

Homily for October 11th 2018

Feast Day of John XXIII¹

Today we are marking the Feast Day of one of the Church's most recently canonized disciples of Jesus. **Saint John XXIII**, original name **Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli**, (born November 25, 1881, Sotto il Monte, Italy—died June 3, 1963, Rome; beatified September 3, 2000; canonized April 27, 2014; feast day October 11), one of the most popular popes of all time (served 1958–63), who inaugurated a new era in the history of the Roman Catholic Church by his openness to Holy Spirit inspired change (*aggiornamento*), shown especially in his convoking of the Second Vatican Council.

The reason this date was chosen as his Feast Day is because Vatican II opened on October 11th 1962. It was the biggest meeting of all time. 2600 participants, lasting over four years. It was a gathering of the whole Church represented by the attendance of all the Roman Catholic Church's Bishops – and thus called an Ecumenical Council. It was the first Ecumenical Council since Vatican 1 that had concluded in 1870 and was the twentieth council in the 2000 year-history of the Church.

John XXIII said the idea came to him in a sudden inspiration. His purpose was to “bring the church up to date” and to work for its spiritual regeneration. He was the first pope since the Reformation who acknowledged frankly that Catholicism stood in need of reinvigoration and reform.

It was long a truism among church historians that councils are followed by upheaval and disorder in the church. The pope's decision, consequently, was received coolly by his conservative Curia, who were convinced that the church had prospered under Pius XII's leadership and who saw no good reason for the changes John envisioned. Some of the Vatican cardinals in fact did everything in their power to delay the council until the old man had passed from the scene and the project could be quietly dropped. But the pope pushed on with his plan and lived long enough to preside over the first session of the Second Vatican Council in the fall of 1962.

In keeping with his wishes, the council fathers pledged that they would be consistently positive. No condemnations to be made; political hostilities were to be ignored; and the church above all was to recognize that it was not the master but the servant of humanity. The pope made it clear that the Second Vatican Council was convened as a pastoral council. No new dogmas were to be pronounced, though old doctrines and disciplines were to be re-examined. What John sought, he said, was a “New Pentecost,” a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Two of the most influential Bishops at Vatican II were Karol Wojtyla and Joseph Ratzinger, who became Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

We know that the period after the Council was indeed marked by upheaval because of those in the Church who thought the Council had made way too many changes and so resisted the

¹ Information for this homily from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-John-XXIII>

changes. Then there were those who thought the Council had not gone far enough in being open to the modern world.

Thanks be to God that there were wise helmsman steering the Barque of Peter in the decades following the Council – John Paul II and Benedict XXIII - so that its true intention for reform and renewal could be enacted,

St. Peter's embodies what the Vatican II Fathers envisioned. A parish where clergy and lay people work together to live out our baptismal vocation to be salt and light in Calgary's North West. Such a vocation requires of us the kind of dedication Jesus describes in the parable of the Friend at midnight. Do you remember the application of the parable? Jesus calls us to be as persistent at prayer as the neighbour in asking for bread because:

¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"²

John XXIII took to heart these words of Jesus and asked for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church. Each day we ask for this same outpouring so that we can remember that to be the Church is to be not the master of humanity but its servant because the one we call Lord Jesus, came to serve and not to be served.

St. John XXIII pray for us to be so formed by the Holy Spirit.

² [*The Holy Bible*](#). (2006). (Revised Standard Version; Second Catholic Edition, Lk 11:13). San Francisco: Ignatius Press.