

*The History
of the Catholic Church*

**Into the Modern World:
1300-Vatican Council II**



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- ✚ The vibrant papacy of Boniface VIII (1294-1303) was followed by a period of more than seventy years in which the popes resided in Avignon, France.
- ✚ The King of France, Philip, promised peace and protection in return for a certain amount of input into the pope's policies.
 - ✚ There was a certain amount of suspicion regarding these "French" popes, not only because they resided outside of Rome, but also because they were actually French.
 - ✚ A number of prominent Saints in the Church criticized them for looking after the interests of France rather than the universal Church.



- Saint Bridget of Sweden and Saint Catherine of Siena were both powerful prophetesses whom God used to convince the popes at Avignon to reform their luxurious lives and care for the Church.
- Saint Catherine convinced Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome in 1376 and counseled his successor, Urban VI. She was recently declared a "Doctor" of the Church.
- The next pope, Clement V (1305-1314) moved to Avignon to escape the political pressures of Italy, including Roman families that were in constant war with one another.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

From 1378-1417 there was a schism among the popes.

Pope Gregory XI died in 1378, shortly after returning from Avignon to Rome. The cardinals gathered in Rome and elected Urban VI to the papacy.

Much to their surprise, this mild-mannered man began to chastise the cardinals for their luxurious living and challenged them to reform their lives.

The French cardinals began claiming that the election in Rome was invalid, and they fled Rome and elected a French "anti-pope," Clement VII. This began one of the saddest chapters in Church history. Two, and later, three men claimed to be the true pope, each supported by various nations and kingdoms.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

✠ In order to resolve the problem of having three popes, an ecumenical council (Council of Constance) was called, and all of the bishops deposed two of the popes and persuaded the third to retire, and elected a new pope, Martin V (1417 A.D.).

✠ The whole Church recognized this new pope.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

☞ Theology during this time began drying up, while spirituality flourished.

☞ The late Middle Ages boast of many mystics, who approached God through the heart more than through the intellect.

☞ Another response to the dryness of theology was a movement called *Devotio Moderna*, “The Modern Devotion,” which was not mystical, but rather, a practical method of reflecting on the life of Christ.

• Examples of Mystical Writing from this time period include:

- Henry Suso (1245-1366)—Little Book of Eternal Wisdom.
- Julian of Norwich (1342-1416)—Revelations of Divine Love.
- Walter Hilton (d. 1395)—Scale of Perfection.
- Unknown Author—The Cloud of Unknowing.

• An example of *Devotio Moderna* from this time period includes:

- Thomas à Kempis—Imitation of Christ.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- ❧ As the spiritual life of the Church grew, so did its debt.
 - ❧ Popes were being forced to negotiate treaties with nations and governments due to the political climate of the times.
 - The Church tried to regain some of the money it lost by implementing its own tax system—papal tax on ecclesiastical offices. If the princes wanted to control the Church, they were going to have to pay for it!



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- This practice is commonly called “Simony,” and is forbidden by the Bible.
- This left a lot of secular rulers “in charge” of the Church, and they made money by collecting fees from pilgrims at holy sites and selling indulgences.
- Indulgences were granted by the Church as a pledge of freedom from the effects of sin (i.e.- time in purgatory).
- Indulgences were suppose to be granted in recognition of a person’s prayer and/or charity, but toward the end of the Middle Ages they were sold like merchandise.
- The lack of education among priests, bishops, religious and laity added to the corruption that was occurring in the Church.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- Recognizing that the Church was in need of reform, education, and renewal, Pope Julius II called the Fifth Lateran Council in Rome in 1512.
 - The Council concluded under Pope Leo X in 1517, and passed many important decrees that might have prevented the Protestant Reformation, but due to the short-sightedness and worldliness of Pope Leo X, most of the Council's reform decrees were not immediately put into effect.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

■ The Protestant Reformation (1517-1650) shook and divided Christianity.

- Martin Luther (1480-1546) was an Augustinian monk who followed a life of strict order and study. He became a professor of Scripture at the University of Wittenberg in Germany.
 - » Luther apparently struggled to find peace through penance and self-denial, but experienced freedom when he realized that man was justified through faith.
 - » Keying in on Paul's Letter to the Romans, Luther declared that salvation came through faith, and faith alone.
 - » Unfortunately, Luther's idea was seen, not as an opportunity for the Church to express the authenticity of its teaching, but as an attack.

•The Catholic Church's stance on salvation takes into account not only Paul's Letter to the Romans, but also the Letter of James (2:14-26)–

What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.:

But some one will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder. Do you want to be shown, you shallow man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by works, and the scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"; and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so faith apart from works is dead.

•Thus, while the gift of salvation comes from Christ, we must be willing, through an act of free will and conscious choice, to accept that gift. Our faith and choice demonstrate themselves through our "works."

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- Luther posted his “Ninety-Five Theses” on the chapel door at Wittenberg in 1517 A.D.
- These consisted of 95 things that Luther felt the Church needed to change.
- The Church saw his bold move as one of rebellion.
- The sad irony of this chapter in Church history is that most of Luther’s complaints were legitimate complaints, and the Church eventually reformed and refocused its teachings and practices. However, the damage had been done, and Luther and his followers broke from the Catholic Church (the word “Protestant” comes from the word “protest”) and this division has yet to be healed today.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- As it became clear to Luther that he could no longer remain a Catholic, he began distancing himself theologically, Sacramentally, and practically.
- He denounced the authority of the Pope, and suggested that all authority should rest in Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*).
- He rejected four of the Sacraments of the Church and only kept Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Penance).
- He encouraged the German princes to rise up and start their own church, and this is what they did. Luther's encouragement gave the German princes an excuse to get out of the Church's taxation and authority. The Lutheran church was born.



•*Sola Scriptura*: The logical problem with “sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone) is that it is a principle that denies itself. No where in Sacred Scripture does it say that only Scripture should be consulted, but actually it states in several places the very opposite (ex. John 14:26 “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”)

•God's People are in constant need of conversion and renewal, but, as we read in the Bible, this conversion and renewal never entails division. Rather, authentic reform always springs up from within the faith community and brings greater unity. The Protestant reformation was one of the few times in the history of God's people that reform was not allowed to develop, but divided. We continue to pray to pray today for healing.

•This was a terrible tragedy for the Church for two important reasons—1) it began the disunity that still exists today and 2) many of Luther's reforms were needed, and he might have brought them about sooner if he had approached it in a different manner.

•Once the Catholic principle of “unity of faith” was replaced by the protestant principle of “purity of faith,” more and more divisions occurred, each group claiming to be more “pure” to the Gospel than the last.

•In 1534, King Henry VIII declared himself the head of the Church of England because the Pope would not grant him an annulment (apparently, the King's wife had not produced any male heirs for him). Thus began the Anglican, or Episcopalian, church.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

Reform in the Catholic Church

- ✧ The Church definitely needed reform, and this ultimately came through various religious orders.
 - ✧ St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus, known as the Jesuits, in 1534. Having been a soldier, Ignatius brought the best qualities of military service to his service in the army of God—dedication, loyalty, education, and exercise... yes, exercise.
 - ✧ In addition to the Jesuits, there were also the Capuchins, Theatines, Somaschi, Barnabites, and Ursulines.

•Once again, authentic reform has always happened *within* the Church, not outside of it. As we have seen at other times in the history of the Church, God raised up men and women, outstanding in holiness, to bring forth the renewal and conversion of the Bride of Christ.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- ✚ The Council of Trent (1545-1563) was called by Pope Paul III in order to clarify what the Church taught. The differences in various protestant splinters had grown, and the Church wanted to solidify its teaching. It reaffirmed:
 - ✚ The Seven Sacraments
 - ✚ Man's justification by faith, shown through the fruit of faith, namely good works and charity.
 - ✚ Revelation from God through both the Bible and Apostolic tradition.
 - ✚ And the Mass as a perpetuation of Christ's one sacrifice.
 - ✚ The Council also corrected the abuse of indulgence-selling, established the seminary system for educating priests, and encouraged more frequent reception of the Eucharist.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

❏ Mysticism was another form of renewal in the Church.

❏ Saint Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) was a Carmelite nun who, after 15 years of dryness in prayer, began having mystical experiences where she had visions and heard voices. Her books—her Autobiography, the Way of Perfection, and the Interior Castle, are spiritual classics.

❏ Saint John of the Cross (1542-1591) was also a Carmelite who greatly influenced the Church. His works are also considered spiritual classics—The Dark Night of the Soul, The Ascent to Mount Carmel, the Spiritual Canticle, and Living Flame of Love.

Mysticism, according to its etymology, implies a relation to mystery. Mysticism is a religious tendency and desire of the human soul towards an intimate union with God. The goal of mysticism is the direct union of the human soul with God through contemplative prayer and love.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

✠ This period of time also produced many wonderful “activists.”

- ✠ Saint Francis de Sales (1567-1622) converted many protestants back to the faith through his instructions for Christian laity.
- ✠ Saint Vincent de Paul had a tremendous zeal for reform and a great love for the poor.
- ✠ Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith in 1622, and thus began an extensive missionary outreach to the ends of the earth.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

The Modern world ushered in:

- ✦ Rationalism—a new philosophy that supposed all things should/could be understood through reason. It considered reality based on faith to be for “unenlightened” people.
- ✦ Science and Technology—the application of new sciences to practical problems gave way to the Industrial Revolution.
- ✦ Secularization—religion was relegated to people’s private lives and had less and less of an influence on secular things, including politics. This “privatization” of religion continues today to have devastating results.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- ❧ The great disputes among Christians helped open the door to the Enlightenment. People were sick of arguing about religion and many sought to find common ground elsewhere, especially in reason.
 - ❧ Some philosophers launched a direct attack against the Catholic Church, notably the Frenchman Voltaire (1694-1778).
 - ❧ Other attacks came through Scripture study.
 - ❧ Philosophers like Pierre Bayle claimed the Bible was like any other book and should be studied as such.



- The Catholic Church was, and sometimes still is, seen as being opposed to science and technology.

The Church had a difficult time trying to assimilate what science was discovering. It wasn't that it was opposed to science, but it was skeptical due to the movements (philosophies) of the time.

- The Church continues today to teach that science alone is not sufficient for understanding our reality, mainly because:

- Science does not take into consideration that our reason was darkened by original sin. It is through the Light of Christ that we can understand clearly.

- Science may help us understand what creation *is*, but it never asks the more important question about the *purpose* of creation.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

📖 The French Revolution is the best example of the crisis the Church was facing in Europe from 1650-1800 A.D.

- 📖 Secular authorities and popular sentiment were calling for the decreased influence of the Church in public affairs.
- 📖 There was confusion about authentic Church teaching and spirituality (Jansenism and Quietism).
- 📖 The French Revolution (1789) abolished Christianity altogether and set up a “religion” based on reason.

•Jansenism: was a spiritual movement in France led by a few priests, a layman, and a convent of religious sisters near Paris. The movement was named after Bishop Cornelius Jansen, a bishop of Ypres, Holland. Jansen had written numerous things about the absolute corruption of human nature by original sin and many of his writings were condemned by Pope Innocent X. The Jansenists thought that the Church was too lax in its approach to sin and too “easy” on sinners. Jansenism promoted an excessive sense of guilt among Christians, setting an impossible standard of perfection. As with other heresies, Jansenism was interested in truth, but took it to an extreme.

•Quietism: was a spiritual movement that advocated total passivity in prayer before God. This movement suggested that people be so “detached” from themselves in prayer and clear their minds so completely that they even lost all concern for salvation. Once again, this movement was condemned as heresy, not because it was void of truth, but because it had taken something truthful and good— quiet, contemplative prayer— to an extreme.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- ⌘ At the beginning of the Revolution, the new government demanded that Catholic clergy take an oath of allegiance to the new regime.
- ⌘ In 1792, when 30,000-40,000 priests refused to take the oath, they were driven into hiding or killed.
- ⌘ In 1793, things got more radical as the State began tearing down churches and erecting "Temples of Reason." A statue of the goddess of Reason was set up in Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Later, the government decided that this new religion was too close to atheism, so they established the "Cult of the Supreme Being," that professed belief in God, but no dogmas.
- ⌘ The French Revolution took things too far, and the West reacted with a more conservative stance beginning in the nineteenth century.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

❧ Beginning with Napoleon, the Church's spiritual presence in France was restored little by little, but the scars of the French Revolution remain:


- ❧ Civil marriage and divorce
- ❧ Public schools



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

The Nineteenth Century

-  Because of the dismal failure of the French Revolution and the positive beginning of the United States of America, the following things occurred:
1. Europe began to move away from government led by absolute rulers.
 2. Church and State alliances came to an end.



The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

✚ The most important question that the Church faced in the 19th century was how to respond to Liberalism.

✚ Liberalism was a general term used for the movement that favored:

1. Constitutional-representative governments
2. Religious toleration
3. Separation of Church and State
4. Freedom of the Press
5. Education

• Many situations made the Church very skeptical of Liberalism, including the problems caused by the Enlightenment and French Revolution, which were brought about through liberal thought, and violence done by liberals, including the murder of the archbishop of Paris.

• When a form of Liberalism began to emerge, called Intellectual Liberalism, the Church was skeptical again. But this movement was different, and sought to evaluate the Church's mission and ministry in light of the advance of modern sciences and understandings. One of the leaders of this movement, a convert from Anglicanism, John Henry Newman, is considered one of the greatest thinkers in Church history. Pope Pius IX, however, feared that this movement would lead to the same rationalism of the Enlightenment.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

📖 The Church's response to Liberalism came in two important ways:

1. The "Syllabus of Errors"
 - 📖 Pope Pius IX seemingly condemned everything considered "modern."
2. Vatican Council I
 - 📖 Relationship between reason and faith
 - 📖 Papal infallibility
 - 📖 The Bishop of Little Rock was one of only two bishops who voted against Papal Infallibility. 😊

• In 1864, Pope Pius IX published his "Syllabus of Errors," in which he condemned seemingly everything "modern." Most people saw this as a step backwards for the Church, as though it wanted to isolate itself from the world. Ultimately, Pope Pius wanted to let people know that they were supposed to look to the Church, the Bride of Christ, for support and truth, and not to the "world."

• Vatican Council I was a natural response to Pope Pius' fears, many of which were justified by the moral decay that was being seen throughout the world. He wanted to solidify the Church's ministry of being the teacher of faith and morals for the world.

• Regardless of the criticisms that are made about Pope Pius IX's attitude toward the modern world, we must keep in mind the tremendous spiritual renewal that came to birth through his direction. Great saints like John Vianney and Clement Hofbauer were influenced by the Pope's teachings. Also, many new religious orders were formed—Marianists, Marists, Christian Brothers, Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Loretto, Paulists, Salesians, Society of the Divine Word, and others.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- Pope Saint Pius X (1903-1914)
 - ✦ Pius X worked toward strengthening Catholic worship.
 - ✦ He also started CCD, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.
 - ✦ He encouraged Catholics to receive the Eucharist at Mass weekly.
 - ✦ And he renewed liturgical music.



•Pope Saint Pius X had his hands full since the beginning of the 20th century was also the beginning of many new modern achievements and also dangerous atheistic political movements like communism.

The History of the Catholic Church



(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

Pope Benedict XV (1914-1922)

World War I

-  Benedict did not take sides, but vigorously condemned injustices on both sides.
-  Three of his encyclicals had to do with peace and reconciliation.

Fatima

-  In 1917, Mary reportedly appeared to three children in Fatima, Portugal
-  Mary's message to the children included the prediction of the end of WWI and the future difficulties with Russia.

•Mary's message at Fatima was confusing at the time, since Russia was not a political power, but very weak due to civil wars.




•Mary request was nothing more than the Gospel message– repentance, faith in Jesus, and living the Christian faith with integrity. She specifically asked that the Rosary be prayed every day, with special attention given to the Word of God, Sacred Scripture, that this prayer contains, and that individuals and nations (esp. Russia) be consecrated to her Immaculate Heart.

•The act (i.e. prayer) of **consecration** means that a person desires to spiritually embrace the characteristics, qualities, and values of Christ that they perceive in another. Jesus mentions consecration in the Gospel of John when, in his prayer to the Father, he says, "Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth. As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (John 17:17-19).

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

Pope Pius XI (1922-39)

-  Wrote nine official documents on the threat of communism.
-  He also faced the challenge of two other dangerous modern ideologies—Fascism and Nazism.
-  In 1922, Mussolini led a Fascist takeover of Italy. Realizing that he needed the support of the Catholic Church in Italy, Mussolini signed a treaty with Pius XI in 1929, which brought peace between the government and the Church, but only after Pius XI surrendered the Papal States to Mussolini's control.

- Surrendering the Papal States to Mussolini was a great blessing to the Church, since it marked the end of the idea that the pope's authority depended on possessing an earthly kingdom. The pope renounced all official Catholic support of the Fascist government, and accepted only independence and the safety of one hundred and nine acres of land, Vatican City, in return.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

- In 1933, Pius XI also negotiated a concordat with the new Nazi leader of Germany, Adolph Hitler. Again, the pope renounced any political role for the Catholic Church in Hitler's regime and only sought to secure the full freedom and rights of Catholics in Germany. Before the ink was dry on this treaty, Hitler began to repress the Catholic Church and to begin his evil policies against the Jews.

- Pope Pius XI issued his fiery encyclical *Mit Brennender Sorge* in 1937, which outrightly condemned fascism and Nazism. Priests and bishops in both Russia and Mexico were imprisoned or put to death by the communist regimes.

- Pope Pius XI also provided leadership for the Catholic Church's missionary activity and social teaching. The missionary activity of the Catholic Church continued to expand throughout the world, and Pius XI was the first pope to consecrate bishops from among the native peoples in large numbers. On the fortieth anniversary of Leo XIII's great social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, Pius XI published his own encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931 in which he presented a serious moral analysis of the questions of capital and labor and of the merits and limitations of socialism and capitalism. As always in Catholic social teaching, the values of Jesus Christ and his gospel were taken as the highest standard to evaluate and judge all political and economic theories and systems. Catholic Action continued to be encouraged as a way of permeating the world with the values of the gospel. Pius XI continued to emphasize that the only way to peace and happiness is through the reign of Christ the King over all of human life.

The History of the Catholic Church

(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

📖 Pope Pius XII (1939-58)

- 📖 Dealt with the Nazis quietly.
- 📖 Condemned Communism.
- 📖 Sought the intercession of Mary.
- 📖 Helped lay the groundwork for Vatican Council II by:
 - 📖 Promoting the study of Sacred Scripture
 - 📖 Appointing more non-Italian cardinals.

- Pope Pius XII, who had been the Vatican secretary of state under Pius XI, was chosen as pope largely because of his diplomatic ability and holiness. Both of these qualities were desperately needed as the world was plunged into war by Adolph Hitler and his Nazi regime. Pius' policy was to maintain an appearance of neutrality. This was wise since the Vatican was located in the middle of the Axis (German- Italian) bloc. In reality, Pius was deeply opposed to both communism and Nazi-fascism, though he loved the German people and culture in particular. Instead of denouncing Nazism in a strong, public way as Pius XI had done; Pius XII thought that such an approach would just bring on more suffering and reprisals for both Christians and Jews in Germany and the Axis countries. Instead of rhetoric, Pius XII used every means available to provide relief and refuge for the Jews and other persecuted people. Pinchas Lapide, a Jewish scholar and former Israeli consul to Italy, credits the pope and the Catholic Church with saving some four hundred thousand Jews from certain death. Lapide writes in the book, The Last Three Popes and the Jews:

“The Catholic Church saved more Jewish lives during the war than all the other churches, religious institutions and rescue organizations put together. Its record stands in startling contrast to the achievements of the Red Cross and the Western democracies. The Holy See, the nuncios and the entire Catholic Church saved some 400,000 Jews from certain death.”



- One Polish man was saved from death by the heroic self-sacrifice of a Franciscan priest St. Maximilian Kolbe, who freely volunteered to accept death in a starvation bunker in place of a man with a family.
- Pius XII's rejection of communism was certainly related to the appearance of Our Lady at Fatima, who warned of Russia spreading her errors throughout the world. In 1942, he consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and in 1952, he made a particular consecration of the people of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. All of these acts were in recognition of Mary's special role as intercessor and mother of Christians.
- In 1950, Pius XII declared as an infallible doctrine that at the end of her earthly life, Mary was taken up or "assumed," body and soul, into heaven—"The Assumption." This doctrine had always been believed by the Catholic Church and had been celebrated as a feast day for fifteen hundred years, but the pope wished to define it formally so that it would be a sure sign of hope for all peoples of their own resurrected and glorified bodies, foreshadowed by the assumption of Mary. Since she was conceived and lived without sin, Mary's body was not subject to death and corruption as other human beings, and so she could enter directly into God's glory.
- Pius XII brought the Catholic Church a new prestige in the world and prepared the Church for the great council of renewal that was soon to come. After the war (1945), many nations sent ambassadors to the Vatican, and the Holy Year of 1950 brought millions of humble pilgrims to Rome. The missionary work of the Catholic Church increased, too, as the number of Catholic dioceses worldwide grew from seventeen hundred to more than two thousand. Pius XII made sure that the international character of the Catholic Church was reflected by the appointment of many non-Italian cardinals, who numbered thirty-four (out of fifty- one) at the time of his death. The Church was now more in touch with the modern world, but it was not until the coming of Pius XII's successor, John XXIII, that a full and open dialogue with the world and a reexamination of the Catholic Church's relationship to it would be achieved.

The History of the Catholic Church


(Into the Modern World: 1300-Vatican Council II)

Pope John XXIII (1958-63)

A pope for the people

-  He appealed to Catholics through his humor and approachability.
-  He appealed to non-Catholics through his desire for ecumenism and unity.

A pope with vision

-  Through the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit, this man who everyone thought would simply “fill” the Chair of Peter, transformed the Church.

•The pope who changed the entire image of the Catholic Church in the eyes of the world was John XXIII. While previous popes gave the image of being dignified, and even a bit aloof, John XXIII was a jolly, spontaneous person who loved life and people and was not hesitant to show it. This seventy-six-year-old man invited friends to dinner, wandered through the streets of Rome talking with people, visited hospitals and prisons, and often told jokes and stories that delighted all. Catholics and other Christians rejoiced to be reminded that the pope was a human being too, and he won the hearts and loyalty of many.

•It would be incorrect, though, to think of Pope John XXIII as a simple man intellectually. What is most notable about his brief papacy was his reliance on God and his clear vision. Instead of openly opposing communism, or any political system, John XXIII sought reconciliation and addressed his great encyclical letters to all men of good will *Pacem in Terris* (Peace in the World) and *Mater and Magister* on social order. He appealed to all peoples to work together to build a better world according to universally recognized norms of justice and the common good.

•John XXIII was also a pioneer with regard to the ecumenical movement, the movement for the reunification of all Christians. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a strong concern for ecumenism arose out of the Protestant missionary movement. Protestants saw how foolish and scandalous it was for different Christian churches to be competing for converts in mission territories. Organizations known as Faith and Order (1925) and Life and Work (1927) endeavored to bring Protestants together on the levels of doctrine and service, respectively. These organizations merged in 1948 to form the World Council of Churches. The Catholic Church had long stood aloof from active involvement in this ecumenical movement, believing that Protestants should work out their own conflicts before discussing their relationship with the Catholic Church. The attitude of the previous popes was that Jesus established only one true church and one faith, the Catholic Church and faith. While not denying the uniqueness of the Catholic Church, John XXIII realized Catholics had to reach out to other Christians and get involved with them in order to seek the unity that Jesus desires for his people. John XXIII had a special place in his heart for the Orthodox Church, since he had served as a papal envoy to the Near East. When the time came for him to call his council, John XXIII invited observers from all Christian traditions and welcomed their input and reflections on the proceedings of the council.

VATICAN COUNCIL II

