



INITIATIVE REPORT

CATHOLIC COMMON GROUND INITIATIVE

October 2010

Common Ground at Vatican II

by Rev. Msgr. John Strykowski

Fifty years ago, on January 25, Pope John XXIII announced his intention to convoke an ecumenical council. In the fall of 1962 his plan became reality when approximately two thousand five hundred bishops came together in Rome for the Second Vatican Council. They came from every part of the world and in the course of four years they issued sixteen documents that passed with almost unanimous consensus.

Where did such unanimity come from? After all, the bishops represented an immensely diverse range of cultures, languages and ethnicities. They also came from many different pastoral situations: the bishops of Western Europe still knew the impact of the horrors of World War II; the bishops of Eastern Europe (those who were permitted to come) knew the oppression of the Communist system; the bishops of Africa came from newly independent nations, freed from the chains of colonialism; the bishops of Asia represented fragile minorities in the midst of immense non-Christian majorities; the bishops of Latin America knew the deeply embedded poverty of their populations. How was it possible for them to discover common ground?

Almost all of them had a common language – Latin—and a common theological background – the neo-scholasticism of the manuals used in most seminaries. And yet they united in encouraging the use of vernacular languages in the liturgy and the final documents would reflect very little of the neo-scholasticism in which they were trained. How did this happen?



Two views of the General Session at the Second Vatican Council.



Though they came from many different and challenging pastoral situations, they recognized the urgency of those situations. They were meeting at a critical time for the Church and the proclamation of the Gospel. A response was needed and could not be delayed. The urgency of pastoral needs created common ground. But

their response to critical pastoral needs used a new language or, to put it more precisely, an older language that had had not been heard for a long time. The bishops used language from the first millennium of the Church. They spoke in terms of communion, participation, and collegiality. They used the language of the Scriptures: people of God, body of Christ, divine and ecclesial missions. Where did this come from?

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Bishop Michael Warfel stresses “Communion in Christ” as Initiative’s Goal in Annual Murnion Lecture

The Most Reverend Michael Warfel, bishop of Great Falls-Billing, Montana and member of the Advisory Committee, gave the 2010 Murnion Lecture (the lecture honors the memory of Msgr. Murnion who with Cardinal Bernardin was instrumental in launching the Initiative) entitled “The Catholic Common Ground Initiative: Journey to Communion in Christ.” The lecture reflected on the origins of the Initiative, its guiding philosophy and current importance. Bishop Warfel noted that “What the Initiative desires is to provide a vehicle for constructive dialogue. Its goal is communion in Christ. True, it is a lofty goal, but this is what we are supposed to be about as a Church centered in the Eucharist.”

Speaking of the character of the Initiative, Bishop Warfel observed that the Initiative “...is an instrument for dialogue with the goal of, not only better understanding of the critical issues at hand, but also a better understanding of the individuals who may hold different perspectives on critical issues. The Initiative is not about undermining the Church and its teachings but providing a vehicle where people with diverse perspectives, including some who may have disagreements with elements of Church teaching or discipline, can talk in a constructive way.”

The lecture concluded with this observation: “The Catholic Common Ground Initiative serves as a model for the Catholic Church throughout the United States. If the vision that God has

for humanity ultimately is Communion of Saints, it is important to continue working for that communion to begin happening right now.” The full text of Bishop Michael Warfel’s talk can be found on the Catholic Common Ground Initiative website, www.catholiccommonground.org.

After the lecture two members of the Initiative’s Advisory Committee, Professor Lisa Sowle Cahill of Boston College and Professor Peter Casarella of DePaul University, reflected on the lecture and the future of the Initiative.



Professor Peter Casarella reflects upon the importance of dialogue as a means to building communion in the Church.



Professor Lisa Sowle Cahill speaks passionately about the mission of CCGI engaging the younger generation of the Church.



Murnion Lecture keynote speaker Bishop Warfel with respondents Professors Lisa Sowle Cahill and Peter Casarella.



Passionist Priest, Sebastian McDonald, engages Murnion Lecture speakers on future of the Initiative.

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Bishops at a General Session during the Second Vatican Council.

In addition to the bishops at the Council there were large numbers of theologians. In the decades preceding the Council many of them had been engaged in renewed studies of Scripture, Church history and the vast literature of the early centuries of the Church. They had gone back to the sources and they had enriched contemporary theology with their research and publications. Some bishops were familiar even before the Council with this rich treasure of thought. During the years of the Council many more became familiar with this theology renewed by the sources.

Theologians gave lectures to groups of bishops and served as consultants to commissions of bishops. The Council became a school for the bishops. They came to consensus as they learned the resources of the Church's tradition. This did not happen without contention. It was not easy to surrender familiar patterns of thought.

Patience and hard work were required and ultimately consensus was established on a new common ground: the awareness of the immensely rich tradition of the Church extending from the Scriptures to contemporary theology. The intricate debates of bishops and theologians during the years of the Council led to the near unanimity of the final documents and the renewal of the Church through a reformed pastoral style.

Today we live in another period of pastoral urgency. Threats to the unity of humankind are rising from the intolerance of extremists. The inner spirit of the human being is being eroded by the superficialities of consumerism and hope is being destroyed by the current collapse of unregulated financial markets. This is no time for polarization within the Church. There will always be some conflict, but the search for common ground is more necessary than ever in the face of current pastoral needs. Our tradition is inexhaustible in what it can offer the Church in the present circumstances. Will we have the courage, humility and wisdom of the bishops at Vatican II to look to that tradition for the common ground that we need today?

Mission of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative, inspired by the call to be one in Christ, invites Catholics with differing views about critical issues in the Church to engage in prayerful dialogue for the sake of building up the communion of the Church.

Honoring Ten Years of Prophetic Leadership to the Catholic Common Ground Initiative



Sr. Catherine Patten, the 2010 Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award Recipient.

Sister Catherine Patten, R.S.H.M., was honored as the 2010 recipient of the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Award. The Award is conferred annually on an individual or organization noted for advancing the vision and principles of the Initiative. Sister Catherine, who currently serves as a member of the General Council of the Institute of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, served

as the Initiative's first Coordinator and for three years as Acting Director of National Pastoral Life Center. As the Award Citation read, in part,

"For 10 years Sr. Catherine Patten brought to life the spirit and practice of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative. Grounded in an understanding of the principles of dialogue, she was able to translate their meaning for use in the parishes, organizations, schools and other institutions of the Church. Persuasive as a speaker, Sr. Catherine organized and addressed numerous conferences, colloquia, and conversations, leading participants to

a new vision of how to interact with civility, respect, and professionalism in the ministries they represented. Prophetic as a leader, she articulated the goals of the CCGI and formulated action plans to meet the evolving and complex needs of the contemporary church. Sister Catherine, we salute you, we honor you, and we thank you for the spirited service you have rendered to CCGI." For the full text see CCGI website.



Sister Catherine Patten receives the Cardinal Bernardin Award for her spirited leadership of the mission of CCGI from Advisory Committee Chair, Archbishop Pilarczyk.

Generous Giving from First Appeal

As you might know, since its inception CCGI has been dependent on the generosity of its supporters and foundation grants to fund its services and programs. The same is true today; consequently, we are quite pleased to announce that in response to our first appeal since coming to the Bernardin Center CCGI,

over \$45,000 has been contributed by Friends of CCGI. This generosity will allow us to continue implementing our transition plan. If you would like to contribute to the future of CCGI, please use the envelope inserted in this mailing.

CCGI Advisory Committee: Amidst Transition, Affirming Its Commitment to the New Strategic Plan

For the first time since CCGI's move to the Bernardin Center the CCGI Advisory Committee met June 4-5 in Chicago. Twelve committee members from across the country gathered with the chair, Archbishop Pilarczyk. The first item of business was to welcome two new members to the Committee: Jerome Hickey and Daniel Murray. Jerry is the Founding Managing Director of Dearborn Partners LLC and Dan is a senior partner in the firm of Jenner & Block; both Jerry and Dan are long-time friends of CTU and are looking forward to supporting CCGI and its mission.

Sheila McLaughlin, Director of the Bernardin Center at CTU, shared how welcoming CTU has been in the transition of the Initiative from New York to Chicago and how smoothly the transition has been in incorporating CCGI into the Bernardin Center. She also thanked the Committee members who collectively contributed over \$25,000 to help fund the transition.

The Committee then spent a great deal of time reviewing the new strategic plan, Catholic Common Ground: A Living Witness, and discerning how best to proceed. The Committee affirmed having an annual Murnion Lecture along with the presentation of the Bernardin Award. For the next years it will be held in Chicago to strengthen the ties with CTU but might be held in other locations in the years following. Likewise, the Committee affirmed the importance of sponsoring a conference, but thought it best that it be held every other year. The longer time frame would provide the time needed to both plan the event and gain needed financial support.

A great deal of time was spent in exploring other aspects of the plan, especially engagement with younger people. This will be a clear priority moving forward and is already being discussed for the next Murnion Lecture in June of 2011.

Finally the Committee put in place a process to select next year's Murnion Lecture speaker as well as the Cardinal Joseph Bernardin awardee.



The CCGI Advisory Board Committee Members in attendance at first meeting since transition: (from left to right) Rev. Michael Place, Sheila McLaughlin, Thomas O'Donnell, Diana Hayes, The Most Rev. Oscar Lipscomb, Sr. Catherine Patten, Daniel Murray, The Most Rev. Daniel Pilarczyk, Peter Denio, Jerome Hickey, Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, Lisa Sowle Cahill, and The Most Rev. Michael Warfel.

Catholic Common Ground Initiative Advisory Committee

CHAIR

Most Rev. Daniel E. Pilarczyk
Retired Archbishop of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, OH

MEMBERS

Dr. Lisa Sowle Cahill
Boston College
Newton, MA

Mr. Paul Covino
College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, MA

Thomas J. Donnelly, Esq.
Pittsburgh, PA

Sr. Sharon Euart, R.S.M.
Canon Law Society of America
Silver Spring, MD

Sr. Doris Gottemoeller, R.S.M.
Catholic Healthcare Partners
Cincinnati, OH

Most Rev. Wilton D. Gregory
Archbishop of Atlanta
Atlanta, GA

Dr. Diana Hayes
Georgetown University
Washington, DC

Jerome Hickey
Dearborn Partners LLC
Chicago, IL

Sr. Mary Johnson, S.N.D.deN.
Emmanuel College
Boston, MA

Most Rev. Oscar H. Lipscomb
Retired Archbishop of Mobile
Mobile, AL

Most Rev. Patrick J. McGrath
Bishop of San Jose
Santa Clara, CA

Daniel Murray
Jenner & Block
Chicago, IL

Mr. Thomas L. P. O'Donnell
Boston, MA

Rev. Michael Place
Catholic Health Association
St. Louis, MO

Sr. Katarina Schuth, O.S.F.
St. Paul Seminary
St. Paul, MN

Most Rev. Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B.
Bishop of Las Cruces
Las Cruces, NM

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AFL-CIO
Washington, DC

Rev. Msgr. Dennis Sheehan
St. Paul Parish
Cambridge, MA

Dr. Ana Maria Diaz Stevens
Union Theological Seminary
New York, NY

Rev. Msgr. John Strykowski
St. James Cathedral Basilica
Brooklyn, NY

Amy Uelman, Esq.
*Institute of Religion,
Law & Lawyers Work*
Fordham Univ. School of Law
New York, NY

Most Rev. Michael W. Warfel
Bishop of Great Falls-Billings
Great Falls, MT

Rev. Reginald Whitt, O.P.
University of St. Thomas
School of Law
Minneapolis, MN



U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH:
THE CHALLENGE OF
COMMUNION
November 4-5, 2010 | Chicago, Illinois

The Catholic Common Ground Initiative of Catholic Theological Union and DePaul's University for World Catholicism are co-sponsoring a conference:

**“U.S. Catholicism:
The Challenge of Communion”**

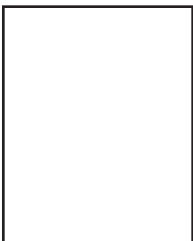
When: November 4-5, 2010

Where: November 4 at DePaul University,
November 5 at Catholic Theological Union

The Conference will examine challenges in key areas of the life of the Church, naming the points of difference and conflict, and lifting up opportunities for building communion.

Focus areas for the conference will be Youth and Young Adults, Cultural Integrity, Racism, Catholic Identity, and Liturgy.

The cost of the two day conference is \$40 or \$25 for one day registration. For more information and to register go to <http://communion.depaul.edu>.



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