

## SEMINARIANS AT VAT. II: CHAPTER TWO: OCT. 12, 1962-SEPT. 29, 1963, THE FIRST SESSION

### Seminarians Provoke University Reactions; Factions Form at the Council.

When the annual Matricula was held at the Greg in November, we were told by the “Magnificent Rector,” Father Pablo MUNOZ VEGA SJ (later cardinal) that our class attendance had plummeted, and our academic marks were suffering because we were skipping classes to listen to the Council Fathers, experts and others attending the Council, speak in various places. One outcome of this was that many of the seminary residences invited the Council participants to address their administrators and seminarians, at their seminaries. (See p. 1 above for Dr. James Hastings Nichols, Nov. 25, 1962).

It became very evident during the first weeks of the first session, that there were three groups forming. The bishops and experts from north of the Alps—France, Belgium, Holland and Germany-- led a group called the “Transalpini,” or more derogatorily, the “Nordic Fogs.” This group saw much need for change. The bishops and experts from south of the Alps, especially Spain and Italy, liked the Church and especially the Vatican as it was. And the third group, with many of the English speaking part of it, and Asians and Africans too, was undecided and wondering. Pope John XXIII belonged to all three groups, depending on the issue being discussed (see above, p. 14, n. 53, p. 15).

We learned quickly from our professors and staff and seminarians from other seminaries, that the Nordic Fogs came to Rome on BEA, not British European Airways, but with the newly appointed (June 6, 1966) Jesuit president of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Cardinal Augustin Bea, S.J. Bea’s elevation as cardinal on Dec. 14, 1959, was a tip off that this most trusted advisor to Pope Pius XII, would be a leader of the Council, probably influencing the most documents. We also heard that Fr. Yves Congar OP, one of the two most influential theologians at the council, had dismissed this appointment, with the sneer, what does he know about Protestants; he’s a Scripture scholar! Congar would later revoke that judgment.<sup>1</sup>

Four of the 44 Oblates taking part in the first session of the Council had a great deal of influence. Archbishop Denis Hurley of Durban, South Africa became a leader especially in reforming seminary education. The Oblate superior general of the time, Leo Deschatelets, was certainly the most traveled missionary at the council. Theologian John King began the council as a conservative, and became more progressive during each session. Missiologist Andre Seumois probably sided with those wanting little change. (I have sketched these four in “Oblates at Vatican II,” Oblatio I (Nov.2012, #3: 335-53, available on our international website [www.omiworld.org](http://www.omiworld.org)).

Hurley’s noted biographer, Paddy Kearney, describes what we learned by Oct. 14. “Something dramatic happened on the first day of business, 13 October, which would

start reducing curial control. The first item on the agenda was the election of council commissions. ...The Curia, largely responsible for selecting the members of commissions in the pre-conciliar phase, expected the bishops simply to endorse the choices they had made for the preparatory commissions. The progressives wanted time for the bishops to get to know each other and to discuss and lobby for suitable candidates. ...Cardinal Achille Lienart of Lille, France, had been primed to stand up at the beginning of the proceedings and propose a delay to give the bishops time to consult about which of their colleagues would be the most suitable. When Lienart made this speech, there was great applause, showing that the council fathers had a mind of their own and would not allow themselves to be dictated to by the Curia. Three days were set aside for discussion before the elections would be held."<sup>2</sup>

Because Hurley was well known to the progressives, he was one of the 160 elected.

### First Conferences

Hans Kung, looking like a young seminarian himself, spoke in English to our general house administration and scholastics on Nov. 28, 1962. He provoked a freezing temperature in the room when he ridiculed the Greg for having Kung's Oblate classmate from Sri Lanka speak at the major academic celebration during Kung's time, on the Immaculate Conception rather than on a topic more in keeping with the Buddhism of Sri Lanka.<sup>3</sup>

Some of the professors also brought in the experts, with Francis Sullivan, S.J., having Gus Weigel, S.J., (1906-64) give a rare class in English, on Dec. 1, 1962. Weigel, who worked himself to death during the council, making sure that the Protestant and Orthodox observers received gracious hospitality each session, spoke on American Protestant theology.<sup>4</sup>

A student during those days recently remembered "Our professors at the Gregorian University taught us in the morning and served as council experts in the afternoon."<sup>5</sup>

Karl Rahner, S.J., who with Congar influenced Vatican II the most of any periti, spoke in Latin at our general house/scholasticate on Dec. 4, 1962.<sup>6</sup> The following evening, probably through the influence of Leo Laberge, O.M.I., Monsignor Gerard Philips of the Louvain spoke in French. Laberge gives some detail about Philips' crucial role in mediating between Yves Congar, O.P., and Sebastian Tromp, S.J., so that the Constitution on the Church could come to fruition.<sup>7</sup>

### Dec. 8 Closing of the First Session

Cynics noted that the first session had produced no documents, only the decision of Pope John to insert the name of St. Joseph in the Roman Canon of the Mass. Much more important than this liturgical addition was the celebration of Mass in other rites than

the Latin, each day the council was in session. The echoing of drums during the Ethiopian Rite, for example, was something new for St. Peter's Basilica and most of the bishops.

Most viewed the decision by the pope to allow the council fathers in favor of reform to take over, as a positive step which would produce significant results in the next session. Word was spreading, though, that Pope John had an incurable cancer, and the choice of the next pope would be crucial for the future of the council.

#### Chiara Lubich and the Focolarini

On Dec. 29, a group of us visited the Abbey of Grottaferrata, and met for the first time the important lay group "Focolarini." Founded in the bomb shelters near Trent, Italy, during World War II by Chiara Lubich, this group would have a very important impact on the Italian Oblate formation program, the relationship of Latin Catholics with the Eastern Orthodox Churches, and with Islam.<sup>8</sup>

#### Pope John's Last Public Visit, and Repercussions

Our teachers at the Greg knew of Pope John's illness. So Fr. Bernard Lonergan S.J. told us at the beginning of our first class on Tuesday, Jan. 22, that the pope wanted us all at what would be his last public visit. So we were let out of class early to glimpse Pope John at the Church of St. Andrea della Valle, on the Corso.<sup>9</sup> Then those familiar with church history began to wonder if the council would continue under a new pope. After all, the Council of Trent, after its first session, had been delayed from 1552-58, as the new pope, Paul IV, opposed it.

Pope John was still strong enough on Sunday, March 17 to engage Cardinal Spellman of NY in a dialogue during the canonization of Mother Seton. Mike Cleary (1940-2010), in the class behind me, and I were fortunate to obtain tickets and attend the ceremony.<sup>10</sup>

#### Congar Visits Us

During the Mardi Gras holidays of March, 1963, Yves Congar OP (see above, pp. 22-23) visited our two communities of the General Administration and the International Scholasticate. He described the experience in his diary. After comparing the actual structure of the Oblate building with the famous Dominican Saulchoir (near Paris), he called the Oblates "Persone molto simpatiche," and mentioned both Fathers Perbal and Seumois. His first conference centered on the thirteen "'picole' domande," which the scholastics gave him. Then after supper, there was "conversazione-conferenza" with the Fathers, not the scholastics, on ecumenism, above all with the Easterners.<sup>11</sup>

On March 18, the first assistant of the staff, Fr. Alexandre Tache OMI, used Congar's insights to furnish the scholasticate community some insights for the superior's feast day.<sup>12</sup>

### Death of Pope John and Election of Pope Paul

By Friday, May 31, it was clear the pope was dying. At 5:30 pm, “a serious crisis; Pope John receives the cardinals, offers his life for the success of the Council, repeats continuously ‘Ut omnes unum sint’ (that all be one, Jo. 17:21).”<sup>13</sup> Pentecost Sunday, June 2, was not the joyful celebration it usually was. On Pentecost Monday, June 3, our entire seminary went to St. Peter’s for the Mass celebrated for Pope John in the piazza of the basilica by Cardinal Luigi Traglia. As we were walking back to our seminary, on a beautiful Roman evening, it was announced that the pope had died at 7:49 pm, just as the Last Gospel of the Mass was being proclaimed: “There was a man named John sent by God”(Jo. 1:6).<sup>14</sup>

Seminaries were asked to furnish an honor guard as Pope John’s body lay in state in St. Peter’s. Our time was Thursday, June 6, from 1 am to 2 am. I shall never forget the sight, as we from our seats near the pope’s body, saw the line of people, many holding small children so they could glimpse Pope John for one last time. The line extended out from the piazza of the Vatican, down the Via dell Conciliazione of Rome, and onto the bridge across the Tiber.

At 10:30 am, the four of us Oblates in my class attending the Greg had an exam to take. During the school year, we rented a bus to travel from our seminary to the Greg and Angelicum, but during exam time, we were given money to take the public buses. I was seated next to a Roman, and tried to make conversation about Pope John. He snarled at me that the pope was a Communist sympathizer; who cared that he was dead? I had experienced Italian anti-clericalism before, but this was a new low.<sup>15</sup>

Our superior rented a tv set, and on Monday, June 17, we watched the last of the Solemn High Funeral Masses for Pope John. On the 19, we saw the Mass of the Holy Spirit as the conclave opened, with a history of the conclave. About 20 of us in the seminary (which now had a capacity of about 60) had been in Rome both for the death of Pope Pius XII, and Pope John XXIII, and the subsequent elections.<sup>16</sup>

On Friday, June 21, the rented tv announced “fumata bianca” (white smoke) and we rushed to St. Peter’s and stood in the blazing noon day sun. We heard Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani “firmly announce ‘Joannes Baptista (roar of the crowd in approval) Montini’ is Paul VI.”<sup>17</sup> Those who feared the election of a cardinal who would oppose the council, were relieved. In our group of Oblates, the young staff member Fr. Alexandre Tache, normally very proper, expressed his joy by throwing his Roman hat up into the air.

As Archbishop of Milan and a council father during the first session, Montini had indicated his openness to those who wanted change. But having served so long in the Vatican before this, those content with the Church before Vatican II felt that he would listen to their concerns. He would soon be dubbed the Hamlet pope, because he was sometimes torn between the two groups and seemed to hesitate with his decisions.

Paul VI very quickly showed that he wanted the Council documents to be acceptable to an overwhelming percentage of the Council Fathers. This would involve his adding portions to key documents at the last moment, in order for them to be acceptable to the group which emphasized the best in the pre-conciliar church. As we shall see below in chapter four, the best example of this is the Declaration on Religious Freedom, where the pope would have to use all of his skills to bring the progressive and conservative groups together. This document would have the highest number of dissenters.

#### The Paris Experience, June 28-August 3, 1963

On June 28, two of my classmates (David Kalert and Heinze Hunke) and I left Rome by train in the evening for Paris. We changed trains early on the 29th in Milan, noticing that all the clocks had been stopped at the hour and minute their Cardinal Montini had been elected pope. In Paris we joined a newly ordained American Oblate, Bill Reinhard, a young Italian Oblate, Fortunato Muffolini, and the American Oblate theologian John J. King, to reside at our mission procure on the Rue de l'Assomption and study French at L'Institute Catholique.

At the mission procure, we rubbed shoulders with French Oblates coming and going from all over the world, and glimpsed those across the courtyard at the provincial house of the North French Province. We heard or saw our French missionaries in the Arctic, French speaking Africa and Laos especially.

L'Institute Catholique incorporated the former Carmelite convent, where the nuns lived who had been martyred during the French Revolution, furnishing the basis for Bernanos "Dialogue des Carmelites" (see above, "International Movies," p. 9). We visited the Church of St. Sulpice, where the Sulpician Fathers trained our founder, St. Eugene DeMazenod, to oppose Napoleon and help restore the French Catholic Church. We attended Mass at one of the centers of the renewal of the liturgy, St. Severin. We toured Notre Dame de Paris, and went to visit Notre Dame de Chartres, reveling in Charles Peguy's "La Tapisserie de Notre-Dame." Excursions to Lisieux, Mont. St. Michel and the city of Reims, visiting both Notre Dame de Reims, where Joan of Arc crowned the Dauphin, and the Basilica, where Clovis was baptized, gave us a deep appreciation of some of the currents which were active at the council.

Bill Reinhard would later obtain a doctorate in Missiology and we would work together in Mission and Ecumenism, especially at the General Chapter of the Oblates of 1972. He would also teach missiology at our seminary in Washington, DC, while remaining on loan from his permanent assignment in Brazil.

For more on John J. King's important role at Vatican II, where he formed part of the media consultants available to the press, see above, p. 23. I remember clearly the three of us seminarians were discussing how we were going to attend daily Mass, if we had to leave the procure early in the morning for an excursion. King told us that priests of his

day considered Mass to be the most important part of their day, and would rise no matter how early to celebrate it. And in those days, Mass could only be celebrated from midnight to noon.

We were offered many lectures on various elements of French culture. One that left a lasting impression was by the French Academy physicist Louis Leprince-Ringuet, on July 8. Most of us were liberal arts students. Leprince-Ringuet told us very bluntly that the reason physics had advanced so much was the team attitude. True scientists do not work alone, but collaborate with others. He asked us when we ever had a class in the liberal arts where we worked with another student or were part of a team. He concluded that the liberal arts were lagging far behind the sciences because we all worked in isolation.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps Vatican II would show that bishops and theologians could work together and produce great, creative change. When I taught in our seminary later, it was not easy to convince either the administration or the seminarians that working together was far more preferable than working alone. At least one of my courses at the University of Pennsylvania, dealing with the philosophy of history confronting the resurrection of Jesus, taught by Van Harvey, involved a great deal of teamwork, and ongoing contact with the university asserts this is continuing in liberal arts.<sup>19</sup>

As I review the notes taken in lectures on Camus, Sartre, Claudel, Marcel and other authors, French history, and art, I'm grateful to the Oblate leadership which encouraged such an experience.<sup>20</sup>

Men and women of all ages and countries took the courses and excursions. Although our Roman, international seminary was not as sheltered as our national seminaries, it was still a rather regulated schedule. This more open summer experience was a good preparation for the one to follow in the summer of 1964.

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, our Oblate missionary bishop from Hudson Bay, Canada, Armande Claubaut, showed the community slides he had taken of the first session of the council.<sup>21</sup> The following evening, the three of us returned by train to Rome, not realizing this was the busiest time of the year for train travel from France to Italy, the August holidays. We stood all the way to Pisa, Italy, where we were able to change trains and sit on the lawn near the Leaning Tower for a few hours.

#### Ignatian Retreat; Second Session Begins.

Since the three of us had missed the community's annual week long retreat in mid-July, because of the Paris trip, we made a slightly longer eight day retreat from Aug. 17-24, based on the Ignatian Exercises. Fr. Tache, who had specialized in this practice, led the retreat for us. Later, as the turbulence of the late 1960's affected the way the Jesuits viewed this practice, it was evident that we benefited very much from the experience.<sup>22</sup>

The second session of the Council opened earlier than the first, Sept. 29 compared to Oct. 11. Most of us were still at the summer house in Roviano, but the excitement and interest mounted as expectations increased.

*Fifty years later, in the context of Pope Francis' October 2014 Extraordinary Synod on the Family, Archbishop Bruno Forte, special secretary of the synod noted what we were beginning to realize: "the major progress at the Second Vatican Council came between its first and second sessions."<sup>23</sup>*

Sources for Chapter Two (in addition to those above for Chapter One).

Annotationes quaedam ad cursum Patris Witte de Unitate and Mission Ecclesiae, Motio OEcumenica (Some Notes for Father Witte's Course Concerning the Unity and Mission of the Church, the Ecumenical Movement). Distributed by Witte, 15 pages. My own written notes of the course are 27 half pages. I also have a typed two page outline.

Johannes Witte, S.J., De Theologia Protestantium (John Witte SJ, Concerning Protestant Theology), Rome, 1964-65, 102 pp. My own written notes for this course are 21 half pages.

Footnotes for Chapter Two:

- <sup>1</sup>. Yves Congar, OP, My Journal of the Council (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012). For a thorough survey of Bea's work, see Jared Wicks, SJ, "Cardinal Bea's Unity Secretariat: Engine of Renewal and Reform at Vatican II," Ecumenical Trends 41 (Dec. 2012, 11):1/161-5/165, 15/175.
- <sup>2</sup>. Paddy Kearney, Guardian of the Light (NY: Continuum, 2009), p. 112.
- <sup>3</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary indicates the date is "about" Nov. 28. 1962.
- <sup>4</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Dec. 1, 1962. Weigel's published work with the American Presbyterian Robert McAfee Brown during the Council is very important; Brown later advised me a great deal on my doctoral thesis, which includes a detailed examination of Brown's liturgical contribution to Presbyterian worship: Catholic, Evangelical and Reformed: The Lord's Supper in the (United) Presbyterian Church, 1945-70 (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1976), especially 2:336-67; 349-54, 364-67.
- <sup>5</sup>. Edward Starkey, "Council Deeply Embedded," America, Oct. 29, 2012, p. 30.
- <sup>6</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Dec. 4, 1962.
- <sup>7</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Dec. 5, 1962. For Philips' role in developing the Constitution on the Church, see Leo Laberge, OMI, note 20, vol. 1 above.
- <sup>8</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Dec. 29, 1962.

- <sup>9</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Jan. 22, 1963.
- <sup>10</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, March 17, 1963
- <sup>11</sup>. I am using Fabio Ciardi, OMI, "GLI OBLATI DI MARIA IMMACOLATA AL CONCILIO ECUMENICO VATICANO II," MISSIONI OMI, 08/09\_13 ([www.missioniomi](http://www.missioniomi)), p. 19, translation mine. Ciardi notes that Congar has hard pages about Seumois: p. 20. For more on Seumois, see HEW, "Oblates at Vatican II," Oblatio I (Nov. 2012,3)338-41).
- <sup>12</sup>. HEW, Quaderno, March 18, index, and p. 63.
- <sup>13</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, May 31, 1963.
- <sup>14</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, June 3, 1963.
- <sup>15</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, June 6, 1963.
- <sup>16</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Dairy, June 17, 19, 1963.
- <sup>17</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, June 21, 1963
- <sup>18</sup>. HEW, two pages of notes on Leprince-Ringuet, Summer, 1962.
- <sup>19</sup>. Amy Gutmann, "A Global Approach to Scholarship," The Pennsylvania Gazette, May/June 2013, pp. 4-5.
- <sup>20</sup>. HEW, a total of 79 half pages, in French, Summer, 1962.
- <sup>21</sup>. HEW, 1958 Desk Diary, Aug. 1, 1963.
- <sup>22</sup>. HEW, Compositions, 2 half pages, 4 sides, inserted, "Retreat, Aug. 17-24, 1963."
- <sup>23</sup>. Gerard O'Connell, "Vatican Dispatch, Looking to the 2015 Synod," America, Nov. 3, 2014 (211, #13): 24.