

OUR CHANGING CHURCH # 6 – 2015

In Challenging Times

Some say that the event that had the most significant influence on faith is the Holocaust where in the Second World War in Europe, six million people were systematically slaughtered by the Nazi regime of Germany.

Most German people were directly or indirectly involved in the Nazi regime. Some people continued their daily lives not noticing, or feeling powerless to protest. Some put their heads in the sand. The German people were Christians.

After the full horror of the slaughter emerged in 1945, people asked how could there be a God? How could people have faith? People turned away from the Church.

In the religious orders and the universities, thinkers and theologians asked these questions and new ideas started emerging. Ideas that moved away from a narrow, elitist view of church, moved away from a church of power, towards a unity of all people drawn together in care for others. A church of kindness, humility and love.

Amongst Catholic Christians these ideas developed and were drawn together at the Second Vatican Council. In challenging times it is particularly worth reflecting on what the documents of the Vatican Council offer us:

“The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of people.”

“This Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons and daughters of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. The council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.”

“So, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole people of God gathered together by Christ, this council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems.” *

“Through the risen Lord, may the Church be given courage so that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light.” **

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* *The Church in the Modern World #1-3*

** *Constitution on the Church #8.*