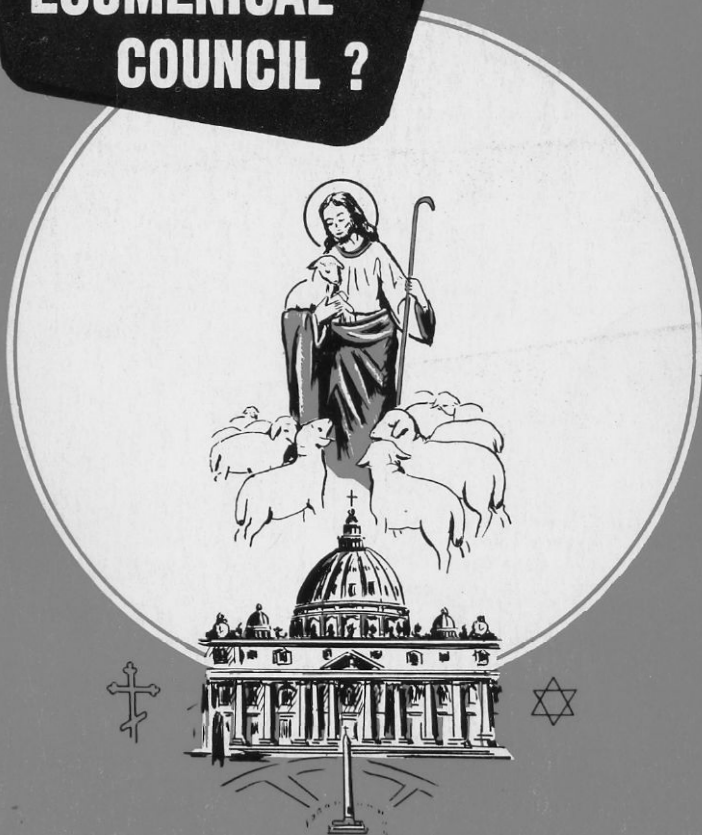


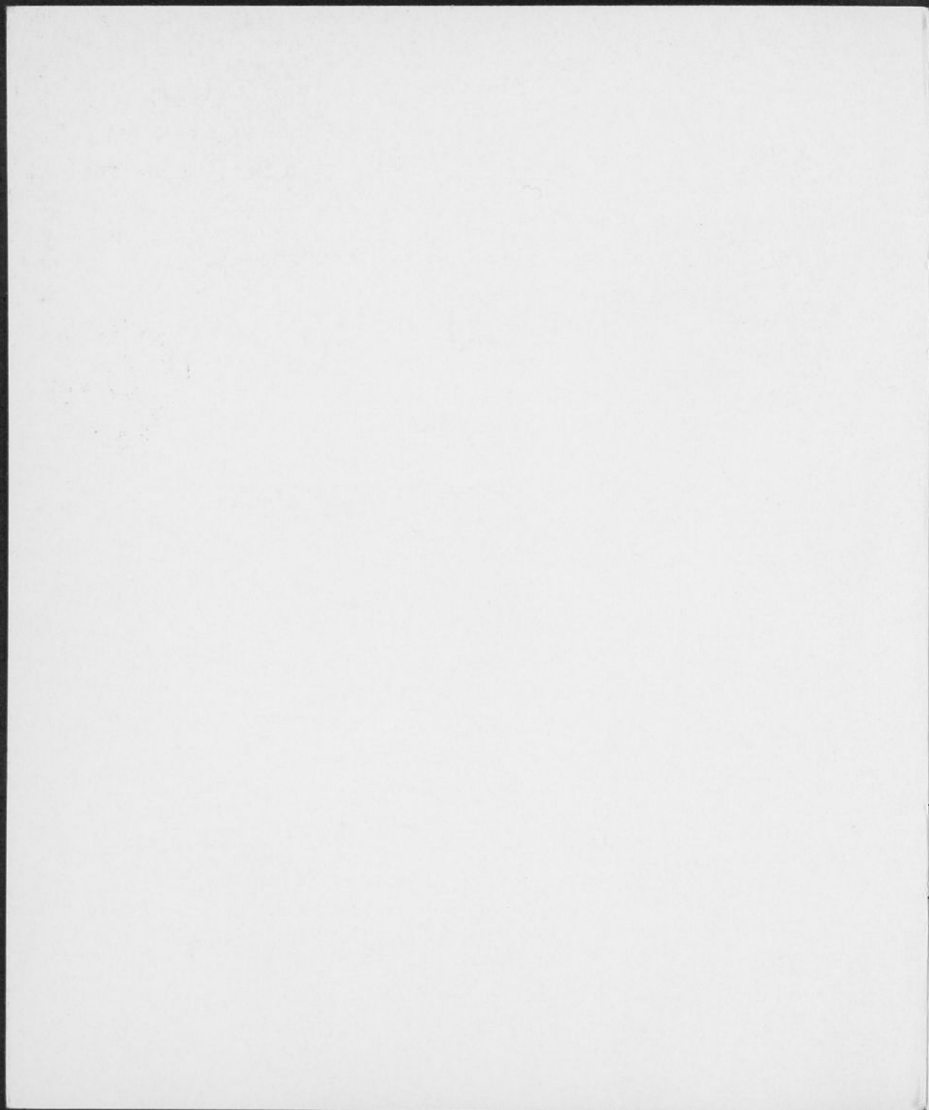
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- What is an ecumenical
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What is an ECUMENICAL COUNCIL ?

By Rev. Joseph F. Collins



With a foreword by His Eminence John Cardinal O'Hara, C.S.C., D.D., Archbishop of Philadelphia



What Is

AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL?

by

REV. JOSEPH F. COLLINS

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FOREWORD

It is the hope of Holy Mother Church that her faithful children will always be able to give a reasonable answer to the questions about the Catholic Faith which are proposed to them by those in their own state of life — their neighbors, their friends, their fellow workmen, and the like.

The Twenty-first Ecumenical Council, preparations for which have been announced by His Holiness Pope John XXIII, is an event of major importance. The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and the Holy Name Society have collaborated in the presentation of this brochure, which gives you a background of information on the idea of a General Council and the particular twenty Councils that have been held in the past.

May I suggest that this brochure be read aloud at home and discussed by all the members of the family who have reached the age of reason. While this will not make you an "expert" in the matter of General Councils, it will help you to answer the reasonable questions of those in your own state of life.

Asking your prayers for the success of the Council and begging God's blessing on all of you, I am,

Sincerely yours in Our Lord,

✠ JOHN CARDINAL O'HARA, C.S.C.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

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WHAT IS AN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL?

The term "Ecumenical Council" is going to be in the news for a long time. The proceedings conducted under that name and the decisions reached are going to make news. The results of the Council will definitely influence the whole world and everyone in the world. No one will escape the influence of the Council because even at this early date it is receiving world-wide news coverage. When it convenes, the news and views of the Council will be disseminated quickly and accurately by the most modern electronic equipment. The reactions to the Council will run the gamut from profound joy and hope through mere curiosity to the inevitable bigotry and disdain. No one will be able to remain indifferent. We Catholics will be asked many questions about the Council. It is the purpose of this pamphlet to help us give intelligent and honest answers.

The Catholic Encyclopedia gives us the definition of a Council: "Councils are legally convened assemblies of ecclesiastical dignitaries and theological experts for the purpose of discussing and regulating matters of church doctrine and discipline." There are various kinds of Councils distinguished according to their territorial extension. A Provincial Council (Canon 283) brings together the suffragan bishops of the dioceses which constitute an ecclesiastical province under the Metropolitan (Archbishop). For example, Harrisburg, Scranton, Altoona,

etc., are suffragan Sees of Philadelphia. A Plenary Council (Canon 281), (such as the Councils of Baltimore) is composed of the Ordinaries and those entitled to vote from several ecclesiastical provinces. A Papal Legate must preside (Canon 281). There are National or Patriarchal Councils which decree for an entire nation or a whole patriarchate. There have been General Councils of the East or the West affecting only the Oriental Rite or the Roman Rite. There have also been "Mixed Councils" composed of both civil and church dignitaries to settle secular as well as ecclesiastical matters. The Diocesan Synod is not really a Council since the members of the synod, other than the Ordinary, have no decisive vote. A Diocesan Synod is presided over by the Ordinary or Vicar-General and its decrees affect only that particular diocese. The annual meeting of the bishops at Washington, D. C., is not a Council but merely an assembly or meeting.

The word "ecumenical" comes from the Greek language and means "the whole world." An Ecumenical Council is one to which the bishops, and others entitled to vote, are convoked from the whole world under the presidency of the Pope or his legates, and the decrees of which, having received papal confirmation, bind all Christians. Unlike other councils, synods and assemblies the decisions and decrees concerning faith and morals arrived at in an Ecumenical Council are infallible. The results of the coming Ecumenical Council will proclaim infallible divine truth.

NECESSARY ELEMENTS OF A COUNCIL

There are five constitutional elements or legal requisites which are necessary for a Council. They are as follows:

1. *The Council must be legally convened.*

The one who arranges the assembly must have the legal authority to do so. The Council could not be convened by an ordinary priest or by an ordinary layman. A Provincial Council must be convoked by the Metropolitan. A Diocesan Synod must be convoked by the Ordinary or Vicar-General. There can be no Ecumenical Council unless it is convoked by the Roman Pontiff. (Canon 222.) For example, the Council of Constance had been in session for some time but only became legitimate when Pope Gregory XII formally convoked it. It is true the first eight Ecumenical Councils were convoked by Christian Emperors but this was always done with the expressed, or at least presumed permission or subsequent sanction of the Holy Father. The Emperor merely issued formal invitations. The practical reason for this was that the emperor had greater access to means of communication and transportation. The Seventh Ecumenical Council was convoked by the Emperor Constantine and his mother, Irene, and was presided over by the legates of Pope Adrian I. The forthcoming Council will be legally convoked by Pope John XXIII.

2. *The participants are members of the hierarchy.*

Of necessity, the members of the hierarchy are the leaders of the Church in their double capacity of judges and teachers. They have the divine authority to administer and they are assisted in their deliberations by skilled theologians and experts on Church Law. Besides members of the hierarchy (Cardinals, Archbishops, Primate, Bishops) Abbots and those designated by law may be invited, and if so, have decisive votes in the Council. Theologians and experts in Canon Law have only advisory votes. (Canon 223.) Others may act as advisers, interpreters or observers but only those so legally constituted have the right to vote.

PARTICIPANTS

The Law of the Church (THE CODE OF CANON LAW) names those who shall be called to the Council and have a decisive vote:

- (a) The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, even though they are not bishops;
- (b) The Patriarchs, Primate, Archbishops and Residential Bishops, even those not yet consecrated;
- (c) The Abbots or Prelates Nullius;
- (d) The Abbot Primate, abbots who are superiors of monastic congregations, the supreme heads of exempt organizations of religious clergy. The superiors general

of other religious bodies are not to be called, unless the bull of convocation explicitly states otherwise.

If titular bishops are called to the Ecumenical Council, they also have a decisive vote, unless it is otherwise provided in the decree of convocation (Canon 223).

If any of the above-mentioned clergy, who, according to the foregoing Canon must be summoned to the Council, cannot come on account of some just impediment, he shall send a proxy and prove the impediment. If the proxy is one of the Fathers of the Council, he shall not have a double vote; if he is not, he shall be allowed to be present only at the public sessions, but without a vote. At the completion of the Council he is entitled to subscribe his name to the acts of the Council (Canon 224).

3. For the purpose of legislating on disciplinary and doctrinal matters.

A conclave of bishops meeting either at regular times or under extraordinary circumstances for the purpose of deliberating current questions of administration or concerted action in social emergencies would not be a Council but merely an assembly or meeting. The purpose of the Council is to decree on matters of Church discipline and doctrine. For example, the First Council (Nicaea, 325) defined the true Divinity of the Son of God and also established the date for observing Easter. The Council of Trent condemned the errors of Luther and other Reformers and also improved the discipline of the Church.

4. *By means of deliberation in common.*

Deliberation, with free discussion and ventilation of private views, is one of the essential components of a Council. This is called the "Sensus Ecclesiae" or the mind of the Church in action. There will be the contrast of conflicting opinions and the actual clash of one school of thought against another. These are necessary in shaping dogmatic definitions and authoritative decrees. This is the element of the human battleground from which will emerge the final triumph of faith.

5. *The final definitions and decrees will have the authority of the whole assembly.*

The Council's decisions will reflect the strength and weight of the combined action of the whole body. In an Ecumenical Council the final definitions and decrees touching upon faith and morals are *infallible* for two reasons:

First, by virtue of the Infallibility of the Church. Shortly before His Ascension Our Divine Saviour solemnly commissioned His Apostles; "All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days even to the consum-

mation of the world." (Matt. XXVIII 18-20). This is a promise of infallible guidance in doctrinal teaching made to the Apostolic College in the first instance and then to the hierarchical college that was to succeed it. It is a promise of a living voice speaking infallibly to every generation on any question that may arise affecting the substance of Christ's teaching. The Vatican Council teaches, "The doctrine of faith, which God has revealed, has not been proposed as a philosophical discovery to be improved upon by human talent, but has been committed as a Divine deposit to the spouse of Christ, to be faithfully guarded and infallibly interpreted by her."

Residential Bishops in union with the Pope enjoy this prerogative of infallibility in the everyday exercise of their episcopal authority. When the Bishops are convened in an Ecumenical Council the Infallibility of the Church becomes more apparent. If Christ promised to be present with even two or three of His disciples gathered together in His name (Matt. XVIII, 20) most assuredly will He be present efficaciously in a representative assembly of His authorized teachers. St. Athanasius wrote, "What God has spoken through the Council of Nicaea endureth forever."

Secondly, the decisions of an Ecumenical Council are infallible by reason of the Pope's presence as head of the

Church and Council. Our Lord, speaking directly to Simon, said, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. XVI, 18). Again, speaking to Peter, Christ said, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." (Luke XXII, 31-32). This special prayer was for St. Peter alone in his capacity as head of the Church. It follows that to St. Peter and his successors was personally committed the office of confirming the brethren — the other Bishops and then the faithful generally — in infallible doctrine. In the fourth session of the Vatican Council (July 18, 1870) Pope Pius IX explained, "Whoever succeeds Peter in this chair, he according to the institution of Christ himself, holds the primacy of Peter over the whole Church." In John, XXI, 15-17 we have the record of Christ's thrice-repeated demand for a confession of Peter's love and the thrice-repeated commission to feed the lambs and the sheep: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these? Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee. Feed My lambs. Feed My sheep." Here the complete and supreme pastoral charge of the whole of Christ's flock — sheep as well as lambs — is given to St. Peter and his successors, and in this is undoubtedly comprised supreme doctrinal authority.

THE POPE AND THE COUNCIL

Canon Law decrees that an Ecumenical Council must be convoked by the Roman Pontiff (Canon 222). This Canon also specifies the rights of the Holy Father regarding an Ecumenical Council as follows:

1. *The Pope presides over the Council as President either in person or through his Legates.*

The Vatican Council (December 8, 1869-October 20, 1870) was presided over by Pope Pius IX in person. On the other hand, in the year 869, Pope Adrian II sent his legates (3) to the Fourth Council of Constantinople expressly declaring to the Emperor Basil, that they were to act as Presidents of the Council. In the Acts of the Council their names were always placed first, and first place was always reserved for their signatures. For their final signatures they used the form, "presiding over this holy and universal synod." At the same time, Ignatius, Patriarch of Constantinople, wrote his signature with this formula, "receiving this holy and universal synod and agreeing with all it has judged and written, and defining I have signed."

2. *The Holy Father determines the matters to be discussed and their order of precedence.*

Pope John XXIII has appointed the Vatican Secretary of State, His Eminence Domenico Cardinal Tardini, to form a preparatory commission with ten other members

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to draw up concrete proposals for the Council's agenda. The Commission receives the opinions and advice of the Bishops and others who will attend the council. The Roman Congregations (the Church's major administrative agencies) are forming study commissions on the Council. Scholars from various nations and language groups are being consulted. The rectors of the Church's major institutions of higher learning will submit their suggestions. When all this data has been compiled and formulated the Holy Father will make final determination concerning the matters to be discussed and their proper order.

3. *The Pope has the right to transfer, suspend or dissolve the Council.*

Since the Holy Father alone has the right to convoke an Ecumenical Council it naturally follows that he alone has the right to transfer, suspend or dissolve it. In the event of a major catastrophe, such as an epidemic or world war, the Pope would transfer the locale of the Council to a more favorable site, suspend it for the duration of the emergency, or dissolve it completely. No member of the Council is permitted to leave before the Council is lawfully terminated unless the President approves of his reason for leaving and grants him the necessary permission (Canon 225). In the event of the

death of the Roman Pontiff during the progress of the Council, the Council is automatically suspended by law until the new Pontiff orders its resumption and continuation (Canon 229).

4. The Holy Father confirms and promulgates the decrees of the Council.

The Pope is the visible head of the Church. Without the Pope's approval the Council would be a headless, soulless body unable to give its decisions the binding force of law for the whole Church. With papal approval, however, the Council's decrees represent the fullest effort of the teaching and ruling power of the Church, a "judicium plenissimum" beyond which no power can go. The Pope's approval is a personal act of the highest authority because the highest authority cannot be delegated. Explicit and definitive approbation is always necessary. The faithful would hesitate to accept as infallible guides of their faith documents which have not been authenticated by the seal of the Fisherman. The Pope's approbation is the authoritative factor for the binding force of the Council's decisions. Pope Leo II ratified the procedures of the Sixth General Council in these words, "Because this great and universal synod has most fully proclaimed the definition of the right faith, which the Apostolic See of St. Peter the Apostle, whose office we,

though unequal to it, are holding, also reverently receives: therefore we also, and through our office this Apostolic See, consent to, and confirm, by the authority of Blessed Peter, those things which have been defined as being finally set by the Lord Himself on the solid rock which is Christ."

Because an Eumenical Council is composed of Bishops representing all parts of the world, the papal ratification formally promulgates its decrees as truths to be known and accepted by all the faithful. Some of the decrees may be articles of divine faith, the denial of which is heresy; others may be matters of ecclesiastical faith, the denial of which would be an error in ecclesiastical faith. Some may pertain directly to the deposit of divine revelation; others may refer to the secondary object of infallibility, e.g., disciplinary matters. Even those who refuse to recognize the pope's authority and his infallibility in teaching faith and morals must be impressed by the salutary and healing effect his final approbation and promulgation has on the entire council. Personal, local and national aims (due to the defects and shortcomings of human nature) are forgotten in the final unanimous assent to the Council's transactions and conclusions.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POPE AND BISHOPS

The relationship between the Pope and the Bishops in an Ecumenical Council must be clearly understood to avoid any popular misconceptions. If we associate the phrase "the Council represents the Church," with our modern idea of representative assemblies we shall have a wrong conception of a basic element of the Council.

The Church is the mystical body of Christ of which the Pope is the visible head and we are the members. To be a living body the head and members must be united. The Residential Bishops from all parts of the world convened in Council under the headship of the Pope represent the Church both physically and morally. They represent the peoples and cultures and customs throughout the entire world. This physical representation need not be complete for if, for example, some Bishops are restrained by their governments from attending the Council, they and their flocks will still be represented by the Bishops who are present. The Bishops assembled morally represent the entire Church for they attest to the unity of doctrine and essential discipline.

The Church as the mystical body of Christ has three distinct organs of Infallibility: 1. The Residential Bishops dispersed throughout the world in union with the Holy See. This is the common everyday teaching authority of the Church. 2. Ecumenical Councils under the headship of the Pope. 3. The Pope himself, separately. The

second and third represent the solemn, definitive authority of the Church. Should the majority of Bishops in a Council vote with the Pope the definitive decisions of the Council would be infallible. A majority vote of Conciliar Bishops apart from the Pope would not enjoy Conciliar infallibility. (It would be like a lifeless, soulless body without a head.) Should the Pope confirm the minority vote of the Council, that decision would be infallible by reason of the Pope's infallibility. The Pope would then be teaching "ex cathedra."

In the modern democratic process the civil authorities are created by, and receive their power from the will of the people they represent. They are thereby bound to protect and promote the interests of their electors. Their authority and duties are prescribed by local, or at best, national welfare. On the contrary, the bishops in an Ecumenical Council hold no power, commission or delegation from the people. Their power and jurisdiction come ultimately from God. The Bishops in Council represent the *magisterium*, i.e., the teaching and governing power of the Church. Their interests are to defend and protect the "Deposit of Faith," the revealed truths concerning faith and morals. The interests of the Bishops in Council are solely the interests of God.

In modern governments the Congress or Parliament (or their counterparts) are very often commissioned to limit and control the power of the President or head of

State. This is not the function of the Bishops in an Ecumenical Council. The proper employment of their faculties and powers is co-operation—the unified action of all the members with the head. The Bishops support and strengthen the authority of the Pope and present to the world a universal agreement with and acceptance of the decrees of the Sovereign Pontiff on matters of faith and morals.

NEED FOR ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

Although Canon Law provides that in each ecclesiastical Province a Provincial Council shall be held at least every twenty years (Canon 283), there is no such legislation concerning an Ecumenical Council. Actually, Ecumenical Councils have no necessary part in the ordinary normal government of the Church. This is demonstrated by the fact that there have been only twenty such Councils in the nearly two thousand years of the Church's history. It is further confirmed by the fact that these Councils have not been held at regular intervals. The decree issued in the thirty-ninth session of the Council of Constance (without papal authority, having no representative of the Pope presiding) that Ecumenical Councils should be convoked frequently and at regular intervals, has never been observed.

Ecumenical Councils are convoked, therefore, only when, in the mind of the Sovereign Pontiff, they will be

necessary or useful in supporting papal authority, defining and strengthening doctrine and correcting laxity in discipline. Such emergencies could be occasioned by great schisms or widespread heresy. Another reason for convoking an Ecumenical Council would be to add new impetus and renewed vigor to the Church in her primary work for the salvation of souls.

FORMER COUNCILS

During the history of the Church there have been twenty Ecumenical Councils. The first was convened at Nicaea (Iznik, in Asia Minor) in the year 325 and lasted two months and twelve days. Hosius, Bishop of Cordova, assisted as legate of Pope Sylvester. The Emperor Constantine attended. The Council gave us the Nicene Creed (the Creed used in Mass is from the First Council of Constantinople, 381). The twentieth, or Vatican Council, was convoked by Pius IX in 1869. It was adjourned October 20, 1870 but is still unfinished. It decreed the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. The Council of Trent lasted eighteen years under five popes (1545-1563), from Paul III to Pius IV, and under two emperors, Charles V and Ferdinand.

The first Council of the Church was the Council of Jerusalem. It was held during the lifetime of the Apostles and is related in the Bible in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It was convened to decide whether

or not converted Gentiles had to be circumcised. It was decided on the authority of Peter that circumcision was not necessary. "And when there had been much disputing, Peter, rising up, said to them: Men, brethren, you know, that in former days God made choice among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, gave testimony, giving unto them the Holy Ghost, as well as to us and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts XV, 7-9.) "For it has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things." (Acts XV, 28.)

The Council of Jerusalem was not Ecumenical (world wide) but it did establish, through the verity of Sacred Scripture, the authority of the Pope (Peter) and the infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There were about 1300 participants at the Fourth Lateran Council under Pope Innocent III (1215). The Fourteenth Ecumenical Council (Lyons, 1274) was attended by Pope Gregory X, the Patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople, 15 Cardinals 500 Bishops and more than 1000 other dignitaries. About 803 members participated in the Vatican Council (1869-1870). It has not been disclosed how many will attend the present Council but the number could well be in the thousands. The language used will probably be the Latin of the Church (in contrast to the classical Latin of e.g., Cicero).

REASON FOR TWENTY-FIRST COUNCIL

Pope John XXIII has indicated in his first encyclical "Ad Petri Cathedram" (Near the Chair of Peter) the reason for convoking the forthcoming Ecumenical Council:

"It was under the guidance of this comforting hope (Note: i.e., the granting of Christ's prayer for unity (John XVII, 21) which encouraged Us very much, that We publicly announced the plan to summon an ecumenical council, to which Bishops from every part of the world will come to discuss matters important to religion. The Council's chief business will concern the growth of the Catholic Faith and the renewal along right lines of the habits of Christian people, and the adapting of ecclesiastical discipline to the needs and conditions of the present time. That event will surely be a wonderful manifestation of truth, unity and charity, a manifestation, indeed, which it is Our hope that those who behold it, but who are separated from this Apostolic See, will receive as a gentle invitation to seek and find that unity for which Jesus Christ prayed so ardently to His Heavenly Father."

The Holy Father explains what must be understood by "unity" and how it must be achieved: "It is a unity which is distinguished and adorned by these three marks: unity of doctrine, of government, of religious practice," and later, "In essentials, unity: in doubtful matters, liberty: in all, charity."

THE COUNCIL & SEPARATED BODIES

This Christlike invitation for unity is undoubtedly being heard by those great bodies who are separated from the Chair of Peter. It is the traditional invitation which the Church always gives — “to return to their Father’s house.” To these bodies the Councils of history have directed their attention and their instruction. While correcting errors and confirming ecclesiastical government with authority, the Fathers of the Councils have taught the separated bodies with that true charity which bespeaks the Mother Church.

The errors of the Oriental Dissidents were refuted and Catholic doctrine explained in the Second Council of Lyons, 1274 (fourteenth Ecumenical Council) under Pope Gregory X. “We believe also that the Holy Spirit is complete and perfect and true God, proceeding from the Father and the Son, coequal and consubstantial, co-omnipotent, and co-eternal through all things with the Father and the Son. We believe that this holy Trinity is not three Gods but one God, omnipotent, eternal, invisible and unchangeable.”

Also this same Holy Roman Church holds the highest and complete primacy and spiritual power over the universal Catholic Church which she truly and humbly recognizes herself to have received with fullness of power from the Lord Himself in Blessed Peter, the chief or

head of the Apostles whose successor is the Roman Pontiff."

The errors of the Protestants were refuted in the Council of Trent 1545-1563 (nineteenth Ecumenical Council): "But when the Apostle says that man is justified "by Faith" (Can. 9) and "freely" (Rom. III, 22-24), these words must be understood in that sense in which the uninterrupted consent of the Catholic Church has held and expressed, namely, that we are therefore said to be justified by faith, because "faith is the beginning of human salvation," "the foundation and root of all justification, without which it is impossible to please God" (Heb. XI, 6) and to come to the fellowship of His sons, and are, therefore, said to be justified gratuitously, because none of these things which precede justification, whether faith, or works merit the grace itself of justification, for, "if it is a grace, it is not now by reason of works; otherwise (as the same Apostle says) grace is no more grace." (Rom. XI, 6.)

The Papal Bull "Exsurge Domine" issued by Leo X on June 15, 1520 condemned forty-one of Luther's propositions and threatened excommunication unless he retracted within sixty days. This, Luther refused to do.

To the Jews and others who refused to recognize the divinity of Christ and the establishment of His Church, the early Councils bore infallible witness to the Creed of the Apostles, the divinity of Christ, the Most Blessed

Trinity, and the primacy of Peter. In the Council of Ephesus (431) we read, "No one doubts, but rather it has been known to all generations, that the holy and most blessed Peter, chief and head of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith, the foundation stone of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from Our Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour and Redeemer of the human race, and that the power of binding and loosing sins was given to him, who up to this moment and always lives in his successors, and judges."

In the fourth session of the Vatican Council (July 18, 1870) when papal infallibility was defined, the Council proclaimed "that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks 'ex cathedra,' that is, when carrying out the duty of the pastor and teacher of all Christians in accord with his supreme apostolic authority he explains a doctrine of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church, through the divine assistance promised him in blessed Peter, operates with that infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished that His church be instructed in defining doctrine on faith and morals; and so such definitions of the Roman Pontiff of themselves, and not from the consensus of the Church, are unalterable."

The forthcoming Ecumenical Council, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will undoubtedly promote new and effective means for disseminating these salutary truths throughout the whole world.

NEED FOR PRAYER

His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, recognizes the need for divine assistance when He invites everyone to pray for the success of the Council:

“The outcome of the future Ecumenical Council depends more, indeed, on all vying with each other in the ardor of their united prayers, than on human effort, industry and diligence. To take part in this prayerful appeal to God, We invite most lovingly those, also, who, though they are not of this fold, yet reverently worship God and with good will strive to keep His commandments.”

This invitation of Our Holy Father is primarily one of prayer—the prayers of all—that God will bless the forthcoming Ecumenical Council with fruit. That invitation can surely be re-echoed by us if we call upon the intercessory power of the saints in heaven and seek their prayerful aid. We are aware of the fact that according to the teaching of our Holy Faith concerning the doctrine of the Communion of the Saints the blessed in heaven are not unmindful of the needs of the faithful on earth nor do they ever cease imploring divine assistance for the members of the Church Militant. Their knowledge of our conditions and our desire to serve God ever more perfectly will surely enlist for us the benign patronage of the blessed Apostles and all the saintly Doctors of the Church.

Were St. Peter and the other Apostles to be transplanted from their age on earth (the first century) to this Twentieth Century, devoid of knowledge of things temporal which they now have, almost everything would be entirely strange and foreign to their own personal experiences. They would be amazed at our mode of travel, jet planes, luxury liners, diesel propelled railroads, automobiles and atomic submarines. They would be awe-stricken at our huge skyscrapers with their elevators, our libraries, museums and comfortable homes. They would be tempted to disbelieve our methods of communication, telephone, radio and television. They would be keenly interested in our modern efficiency in catching, preserving, canning and selling fish. They would find delight (as do others) in our supermarkets. They would wonder at our immense farms and great herds of cattle. They would not be surprised at the rumbles of wars and the persecution of the Church because these things they, themselves, experienced. They would, however, be dismayed at those who call themselves Christians, who fail to love Christ sufficiently or reject His divine commands. They would be saddened at the lack of Christian charity and zeal.

Were the Apostles to visit the Ecumenical Council, however, they would no longer be strangers. They would immediately recall the words of Christ, "For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew XVIII, 20.) and "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation

of the world." (Matthew XXVIII, 20.) They would recognize the Pope as the faithful successor of Peter guarding and feeding the flock of Christ. They would rejoice in fraternal love with the modern Apostles, the Bishops from all over the world. They would unite in the prayers to the Blessed Virgin, remembering that it was she who besought the first miracle at Cana, proving the divinity of her Son. It was she, who (when they fled) remained steadfast at the Cross on Calvary interceding for the salvation of the human race. They would visualize again those days in the Cenacle at Jerusalem, when Mary prayed for them and with them for the coming of the Holy Ghost (Acts I, 14). They would remember the first Pentecost when Peter went forth courageously and spoke the Gospel of Christ to the strangers from the four corners of the earth. They would still marvel at the work of God on that birthday of the Church when three thousand were converted (Acts II, 41).

They would heartily endorse the sentiments of the new Peter, John XXIII, speaking from the Eternal City, stretching forth his arms in all the humility and love of Christ-like charity, beseeching everyone, "Note, we beg of you, that when We lovingly invite you to the unity of the Church We are inviting you, not to the home of a stranger, but your own, to the Father's house which belongs to us all." (First Encyclical.)

BRIEF HISTORY OF ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

1. First Council of Nicaea (325). Hosius, Bishop of Cordova presided as legate of Pope Sylvester I. Emperor Constantine and three hundred and eighteen Bishops were present. Refuted the Arian heresy concerning the divinity of Christ, proclaimed the Creed of Nicaea and established the method for calculating the date for observing Easter.

2. First Council of Constantinople (381). Convoked by Pope Damasus and Emperor Theodosius I. One hundred and fifty Bishops attended. Condemned the heresy of the Macedonians concerning the divinity of the Holy Ghost and added the clause "qui simul adoretur" and the present ending to the Nicene Creed.

3. Council of Ephesus (431). Presided over by St. Cyril of Alexandria as legate of Pope St. Celestine I. More than two hundred Bishops attended. Declared Mary to be the Mother of God against the heresy of the Nestorians and renewed the condemnation of the Pelagians.

4. Council of Chalcedon (451). Pope St. Leo I, the Great and the Emperor Marcian. One hundred and fifty Bishops attended. Refuted the errors of the Monophysites and defined the two natures (divine and human) of Christ.

5. Second Council of Constantinople (553). Pope Vigilius and Emperor Justinian I. One hundred and sixty-five Bishops were present. Condemned the Three Chapters (Theodoret—Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ibas of Edessa) and confirmed the first four Councils.

6. Third Council of Constantinople (680-681). Convoled by Pope St. Agatho and Emperor Constantine Pogonatus. The Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch with one hundred and seventy-four Bishops attended. Against the Monothelites and defined the two Wills of Christ.

7. Second Council of Nicaea (787). Convoled by Emperor Constantine VI and his mother, Irene under Pope Adrian I. Papal legates presided over the (approximately) three hundred and fifty Bishops who attended. Against the Iconoclasts and regulated the veneration of sacred images.

8. Fourth Council of Constantinople (869-870). Under Pope Adrian II and Emperor Basil. Three Papal Legates presided over four Patriarchs and one hundred and two Bishops. Condemned Photius who had illegally seized patriarchal dignity. The Photian Schism prevailed and no other General Council was held in the East.

9. First Lateran Council (1123). First to be held in the Lateran at Rome. Pope Callistus II presided over nine hundred Bishops and Abbots. Issued decrees concerning simony, celibacy and lay investiture.

10. Second Lateran Council (1139). Pope Innocent II presided over about one thousand Prelates. Emperor Conrad attended. Decreed against the pseudo-pontiffs.

11. Third Lateran Council (1179). Pope Alexander III presided. Emperor was Frederick the First. Three hundred and two Bishops were present. Decreed against the Albigensians and Waldensians.

12. Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Pope Innocent III presided. Present were the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople, seventy-one Archbishops, four hundred and twelve Bishops, eight hundred Abbots, the Primate of the Maronites and St. Dominic. This was considered the most important council of the Middle Ages. Decreed against the errors of the Albigensians, Abbot Joachim and Waldensians and made many reforms.

13. First Council of Lyons (1245). Pope Innocent IV presided. Present were the Patriarchs of Constantinople, Antioch and Venice with one hundred and forty Bishops. St. Louis, King of France and Emperor Baldwin II of the East attended. It deposed Emperor Frederick II, dealt with the Rites of the Greeks and organized a new Crusade against the infidels.

14. Second Council of Lyons (1274). Pope Gregory X presided. Present were the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Antioch, fifteen Cardinals, five hundred Bishops and more than one thousand other dignitaries. It issued a declaration concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost

from the Father and the Son (filioque); caused a temporary reunion with the Greek Church and ruled concerning papal elections.

15. Council of Vienne (1311-1312). Convoled by Pope Clement V (the first of the Avignon Popes). Present were King Philip IV of France, King Edward II of England and King James II of Aragon. The Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria along with three hundred bishops completed the Council. Abolished the Knights Templars and decreed against the errors of the Beghards and Beguines.

16. Council of Constance (1414-1418). Convoled by Emperor-elect Sigismund to end the great schism of the West. During the Council Martin V was elected Pope (1417). He confirmed the early decrees of the Council against the heresy of Wycliff and Hus. Pope Gregory XII formally convoled the Council making it legitimate and granting infallibility to the decrees of the last four sessions. (Note: Space does not permit the history of this period to be related here).

17. Council of Florence (1438-1445). This Council first met at Basle (1431), was transferred to Ferrara (1438) and later transferred to Florence (1439). Pope Eugene IV was Pope and Sigismund was Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. The Council endeavored to affect a re-union with the Greeks, Armenians and Jacobites. The union was short-lived.

18. Fifth Council of the Lateran (1512-1517). While the Council was in session Julius II died and was succeeded by Pope Leo X. The Emperor was Maximilian I. Fifteen Cardinals and about eighty Archbishops and Bishops attended. The decrees issued were mostly disciplinary to effect reforms in the Church. During the latter part of the Council Germany began to suffer the first throes of the religious upheaval caused by Martin Luther.

19. Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Popes were Paul III, Julius III, Marcellus II, Paul IV and Pius IV. The Emperors were Charles V and Ferdinand. The Council lasted eighteen years. Present were five Cardinal-Legates of the Holy See, three Patriarchs, thirty-three Archbishops, two hundred and thirty-five Bishops, seven Abbots, seven Superior Generals of monastic orders and one hundred and sixty Doctors of Divinity. It examined and condemned the errors of Luther and the other Reformers. It issued decrees on Sacred Tradition, the acceptance of the Vulgate edition of the Bible, the prescribed method for the proper interpretation of Sacred Scriptures, Original Sin, Justification, the seven Sacraments and many more doctrines of the Catholic Faith. It is considered the most beneficial of all the former Councils.

20. Vatican Council (1869-1870). Convoled by Pope Pius IX. It met on December 8, 1869 and was adjourned

on October 20, 1870. It is still unfinished. Present were six Archbishops-Princes, forty-nine Cardinals, eleven Patriarchs, six hundred and eighty Archbishops and Bishops, twenty-eight Abbots and twenty-nine Generals of Orders. The Council made important decisions and decrees concerning the Faith and the constitution of the Church. It also decreed the infallibility of the Pope when speaking "ex cathedra."

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ABBOT — The regular superior of an abbey of Benedictines, Cistercians or other monks, or Canons Regular. The father, ruler and teacher of a monastery.

ABBOT PRIMATE — The representative head of the Benedictine Order who resides in Rome.

ARCHBISHOP — The bishop of a diocese (archdiocese) who has certain defined authority over the bishops of a particular territory called a province.

BISHOP — The supreme ecclesiastical ruler of a diocese. A successor of the Apostles.

BULL (PAPAL) — The most solemn and weighty form of a papal letter. Formerly was sealed with a lead seal (Latin: *bull*a, a bubble).

CANON — Rule, law, decree or definition concerning Christian faith or discipline. The Code of Canon Law (1918) contains 2,414 canons. The Canons quoted in the text are from the Code.

CARDINAL — A member of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Cardinals are counsellors and assistants to the Pope in governing the Church. A Prince of the Church. Since the Code he must be a priest.

DIOCESE — The territory governed by a bishop.

ECCLESIASTICAL — Of or pertaining to the church.

ECUMENICAL — (Pronounced: Ek-kew-MEN-i-cal).

Of or pertaining to the Christian church throughout the whole world. Universal.

HERESY — As a sin, it is the denial by a baptized person of any revealed truth of the Catholic Church. As a crime, it is the outward and contumacious persistence in the sin.

HIERARCHY — The organization of the ranks and orders of the clergy in successive grades: bishop, priest, deacon.

INFALLIBILITY — The incapability of teaching what is false.

LEGATE — An ecclesiastic representing the Holy See with certain delegated power or authority.

METROPOLITAN — The archbishop who presides over a province and has suffragan sees under him.

MONASTIC — Pertaining to a monastery or a community of monks.

ORDINARY — A cleric with ordinary jurisdiction in a specified territory, as the bishop in his diocese.

PATRIARCH — A bishop who holds the highest rank, after the Pope, in the hierarchy of jurisdiction.

PRELATE-NULLIUS — One having independent jurisdiction over a district not under the authority of a diocesan bishop.

PRIMATE — A bishop who, without the rank of patriarch, exercises jurisdiction over all the metropolitans and bishops of a given district or country.

PROVINCE — The territory over which an archbishop exercises metropolitan jurisdiction: for example, his own archdiocese and at least one suffragan diocese.

SCHISM — The refusal to submit to the authority of the Pope.

SUFFRAGAN — The diocesan bishop and his see subject to an archbishop as metropolitan in a province.

SUPERIOR GENERAL — The ecclesiastical authority over all the members of a particular Religious Order.

SYNOD — An ecclesiastical council. Particularly a meeting of diocesan clergy presided over by the Ordinary or Vicar-General for the consideration of diocesan regulations.

THEOLOGY — The science which treats of God and the things of God.

TITULAR BISHOP — A bishop consecrated for a see which for some reason no longer exists; an auxiliary bishop.

VICAR GENERAL — A deputy appointed by a bishop to assist him in the government of his diocese.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is a council? A Provincial council? A Plenary council? National or Patriarchal council? General councils of the East or West? A mixed-council? A diocesan synod? PAGES 1 and 2.
2. What does the word "ecumenical" mean? How do the decrees of an ecumenical council differ from the decrees of other councils? PAGE 2.
3. What are the legal requisites necessary for an ecumenical Council? PAGE 3.
4. Who must convene an ecumenical council? A provincial council? A diocesan synod? PAGE 3.
5. Who convoked the first eight ecumenical councils? Why was this done? PAGE 3.
6. Who may participate in an ecumenical council? Who have the right to vote? PAGE 4.
7. What is the purpose of an ecumenical council? PAGE 5.
8. How does an ecumenical council function? PAGE 6.
9. What authority do the final decisions and decrees of an ecumenical council enjoy? Why? PAGE 6.

10. Who presides over an ecumenical council? PAGE 9.
11. Who determines the matters to be discussed in an ecumenical council? PAGE 9.
12. Who may transfer, suspend or dissolve a council? Why would this be done? What happens in the event of the Pope's death? PAGE 10.
13. Who grants final approval to the decrees of an ecumenical council? Is this necessary? How does an ecumenical council affect the whole world? PAGE 11.
14. What is the relationship between Pope and Bishops in an ecumenical council? How does this differ from Congress and Parliament? PAGE 13.
15. Are ecumenical councils necessary? PAGE 15.
16. Why are they convoked? PAGE 15.
17. Where was the first council of the Church held? Who presided? What did it prove? PAGE 16.
18. Have many ecumenical councils been held? How many? How long did the first council last? How long did the Council of Trent last? PAGE 16.
19. What language has been used in ecumenical councils? PAGE 17.

20. Where do we find the list of those called to participate in an ecumenical council? Name a few. PAGE 4.
21. Why is Pope John XXIII convoking an ecumenical council? PAGE 18.
22. What must be understood by "unity?" PAGE 18.
23. What are the errors of the Oriental Dissidents? How were they refuted? PAGE 19.
24. What were some fundamental errors of Luther? What council refuted these errors? PAGE 20.
25. What is needed most for the success of the forthcoming ecumenical council? PAGE 22.

A MESSAGE TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND THE HOLY NAME SOCIETIES

An enormous interest in the subject of Ecumenical Councils has been stirred by Pope John XXIII. His call for prayer and scholarship has been resounding in all corners of the world and is being heeded. Everywhere there is talk of the preparation. Many are striving to interpret the announcements and plans.

Some hindsight will help us to see how the Church has implemented some of the teachings of the Councils of history. It is one thing to declare discipline and define truths. Something else is it to promulgate these facts and make the Council articles living ideas. Knowledge left to merely objective speculation is sterile. Brought to the productivity of the will it quickens the whole spirit and informs the world.

The Holy Name Society and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine came into existence as adjuncts to the teachings of the Council of Lyons (1274) and the Council of Trent (1536). These organizations are practical conclusions—reverence for the Sacred Name of Jesus promotes a respect for the authority of God and the divinity of Christ; apostolic, enthusiastic and spiritually formed catechists are a bulwark of truth in a world beset with error.

Since it has been an evident practice of Holy Mother Church to call Her children to assist in the education of the world through the instructions of Divine Truths, it is an obvious conclusion that She has a right to expect those children to be prepared and equipped to help. The loving child anticipates the needs of the mother.

Idle curiosity in the Ecumenical Council called by Pope John XXIII would hardly bespeak the attitude of a devoted member of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Holy Father asks for prayer. That prayer plus an enthusiastic effort to learn about the Council will be a solace to His Holiness and a pledge to the Holy See of preparedness on the part of the faithful to carry out the directions of the Council.

To this end is a careful reading and discussion of this pamphlet recommended to all. It would seem to be, because of membership, a duty for all those enrolled in the Holy Name Society and the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

RIGHT REVEREND MONSIGNOR CHARLES B. MYNAUGH
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