

## POPE PAUL VI PREPARES FOR VATICAN COUNCIL



All is not rest for Pope Paul VI this summer at the papal villa, Castelgandolfo. When leaving the Vatican on August 5, he took with him many documents and curtailed some of his audiences, so that he could prepare for the second session of the Vatican Council, due to open on September 29. (NC Photos)

## COUNCIL OPENING—SPECIAL RELEASE

Council Opening, Oct. 11th Will Attract Great Throngs of Onlookers



Vast crowds, similar to the one above, fill famed St. Peter's Square in Rome on the opening day of the Second Vatican Council when more than 3,000 Council Fathers marched in procession from the Hall of Benedictions in the Vatican through the square and into the Basilica. A crowd in excess of 300,000 was on hand to view the elaborate proceedings. The attention of the entire world will be focused on the Vatican for the historic ecumenical gathering. (NC Photos)

## COUNCIL FATHERS WAIT FOR BREAK IN CLOUDS



A group of prelates representing all areas of the world stand outside St. Peter's Basilica following a general session of the Second Vatican Council. At left, a bearded bishop makes a dash for cover as the rain begins to fall. The remaining council fathers prefer the shelter of the Basilica. Recently, the Vatican announced that general sessions of the council would be recessed from December 8 until May 12. (NC Photos)

# VATICAN II

## Catholic Reform and Revitalization in a Modern World

By Karen Lesiak, Hartford, CT, Digitizing Partner

Vatican II was a pivotal time in our Catholic history as the first ecumenical council in almost a century, emerging with sixteen documents that examined the nature of the Church and the Church in the modern world. Vatican II propelled the reform of the liturgy, encouraged the missionary spirit of the New Evangelization, created a dialog with other faiths, and returned the Church to its roots. It further sought to define clearly roles within the hierarchy, create a deeper inclusion of the laity, and restore Christian unity. Though Vatican II has been the subject of much controversy among its proponents and adversaries, it has continued to spark a revolution of ideas and deeper examination that is challenging and vital in our approach to understand it and to look at it in its historical context.

Planning for the formation of the new council in response to calls of reform within the Church, it was formally announced by Pope John XXIII, much to the world's surprise, on January 25, 1959. The council that convened in Rome spanned the time from its first session beginning on October 11, 1962, to Pope Paul VI's historic speech at the last public session on December 7, 1965, bringing it toward its official conclusion. Paul VI succeeded John XXIII upon his death on June 3, 1963, just eight months after it began, to lead the council. Pope St. Paul VI was canonized in October 2018; Pope St. John XXIII was canonized in April 2014.

In addition to 2,625 members of the council, representatives from all over the world were in attendance including the new, independent nations in Africa and Asia. Sessions were attended by bishops and priests, religious leaders, theologians, and lay and religious men and women. A major event, Vatican II was fundamental in bringing the Church into the modern age.

A search of Vatican II in the Catholic News Archive yields thousands of articles that include information regarding the nature and mission of individual documents, points emphasized by panel members, as well as outcomes, criticisms, protests, resolution of conflicts, symposiums, polarization, new role of the priest and preaching, new vitality of the Church, accomplishments, conclusions regarding ecumenical relations, information on specific sessions, implementation of the decrees, local effect, challenges, commentary and much more. The research of this vital topic proves invaluable in its diversity of information putting a multi-faceted perspective on its impact as a vigorous turning point in Church history.

An article in the *Clarion-Herald* on May 6, 2006, gives an account of the historic prayer service in St. Louis Cathedral that commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the document on Catholic-Jewish relations issued by Vatican II in 1965. The document, *Nostra Aetate*, was described in the article as a "transforming document in Jewish Christian history" initiated by Pope St. John XXIII and coming to greater fulfillment during the papacy of Pope St. John Paul II.

As expressed in a letter to the editor in the November 18, 1977, issue of the *Catholic Transcript*, a letter by Domenico Rosa tells us "that the average Catholic [today] does not know what or whom to believe." Domenico further writes that he overcame this feeling after reading the book "Documents of Vatican II" and expressed that the "encyclicals of Pope Paul VI are rooted firmly in our ancient faith and tradition; that they express our faith more clearly."

Especially during these times of uncertainty in the midst of a pandemic, racial unrest, and injustice, which has gripped our nation and the whole world, it is important to look to our faith more deeply to help us understand and cope with the daily challenges we encounter in our Church and daily lives. Here we can find hope in the carefully constructed tenets of our Catholic faith in the context of scripture and tradition, as a resource for serving the needs of others and embracing fully our Catholic roots.

For further research about Vatican II, one can find many insights regarding its assembly, construction of documents, and aftermath in the Catholic News Archive and Catholic Portal.

### Articles during the convening of the Council highlighted

*Search terms: Cardinal Augustin Bea, Church in Modern World, Lumen Gentium, Nostra Aetate, Second Vatican Council, Vatican II, Vatican II Documents*

### Catholic News Archive

<http://thecatholicnewsarchive.org/>

6 Sept. 1962 250 Bishops Will Represent US at Council; Only 45 Attended Last Conclave in 1869-70 by Msgr. James I. Tucek *Catholic Transcript*.

11 Oct. 1962 Modern Meeting in Eternal City *Catholic Advocate*. *Newark*

4 Oct. 1963 Council Accepts Schema on the Nature of the Church. *Catholic Standard and Times*.

10 Oct. 1963 Heartened by Spirit of Reform Outline Protestant Hope for Vatican Council. *Catholic Advocate*. *Newark*

20 Aug. 1964 Second Vatican Council, Virgin Mary 100 Years Later: Newman's writings influence Council by Eugene Best. *Catholic Transcript*.

11 Oct. 1964 Iron Curtain Bishops Renew Vatican Ties Through Council. *Catholic Advocate*. *Newark*

1 Jan. 1965 War and Peace at the Council. *The Catholic Worker*.

17 June 1965 Last of Council's Revised Texts Sent to Bishops *Pittsburgh Catholic*.

15 Dec. 1965 Council Ends Renewal Starts; Paul Summons Church to Serve World. *National Catholic Reporter*.

### Catholic Portal

<https://www.catholicresearch.org/>:

A variety of collections, commentaries, addresses, books and other resources in Catholic Universities to include:

Vatican II Print and Photo Collection: council booklets, leaflets, correspondence, et al. in English and Italian, 1958-2003, Catholic University Archives.

Chicago Conference of Laymen Records (CCL), an organization founded in 1966 to implement the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the apostolate of the laity, University of Notre Dame Archives.

Gilligan, W. Doyle. *Our Lady and Vatican II*. Lumen Christi Press, 1976 Marian Library, University of Dayton. ■

## EXPLORE MORE

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- The Catholic Portal | [catholicresearch.org/catholic-portal](http://catholicresearch.org/catholic-portal)
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