of view. The Council of Trent and its directive on vernacular had simply stated that, "it is wrong to maintain that the Mass must be celebrated in the vernacular."<sup>10</sup> By the 1960s, the vernacular had come to be used in the Protestant liturgy. For some, the use of vernacular in Mass suggested that the Catholic Church would adopt Protestant methods in the liturgy. For others, it suggested that the discussion on vernacular was an attempt for the modernization of the church in times of turmoil. Analysis of the roles of major figures in the church reveals the concerns and praise there was for the use of the vernacular in the Mass.

The first Cardinal who led the discussion on the use of vernacular in the Mass was Cardinal Frings of Cologne. He opened by saying, "The schema before us is like the last will and testament of Pius XII, who, following in the footsteps of Saint Pius X, boldly began a renewal of the sacred liturgy."<sup>11</sup> Frings had an overall positive reception of the schema that was presented before the council by Cardinal Antonelli. Frings' next sentence was equally significant when he said: "The schema is to be commended for its modest and truly pastoral literary style, full

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

of the spirit of Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church.”<sup>12</sup> Although his speech was only ten minutes, it was evident of how highly he thought of the schema.

Cardinal Ruffini spoke next, and was not as enthusiastic about the schema. He criticized the text for being too exclusively focused on the Roman Rite. He also reminded the council fathers that only the Congregation of Rites had authority in matters liturgical and more significant, expressed no praise for the document.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most influential speaker on this matter and most influential bishop on the use of the vernacular in liturgy was Maximos IV. He was a bishop from Greece, where Catholics celebrate the liturgy of the Eastern Rite, thus his views on the use of vernacular in the liturgy were positive. In his speech he stated that the use of Latin in liturgy was strange to the Eastern Church...all languages are liturgical. “Latin is dead, but the church is living, and its language must be living as well.”<sup>14</sup> It is evident, given Maximos’ speech, that the non-western church was substantially different in its tradition from in the West. The non-Western bishops insisted on the urgency in their countries of cultural adaptation, including the use of the vernacular. This had strong support, especially from African and Asian bishops.

Finally, after three weeks of debate the schemata base on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was voted on and the results were a landslide with 2,162 votes for, and 46 against. The final document was also overwhelmingly approved, with 2,147 in favor and 4 against. This suggests that the majority of church leaders agreed that the use of the vernacular should be implemented in the Mass. However, as is evident later in this

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 136.

work, the implementation of the vernacular in Mass was more gradual.

Once the council approved the document, it is critical to trace the steps of its implementation. By approving *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the council set in motion the reshaping of nearly every aspect of Catholic liturgy unlike anything that had ever happened before. In comparison, the changes mandated by the council of Trent consisted in standardizing traditional texts, something worshippers would hardly have recognized. This was not true with Vatican II.<sup>15</sup> Within a few years, the Mass began being celebrated in its entirety in the vernacular worldwide.

Two principles account for the promulgations of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. First is the principle of *aggiornamento*, which compelled the council fathers to make changes to the Church that aligned with contemporary circumstances. Second was the principle of *ressourcement*, which for the council fathers meant a return to ancient texts to find answers. During the sessions of Vatican II “The liturgists had returned to the ancient sources in order to find their way. The Mass was thus not so much ‘modernized’ as made to conform to fundamental and traditional principles.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the liturgical reforms of the council did not necessarily define the changes as modernizing, but rather the use of ancient texts to align itself to modern society.

The principle of the adaptation of local circumstances into the liturgy proved significant for the non-Western church. The council stated that, “The church does not wish to impose a rigid uniformity in matters that do not involve the faith or the good of the whole community.”<sup>17</sup> Unity can be maintained within diversity; the universality of the church enhances its Catholicity.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 140.

In other words, the Church is able to exist without uniformity and still embrace its universality.

Although *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was approved in Rome and was implemented in many regions of the world, it is crucial to stress that the way in which liturgical reforms were enacted worldwide varied. The Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council, and the liturgical reforms of the council were not monolithic and it is imperative to understand that, even today, the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council continues to be contested and debated. In order to illustrate this contestation, this study will focus on two separate geographic locations, and explore how the liturgical reforms of Vatican II were contested, debated and implemented in each region.

### **Implementation of Liturgical Reforms in Pittsburgh and the United States**

The liturgical reforms of Vatican II were interpreted and implemented differently in various regions around the world. The United States was no exception, and participated in debates on the liturgical reforms of the council, which were received in varying ways. In the wake of the civil rights movement, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and multiple protests concerning the war in Vietnam, the United States and its citizens were going through a period of transition. As described by Jay P. Dolan, “The events in Dallas to Watergate rocked the nation, to add to these the revolution sparked by Vatican II and the result is a powerful one-two punch that sent American Catholics reeling.”<sup>18</sup>

The liturgical reforms of Vatican II caused an array of opinions to emerge during the 1960s from parishioners and also

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<sup>18</sup> Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 424.

lay men and women. One thing was certain; Catholics in the United States took their religion seriously and were proud to be Catholic and American. As James O'Toole describes, "American Catholics might be more Catholic than the Pope, but at times they also seemed more American than Americans."<sup>19</sup> O'Toole's description of American Catholics suggests that Catholics in the United States were both extremely loyal to their religion and loyal to their country.

With the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* in 1963, American Catholicism was about to pass through the most turbulent period in its history. Jay P. Dolan explains that this period was a time of disillusionment and hope, conflict and harmony, crisis and growth.<sup>20</sup> Dolan's description of what American Catholics endured following the proclamation of liturgical reforms is precisely what was to occur next. In the United States, liturgical reforms had many different implications in different areas. The laity may have been enthusiastic about the reforms, but many clergy members were not. The American Council members that went to Rome were theological and social conservatives. Thus, American bishops were not concerned with liturgical languages, rituals and theology of global Catholicism.<sup>21</sup>

Many American Catholic clergymen approved the liturgical reforms of the council. For centuries, Catholic laity was defined by who they were not (i.e. clergy). However, the council meant, that nearly all Catholics were characterized by who they were.<sup>22</sup> As a result, "Vatican II was largely responsible for forcing Catholics to rethink the meaning of Catholicism in the modern

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<sup>19</sup> James M O'Toole, *The Faithful: A History of Catholics in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>20</sup> Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience.*, 426.

<sup>21</sup> Colleen McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II: A History of Catholic Reform in America* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 64.

<sup>22</sup> O'Toole, *The Faithful.*, 3.

world.”<sup>23</sup> Dolan’s claim holds true to the fact that the liturgical reforms brought by Vatican II forced Catholics in the United States to reexamine their faith in the form of liturgy.

Dolan claims that reform would have taken place regardless of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* because of the cry for reform during the 1950s. However, what the council made possible was for this reform to “burst forth with much more force than would have otherwise been true.”<sup>24</sup> This statement is plausible because subsequent decrees following the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* eventually made liturgical reforms mandatory. However, Dolan’s claim is problematic because it is not the duty of the historian to predict the future, although the need for liturgical reform may have been visible before Vatican II.

The implementation process of liturgical reforms varied throughout the United States as a result of bishops and their enthusiasm for the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. The enactment of the council’s liturgical reforms began even before the conclusion of the council, but was inconsistent in the United States. This may be attributed to the lack of education about how the Mass should be reformed imposed on the bishops and Catholic laity. There was also unwillingness in the Roman Curia (offices within the Vatican) to implement these changes. While the Curia issued orders to all dioceses, they did not monitor application. Therefore, dioceses were responsible for the implementation of liturgical reforms, which resulted in varied timelines of action.

Therefore, reform occurred at different rates both as a result of the lack of education, but also out of the willingness or unwillingness of bishops in different regions. For instance, in the Midwest reform was implemented quickly, as they were eager to live up to the council. In California, the willingness for change was not the same. Monsignor O’Carroll of Los Angeles did not

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<sup>23</sup> Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience.*, 428.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 428.

have an English Mass because the archdiocese did not require him to. Thus, the issue with the implementation of the reforms was that there was no driving force in the United States that ensured they would be implemented in the 1960s. As Colleen McDannell explains, “Many bishops did not rush to implement changes because they were satisfied with how their parishes were running.”<sup>25</sup> This is a trend that is evident in many different regions within the United States during the 1960s, possibly suggesting that a certain type of ‘American thinking’ was evident, one that did not approve of authoritarianism.

The Council’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* gave national groups of bishops the power to determine how much and when the vernacular, ritual and sacramental changes were to be mandated. On a local level, the US National Conference of Bishops did not mandate a change in language; they merely allowed English at prescribed times.<sup>26</sup> Clergymen like O’Carroll were not forced to implement the use of English in Mass as a result, until O’Carroll’s retirement in 1971, his parish did not use the vernacular in Mass. It was not until November 28, 1971 that the *National Conference of Bishops* made it obligatory for all parishes in the United States to say the entire Mass in the vernacular. In contrast to Los Angeles, The Diocese of Pittsburgh was eager to begin its implementation of the liturgical reforms.

When Pittsburghers heard of an ecumenical council, they were excited. Pittsburgh is the ideal example of a city in the United States that began implementing liturgical reforms before the council had concluded. The diocesan Liturgical Commission had been formed and its duty was to decipher the newly promulgated changes of the council. The commission worked on two main projects during the years that the council was still in session: the reform of the liturgies outside of the Mass and the

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<sup>25</sup> McDannell, *The Spirit of Vatican II.*, 125.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

Mass itself.<sup>27</sup> The commission's main efforts were to educate the laity in order for them to better understand the Mass and thus be able to participate in the Mass to their fullest potential. For example, the introduction of English into the liturgy would increase understanding and interaction between the laity and the priest.<sup>28</sup> This was manifested with the formation of training programs, in which men and women from all over the diocese would gather in sessions in order to learn how to preach the word of God. In this way laymen and women successfully learned their faith.

The simplification of the Mass would also increase participation and understanding within the laity. Thus, it was the duty of the council to shave away the old repeated actions accumulated over the centuries and bring it back to its origins. As, According to Timothy Kelly, "Before Vatican II, the Mass suffered from an alarming paralysis with so much of its ritual and formulas completely dependent on past ages."<sup>29</sup> It was now time for the "new" Mass to be a vital religious experience for modern man.

The formation of the commission suggests that the Pittsburgh diocese was excited about the changes that were issued by the Vatican. They were going to do everything in their power to implement these changes to enhance the experience of their laity. It is important to keep in mind that this was not the case in other regions as discussed earlier.

The main task of the commission and the desire of the diocese was to educate their lay people. As a result of the Mass being in Latin before Vatican II, many lay people did not understand what was occurring. Vatican II encouraged laity to

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<sup>27</sup> Timothy I Kelly, *The Transformation of American Catholicism the Pittsburgh Laity and the Second Vatican Council, 1950-1972* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame, 2009), 175.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

study the Bible, and thus gain an understanding of what was occurring at Mass. Therefore, “the reforms imbued the new liturgies with hope and possibilities, with human interaction and understanding.”<sup>30</sup> In the case of Pittsburgh, the Commission mandated its changes. Therefore, there was no confusion as Bishop Wright's direction was firm and concise.

The diocese of Pittsburgh was getting its parishioners ready for the reforms that the council was going to bring forward. In this sense, the diocese of Pittsburgh did its laity and priests a great service by implementing changes gradually, in order to avoid the resistance the reforms could have provoked if they were to be put in place all at once. Also, the commission worked regularly to break down clerical indifference and hostility to reforms and pushed the laity to become more involved.<sup>31</sup> These gradual steps towards reform benefitted Pittsburgh's faithful because, as was stated by the Liturgical Commission, “people cannot accept change that is too violent.”<sup>32</sup> This was the way in which the commission reminded pastors that there were to be many reforms implemented that would last several years. Therefore, when the Vatican Council formed a commission to oversee that the liturgical reforms of the council were being implemented, the Vatican instructed the Pittsburgh diocese to further simplify the Mass, taking out a few prayers and the last gospel.<sup>33</sup> Pittsburgh's Catholics were ready for these changes and took them in stride because the Liturgical commission in the city had rightly prepared them for change.

Kelly's examination of three parishes in the city will allow for insight into how cohesive or divisive, change was in Pittsburgh. Kelly used the bulletins of the parishes to establish the reception of Vatican II's liturgical reforms. He found that the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 191.

parish centered on ethnicity made no mention of liturgical changes for their laity. In contrast, the urban church made reference to the reforms and thanked its laity for their willingness to accept the changes of the liturgy. In addition, the suburban church made few references to liturgical changes, but did not acknowledge the changes introduced by the Vatican.<sup>34</sup> This lack of cohesiveness provides evidence of the wide spectrum of how liturgical changes were implemented in Pittsburgh.

The reformers sought to connect the liturgy to twentieth century culture, to make it relevant to Catholics in the 1960s. This goal was manifested with the use of the vernacular in the Mass. This would ensure the “modernization” of the Mass and promote lay participation to its fullest. During the council year, a number of bishops argued that some Latin should remain in the mass to demonstrate the universality of the Church, an argument that still exists today. Although leaving some prayers in the Mass in Latin would emphasize the universality of the church, what is distinct about Catholicism is its diversity. This is what is universal in the Church.

In Pittsburgh churches, the Mass transformed from a Latin ritual that was performed by priests to an English ritual that depended on lay participation for its success. In 1962 the Mass was a mysterious and distant ritual in which few lay people understood to its fullest. By 1965, the Mass had transformed into a ritual that many parishioners understood and embraced as one of the most sacred rituals of their faith. An analysis of the implementation of liturgical reform in Pittsburgh sheds light on the different ways in which liturgical reform was implemented in the United States. In order to comprehend the effects of Vatican II and its liturgical reforms around the world, we must next discuss the importance and implementation elsewhere in the world.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

## **Inculturation and Liturgical Reforms in Zaire**

Vatican II affected Catholics all around the world. However, the way in which it affected countries and parishes differed from region to region. On the African continent, Vatican II opened the gates for societies to worship how they saw fit. African countries for decades struggled with Roman Catholicism and how to align it with their culture. European worship (Roman Rite) and culture was extremely different from that of African nations. Vatican II allowed for African countries to adopt new forms of worship; beginning the process of inculturation in several nations. Incarnation allows nations to be a part of the universal Church, and to hold the same “truths” in particular regions. Before Vatican II, the Church was universal with uniformity and after Vatican II, the Church is universal, but without uniformity. This is demonstrated in Zaire, present day Congo.

Vatican II liberated the African continent's powers. The context of anti-colonial revolution and independence from Rome was evident in Africa, specifically in Zaire. This is characterized by the decentralization of power, which had traditionally resided in Rome, giving autonomy to bishops around the world to make liturgical decisions based on their own country's culture and customs. This decentralization opened the door for bishops in all nations to begin a process of “liturgical inculturation”<sup>35</sup> that is seen all over the world. In order for inculturation to occur, the bishops of Africa called for liturgical form which allowed people to express its praise of God in many languages of its own culture. These elements served to bond the people of the Roman Catholic Church. The main concern of the Vatican was that

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<sup>35</sup> Eltin Griffin, “Rekindling the Liturgy,” *The Furrow* 54, no. 9 (September 1, 2003), 503.

inculturation of the liturgy would create inauthenticity of the Roman Rite.

For decades before Vatican II, African nations had already begun the process of inculturation in their diocese. They did so because the Roman Rite, the Latin based style of worship, did not suit individuals in African nations. Even following the promulgations of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, African bishops were not satisfied with liturgical reforms because they were based on Western culture. Therefore, African bishops were required to bring a foreign tradition of the Roman Rite and mold it into worship that their people would understand and relate to.

Inculturation had the largest impact in Zaire. The influx of missionaries into Zaire in the previous centuries was extremely successful. As a result, today over fifty percent of Congolese are Catholics. Therefore, Vatican II had perhaps the most impact on this nation on the African continent. Although African bishops did not feel as though the liturgical reforms of the council suited its populations, “the theological implementation of the council was centered on the inculturation of Catholic theology in African Culture”<sup>36</sup>. The task at hand for African bishops was to engage their parishioners in a celebration that was centered on a European style of worship.

Although the bishops of Zaire were planning to adapt the Catholic liturgy to their people before the deliberations of Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* did not provide for the inculturation of the Mass. However, once the documents of Vatican II were passed, the inculturation of the Zairian Mass began. For Griffin, inculturation is an encounter among three cultures: of the Bible, of the Christian tradition, and of the people whom the Gospel is proclaimed.<sup>37</sup> Following the

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<sup>36</sup> Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle for Meaning* (New York: Paulist Press, 2012), 61.

<sup>37</sup> Griffin, “Rekindling the Liturgy.” 503.

formation of the Liturgical Commission in Zaire, the next issue that arose was to find the common elements which would have been accepted by all Zairians.

Following Vatican II, two approaches were adapted in order to begin the process of liturgical inculturation in Zaire. One was to model the liturgy around the chief, highlighting the role of the presider.<sup>38</sup> With the model of the chief, the presider was invested with so much authority that the celebration became a reflection of the authoritarian leadership that Zaire and other African countries experienced in the past.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, realizing that this style of liturgical inculturation would not properly allow for parishioner participation, as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* called for, it shifted the liturgy's attention to the laity.

Therefore, the liturgical commission used a model highlighting the African Assembly (union of African government officials) as the focal point. By doing so, this would take the authority away from the presider and place it with the assembly. This would ensure that the hierarchical structure of the Mass was replaced by one that focused on the laity. Bishops were expected to respect the basic structures of the Catholic liturgy, to use the Roman order of the Mass of 1969 as its basic text, to seek inspiration from Eastern liturgies and to introduce Zairian cultural values into the liturgy.

As a result, this liturgy remains Roman in spirit. The commission made only a few structural changes that reflect African cultural and religious values. As Egbulem points out, "the insertion of African ideas and symbols into the Roman liturgy does not give birth to an authentic African Liturgy."<sup>40</sup> In other words, because there was no radical change or creativity to the Mass in Zaire, it was not its own Mass. Although Egbulem is

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 43.

correct in his argument, it is evident that the Zairian bishops were not intending or permitting the abolishment of Roman Rite from the liturgy. Instead it was their aim to preserve Roman Catholicism and enhance it with that of their own culture. This is also evident as “the bishops were expected to respect the basic structures of the Catholic liturgy.”<sup>41</sup>

Between 1975 and 1985, Zaire and Rome had many discussions about the liturgy allowing each parties to learn from the other. In Rome, it is clear that Vatican II’s liturgical reforms did not allow the doors of reform to close and the Zairian bishops would ensure that their hopes for inculturation were met. Throughout the negotiations, the Roman delegation kept reminding Zairian bishops of Pope John Paul II’s demand that, “sensitivity toward the unity of the World church”<sup>42</sup> be kept in mind throughout the process of inculturation in Africa.

Consequently, it is evident that the authority of the Pope from Rome continued to shape Catholicism around the world. Although, in some ways Vatican II was a liberal movement in the Church, the ultimate authority of the Pope was still in effect. Evidently, Vatican II allowed for inculturation, but we must ask if the interpretation of Vatican II by Pope John Paul II post-Vatican II allowed for the full inculturation of the liturgy in the Congo. It is not the aim of this work to discuss the views of Pope John Paul II; however, it is important to identify that he was theologically conservative and desired for a more centralized and authoritarian approach to Catholicism. Undoubtedly, this had some effect on the guidelines and later the approval of the Zairian Rite. Finally, on April 30, 1988, after much deliberation and debate, the Congregation for the Divine Worship gave the formal approval of the Zairian Rite of the Eucharist.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 45.

Although it is evident that the Zairian Rite is distinct compared to the Roman Rite, we must ask ourselves if the bishops in Rome during the 1970's and 1980's stayed true to *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Following extensive research, it is apparent that by forming the Zairian Rite of the Eucharist, the bishops in Rome did stay true to Vatican II. Without the promulgations of the liturgical reforms in the council, inculturation would not have been possible to the extent that it had reached in Zaire.

Inculturation did exist and manifest itself in Zaire as a result of Vatican II. Without Vatican II, inculturation may have existed but not to the extreme that it was able to exist after *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Vatican II allowed for the reinterpretation of Christian theology, and the next step for Zairian bishops was for their liturgy to be shaped around the culture of its population. According to Magesa, "True inculturation is a deep experience in the life of the individual and the community."<sup>43</sup> Regardless of whether the Roman liturgy is still present in the Zairian Mass, it has incorporated that which is symbolic to the individual in Congo, to allow for better understanding of their faith. Zairian Christians "live their faith as truly African and truly Christian, without a split personality from divided loyalty."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, it is important that the Zairian Rite derive itself from the Roman liturgy in order to maintain universality within the Church that stretches to all corners of the world.

## Conclusion

As Jay P. Dolan explains, "Religion lives and breathes in a specific time and place, in a particular culture; for this reason, it is shaped by the ideas, attitudes, values and forms that prevail in

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<sup>43</sup> Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 145.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

the society in which that religion lives.”<sup>45</sup> Vatican II was the most important event in the history of the Catholic Church in the twentieth century, because it has caused clergy members and laity alike to question the teachings and practices of its two thousand year old tradition. As Massimo Faggioli claims, “Nobody doubts any longer that something happened at Vatican II, but what happened is not so obvious.”<sup>46</sup>

The post-Vatican II period was the most visible example of the complexity of the relationship between the spirit and the letter of the council. Vatican II brought Catholics together, but also tore other Catholics apart in a battle for meaning. The basic texts reveal that there were decisions made, however, those decisions are constantly up for debate. When Vatican II gave space to this debate, in many ways it allowed for a deeper meaning of Catholicism.

The conclusion of the council did not lead to the conclusion of the debate. After the council, “the ideological spectrum of Catholic theologians on Vatican II seemed unanimous in their enthusiastic acceptance of the final documents and their view of the novelty of Vatican II.”<sup>47</sup> However, what began as exuberance for the council quickly became disappointment among some, as a result of the slowness and indecision of the council’s documents.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, some argue that Vatican II was a failure. “Traditional Catholics” in recent years, have grown vocal in denouncing the council as synonymous with disaster and chaos in the Church.<sup>49</sup> However, today it seems that the majority of laity and clergy accept the changes that Vatican II implemented. What is apparent is that the Catholic Church and Vatican II are not monolithic. However,

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<sup>45</sup> Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience*, 423.

<sup>46</sup> Faggioli, *Vatican II*, 112.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

Pope John Paul II attempted to eliminate the divide in the interpretations of Vatican II during his pontificate.

Between November 24 and December 8, 1985, Pope John Paul II summoned the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops to mark the twentieth anniversary of the conclusion of Vatican II. The Synod was called in order to celebrate Vatican II and to evaluate the application of the changes of the council in the past twenty years. In the same spirit of Vatican II, the secretariat of the synod sent out questionnaires to the attending bishops and used the responses as preparation for what would be discussed.

Pope John Paul II and the bishops set out to react to the tensions that had emerged during the global reception of Vatican II after 1965 with the final report from the Synod. With this, the bishops would also reveal and cement the long-lasting effects that the council had on the, “diverging hermeneutical tendencies present in post- Vatican II Catholicism.”<sup>50</sup> In other words, the Synod discussed the conflicting reception of Vatican II’s reforms and the legacy it had on the church twenty years later.

The conclusion of the Synod declared that the council was “a grace of God and a gift of the Holy Spirit, from which have come forth many spiritual fruits for the universal church of our time.”<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the final report proclaimed, any attack on Vatican II would contradict the central conclusion of the Extraordinary Synod. Vatican II will forever be contested and debated, regardless of the 1985 Synod and its final report.

The main aim of this work is to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic Church is not singular or monolithic. There were several interpretations of the council and every Catholic, clergy and lay received the council differently. Furthermore, the evaluation of the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum*

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>51</sup> Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2008), 212.

*Concilium*, reveals the variety of responses within the church. Clergy members and laity alike were eager and cautious during the implementation process, and implementation varied across different regions.

The example of Pittsburgh and Zaire illuminates how Vatican II was received in various regions. These two separate geographic locations reveal different understandings and receptions of Vatican II from clergy and laity. Pittsburgh and Zaire are examples of different interpretations and implementations of Vatican II that have exposed the contestation and debate of the council. The inclusion of Pittsburgh and Zaire reveals the significance and impact that Vatican II had and continues to have on Catholics in these regions.

A focus on the council's liturgical reforms of Vatican II reveals an in depth view of how the laity received the council, not just those who passed its reforms. This is what is valuable. The advent of the council's liturgical reforms allowed for the first time, the participation of the laity, which was once a distant observer of its own faith. Although, many individuals may not understand or comprehend what Vatican II has done for the Church, and the laity, it is evident that many are aware of liturgical changes. This is because Vatican II and more specifically, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, will remain visible so as long as the faithful continue to attend the Mass.



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