



ARCC CELEBRATES TWENTY-FIVE YEARS: 1980-2005

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ARCC MARKS AN ANNIVERSARY

Think back to what was happening a quarter-century ago. It is 1980. John Paul II has been the Bishop of Rome for just two years, but already there are disturbing signs that this deeply spiritual Polish priest may not be able to overcome the reactionary tendencies of the Vatican establishment. He may reach out to other Christians, he may follow through on the Second Vatican Council's effort to reverse centuries of anti-Semitism, and later he may even startle hard-liners by his meeting with the Dalai Lama, but he appears to endorse the efforts of Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation for the Defense of the Faith to suppress dissent within his own Roman Catholic community.

An early victim is one of the key theologians active in the Second Vatican Council, Father Hans Küng. Ratzinger and Küng had been colleagues at the University of Tübingen with both seen as theological liberals, but the student uprisings of 1968 had been a shock from which Ratzinger never recovered. Eleven years later he is the key figure in the ruling that denies his former friend and associate the right to teach theology in any Catholic institution. Küng is not alone, of course, but he is arguably the best known of those censured.

The concept of an organization that would concern itself with advancing the progressive vision of Vatican II was a direct result of this Vatican action. Leonard Swidler of Temple University in Philadelphia had known both Küng and Ratzinger when he pursued his own theological training, one of the few laymen to do so at the time, and in 1980, months after Küng's condemnation, ARCC was formed.

Len recalls how it began:

"A few hours later [after hearing of Küng's condemnation] I was on the phone with Father Charles Curran of Catholic University of America and Father David Tracy of Chicago University. We decided to quickly issue a press statement by U.S. Catholic theologians stating that "Küng was indeed a Catholic theologian." We decided to fight Rome with Roman tactics, and took a leaf from Caesar: *Omnis America in tres partes divisa est*. For the next twenty-four hours each of us got on the phone to our third of the nation, collecting signatures. As I spoke with people, time and again the refrain recurred: This can't go on; we have got to organize!

"So in the next days I drew up a proposal to organize what became **The Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church** (ARCC) and sent it around to all interested contacts around the country. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Group meetings were held in many cities around the U.S., proposals of what needed to be done were drawn up, and delegates were chosen to be sent to the Founding Convention held March 17-20, 1980, in the Alaska Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Thirty-two (22 women and 10 men) met and founded the Association for the Rights in the Church to 'bring about substantive change, to institutionalize a collegial and egalitarian understanding of Church in which decision making is shared and accountability is realized among Catholics of every kind.'

Three delegates, Gerard Sloyan, Dolly Pomerleau, and I, were charged at Milwaukee with coming up with a National Board of ARCC, which we did in the next week, sitting in Gerard's living room in Philadelphia. The first meeting of the Board (consisting of between 15 and 20 members, deliberately geographically, gender, lay/clerical, and otherwise as diverse as possible) met in October, 1980, and every spring and fall since.”

Given this background, it is appropriate that ARCC marks its silver anniversary with a special program to honor Hans Küng at Temple University. On November 16, at a fund-raising dinner, Father Küng will be honored with ARCC's first Rights of Catholics Award. On the following day he will open his Global Ethic Traveling Exhibition and deliver a special lecture on church reform and interfaith dialogue. We invite those who are able to do so to share in these events (for ticket information go to our website at <http://arcc-catholic-rights.org/kuengarcc.htm>).

AND WHAT'S AHEAD

The first weeks of Cardinal Ratzinger's reign as Pope Benedict XVI have not been encouraging to progressives. The forced resignation of Father Tom Reese as editor of the Jesuit magazine *America* was an early indication that, if anything, even the impression of dissent would not be allowed.

What still remains to be seen is how much further Rome will go in demanding allegiance on various moral issues. Meeting in mid-June, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was advised by the Vatican to put off an effort to deal with the sexual orientation of prospective seminarians until Rome releases a statement of its own. That is expected soon, and in all likelihood it will be something pleasing to Chicago's Cardinal Francis George, the USCCB's vice-president, who has publicly indicated his opposition to gays in the priesthood. If so, the result could be increased pressure on ordained gays either to hide in the closet, no matter the psychological cost of this, or to leave the ministry.

What the USCCB has decided in the interim is to commission a further study of the factors that have led so many priests to be predators. What this would accomplish is questionable, especially if the study in some way is intended to vindicate any supposed equation between a homosexual orientation and a tendency to prey on minors. At a time when in many parishes communion is denied not only to gays but to other Catholics wearing any emblems that would indicate support for gay rights, perhaps the last thing we need is anything that would further unfortunate stereotypes.

Again, everything seems to come back to the bishops, a generally timid crowd of individuals who got to where they are because they understand corporate politics. In a way they are victims of a system that badly needs reform. Presently, an archbishop with any ambition can develop a power base by choosing his own auxiliaries with no effective consultation, and these auxiliaries are expected in a short time to move on to dioceses of their own, again with no effective consultation. ARCC has supported a petition for a more transparent and democratic process, but any hope of success depends on the willingness of concerned Catholics to become involved.

Involvement, though, is a risky business. As you will read in his farewell letter, John Sheehan, who has served as ARCC's national coordinator for the past four years, is just one individual who found himself stripped of certain parish roles. Several of our Board members have their own horror stories about not only being denied communion but being subject to a process that best resembles the “shunning” found in some other denominations.

A key message that all concerned Catholics need to get out is that open discussion is not necessarily dissent (what the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith failed to recognize in the action taken against Father Reese), and that even being someone who does dissent on various issues—not agreeing, for instance, with the church's present stand on contraception or with the

Vatican's insistence that Catholic politicians cannot support legalized abortion—should not be thought of as a “dissident,” which implies a basic disloyalty.

Benedict's election has been a disturbing development for progressives. It can also be a wake-up call reminding us that we should not wait for change from the top—what almost came to be expected in the years following Vatican II—but continue to push from the bottom. And ARCC, which for the past quarter-century has been there to move along the process, expects to be around for a long while to come.

SUMMER READING

Benedict's favorite theologian is Augustine, the fourth-century bishop of Hippo in North Africa. A new study of Augustine by James J. O'Donnell has been published by ECCO, an imprint of Harper Collins. Its title—*Augustine: A New Biography*—concentrates on the period from 395 to 430 but has us look at the man who created a lasting image of himself in the *Confessions* in a somewhat different light.

The church of the fourth century was already markedly different from what it had been in the centuries of persecution. One consequence, ironically, was a badly splintered church. In North Africa the split was between the followers of Caecilian and the followers of Donatus, and the issue was whether some sins, such as apostasy during the time of persecution, were so grievous that a penitent could only be cleansed through a repetition of baptism. When Augustine, not that long a Christian himself, was ordained a priest in the Caecilianist tradition he belonged to what then was actually the minority community. By the time he was consecrated a bishop the Donatists, out of favor with Roman authorities in large part because of the actions of extremists in their ranks, were already declining, and in just a few years more they had disappeared, their clergy and parishioners either integrated into the victorious Caecilianist faction or forced into exile.

We look backwards and see the Donatists as heretics, with Augustine as the great preacher who was instrumental in their demise. O'Donnell's study reminds us that how one group won out of another in these early centuries was largely a political matter. It also shows us how theological positions, such as the classic Augustinian emphasis on original sin, were themselves politically inspired. This is definitely a fascinating and readable study.

For lighter reading about an entirely fictional hierarchy, former Board member Eugene Bianchi offers us *The Bishop of San Francisco: Romance, Intrigue and Religion*. Mark Doyle clearly is not modeled on William Levada, the former archbishop of San Francisco selected to replace Cardinal Ratzinger as head of the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith. Instead Gene introduces him as “a church reformer and a martial arts expert” who “falls wildly in love with his therapist.” Doyle's main problem, apart from his love life, is that a shadowy group of Catholic extremists calling themselves Ordo Novus have already murdered two of his priests and are now gunning for him. And then there is the defrocked pedophile dogging his steps and a small matter of having to answer in Rome for scandalous allegations against him.

Those already familiar with Gene's more scholarly work—especially *Passionate Uncertainty*, the study of contemporary American Jesuits that he did with co-author Peter McDonough—will enjoy this change of pace. Rosemary Radford Ruether describes it as “a fun read you will not be able to put down until you finish,” and Robert Blair Kaiser sees it as a “surprising, shocking piece of fiction from a well known scholar quite obviously off on a lark.” As yet no comment from Archbishop Levada, but we assume he will not be amused.

For more about how to order it, please visit Gene's website at <http://www.bianchibishopsf.com>

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:

After two years as editor the time has come for me to move on. I wish I could say that this was the result of Vatican displeasure, but much as I would envy any comparison with Father Tom Reese, the Jesuit editor of *America* forced to resign after years of pressure from Cardinal Ratzinger's Congregation for the Defense of the Faith (ironically, just days after appearing on American television to report on the process leading to the cardinal's election as Pope Benedict XVI), I am stepping down for purely personal reasons. In particular, I realize that I have kept putting other writing projects on the back burner for altogether too long, and I am of an age when the need to parcel my time wisely has become more urgent.

Nonetheless, I have very much enjoyed my professional association with ARCC, brief as it has been. It has been a chance to meet some very dedicated individuals and to advance my own understanding of the issues facing us as American Catholics. AL itself will again be in the competent hands of Christine Roussel, who edited several issues in 2001. Her own vision for a possibly expanded AL is that it will become "both a newsletter and a journal and thus serve as a reference tool for the American Catholic reform movement." I wish her all the best in this ambitious undertaking.

ARCCLight is published bimonthly by the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (<http://www.arccsites.org>). For membership information contact ARCC:
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ARCCLight Editor: Doug McFerran doug@ireland.com
Archived issues: <http://www.arclight.com> (be sure to see our list of books available through Amazon.com)

**This issue of ARCCLight is sponsored by
an anonymous friend from New York**

*Be careful not to make a show of your religion
before men; if you do, no reward awaits you in
your Father's house in heaven.*

Matthew 6:1



**A PETITION TO EACH (ARCH)BISHOP ORDINARIUS IN THE WORLD
Concerning Broad Participation in the Selection of Bishops**

Context: This world-wide petition is one step in an extended strategy focusing on transforming the governance structure of the Catholic Church to bring it in line with the freedom-fostering collegial spirit of Vatican II. It includes the writing and living by collegially-drafted Constitutions from the parish level on up to the international, culminating in a new Ecumenical Council (in civil society, a "Constitutional Convention") with full representation of all elements of the Church. Because in the "real world," we set specific goals and time-frames, we aim to gain the commitments of one hundred bishops world-wide—and publicly report on them—by Advent, 2006.

In light of the following 2,000-year Catholic Tradition:

- From the very beginning of the Christian Church all the faithful gathered together to choose a successor to the Apostle Judas (Acts 1:15-26);
- this participatory approach was thereafter continually affirmed, first by the first-century document the *Didache* (15:1-2): "You [the faithful] must, then, elect for yourselves bishops and deacons";
- also in the first century St. Clement of Rome stated that bishops should be chosen "with the consent of the whole Church" (1 *Clement*, 44,5);
- St. Cyprian (third century) bore witness to the custom of the people having the right not only to elect, but also to reject and even recall bishops: "The people themselves most especially have the power to choose worthy bishops or to reject unworthy ones." (*Epistle*, 67, 3, CSEL, 3.2.737);
- St Cyprian also wrote, "from the beginning of my episcopate I have been determined to undertake nothing on my own private judgment without consulting you and gaining the assent of the people." (*PL* 4, 234);
- Ss. Ambrose as bishop of Milan and Augustine of Hippo (fourth and fifth centuries) were elected bishop of Milan and Hippo respectively by the acclamation of the people: "*Nos elegimus eum!*" "We elect him!"
- Pope St. Celestine (d. 432 A.D.) said: "No one is given the episcopate uninvited. The consent and desire of the clerics, the people, and leadership are required." (*Epistle*, iv, 5; *PL*, 50, 431);
- Pope St. Leo the Great (d. 461 A.D.), who faced down Attila the Hun and saved Rome from the sack, wrote: "Let him who will stand before all be elected by all." (*Epistle*, x, 4; *PL*, 54, 634);
- the first bishop of the United States, John Carroll, was elected by all the priests of the United States;
- all the Catholic bishops of the world, including the bishop of Rome, stated that all Catholics must "wherever necessary, undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform.... But their primary *duty* is to make a careful and honest appraisal of *whatever* needs to be renewed and done in the Catholic household itself.... [called] to that *continual reformation* of which it [the Catholic Church] always has need." (*Decree on Ecumenism*, Vatican Council II – italics added);
- Pope Paul VI in 1965 established a Commission to draft a Constitution (*Lex Ecclesiae Fundamentalis*) for the whole Catholic Church, which Commission worked for sixteen years, producing several drafts;
- Pope John Paul II stated that the Church "values the democratic system inasmuch as it ensures the participation of citizens in making political choices, guarantees to the governed the possibility *both of electing and holding accountable those who govern them, and of replacing them.*" ("John Paul II to the Participants in the 6th Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences," February 23, 2000 italics – added);

Therefore, we undersigned Catholic organizations and individuals of this (arch)diocese request that you make the following public commitment:

1. In preparation to submit names to the Apostolic Nuncio of candidates for the episcopacy you will consult, report, and support the consensus of the following:
 - a) All the priests, diocesan and religious, actively working in this diocese,
 - b) all the religious, female and male, actively working in this diocese,
 - c) all the Catholic institutions of higher education in this diocese,
 - d) all the organizations in the diocese which identify themselves as Catholic,
 - e) the Catholic laity through public hearings and other public instruments;
2. That all these opinions will be automatically made public, and they, along with a coherent summary, will be publicly forwarded to the Apostolic Nuncio.

SIGNED

Signature

Name (printed)

Diocese

Mail to: Gaile Pohlhaus, 341 S. Devon Ave., Wayne, PA 19087

June, 2005

Dear ARCC Members:

I will be leaving ARCC as National Coordinator as of July 1, 2005.

When I signed on four years ago, I agreed to work a minimum of three years with ARCC. Now it is time for me to move on.

It has been a bittersweet experience working as your National Coordinator during the biggest scandal to rock our church in hundreds of years. On the one hand, I was honored to be working with such a dedicated group of Catholics to reform our church. On the other hand, the institutional church did lash out at me for speaking out about the sex scandal and the cover-up by the bishops. They fired me as eucharistic minister and lector, and they fired my wife for being "guilty by association". This all happened on the heels of losing our daughter, Tara. So much for a "compassionate church."

The local chapter of VOTF just elected me as their Moderator, so I will continue to work on church reform. I urge each of you to continue working for church reform in your sphere of our small world. The Body of Christ has been severely wounded, but He will always be with us in the struggle to bring the church back to His message of peace, justice, and love.

BOB SCHUTZIUS will be handling mail, membership list, and dues, so you can send your checks to 3150 Florissant, MO 63033.

GAILE POHLHAUS will be handling telephone calls. You can reach her at 610-687-2573.

On a final note, I urge you to send the petition on the reverse side to your Bishop, if you have not done so yet. I strongly agree with the Canon Law Society of America that the biggest problem in the church in the U.S. is the way bishops are appointed. We must return to the practice of the early church to involve the laity and clergy in selecting and electing our bishops.

Please urge your friends to send the petition to their bishop also.

As the Irish say, "*May God bless you always and in all ways.*"

Peace,

John F. Sheehan