



## President's Column: Reformers take Heart

These are certainly difficult days on many fronts in this church of ours. The sex abuse scandal continues to unfold in many parts of the world, including Ireland, Belgium, Holland and Germany. It is nearly impossible to say how this will all end but I am confident we are in for some really tough times. The hierarchy of the church has yet to take the kind of responsibility that is clearly needed. Instead, they continue to obfuscate the issue with apologies that are not apologies, new policies that are not new policies, and investigations that will yield the same results as they have before, i.e., the problem is that secularism has eroded the moral fiber of the Roman Catholic Church. It can indeed be disheartening to watch all this happen. The voices for reform appear to be falling on deaf ears. On another front, the hierarchy is taking on a much more aggressive response to those who call for a variety of reforms. This is especially true in terms of the women's ordination advocates. Earlier this year, the Vatican placed the ordination of women on the same criminal level as the raping of children. It seems that every day we read of another attempt by the Vatican to rein all Catholics back in and to restore the church to pre-Vatican II conditions. It would make sense then, to some, to become distraught and conclude that church reform is just not possible.

It is useful to reflect on reforms that have occurred in the past and how they developed. St. Francis of Assisi was one individual who confronted a church that was corrupt and had lost

touch with its calling to serve the poor. Nevertheless, he persevered and gathered together like-minded men and women to call the church to its mission. This small group had an extraordinary impact on the church of its time. His life story is one of determination and sacrifice that made a difference. We can look beyond church history to find similar figures who challenged seemingly immovable institutions. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did not allow those who said overcoming Jim Crow would be impossible. Instead, with a steadfast spirit of non-violence, he brought together thousands of individuals to march and promote the cause of justice. Nelson Mandela came out of prison and overthrew a system of apartheid that was incredibly aggressive in its self preservation.

Lech Walesa took on a communist state that most thought would last for hundreds of years. We cannot forget one Jesus of Nazareth, who challenged the religious hierarchy of his day. Starting with a small band of disciples, not only was a church founded but the religious institution itself was changed.

While we find ourselves in tough times in terms of reforms, we really should remember how far we have come. It is too easy to forget that much has changed in the last 45 years. Since Vatican II we have seen the opportunities for married men in the diaconate, which provided a resource for sacramental life, counsel, and homilies from a perspective of those with families and with various occupations. We have also witnessed expanded opportunities for the laity. Lay people have been invited into more liturgical roles-lectors, Eucharistic ministers, and liturgy

planning. Frequently, I marvel at the sight of so many women taking part in these roles. In fact, it is very common to see the majority of liturgical lay ministers are women. The religious, women and men, have been moved out of their cloisters and into ministering to people in a vast array of services. The laity have been provided many more opportunities for input in pastoral and finance councils. These are all areas of change of which we can be proud. While the past decade has seen some erosion of reforms, it is important to recall that they can happen and they will in the future.

I, for one, believe that the behaviors of the hierarchy are signs of the times through which we can take heart. In history, when institutions were facing their most formidable foes, especially forces within their own midst, they became very aggressive. The Roman Empire was much more aggressive in its efforts to retain its power in the Fifth Century. The British government was consistently more forceful in its later years of colonial rule - including the American colonies. The South African government was adamant in its determination to preserve the system of apartheid. The southern communities were very aggressive in protecting the Jim Crow status quo. In every case, where an institution came under its most serious threat, it became more aggressive and sought to stifle every form of dissent. This, I am convinced is the situation in the church today. The hierarchy is clearly aware of the threat to its existence. Their actions reveal an institution in fear. The more aggressive it becomes, the more people will doubt their leadership. This is not the time to listen to the naysayers. Thus, I urge all of us in ARCC and in all the reform organizations to take heart. This is the time to work together to promote the changes so desperately needed. This is not the time to throw up our hands and hope that change will happen in some future generation. The seeds of change are in the air and we must seize this opportunity.

It begins with education. By this, I mean informing as many people as we can that there are options. We must reach out to those who are seekers of a better way. This can only happen if we stay faithful to our core beliefs and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide us. The opportunity is now and we can make a difference. I am proud to be a part of this campaign for change and will tell anyone who will listen that we can overcome incredible obstacles. So, I ask all of the membership of ARCC to re-double your commitment to reform and to let us know what we can do to further empower you to make this church our own again. I welcome any ideas or suggestions from you that may improve how we can do better. Let people know that we are here and encourage them to become part of this noble effort.

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President, ARCC

REFLECTIONS ON ARCC'S MISSION AND GOAL IN THE LIGHT OF *CATHOLIC DOES NOT EQUAL THE VATICAN: A VISION FOR PROGRESSIVE CATHOLICISM* BY ROSEMARY RADFORD RUETHER (New York: The New Press, 2008)

Professor Ruether's book should be required reading for all reform-minded Catholics but especially for disenchanting Vatican II Catholics who have already left "the Church" or are considering leaving the institution in frustration over decades of carefully plotted strategies by popes and curia to reverse the Council's trajectory toward "*aggiornamento*." Vatican II explicitly defined the Church as "the people of God," and Vatican II Catholics had every right to expect that their Church would be revitalized by drawing strength from secular modernity; it would define itself as an ecumenical egalitarian community of the non-ordained and ordained, in which ALL are challenged to serve as focusing

lenses to share the light of God's love with others. Most importantly, the Church would at long last explicitly become what it had implicitly been from the beginning – the *Ecclesia semper reformanda*, the continuously to be renewed Church,

an emergent living organism in the process of becoming, rather than an externally exquisite chrysalis containing its dying pupa smothered by its inability to break through a self-generated cocoon and adapt to environmental changes.

With a foreword by Professor Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite (UCC minister and, at the time, president of Chicago Theological Seminary), Ruether's book consists of an introduction, six chapters, an epilogue, acknowledgments, and notes. The book is very readable and clearly intended primarily for educated and thoughtful non-theologians. After discussing the author's introduction which contains a summary of the book's primary purpose, I will cite extensively from chapters One through Three, focusing on material potentially most helpful to *ARCC Light* readers. I plan to discuss Chapters Four, Five, and Six, "Women Church," "A Discipleship of Equals," and "Liberation for the Poor and Oppressed" in a future issue of *ARCC Light*.

### Introduction

Ruether's book is filled with hope, showing those who are willing to see that we need not, and indeed should not, give up on "the Church" because of its current leadership. There is no legitimate reason to identify and limit being Catholic to the Vatican, a Vatican that has gone

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"back to a defensive posture of a papal monarchy, claiming infallibility and seeking to impose its will upon the global church and upon the world outside the Catholic Church" (1) and seeks to "dismantle the institutions and programs that progressive Catholics have developed to promote a liberative vision of justice" (1). She insists that "The Roman Catholic Church has reached a crucial moment in its history, and there is no more important time for progressive Catholics to stay committed to an alternative vision of Catholic Christianity" (2). While she admits that for her Roman Catholicism is "a very important expression of historical Christianity in the West" rather than the "'only true church' or even the best church" (3) she considers its reform and renewal vital both for members and the global community in general. "The progressive Catholicism that many of us have helped create in the last half century," she argues, "must be defended. We represent an ecumenic Christianity; we acknowledge the truth of other Christian churches, as well as world religions, while at the same time remaining committed to our own particular tradition" (3-4).

### **Ruether identifies six characteristics of "the church we need now."**

First, it is multicultural (genuinely "catholic," i.e. universal) and not exclusively the church of Euroamericans who seek to impose "cultural patterns shaped in the European Middle Ages and a church polity formed by fourth-century Roman imperialism and eighteenth-century absolute monarchy" (6) on the contemporary West along with the rest of the world.

Second, it acknowledges its fallibility. Ruether considers the claim to infallibility an unforgivable "sin against the Holy Spirit" (5), noting that, "The error of infallibility fixates all other errors, and to repent of it is also to liberate ourselves to be human, knowing ourselves to be finite, fallible,

and able to see only in part, not absolutely or with final certainty. Knowing our fallibility liberates us to be Christian, to live by faith, repentance, and the grace of transformation, gifts of the Spirit without which we cannot be in authentic continuity with the new life in Christ and in authentic relationship with each other"(6). She continues that " we must call on the Vatican to repent of its teachings about birth control, about the exclusion of all women and married and gay men from ordination, about the spiritual superiority of celibacy, and about the divine sanction for patriarchal hierarchy. The Vatican must repent specifically not just vaguely and in abstract terms that leave confusion or doubt about what it said. But none of these reforms is possible without first admitting the possibility of error" (6-7).

Third, it lives by grace, a grace that works in and through "knowledge, experience, and historical change" (7).

Fourth, it is liberated from sexism and acknowledges a true Christian community "where both women and men are recognized as images of God and representative of Christ" (7). She notes that "The previous Pope sanctified two Italian women victims as saints and role models for women. One, who was pregnant, died of uterine cancer rather than save her own life; she left a newborn baby and four other motherless children. The other endured continual spousal abuse rather than leave her husband, who abandoned her. We must reject these kinds of models and roles for women" (8).

Fifth, it is democratic and rejects the official definition of the church having been founded by Christ as "a centralized feudal monarchy: Pope over bishops, bishops over priests, priests over laity, men over women, and all adults over children" (9).

Sixth, it is committed to the poor and the oppressed and rejects the traditional advice by

church leaders that they "win favor with God by obeying their masters"(11). Ruether writes, "The Christian church is authentically the body of Christ only when it lives in solidarity with those who are treated unjustly, those who are the most marginalized and despised, and those who are made destitute by systems of power and wealth. . . . When we live that good news, we live the gospel" (10).

Having described her vision of the church, she asks, "How do we get there from here?" (11) and identified five steps.

"First, we need to grow up" and overcome the "spirituality of childlike dependence that has been deeply bred into our psyches"(11). "Second, we need to be people of prayer" and "overcome the split between spirituality and social action that . . . squeezes the presence of God out of real life" (12). "Third, we must acquire critical knowledge about church history and theology" in order to become informed critics of the "assertions of power that damage our spiritual health" (13). "Fourth, we need to be socially and ecologically committed" (14), and "Fifth, we need to build alternative church communities and organizations"(15). Ruether then points to the Catholic tradition of establishing "base communities or small worshipping and support groups" (15) and lists several church reform and social action groups, including the Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church (15).

"Why call such groups Catholic," she wonders, and answers her own rhetorical question: "For the simple reason that they see themselves as Catholic, both because their membership is based on people with Catholic roots and because they see themselves as addressing reform issues in the Catholic Church, and doing the work of ministry inspired by Catholic Christian faith and life" (16). Again and again, throughout this book, Ruether inspires and challenges us to be "engaged in a process that

will lead to eventual transformation of the official institution to allow legitimacy to the broader range of thought and life. But meanwhile, we can and must carry on living ways of being a Christian community that satisfy our vision of what is authentic and truthful. In short, we need to insist on being the church today and not waiting to be allowed to do so in some distant future"(17).

**In Chapter One, "On Being a Progressive Catholic,"** Ruether tells us of her ecumenical youth as daughter of a Catholic mother and Episcopalian father and her first encounter with the winds of reform during the Second Vatican Council. She studied fine arts and Classics, learned Latin, Greek, French, and German, married, and completed a Ph.D. in Patristics while tending to three small children. In 1965 she got involved in civil rights and peace movements and encountered hooded Ku Klux Klansmen in the Mississippi Delta (22). It is there that she first wondered about "the roots of an issue in Western society and culture, such as sexism or racism; how has Christianity played into justifying this problem; what are the critical traditions in Christian thought that enable us to question this issue; and how do we go about mobilizing Christian resources to overcome it?"(22-23). She determined "that when the 'bad guys' seem to have won, you don't run. You fight harder" (23). She is still fighting – and challenging us to join her.

The section "Challenges to the Vatican" shows how new liberalism and the beginnings of feminism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were "grounded in the view that all 'men are created equal'"(23) and called for social reforms that demanded the "overthrow of old aristocracies and new laws that guaranteed equal rights of all citizens before the law"(23). In the process the master-servant model of masculinity and femininity was replaced by a newer model of

complementarity with each sex keeping to its own distinct "nature" and sphere. This model was in turn replaced by a model of full civil equality of women and men. The "Catholic bishops and the Vatican generally set their face against these changes, insisting that a woman's place is in the home. In 1930 Pope Pius XI condemned woman's emancipation as undermining the divinely founded obedience of the wife to her husband. Feminism was condemned as a false deflection of woman from her sole and true role as homemaker and mother (*Casti Connubii*)" (25). Once bishops realized women could be useful, "Officially recognized Catholic women's groups . . . campaigned against birth control, divorce, child labor laws, and the Equal Rights Amendment. . . . [They] championed the view that women had a totally different nature from men. Although "naturally" more spiritual, moral, and loving than men, women kept their superior nature only by maintaining their traditional roles in the home" (26).

Then came Vatican II (1963-1965) and especially Pope John XXIII's "encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), which endorsed a whole gamut of civil liberties in language that echoed the American Bill of Rights. Every human person, it said, is endowed with intelligence and free will. The full and equal rights of all persons in society flow from this basic human nature. Since these rights are rooted in human nature itself, they are universal and inviolable. These rights include the right to seek truth, to freely express and communicate opinions, and to be informed about public events. The encyclical affirmed freedom of religion, of the press, of democratic assembly and participation in political life; freedom to choose one's state of life; and equal protection under the law. It also included economic rights, such as the right to a living wage, to sufficient food, to adequate housing, to medical care, to social security in sickness and

old age, and to unemployment insurance" (26). Reproductive rights were, however, not discussed as part of the Council. Instead, Paul VI set up a separate Birth Control Commission but was persuaded by conservative advisors to reject the Commission's findings and reassert the traditional teaching and issued *Humanae Vitae*.

Under the heading "Progressive Catholicism for the World," Ruether reflects on her life-long preoccupation with the connections between various manifestations of oppression, such as racism against blacks, anti-Semitism, sexism, the injustices that had inspired liberation theology, justice of Palestinians, ecological abuses, and so forth.

**In Chapter Two, "Reproductive Rights and the Vatican's 'Pro-Life Ethics,'" Ruether explores the origins and consequences of *Humanae Vitae* in more detail and speculates on the reasons why Church authorities would consider "church control of marital sexuality at whatever cost to women's health and well-being, as well as that of their families . . . the central article of faith and practice for Catholic Christianity. Preventing conception was defined as a greater evil than taking a human life" (42).**

Ruether continues, "It did not occur to these men that not changing the teaching, when it had already lost credibility with both Catholic intellectuals and lay people, might cause a much greater loss of credibility. They failed to consider that confidence in the church's teaching authority might be restored if the official church acknowledged its teaching could adapt to new information and social conditions" (46). The following paragraph is central to her argument: "This exchange sums up the crux of the Vatican's problem. The key issue for the official celibate male clerics of the church's hierarchy was the maintenance of their unquestioned power to define the sexuality of lay people and to invoke

sanctions of eternal hellfire if they did not obey. They assumed not only that they knew God's will fully, but also that God was an instrument of their power" (46).

In the wake of *Humanae Vitae*, the Vatican dealt harshly with opposing theologians and disobedient priests, suspending Charles Curran and twenty-three other dissenters as well as disciplining thirty parish priests. At the time, with Vatican II bishops still in power, a number of bishops' conferences left loopholes by appealing to the "rights of conscience for those who did not agree with it"(47). After the election of Karol Wojtyla, as John Paul II, "the strict view of contraception as intrinsically evil (along with rejection of women's ordination) became a litmus test for advancement to any leadership position in the church as bishop, seminary president, or head of a religious order. The stage was set for a full-scale purge of any dissenters in the church, particularly theologians who were also priests" (51). Beyond church issues, in 1994, the Vatican joined forces with some of the most reactionary Islamic countries to oppose the declaration on women's reproductive rights by the 1994 United Nations Cairo Conference on Population and Development.

"The official church makes absolute the right to life of the unborn, even of fertilized eggs in the first days after conception, but it possesses little moral rigor when it comes to the vast carnage of human beings between birth and old age from war, poverty, and environmental devastation. While Catholicism theoretically forbids the direct taking of innocent life at any stage of life, it applies the most rigorous sanctions to taking unborn life, while it applies no sanctions to killing noncombatants in war, selling toxic waste to farmers as fertilizer, favoring military spending over social welfare spending, impoverishing the poor and favoring their exploitation by the rich and their corporations, or any number of other

actions that have the consequences of unjust and untimely death. Only unborn life, it appears, is really 'innocent' and worthy of moral protection" (54).

A few pages later Ruether writes, "Affirming the ethic of life both before birth and after birth would help overcome the credibility gap from which Catholic teachings on ethics presently suffer. Only by putting these two ethics more in sync with each other can we genuinely speak of a 'consistent life ethic.' The official church does not have a pro-life ethic, but uses the term as code for an absolutist rejection of both contraception and abortion under any circumstances, while it ignores the myriad threats to human life after birth" (58).

**In Chapter Three, " Good, Evil and the Church's Mission,"** Ruether points out basic inconsistencies, such as the claim of bishops to moral authority while flagrantly violating their own principles when covering up the crimes of priest child molesters, or conservative Catholics accusing progressive Catholics for selectively picking and choosing among magisterial teachings while they do exactly the same by refusing to condemn nuclear weapons or actively support peace and justice movements. "Is there a solid basis for one set of choices rather than another," she asks, "or is it all just arbitrary, personal preferences?" (63). She makes her case by an interesting analogy, "Given that it appears everyone picks and chooses, not all choices are equal. . . . If you are in a cafeteria and see someone in the cafeteria skipping vegetables, salads, and fresh fruit and choosing rolls and butter, fried potatoes, and cream pies, you might think that such a person lacks principles of healthy eating"(64). For progressive Catholics the equivalent of principles of healthy eating should be norms based on authentic gospel values. "Jesus proclaimed and represented the good

news, which he defined as centrally about a new reign of justice on earth, one in which the poor have hope to overcome their misery. Those unjustly imprisoned are released, and those oppressed by all forms of misery and injustice are liberated from their oppression" (65). This means that "the mission of the church is to follow Christ in proclaiming the good news, to be the place where truth is told, where the unseeing have their eyes opened to reality, and where oppression and injustice are overcome and a reign of peace and justice is established among humans and with the earth. . . .Above all, the church should not be a place where new evils are constructed, perpetuated, and justified!"(65- 66). The church also must be able to repent and that means that the claim to infallibility cannot be sustained.

Ruether defines goodness as "mutually enhancing relationality" and evil as "distorted relationality"(69). She argues that "evil lies in the distortion of relationships, relationships among different aspects of ourselves and among different individuals and groups in relation to one another in a way that is not only equal, but mutually enhancing, that contributes to our mutual well-being. We not only have to give our bodies, our sexuality, our desires for pleasure and feelings their due. We need to relate mind and body, intellect and feelings in a way that is mutually enriching. Sickness is caused when we glut ourselves on pleasure in a way that is unhealthy for the body or when we deprive others of what they need for their basic nourishment. Also sick are those who starve or beat their bodies in the name of an intellectuality or spirituality cut off from its relationship to sensuality" (68-69). She continues, "whenever we construct theories that some groups of people have a different nature from others and therefore should be excluded from certain human aspirations, such as education and leadership, and should be confined to bodily labor, we are in the process of creating wrong

relationship to each other"(69). We create evil first, by setting "ourselves up as those with power, . . . by subjugating and exploiting others and forcing them into roles from which we benefit at their expense," second, by "institutionalizing this wrong relationship, embedding it in laws, social policies, and economic systems," and finally, by constructing "ideologies that justify such wrong patterns of relationship, declaring them to be the order of nature and the will of God" (71). She calls the systematizing of evil "'inherited evil.' It means that we are born into social systems already biased by sexism, racism, religious prejudice, and class hierarchy, and we are socialized to assume that this is normal, natural, and divinely mandated" (71). Francis Bacon would have called this third level the "idols of the theater" – the most destructive of the deceptive beliefs he identified as obstacles to learning in the 17th century. If we accept Ruether's analysis, we still have a long way to go. Appealing to Luke's "Sermon on the Plain," she does not call for reversing "the present distorted system, making the presently oppressed oppressors" (71). Instead, we should "seek to build a new system where there is neither oppressed nor oppressors, but, in the words of the American creed, there is 'liberty and justice for all.' Or, to put it another way, we all flourish by enhancing one another" (71).

This transformation, however, demands "redemptive repentance [which] also gives us a glimpse of what we call the 'Reign of God,' God's world as God created it to be and calls it to be" (72).

She continues, "Church is not a place of perfect saints, but a place where we acknowledge our distortions so that we might relax our grip on them. Then we are able to glimpse and taste right relation, our true humanity, our true nature and goal" (72).

In the section, "The church must be the place where truth is spoken" (72), Ruether challenges

abusers and those responsible for protecting abusers and covering up abuse to "personally repent and apologize to those they have abused. They should stand before the church community and confess their sins, indicating their strong desire to heal themselves and ask for forgiveness. The people should deal with them as they deal with other pathological members of their own family," . . . [supporting] their rehabilitation precisely by keeping them connected with the community and setting parameters and expectations on their behavior" (74). She points to the case of Bishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee as an example of the way the church should respond. "His way of doing so suggested something less than innocence on the part of the man who claimed to have been victimized. But Weakland did not justify himself by claiming he himself had been taken advantage of. He stood before his community and confessed. He retired from his job as bishop of Milwaukee, into his Benedictine community, there to spend the rest of his life dealing with his own soul among those he could count on to help him" (74-75). Ruether argues that from a genuinely Christian perspective, both lying to protect the institution and expelling molesters and others guilty of sexual sins from the community are inappropriate responses. As has been done in monastic communities, they should be allowed to "remain among those who know them, love them, and can help them to amend their lives. They have some hope of healing their souls. This maintaining of relation and accountability comes closer to what it means to be church than the discourse we have had so far about clergy sexual abuse that has focused on crime, punishment, and monetary compensation" (75).

"We need," she writes. "a deep probing of the sick culture of sexual repression and covert sexual exploitation in the Catholic tradition generally. Not only that of the clergy. It is time to call for an

end to mandatory celibacy for the clergy and for the ordination of women and of married people" (75). While married clergy will not end sexual misconduct, "at least it will broaden the range of people from which we draw our clergy, rather than limiting it solely to males willing to be officially celibate" (76).

Ruether's book presents a powerful justification for the work of ARCC and other reform groups. She concludes Chapter Three with an appeal that echoes ARCC's thirty-year call for structural church reform: "We need a more democratic church, a church where the laity participates in church governance on every level. Contrary to claims about tradition, there is nothing in the nature of the church that calls for a patriarchal hierarchical structure. This structure is simply the reflection of the social systems in which the Catholic Church was shaped by its history within the Roman empire, feudalism, and early modern European monarchies. These political contexts have nothing to do with the message of Christ. On the contrary, if we are serious about the church as a redemptive community, then a participatory democracy is much more in keeping with its mission and message" (76).

Ruether does not cite ARCC's mission statement, but the statement could serve to summarize the book's challenge to the church: "To bring about substantive structural change in the Catholic Church, ARCC seeks to institutionalize a collegial understanding of Church in which decision making is shared and accountability is realized among Catholics of every kind and condition. It affirms that there are fundamental rights which are rooted in the humanity and baptism of all Catholics. To this end ARCC developed and works to implement a *Charter of the Rights of Catholics in the Church* and a *Proposed Catholic Constitution* ([arcc-catholic-rights.net/](http://arcc-catholic-rights.net/)).

Ingrid Shafer



## Update on the American Catholic Council

<http://americancatholiccouncil.org/>  
From the September Newsletter

### *Early Registrations Surpass Expectations for Detroit*

We are pleased to report that in the first round of registration through mid-August, nearly a year in advance of the Council, over 300 people have already committed to journey to Detroit next Pentecost Weekend (June 10-12, 2011). We have every hope that the Council will see several thousand participants representing the grassroots church from across the U.S. and elsewhere. There are still several tiers of "Early Bird" discounts available, so please register as soon as possible.

### *Airfare Discounts: Delta Airlines*

Delta Airlines is offering rate reductions to the ACC in Detroit. The discount applies to all US/Canada originating passengers who travel between June 7 and June 15, 2011. Full Airfare (Non-Restricted) will be discounted 5% from Hub cities and 7% from Non-Hub markets. Discounted Airfare (Restricted) is eligible for a 2% reduction from Hub markets and 5% from Non-Hub cities. Delta's Hub cities are Cincinnati, Memphis and Salt Lake City. To take advantage of this program, call 800-328-1111 and mention discount code NM67F. Delta will waive telephone ticketing fee.

### *3. What kind of ideas did Vatican II proclaim? The Holy Spirit was present at Vatican II in a special way We call the ideas of Vatican II Motifs of the Spirit:*

- \*The importance of Baptism: through baptism, all are called to conversion and to ministry;*
- \*The primacy of conscience: it's the key element in decision making, particularly moral decision making;*
- \*The Church is in the world: it's not above it;*
- \*Ecumenism: sincere and open-minded respect for theological diversity;*
- \*Enculturation: adaptation of liturgy, prayer and spirituality to local custom (use of vernacular), and respect for cultural diversity in education, governing style, worship, and praxis;*
- \*Openness to all peoples: saints, sinners, women and men and a view which sees sacraments as food for life's journey;*
- \*Collegial and responsible decision making: respect for all individuals and their Spirit-filled gifts;*

### *ACC Leaders Meet with HANS KUNG in Germany*

John Hushon and Anthony Padovano, members of the National ACC Planning Committee, recently traveled to Germany to conduct a video interview with HANS KUNG. Swiss priest, theologian, educator, author, global ethicist and ecumenist, Kung was an expert advisor at Vatican II and has been a sustained outspoken champion of the reforms instituted by that Council. Kung is Professor Emeritus at the University of Tübingen and President of the Global Ethic Foundation. He is scheduled to address the ACC in Detroit.

Go to <http://americancatholiccouncil.org/> to sign up and read John Hushon's report on the visit.

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