

# HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

## THE MODERN ERA (FROM THE REFORMATION TO VATICAN II)

The council of Trent (1545-63) was the greatest and most definitive response of the church to the crisis caused by the protestant reformation. Two major things were achieved by this council, with far-reaching consequences for the every facet of the church's life.

# Reforms- The reforms that had been long overdue and which, if carried out in good time, might have prevented or at least reduce the effect of the protestant reformation, were eventually embarked upon, affecting such areas as the liturgy, discipline among the clergy, the focus of the church, the education and spiritual growth of the laity, and so on;

# Response to the claims of the Protestants – this council was concerned with correcting the errors that had been spread by the Protestants, concerning many things that the church had always believed but may not have defined explicitly. Such areas include the canon scripture (concerning which books rightly belong to the bible), salvation (especially about justification), purgatory, tradition, and so on.

The leader of the catholic reformation, or counter- reformation, include popes Pius V, Gregory VIII and the Sixtus V. There were also Saint Charles Borromeo, Philip Neri, Angela Merici and Theresa of Jesus.

Perhaps the most prominent was St. Ignatius of Loyola who founded the society of Jesus (the Jesuits) Ignatius and his followers embarked on large-scale Christian education and enlightenment. They also got involved in missionary activities, thus expanding the domain of Christianity across the globe, especially in Asia, and America. Today they are remembered as missionaries, scholars and instructors, and St, Francis Xavier, one of the first Jesuits, is honored in the church as the patron saint of the mission.

From this point, the church began to get revitalized and enlarged. Many territories that had fallen into the control of Protestants were recovered, and morals, discipline and devotion were revived within the church, even among the

top leaders and the clergy. This reform not only addressed the crisis in the church at the time, but also prepared her for new challenges that came up as the church opened up to the new world in evangelization.

Outside the church, this was a period of exploration. European countries began to annex and colonize the rest of the world. As the colonialists and explorers moved, the missionaries also moved, making the work of the missionaries to often be perceived as an extension of the Europeanization of the other people. It was also a period of slave trade, especially in Africa, and some missionaries were involved as well.

While the expansion of the church continued and the church was thriving in other climes, Europe was caught in the throes of other crises. The religious disturbances in Europe continued, and the entire continent was getting more and more polarized. Each nation, especially among the protestants, seemed to have a national church, which was largely intolerant of non- members.

In France, there seemed to be no respite, as crisis followed crisis. There was Jansenism (Named after Jansen or Jansenius) which claimed, in the fashion of the Protestants, that the original sin has weakened humanity so much that no human being is capable of doing any good. Therefore, since it is grace that saves, anything done by a non-Christian is necessarily evil, no matter what it is. When the Jesuits opposed this position, they became unpopular in France, and this affected the faith in France. After Jansenism arose Gallicanism, which was a form of nationalism in the French church. Essentially, Gallicanism's position was that the church in France would not be subject to any authority outside France, especially the Pope. An offshoot of it was Josephism, which was an attempt to control everything in the life of the church by secular powers. But this was cut short by the outbreak of the French revolution.

The French revolution was a socio-political struggle; the uprising of the poor (proletariat) against the rich (bourgeois). But it had a lot of implications for the church. For one thing, all the parties involved in the struggle were catholic. Apart from this, many churches were sacked, because the poor perceived that the church had sided with the rich. There was also anticlericalism (attack against the clergy) since the priests had often been seen as friends of the Rich. Many priest

had to flee to France, especially the Jesuits who had earlier become unpopular at the onslaught of Jansenism.

These troubles in Europe and especially as France began to insist on the equality of all bishops with the bishop of Rome, Pope Pius XI called. The dispute over the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception was an issue that the council was going to be consider.

The first Vatican council (Vatican I; 1869-70) took place in the pontificate of Pius IX. It was not concluded. At the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, the council was suspended, but it never resumed again. Because of this, very few things were achieved, the most significant of which is the declaration of papal infallibility. Another important position of the council was that faith and grace are superior to reason and nature respectively.

Infallibility means that when the church, through her head, the Pope, make an ex-cathedra definition on any matter of faith or morals, it cannot err, because she speaks on the authority of Jesus Christ.

20<sup>th</sup> century Pope until Vatican II

### **Pius X (1903-14)**

# He started the confraternity of the Christian doctrine (CCD).

# He introduced early communion, as soon as a child is old enough to understand.

# Liturgical music reform.

# Improvement and codification of canon law. This resulted eventually in the 1917 code of canon law.

# Catholic action; this led to conversions.

# He persuaded the church in France to concede to the government's demand for the church property. This stripping of the church led to spiritual revival in France.

# He stood against catholic modernism and biblical criticism among catholic scholars.

### **BENEDICT XV (1914-22)**

# He was Pope during the First World War (WW I; 1914-17)

# He contributed funds for relief during the war (5.5 million lire personal; 30 million lire from the church).

# He was neutral, condemned abuses and wrote about peace and reconciliation.

# The Fatima apparition and the communist revolution (both in 1017), took place during his pontificate.

### **PIUS XI (1922-39)**

# He opposed communism

# He signed treaties with Mussolini of Italy (fascism) and Hitler of Germany (Nazism) to secure peace but neither Hitler nor Mussolini honoured the treaties in the entirety, thus causing untold hardships in many places in Europe. His treaty with Mussolini vastly reduced the size of the size of the papal territory to what it is today the Vatican City.

He released a document, uncharacteristically written in German (*MitBrennender sorge*, 1937) condemning Nazism and fascism.

He instituted the solemnity of Christ the king in 1925, emphasize that Christ, not human beings or their ideologies, is the king of the universe.

### **PIUS XII (1939-58)**

The second world war (WW II ; 1939- 45) took place during his pontificate.

He employed diplomatic and other means to intervene during the war, seeing the futility of open confrontations used by his predecessor.

In 1943, he wrote the encyclical *mystici corporis Christi*, teaching that the church is the mystical body of Christ rather than a political or institutional set-up.

He promulgated the dogma of the assumption in 1950, the only exercise in papal Infallibility till date.

### **JOHN XXIII (1958-63)**

# Known as the father of the second Vatican council, he was a man with an extraordinary attitude of openness who constantly searched for reconciliation.

# He also started the ecumenical movement, with special attention to the Orthodox Church.

# In 1959, he made known his intention to have another council, so that the fresh air of the holy spirit can come into the church.

# Vatican II started in 1962, and Pope John XXIII died in 1963, and the rest of the council was presided over by his successor, Pope Paul VI.

### **FROM VATICAN II TILL DATE**

Not much will be said about Vatican II since there is another course on it. However the council lasted from 1962 to 1965, and had sixteen (16) documents, the most important of which were the two dogmatic constitutions on the church (Lumen Gentium), and on divine revelation (Dei verbum)

### **EFFECTS OF VATICAN I**

# A new understanding of the church, her members and her mission.

# A new zeal.

# A new emphasis on evangelization and witnessing.

# New liturgical arrangement.

# Adjustment in the holy order for example, the married, permanent diaconate was reintroduced after centuries of absence.

# New movement- the charismatic renewal, etc.

# New code of canon law. The teaching of Vatican II were incorporated into the laws of the church leading to a revision of the code of canon law. This was completed in 1983.

# New relationship with other churches.

# New relationship with the world.

# On the part of the hierarchy, a de-emphasis on authority and more emphasis on ministry.

Since Vatican II, there have been five Popes> Paul VI (1962-78), John Paul I (1978), John Paul II (1978-2005), Benedict XVI (2005 -13) and Francis (2013 till date).

Much change (both positive and negative) has taken place in these years. Lay person have become more active in the life and worship of the church, vacation to the priesthood and religious life has drastically reduced in Europe and North America, but it has increased exponentially in Africa, South American and some other places. In recent time too, there have been sexual scandals in the church, especially in Europe and America, with the Popes (John Paul II, Benedict and Francis) coming forward to apologize and to seek solution to these problems.

### **SOME LESSONS TO DRAW FROM THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**

# Despite all the trouble that the church has encountered through the centuries, the spirit of Christ has remained with her, giving her energy and direction in every age, and raising new heroes of the faith and witnesses to Christ.

# Relying on human wisdom and effort ultimately does not help the church.

# Whenever the leadership of the church looks away from Christ and begins to pay attention to other things, something goes seriously wrong.

# Whenever the church is slow to reform, the other person or event usually overtake and complicate matters.

# It is always good to pay attention to the general good of all the members of the church, not just a section. Giving special privileges to the clergy has always impoverished the laity, making the church vulnerable where the laity could have helped out.

# Most importantly, the church is not an end in itself. It is the bride of the church, subject to her master as she seeks his face and intimacy with him on the journey to the eternal kingdom. Whenever we see the church as an end in itself, we become very worldly.

# Apart from the presence of the church in North Africa during the early centuries, the church first arrived in Sub Saharan Africa in the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Congo, Warri, etc.

# It came with the traders and explorers.

# it was mixed up with the activities of the Non missionary Europeans, and its fate was therefore determined to a large extent by what became of the expeditions with which the missionaries came. But even at this stage, some local churches were founded and a handful of local clergy emerged. Ultimately, nothing lasting came out of this missionary effort.

### **THE SECOND MISSIONARY EFFORTS CAME IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

# It started with the European missionaries but was later taken over by the natives. The gospel has finally taken root.

# it should be noted, however, it was a relatively easy time to receive anything European. And so churches were opened and filled up with relatives ease. Schools were opened and children began to enroll, ultimately becoming members of the church through this process. But because membership was not largely based on personal conversion but rather on other factor, the quality of Christianity became watered down.

# **QUESTION.** What is the shape/condition/quality of Christianity/Catholicism in Africa? What improvement have we added to the works of the missionaries?

### **THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA**

# Same as in Africa.

# The missionaries, especially the SMA and the CSSP (Spiritans) evangelized Nigeria.