

Happy Monday to all,

On this date, December 8, in 1965, Pope Paul VI closed the final session of the Second Vatican Council - an influential ecumenical council that significantly modernized Catholic Church practices. The magnitude of changes that came out of the Council is far too large for me to ever cover in this venue. However, a few of the highlights include:

- The new Roman Missal was issued in 1970, with a new cycle of readings offering a richer selection of Scripture. The rites for sacraments were revised, emphasizing the communal aspects of their celebration.
- Lay readers and lay ministers of Communion appeared during Mass. Laity were represented on parish councils and diocesan boards, and lay men and women replaced clerics in a number of administrative church positions.
- Throughout the Church, there was a renewed attention to Scriptures, in liturgy and in individual spirituality.
- Eastern Catholic Churches were encouraged to return to their own traditions, ending a period of Latinization and opening a new appreciation of variety within the universal Church.
- Ecumenism flourished, in formal dialogue between Catholic officials and other Christian Churches, and in prayer and fellowship encounters at the local level.
- After the Council acknowledged the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, dialogue also began with other religions.
- Religious life changed dramatically, as religious orders adopted Vatican norms and rewrote their own constitutions, taking a new look at issues of authority, community and identity.
- Vatican II restored the permanent diaconate as an order of the clergy and allowed married men to be ordained deacons.
- The Council's teaching that the pope and bishops together form a single collegial body led to a new appreciation for bishops and bishops' conferences. The Synod of Bishops was formed to meet regularly and advise the pope.
- The Council underlined the Church's solidarity with humanity leading to the proliferation of social and charitable activities. Church leaders spoke frequently about the Church's preference for the poor and suffering, and became strong human rights advocates.

The 1960's were a turbulent time in the U.S., and around the world in general. Families, communities, and nations were deeply divided and at extreme odds with one another. The

Second Vatican Council sought to clarify the role of the Church in the world by turning to Scripture in the Church's social teachings. It was a time when the faithful were called to proclaim to the secular world that the dignity of each human being- as created in the image of God –comes from our call to communion with God.

2025 is a turbulent time in the U.S., and around the world in general. Families, communities, and nations are deeply divided and at extreme odds with one another.

God did not create people to live in isolation, but to coexist in harmony. As members of the human family we are each called to support and serve others through our words and actions. We must continue to turn to scripture, to Catholic social teachings, to all that is founded upon the principle of respect for life at every stage and the inherent dignity of every human being.

As the arm of charity and justice for the Catholic Church, Catholic Charities is committed to "reading the signs of the times" in developing our services and resources. Our outreach, and our welcome-in, is provided to all people without consideration of race, religion, or any other identifying benchmark. At Catholic Charities, our sole criteria for consideration is... does this service address modern injustices, promote peace, and advocate for issues such as, equity, equality, and a preferential option for the rights of the poor.

Today- as we celebrate the gift of all that Vatican II brought to the world—let us all commit to sharing our own gifts... our time, treasure and talent... with those in need.

Blessings

Deacon Mike

[The documents of Vatican II can be accessed at:

https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/index.htm]