

# Three Years of Pope Benedict XVI<sup>1</sup>

## The Genie is Out of the Bottle . . .

ARCC LIGHT 29.3 ( May/June/July 2007)

"*Habemus papam!*" "We have a pope!" the smoke signaled, the bells tolled, and the crowd exulted on April 19, 2005. Precisely WHO is the WE who have this pope? We have a pope – a "papa-father," or, more appropriately the affectionately informal, "papa-daddy," and his name, the world learned, would be Benedict. Choosing his name for a newly minted pope is significant. Like the notion of apostolic succession, a pope's name ties him to his predecessors and is generally seen as a symbolic expression of how he views himself and his role in the Church. Possibly, he chose the name Benedict, Andrew Greeley speculated at the time, "because he wanted to be known as a healer," in the spirit of Benedict XV, a promoter of peace during WW I. Sadly, Father Greeley's hope appears to have been overly optimistic, unless peace is defined as enforced uniformity, univocity, suppression of all dissent.

However, considering developments since Ratzinger's election, a case can be made that deliberately or unconsciously he was inspired less by Benedict XV (1854 – 1922) than by Benedict XIV (1675-1758), a man renowned for his erudition and scholarship but also the author of the 1751 encyclical *A Quo Primum – On Jews and Christians Living in the Same Place*, in which he rails against the "principle of freedom of conscience," "the influence of Jewish faithlessness," and chastises Polish bishops for not enforcing existing legislation intended to keep Jews and Christians apart. He points out that for bishops to be aware of Rome's position, "It is enough to peruse decretals with the heading *de Judaeis, et Saracenis* [concerning Jews and Muslims]." One suspects that the ghost of Benedict XIV would applaud his 20<sup>th</sup> century namesake's efforts while he would have been horrified at John Paul II's attitude toward the Jews and his prayer of apology at Jerusalem's Western Wall in July 2000 for the Church's past transgressions: "God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking Your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant."

Clearly, the documents issued by the Vatican during his papacy, as well as the documents produced under his leadership as Prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (a.k.a. Holy Office or, informally, Inquisition), show that Benedict XVI considers himself a divine-right absolute ruler of the pre-democratic era or a contemporary benevolent dictator.

He distinguishes those he considers loyal and virtuous subjects from those he considers misguided and in need of correction. Throughout his public career, Joseph Ratzinger has favored rigid doctrinal conformity and the clerical, hierarchical structure of the traditional Church. Even during the Vatican Council, as a young theologian, he appears to have been

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<sup>1</sup>The first two of the following articles, with minor editorial changes, were originally published in volumes 29.3 and 30.1 of *ARCC Light*, the newsletter of the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church, and can be found at [http://arcc-catholic-rights.net/arcc\\_light.htm](http://arcc-catholic-rights.net/arcc_light.htm).

less a supporter of progressive changes in the Church in line with Pope John's "aggiornamento" – opening the Fortress Church's doors and windows to the winds of the modern age – than a supporter of conservative changes that would return the Church to its scriptural and patristic roots.

As head of the CDF, he signed decrees insisting not only on supportive roles for women in the Church but even in society as wives and mothers in traditional patriarchal families. He condemned communion for the divorced and remarried, reproductive technology, stem cell research, artificial birth control, homosexuality, and condoms for HIV victims. He forced German bishops to stop the tradition of pregnancy counseling at Catholic social agencies because the certificates issued could be used to obtain abortions, though, in practice, the counseling saved lives of mothers and babies.

He opposed increased involvement of the laity in church ministries, blurring of the boundaries between clergy and laity, and married priests. He castigated progressive theologians and excoriated liberation theology, Enlightenment thought, and modernity in general.

As for ecumenism, two decades ago he was quoted in a newspaper interview stating that Jews had to convert to Christianity if they wished to be fully true to their heritage. In *Dominus Iesus* (2000), he presented Catholicism as the unique, divinely established, exclusive and unblemished path toward salvation, far superior to other defective roads. More recently, he opposed the inclusion of Turkey in the European Union because of Turkey's "alien" Muslim tradition, and referred to Buddhism as "narcissistic."

Both as cardinal and now as pope, Ratzinger has consistently identified with those opposed to a progressive interpretation and liberal reforms of the Second Vatican Council, especially the changes in liturgy and openness to genuine ecumenical dialogue grounded in mutual respect of all participants as equal partners and the willingness to listen to and learn from the other. The 1988 excommunication of the ultra-conservative critic of Vatican II, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and two of the bishops whom Lefebvre had illegally consecrated cannot be used to show Ratzinger's evenhandedness because Lefebvre was punished not on the basis of his theological position but because he defied Vatican authority.

It seems highly significant that Benedict's most recent document, "Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects Of the Doctrine on the Church" was dated June 29, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul and a date of special meaning for Benedict as the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood on June 29, 1951 in the Cathedral at Freising near Munich by Michael Cardinal von Faulhaber who himself had been appointed by Pope Benedict XV in 1921. As archbishop and cardinal during the Hitler era, Faulhaber was one of the Catholic "princes of the church" who not only pretended to support the Nazi regime in order to protect Catholics in Germany but also, one suspects, as John Allen points out in *Cardinal Ratzinger*,<sup>2</sup> because as Catholics they shared fascist anti-Judaism along with fascist opposition to "liberal individualism" and Communism (both associated with the "destructive influence of the Jews"). At an impressionable age, Joseph Ratzinger, the son of a Bavarian

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<sup>2</sup> John L. Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger: The Vatican's Enforcer of the Faith* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

police officer, lived in an atmosphere – personal, religious, and political – of right-wing authoritarian collectivism that opposed democracy and individualism, and that atmosphere, I believe, still colors the lenses through which he views the world and his responsibilities as leader of world Catholicism.

No wonder Benedict and his staff appear determined to turn back the clock and undo what they consider the damage done by a misinterpretation of the documents of Vatican II. In fact, to make sure that the above-mentioned document would not itself be misinterpreted, it was followed by a commentary:

"The response, based on the teaching of John XXIII and Paul VI, is very clear: the Second Vatican Council did not intend to change – and therefore has not changed – the previously held doctrine on the Church. . . . In the post-conciliar period, however, and notwithstanding these clear affirmations, the doctrine of Vatican II has been, and continues to be, the object of erroneous interpretations at variance with traditional Catholic doctrine on the nature of the Church: either seeing in it a 'Copernican revolution' or else emphasising [sic] some aspects almost to the exclusion of others." ([http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20070629\\_commento-responsa\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_commento-responsa_en.html) )

Hence it is in no way surprising that Pope Benedict's most enthusiastic supporters (and those to whom he responds most warmly) are precisely those Catholics who identify either openly or covertly with the most conservative, and even reactionary bands of the Catholic spectrum – groups such as Opus Dei, the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, and Catholics United for the Faith. The connection appears to go far beyond support for the pope on the part of individual Catholics or organizations. It appears to involve an unofficial network of information exchange that affects decisions made at the highest levels of the Vatican. Consider the following:

Una Voce (Latin for "In One Voice") is a self-defined "international organization devoted to promoting the traditional Mass." The eleven working links to "Ecclesiastical Documents" (<http://www.unavoce.org/documents.htm>) in the Una Voce site include Pius X's notorious "Oath Against Modernism," a document diametrically opposed to Pope John XXIII's call to "*aggiornamento*." Permission to use the traditional missal was only officially given on July 10, 2007. However, four months earlier, on March 11, 2007, the following press release was published in the site: "Una Voce America is pleased to announce a collaborative program with the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP) designed to provide training for any priest interested in learning how to celebrate the traditional Latin Mass."

According to the FSSP website ([www.fssp.org/](http://www.fssp.org/)), "The Fraternity was founded on July 18, 1988 at the Abbey of Hauterive (Switzerland) by a dozen priests and a score of seminarians. Shortly after the Fraternity's foundation and following upon a request by Cardinal Ratzinger, Bishop Joseph Stimpfle of Augsburg, Germany granted the Fraternity a home in Wigratzbad, a Marian shrine in Bavaria that now lodges the Fraternity's European seminary. . . . There are currently almost 200 priests and 110 seminarians in the Fraternity." The founders of FSSP had previously been associated with Marcel Lefebvre's Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) and left to form their non-schismatic organization after Lefebvre's open defiance of Rome.

According to Jason King, director of Una Voce America, "UA's board of directors began actively discussing the concept of priest training in early 2006" and "Preparations accelerated last fall amid speculation that Pope Benedict XVI was planning to grant greater freedom for celebration of the Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal." The first training session was

scheduled for this June at Our Lady of Guadalupe seminary in Denton, near Lincoln, NE, the diocese well known for Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz's 1996 excommunication of members of CTA, Planned Parenthood, Catholics for Free Choice, the Masons, and – on the opposite end of the spectrum – Lefebvre's SSPX – a group that seems only a fraction of a millimeter to the right of the FSSP – and one mentioned approvingly in the Una Voce website. The Denton seminary is the U.S. center of FSSP activities.

While I personally believe that a diversity of liturgies should be encouraged, and love the Latin Mass (minus the offensive passages in the Holy Week liturgy) I am deeply troubled by Benedict's pattern of inevitably catering to the right-of-center Catholics while scolding, rebuking, and persecuting progressives, and I am even more troubled by the implications of the fact that apparently this change in policy was known in advance.

A few days after Ratzinger's election, on April 27, 2005, the following press release was published in the Una Voce website: "Throughout the world, you can hear the roar of approval from millions of Catholics overjoyed and grateful to hear that the new Pope is committed to Tradition. Tradition is the body of beliefs, writings, devotions, rituals, gestures – all things Roman Catholic – that has been passed down from generation to generation from the time of the Apostles until now. Amongst those cheering most loudly for Holy Father Benedictus XVI is Una Voce America."

At the beginning of this article I asked, "Precisely WHO is the WE who have this pope?" It seems my question has been answered – and I am not part of the we.

While for centuries one of the greatest gifts of Catholicism has been its ability to hold diverse perspectives in creative tension, Benedict's rigid identification with the traditionalist agenda coupled with his autocratic style of governance and political power bodes ill for a future church that, like all organisms, is in process and cannot survive unless it grows and evolves in a living exchange with secular modernity, learner as much as teacher, drawing nourishment from what Karl Rahner called the "sacramentality of the world," and, with John XXIII, capable of discerning "the signs of the times, to seize the opportunity and look far ahead."

Against the backdrop of eternity the forty years that have passed since the Council are merely a few tiny grains of sand in the hourglass. It is still "only dawn," and I draw strength from the comment of the dean of a pastoral ministry program after a newly appointed bishop had destroyed the work of decades. "The Genie is out of the bottle," she smiled, "and no matter how hard they'll try, they won't be able to stuff Her back in."

Ingrid H. Shafer

## Editorial

*Arcc Light* 30.1 ( January/February/March 2008)

We are now almost three full years into the papacy of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, a/k/a/ Benedict XVI, and we are seeing his true colors more and more, almost day by day.

I must be honest: when I learned Ratzinger had been elected Pope, after almost 27 years of John Paul II, I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. Then, since I still believe in God/de and that S/He cares about Jesus' woebegotten church, I tried very hard to look at things positively. Surely, Pope Ratzinger's education and erudition would provide some safeguards? Surely, JPII had subjected us to enough whittling down of the legacy of Vatican II? Surely, Benedict's removal of papal protection of the notorious pedophile founder of the Legionnaires of Christ was a sign of greater honesty from the Vatican. Surely, this smiling little man who joked that his would not be a long papacy had mellowed from the Enforcer of the previous reign. Right? Wrong!

One should always give a new pope the benefit of the doubt, a chance to show his best before criticizing him too strongly, but I don't think we should let such good intentions blind us to the absolutely dizzying power that canon law and Catholic passivity have given to the pope. Having absolute power to set everything "right" is a dream as old as humankind. It is an especially tempting dream to a devout, rigid, authoritarian, book-loving but temperamentally timid cleric who fears the world around him has gone mad. Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI is such a man.

This reading of BXVI, past and present, is not necessarily as far-fetched as it seems. Ratzinger was born in a lower-middle class, religious family (the two sons became priests and their sister became their housekeeper) in a small village in Bavaria. He entered the seminary at 12, but his seminary was closed when the war required resources and draftees. He was a very reluctant Hitler Youth for two years and when he was drafted into the army, he claimed he never loaded his gun and soon deserted his unit for home. Ratzinger went back to his seminary in the Fall of 1945 and was ordained in 1951. Ratzinger's world was home, religion and study. When the Nazis upset that world, he tried hard to avoid them, and then he ran for home, for his familiar world. This is a pattern I see repeated all through his life.

John Allen, Ratzinger's biographer,<sup>3</sup> describes these years charitably but then adds a telling summary of his view of the National Socialism episode: "...Ratzinger understands the twelve years of the Third Reich as a trial by fire for the Catholic church, in which the church was triumphantly vindicated." (23) This is consistent with Allen's analysis of the mature Cardinal: "Having seen fascism in action, Ratzinger today believes that the best antidote to political totalitarianism is ecclesial totalitarianism." (3) Rather frightening but probably fairly accurate on the whole.

It's well-known that Ratzinger was Cardinal Joseph Frings' *peritus* at Vatican II, and some Catholics think this means he was a liberal young reformer. Vatican II was doubtless an exciting forum for an ambitious 35 year old theologian, but it is crucial for an understanding of Ratzinger to keep in mind that his Vatican II was the early council, with its emphasis on *ressourcement*, a return to the sources of Catholicism. The mature Council's liberalism,

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<sup>3</sup>John L. Allen, *Cardinal Ratzinger: The Vatican's Enforcer of the Faith* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

culminating in *Gaudium et Spes*, frightened him and he fought it in word and print.

However, Ratzinger also happily furthered his academic career, progressing from Bonn to Münster to Tübingen during and immediately after the Council, bringing personal good out of seeming professional backpedaling. Ironically, the last move, to Tübingen, was largely due to the good offices of Hans Küng. But these were the turbulent '60s. Küng was not afraid of lively give and take with his students and colleagues, but Ratzinger was. The student unrest and increasing radicalization of his fellow faculty in 1968 disturbed him to the point that, in 1969 he left Tübingen, the most prestigious and erudite university in Germany, and went to Regensburg, a new university he had just helped establish to create a new generation of docile, orthodox theologians. Once again, when his beliefs and now his authority were challenged, rather than dialoguing, he ran to what was secure and controllable.

The Vatican, and especially Pope John Paul II, continued to favor Ratzinger and he gave them loyal service, including rallying the German bishops around JP II's decision to strip Hans Küng, his former friend and benefactor, of the right to teach as a recognized Catholic theologian. Ratzinger also began the attack on liberation theology and its theologians which he continued through the 1980s. Thus, when John Paul named Cardinal Ratzinger head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 1981, Ratzinger was a known entity – a rock-solid, ultra-Catholic, brilliant, hard-working, and single-minded, perhaps even ruthless, defender of his vision of the Church – which coincided with John Paul's vision quite well.

I'm sure I'm not the only Catholic observer who has wondered increasingly over these past few years if Ratzinger was not, in fact, the "brains" behind the Wojtyla papacy. Karol Wojtyla was certainly very intellectually gifted but the extent of his intellectual achievements has just as certainly been inflated by his admirers, the authors of the legend of "John Paul the Great." This supposed genius failed to receive a doctorate in Rome and had to return to his Poland to secure it. He was allowed to travel freely outside Poland cultivating contacts during a period when no one who did not supply information to the Communist Secret Police ever received permission to travel, and he is said to have – humbly – brought a recent EKG to the second 1978 conclave to demonstrate that he wouldn't die within a month like Luciani! One cannot deny that Wojtyla and Ratzinger made an excellent team, allowing John Paul II to lyrically proclaim at the Wailing Wall

"We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer and, asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the covenant."

Ratzinger railed, "The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism," (*Dominus Iesus*). Although Wojtyla and Ratzinger were similar in many ways – arrogant, narrow Catholics, authoritarian, intolerant, convinced of their absolute rightness, xenophobic – there were differences between them. Wojtyla was slightly less pedestrian than Ratzinger, had a bit more of the Romantic and the dreamer, a bit more vision and empathy for the suffering, especially as he weakened and suffered toward the end of his life. He lived a bit more by emotion, and so, whether he realized it or not, having an absolutely implacable "Enforcer" allowed Wojtyla to give rein to his more "liberal" side, especially toward the Jews and the "Separated Brethren," without worrying that the Church would be weakened while he focused on that. And so during the JP II Papacy, we have him announcing that the subject of women priests is closed – it may not even be discussed, and Ratzinger chiming in with "And that's infallible." Wojtyla the Bishop

may have signed *Gaudium et Spes* at the Council but Ratzinger the Enforcer distorts that same document to justify *Dominus Iesus*. And on and on.

This raises a small but fascinating question: was Ratzinger John Paul's designated successor? Some months before the Conclave, at least one elector voiced to John Allen the thought that Ratzinger was probably best suited to the job, and Allen is convinced many others had the same opinion. The massive demonstrations of grief at the death of John Paul II, and the very carefully staged "santo subito" manifestations doubtless had an effect on the Electors, convincing them that they had better find someone associated with John Paul who would continue his policies. After almost twenty-five years of faithful collaboration, Ratzinger certainly fit that bill. He was intelligent, experienced, he had been present at the great events of his time, he was the great hope of the anti-Vatican II factions everywhere, and was expected to continue the reversal of the reforms of that Council. As pointed out in Ingrid Shafer's essay, "The Genie is Out of the Bottle," in the May/June/July 2007 issue of *ARCC Light*, as soon as it became likely that Ratzinger would be the next pope, restorationist groups began to prepare for the liturgical and other changes they knew he would make. It is not unlikely that this process began even before the death of the Pope.

One finds startling substantiation for this view in a fascinating letter from Cardinal Ratzinger to Dr. Heinz-Lothar Barth, dated June 23, 2003, which was recently posted on the site of Prof. Joseph O'Leary of Sophia University, Tokyo. It reads in relevant part:

To Dr. Heinz-Lothar Barth, 23 June 2003

Dear Dr. Barth,

...You are asking me to act for a broader availability of the old Roman rite. Actually, you know yourself that I have no deaf ears towards such a request. My work on behalf of this cause is meanwhile generally known.

Whether the Holy See will "admit the old rite again for every place and without restrictions" as you desire and have heard it rumored cannot be simply answered or confirmed without further ado. Still too great is the aversion of many Catholics, instilled in them over many years, against the traditional liturgy which they scornfully call "preconciliar". Also one would have to reckon with considerable resistance on the part of many bishops against a general readmission.

Things look different, however, if one thinks about a limited readmission. The demand for the old liturgy is limited, too. I know that its worth, of course, does not depend upon the demand for it, but the question of the number of interested priests and laypeople, nevertheless, plays a certain role. Besides, such a measure can now, only some 30 years after the liturgy reform of Paul VI, be implemented only stepwise. Any new hurry would surely not be a good thing.

I believe, though, that in the long term the Roman Church must have again a single Roman rite. The existence of two official rites is for bishops and priests difficult to "manage" in practice. The Roman rite of the future should be a single rite, celebrated in Latin or in the vernacular, but standing completely in the tradition of the rite that has been handed down. It could take up some new elements which have proven themselves, like new feasts, some new prefaces in the Mass, an expanded lectionary – more choice than

earlier, but not too much, – an "oratio fidelium", i.e., a fixed litany of intercessions following the Oremus before the offertory where it had its place earlier.

Dear Dr. Barth, if you commit yourself to work for the cause of the liturgy in this way, you will surely not stand alone, and you will prepare "public opinion in the Church" for eventual measures in favor of an expanded use of the earlier liturgical books. One should be cautious, however, about awakening too high or maximum expectations among the traditional faithful. ...

With delight I give you the blessing you have asked and remain sincerely yours  
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger ([http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my\\_weblog](http://josephsoleary.typepad.com/my_weblog))

One could not ask for a better explanation of the liturgical edicts of the past year. They are not meant to lure the Society of Pius X back into the Church, although certainly Benedict would like to reunite these traditionalists so close to his heart to the Church. They are meant to bring Catholic liturgy back to Benedict's comfort level. Pope Ratzinger is running absolutely true to form: he dislikes modern music and loves old sacred music: now, therefore, the Church "discourages" the use of modern music and establishes a special Curial department to make sure it is not used. Pope Ratzinger loves the Tridentine Mass: now, therefore, a pastor may not refuse the Tridentine Mass to a "stable" (but no mention of how large or small) group that requests it. No bishop's permission is needed and those refused will be heard in Rome. The next step, presumably, will be the "Roman rite of the future" mentioned in Cardinal Ratzinger's letter, which sounds very much like the Tridentine Mass with a slightly larger lectionary and a few new prefaces. Even if Ratzinger's jocular line on being elected – "this won't be a long pontificate" – proves true, he is trying to assure the continuation of **his** version of Catholicism in the next reign or two by regularly appointing Cardinals to keep the Electoral College at its maximum number of 120. He has already named 1/4 of the College in less than three years!

These liturgical reversions are perfectly in keeping with Benedict's theology. So was one of his Curial cardinals suggesting recently that tabernacles be moved back to the center of churches. So was his saying some of the proper prayers at Christmas Mass in Rome in Latin rather than understandable Italian. So was his recently saying Mass for the Vatican's staff in the Sistine Chapel with his back to the congregation. Pope Ratzinger certainly sees the priesthood as cultic, separate from the "faithful," uniquely enabled to offer worship to God, but it is deeper than that: as early as 1968, in an article on the Early Fathers of the Church, he described the core of Catholicism as "episcopal, sacramental, and liturgical." (Allen, 98) His view had not changed in 1979, when he defended the silencing of Küng in a homily saying "The Christian believer is a simple person: bishops should protect the faith of these little people against the power of intellectuals." (Allen, 130) Ratzinger has always seen cultural relativism as the greatest danger to the faith. Something is either true or not: relativism puts that into doubt and is especially dangerous when combined with appealing Eastern philosophies. As Allen puts it very astutely: "Rooted in an Augustinian/ Bonaventurian outlook, Ratzinger has always stressed the critical distance that must separate the church from the culture." (Allen, 90) So, Pope Ratzinger is not 'The Servant of the Servants of God' to use one of the oldest titles of the Pope: he is the Fuhrer, because ecclesial totalitarianism is safe.

It is safe and it is what Ratzinger feels comfortable with – and that's what this papacy is all about. Ratzinger is determined to use all the power of the papacy to set the Catholic world aright, to re-evangelize it, meaning correct it from Vatican II and modernism. The Church will



return to the simple, obedient, trusting body it always was. People, especially intellectuals, will conform or leave. It will be a smaller, purer Church, more true to the strict message of God's love – or else.

Unfortunately, Ratzinger's theology was already passé in the 1930s when he first learned it. The age of the infantilized Catholic laity is past; the day of the deified clergy is past, except in the factories cranking out Legionnaires and OD'ers; the day of loving Fascisti popes is over—their death-knell was the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

In a way, the most symbolic expression of this papacy's mindset is the recent comment by a Curial minion that respect for the sacred started to diminish when Communion began to be given in the hand and so a solution would be to once again give it on the tongue.

Only a priest is holy enough to touch the sacred species. What about the priesthood of all believers taught by Vatican II? The truth is Ratzinger & Co. never accepted it and now he is using the biggest religious bully-pulpit in the world, the Papacy, to remove the traces of Vatican II, bit by bit by bit. One of the Medici popes is reputed to have said "Since it has pleased God to make us pope, let us enjoy it." Pope Ratzinger's variation on that might be "Since it has pleased God to make us pope, let us use it" – to undo all the liberal mistakes of the last forty years and restore the Church to its pristine purity. Those who don't like it can leave.

In Pope Benedict's imagined scenario, the bishops, priests, and laity meekly accept the will of his magisterium. That was barely true even in the late 1930s of his childhood in Bavaria. Now, it's well on its way to being only a memory. Sorry, Pope Ratzinger: your small, if vocal, groups of supporters notwithstanding, you are two centuries too late!

Christine M. Rousset

## **Postscript**

(April 2008)

Rereading these two articles less than two weeks before Pope Benedict's visit to the United States, and so less than two weeks before the third anniversary of his election, which he will celebrate in this country, it is difficult not to be depressed at the immediate future of the Catholic Church. As Dr. Shafer and I were forced to conclude, Father and Cardinal and Pope Ratzinger have been extremely consistent through these last sixty years.

In a way, Ratzinger's dilemma has been that of many in the tumultuous twentieth century, coming on top of the even more tumultuous eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: how does one cope with threats to, or even loss of, the most important certainties of one's life? If the Catholic Church can change, then God can change, and that cannot be. It simply cannot be, even if a council of the entire Church misguidedly said things which \*could\* be interpreted to say that two thousand years of tradition \*could\* be modified.

The alternative, for Ratzinger and other Catholic conservatives, is to turn their backs on modernity (castigated by Pio Nono as "modernism"), freedom of thought, opinion and judgment, and respect for others' beliefs (seen as "relativism") and cling to an ecclesiastical absolutism which demands unquestioning obedience to a self-appointed and self-perpetuating "magisterium" with an allegedly direct lineage and mandate from God.

Absolute obedience guarantees heaven as a reward, according to Ratzinger & Co. Of course, there is a fairly hefty price tag to all this salvation: you must check your reason at the door, as well as a considerable part of your knowledge of history, psychology, sociology, theology, and logic, your ability to learn from the world around you, as well as your judgment and individuality, for, of course, nothing has truly been the same or even close to permanent in the Catholic Church for 2,000 years – until you have stepped with Alice through the Looking Glass. On the other side of the Looking Glass, Popes and councils never contradict each other or change their teachings (how on earth did Bishop Lucker and Judge Noonan develop those lists of teachings of the Church that have been changed, and still more that could be changed?) Meanings of words are different on the Ratzinger side of the Looking Glass too. In American history and political theory, for example, conservatives are usually "strict constructionists," that is, they believe quite literally what the Constitution says, and they do not believe in adding to it, or extrapolating from it. That last "sin" is called "loose constructionism" and is the province of the so-called "liberals." But on the other side of the Looking Glass, in the super-conservative world of Ratzinger and Co., extrapolation is a necessary pastime: anything that might lead to an idea or belief, that might lead to a further idea or belief which, with a great deal of time and effort, might be vaguely capable of being misunderstood by someone – anyone – MUST be definitively defined by the Curia or the Pope himself.

This is the origin of what is sometimes called "creeping infallibility." The fact that increasing numbers of laypeople are earning advanced degrees in theology and know much more theology than most members of the Curia, does not change the fact that the "simple" faithful might be confused or led astray by evil theologians writing erudite books for each other. Creeping Infallibility is ultimately to protect the simple faithful, whose function in life is to pray, pay and obey.

So, is that the role of the teaching authority of the Church – to teach us the pablumized, infallibilized teachings the Magisterium believes are important? And to slap us upside our souls and withhold Communion when we fail to procreate when we uniate with our spouses? Is that why we were created???

Absolutely NOT. The role of the Church is to bear witness to the loving God/de who created us and calls us to live in the responsible freedom of the Children of God/de. God/de created us with reason, discernment and free will. The Church, including, but not limited to, the formal hierarchical Magisterium, is to help us understand, accept and adapt the teachings of Christ so we may properly form our consciences and convictions and together build up society and this wonderful earth we have been given. As the popular and alas, overused, saying goes, God/de does not create junk. God/de did not create us mindless automata who need to be spoon fed the important facts of life and salvation – that is an insult not only to us but to Jesus Himself, who became one of us. What greater dignity and trust could God/de have given to his creation than to take on its own being? One of the most moving parts of the pre- and post-Vatican II Mass is the mingling of the water and wine to be offered: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

This is a daunting, even a frightening, hope, but it is the one the Church proclaims in its very liturgy and Creed. God/de calls us to a process which will last all our lives and even all of creation's life, moving to the Omega Point, which is the union of all creation in God/de.

This is the divine activity in which we are called to participate, our purpose for being, and the purpose of the Church. Pope Ratzinger and others of his temperament or conviction don't trust us to do it. They only trust an absolutist Church in which everyone is in lock-step to the same tune. But that tune is being called by human beings who are products of their time and upbringing. It seems incredible that Benedict would not realize that he is as much a historical product as any of us. The "Tradition" he extolls as eternal and revealed by God/de is also time-bound, and therein lies the great problem. Christians have never all thought exactly the same way, as is clear from the Gospels, the Epistles, and history. Interestingly, when a majority of the bishops and even the Pope got it wrong by accepting Arianism (that Christ was not truly divine) in the fourth century, it was the laity, the simple faithful who Ratzinger sees as so gullible that it must be protected from the theologians, who saved the Church from major heresy. Presumably, John Henry Newman's *On Consulting the Faithful On Matters of Doctrine* is not one of Benedict's favorite books.

It is unfortunate that Pope Benedict's view of humanity, the Church and even of God/de is so narrow and provincial. When Angelo Roncalli was sent as a diplomat to Turkey and then to a thoroughly secularized France, he learned from these experiences to open his heart and soul, and when he became Pope, he encouraged the Church to throw open its windows and let in the fresh air of the world. He was convinced that if the Church could throw off the accretions and shackles it had accumulated over the centuries, the beauty of its true message would shine forth for all to see. Pope Ratzinger's all-pervasive Eurocentrism will not even allow Turkey into the European Union, and he seems to see the shackles as strengths, without which the Church will disintegrate into the sea of relativism surrounding it. He spent 25 years in the Curia, the home of the imperialist Church, at the head of the successor agency to the "Holy" Inquisition and it would seem he is still fighting the battles of the Counter-Reformation.

The Counter-Reformation is over and it is time for the People of God/de to grow up and accept their responsibilities. Sometimes, one must say No.

Christine M. Roussel