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PAUL LAKELAND TRUE AND FALSE REFORM IN THE CHURCH

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Introduction

Bishop Thomas Gumbleton

Today, we welcome Paul Lakeland; and the topic that we will be hearing about from Paul has to do with reform, of course; and we keep hearing more and more about reform in the Church. In fact we prayed - I don't know how many petitions for reform in the Church - and so it's a very important topic. And many of us, probably most of us here, think of reform in the Church as something that took a very definite step forward with the Vatican Council, which is now 50 years ago, when that happened. But since then, even though it takes a lot longer than 50 years for the teachings of a Council to really become accepted and acted upon within the Church, we are now hearing about reform of the reform. And, I think for many of us, that gets to be quite confusing. And so we have reached out to a speaker today, who is an expert, probably in our country, and maybe throughout the world, a theologian who knows the teachings of the most extraordinary teacher about reform in the Church, and that is Father Yves Congar, a Dominican priest from France.

And Father Congar is known especially for his work about true and false reform in the Church. And as I think about Father Congar I thought I might just say a word to the women religious among us today. If you don't know about Father Congar you may not know that even though he was a brilliant theologian, a very, very faithful priest, very faithful religious in his community, he was constantly harassed, you might say, persecuted by the so-called Holy Office. At that point the Holy Office of the Inquisition - and now we softened it a bit by calling it the Congregation for the Defense of the Faith - but the Holy Office really went after Father Congar in a big way. They just persecuted him practically, and Ken Untener, who as you know was a very close friend of mine, got to know Father Congar quite well, because he wrote his theological doctorate thesis on the works of Father Congar. And Father Congar, even though he had been so persecuted, became an expert, what we called a *peritus* at the Vatican Council. So, totally rehabilitated, and now put in a very significant position to influence the teachings of the Church. And even more, before he died, in order to, it seems to me somewhat of a false honor, but to honor him within the framework of the Church he was made a cardinal. And so I encourage the women religious to think about the fact that (laughter and applause) at the next Council; it won't be periti, it will be peritae; and perhaps some of you will be wearing red hats. (Much laughter) You never know where church reform is going to take you; and this could be the ultimate.

But I'd better get back to introducing Paul. (Laughter) Paul comes to us- he's originally from England - and did his major studies in England, studied at Oxford University, English language and literature. He got a degree in Divinity from the University of London, and subsequently here in the United States, a Doctorate in Theology from Vanderbilt University. Paul has lectured many, many times in many, many different places. He's written untold numbers of articles, and also a number of books that touch upon the topic of our presentation today. I just remind you of a couple that were mentioned in the blurb that was sent out: *The Liberation of the Laity: In Search of an Accountable Church; Catholicism at the Crossroad: How the Laity Can Save the Church; The Church: Living Communion*, and then, most recently, he's published a book of selected writings of Yves Congar. And so, Paul is one who knows well the works of Fr. Congar. He knows well what true reform in the Church should be; and I'm confident that this afternoon he's going to be able to enlighten us on true and false reform in the Church, what it means for each of us, as we continue to struggle with what is going on in our Church: the reform of the reform. So I'm very happy to present to you Paul Lakeland. (Applause)

Yves Congar on True and False Reform in the Church

Paul Lakeland

Good afternoon everybody. Thank you for having me here, it's a great honor; it was a great honor to be invited. It was a very special day for me when I got a voice mail from Bishop Gumbleton, who's only before that just an icon I knew about; so you people know how to get other people's attention; and you've got to keep him doing this. (Laughter) Bishop Gumbleton laid out very nicely in his introduction the relationship between Yves Congar and true and false reform in the Church. He mentioned Congar being persecuted. There's no truer word for what happens to him than persecution by the Holy Office. There's a very interesting letter, if you ever want to look at it, you can find it in a number of places, including the edition that I recently published of some selected writings of his. There's a letter he wrote, it's an astonishing letter, he wrote it to his mother on her 80th birthday. And this is not a letter you want to send your mother on her 80th birthday. It was issued in about 1976, he was pouring out his heart about the way in which the institutional Church was persecuting him. In the strongest possible terms he was clearly on the brink of despair; and then, as Bishop Gumbleton said, two years later it was another story. He was moved to the center of things; and he had an enormous influence on the Council, partly because of his work as a *peritus*, partly because of all the writings he had done in the previous, really, 25 years that had influenced other people, and that had so percolated through the theological community. One of those books was a book called *True and False Reform in the Church*, which I noticed is on the table in there where we just had lunch, the book sale there. It's there, purporting to be a book that I had some involvement in. I wish I could say I did, but very interesting, *True and False Reform in the Church* was written, I think, in 1950, published in French in 1950, published in English in 2011. One does have to wonder why it took 60 years to get that translated into English, because every other major text of Congar was published in English.

So, true and false reform, right? The reforms that have grown out of the Second Vatican Council, and continue to have an influence on us, and, as Bishop Gumbleton said, the reform of the reformed, right? We are now suffering from the reform of the liturgy, and our religious sisters are being reformed again (laughter) for having reformed themselves after the Vatican Council.

What I am going to say today about true and false reform is - you'll hear Congar referred to from time to time, but this I would say is in the spirit of Congar, rather than the exact words of Congar - because of course Congar died getting on to 20 years ago now, and did not live to see the extent to which the reform of the reform would speed up. When I was planning what to say here, I did what speakers often do. I looked back to the most recent talk I had given somewhere, entirely differently, and blew off the dust in the hope that maybe I could recycle this. And I realized, this was less than 2 years, 18 months ago, I had given this talk actually in South Bend; and I realized that things seemed to me to have grown considerably worse in the last year and a half. So you will be relieved I tore it up and started again. (Laughter)

The inspiration of Congar is in so many ways he was a deep thinking theologian, as the bishop said; a very faithful Christian, a very traditional Christian, in some ways, a man who did not stand as a total workaholic, a man who took a week off of his workaholicism every February, and traveled the length and breadth of France in dirty crowded trains to preach in little country churches for the Church Unity Octave. He was always at heart an ecumenist, although he became an ecclesialologist, you know, a theologian of the Church, mainly because when he was doing his early works on ecumenism, ecumenism was not acceptable in the Catholic Church, and he realized he had to step sideways. The school of theology that he was central to is known as, *le Theologique Nouveau*, the new theology. The name was given to it by one of its enemies, but they took it rather like what you told me the *Cockroaches*^{1/} did, right? So they took the name and their theology. Now this is going to be important from what I have to say: their theology is very incarnational. Their focus is on the incarnate God, the incarnate God in Jesus, rather less than pure focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus. The other thing I would say about Congar - and this is so that we can feel feisty too - is that in the darkest days when he was being persecuted by the Holy Office, he was called to Rome; and he was spoken to by the Holy Office and also by his Dominican superiors; and I'm afraid his temper got the better of him; and he is reported to have left the Holy Office, gone around the corner, and relieved himself against the wall of the building. (Laughter) So, whatever we say, he wouldn't bat an eyelid, I guess. Ok! So with that, let's talk about true and false reform in the Church.

I'm going to start with the word I think that distinguishes between the two kinds of reform, and that is the word "change." There is kind of a reform that is comfortable with change; and there is kind of a reform that is terrified with change. Change we must, or we surely will die. This is the clear implication of

Cardinal Neumann's famous statement, "To grow is to change; and to be perfect is to change often." Change in any dynamic system, like life or history, is simply what happens. It's inevitable. So our choice is we can't defeat change. Our choice is either to approach the process of history, proactively or reactively. Now my impression is that for many understandable reasons the institutional Church tends to be reactive to change. But it is also evident that since the Second Vatican Council, the pace of the proactive movement for change has picked up enormously. Some of this is simply a by-product of the speeding up of change in general in our information age, but some of it is result of the impetus to change afforded by the work of the Council. It was after all the only proactive council probably in the second millennium. Certainly the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council were supremely reactive; Trent to the challenge of the Protestant Reformation, Vatican I to the perceived threat of modernity. Indeed, you know it might even be the deepest concern of those in our Church who wish to understand Vatican II as about continuity solely rather than change is that to do anything else is to canonize the notion of being proactive of moving forward.

Now, as I look back on the first decade of the 21st century, and I think about our future, I have certainly come to the conclusion the work I did in some of the books the bishop kindly mentioned is really not significantly progressive, although it got me in enough trouble. (Laughter) You know, it promoted the role of the laity. It tried to think about the implications of the *sensus fidelium*, and it took up predictable, but correctly liberal positions on the hot button issues of our day: married and female ordained ministers, same sex marriage, Eucharist for the divorced and remarried, fair treatment for religious sisters - the crowning glory of the American Catholic Church - but I suspect, like many others, I was unprepared for the backlash against the achievements of Vatican II, and I am frankly appalled by the degree to which the movement of reaction is picking up speed. Only a few days ago I took a look at something I wrote a year or so ago, as I said to you, and I was just taken aback by how much worse things seem to have become. Sometimes, it feels as if there must be a meeting of a few important bishops once a week; (laughter) and they have only one agenda item: "What can we do to make people think worse of us than they already do?" (Laughter and applause) I am sure they understand themselves to be sincerely seeking to reform the Church. So in the time I have with you today, I wanted to just explore this one question, "What on earth is going on?" I've divided this into three parts.

The Revival of Integrism.

I'll explain that word to those of you that don't know what it means in a minute or so. So my starting point is with the idea that we are witnessing the renewal of what is called *integrism* in some sectors of the American Church, both lay and clerical, and on some days, even in the Vatican. This term *integrism* has been used in a number of ways, but integrists are essentially driven by a belief that they have the truth in its entirety, and nothing, therefore, needs to change. Most notably, the word has been used in Catholicism to describe the movement in the Church in the early 20th century to combat what were then seen as the evils of *modernism*. Modernism, if you don't know it, was good and ill, some of both. Modernism was an effort to look at the tradition historically, which means to recognize the role of change. Integrism, since it believed we were already in possession of the whole truth, and simply had to hold onto it, opposed modernism by resisting change. In secular life the term integrism is sometimes used as a polite alternative to the word *fascism*. There is a common thread between, - not an identity - there is a common thread between the use of the term integrism in the Church and the use of the term integrism to mean fascism in secular society. The common thread is the subordination of the individual to the group, whether it is the monumental Catholic Church, or the glorified and sacralized nation of the fascist state. If you don't get the connection - I think you probably do - but if you don't get the connection, let me suggest you take a look at a promotional video for a boy's summer camp run by the *Legionnaires of Christ*. This video can be found at www.arcatheon.com. Believe me, it will make your hair stand on end.

Yves Congar describes the characteristics of integrism in an appendix to his book, *True and False Reform in the Church*, although sadly, for good reasons actually, but sadly, this an appendix that is not translated in the new English edition. "Integrists," he says, "are old fashioned hierarchical authoritarians afraid of change, and often paranoid about those who think differently. They are pessimists with a closed, clubby view of the Church, who see faith as a matter of intellectual assent to doctrines. Their theology continues to be Neo-Scholastic in orientation. They have an excessively centralized view of the Church. They see it in terms of visible structures that provide a context for personal spiritual reform, but the structures themselves are not open to change. It is worth noting that, as Congar - Congar is the one who gives this

description of integrism - it is worth noting that Congar's great work as a Thomist philosopher was in the teeth of opposition from a more Augustinian tradition in theology; and today, someways, you see a similar standoff in the higher reaches of institutional Catholicism between the Thomists, who are broadly a little more liberal, and the Augustinians, like Benedict, who are a little more conservative.

I cannot resist adding also, I don't know if you noticed when you were over there in the book exhibit, but there's a very fat book called, *The Journal of the Council*. It's huge; and I now have it on my bedside table; and it is like my new bible, because this is a book - it's not the new bible; I'm sorry, I shouldn't say that - (laughter), this is a book that has just come out in English; and it is the diary that Yves Congar kept on every day of the Council. And a lot of it is very pedestrian: "I went to this meeting, went to that meeting, went to that meeting," but a lot of it is very instructive; and in some of it, you see glimpses of the man who relieved himself on the wall of the Holy Office. (Laughter) And in this book- I was looking through it; I haven't read it - I was looking through it, and low and behold, what do I find: one of his most contemptuous remarks is directed against Church leaders occupying their time investigating the Boy Scouts. (Laughter) Well, at least it wasn't the Girl Scouts, right? (More laughter)

One of Yves Congar's not exactly a friend, but certainly a colleague at the Council, was the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner; and he offers another very useful description of the strategy of this thing, integrism. He does this in an encyclopedia article on *the Church in the World*; and Reiner describes integrism as "a heresy." And then he says, this is his definition of it, "It is the effort to impose the teachings of the Church as a kind of blueprint or ethical template upon the secular world. Integrists," he says, "now you have this vision in your head of the truth of Catholicism; and its already fixed; and you have all the answers; and your objective is to bring the secular world into conformity with this. Integrists," this is still Rahner, "think that all earthly action in the history of the world is nothing but the putting into practice the principles taught, expounded, and applied by the Church." Rahner thinks this is mistaken. Why does he think it's mistaken? "Because it is not possible," he says, "wholly to derive from the principles of natural law and the Gospel the human action which ought to be done here and now." "The Church as an official Church," emphasis on that "the Church as an official Church," he adds, "is not the immediate or proper subject for realizing in the concrete the humanization of the world. And the Church," he says, "must be ready to declare that she is not qualified in this respect." (Murmuring) I can think of some people in senior positions we might e-mail with this quotation. (Laughter)

Now, of course, it's beyond dispute that the Catholic Church, like other religious and secular organizations, has the right to make its positions known, and to argue for their incorporation into public policy; but is there a line over which the Church ought not to step? A positive response to this question, yes, is most often based on the judgment that the Church might endanger its tax free status by inserting itself into political controversies, especially if it seems to be uttering veiled threats about how Catholics should or should not, might or might not, vote.

There is, however, a more fundamental reason for being wary of these practices. It goes to the question of the relationship between the way the grace of God works in and through the Church and the way in which God's grace is differently present in and through the complexity of the secular world itself. Whenever the Church seems to be proposing its own ethical stand point as a template for secular society, there are reasons to hesitate; not because the Church's positions are wrong, but because the workings of God's grace in the secular world need to be respected; and the world is not under the jurisdiction of the Church. Certainly, any assumption that the Church's convictions are *ipso facto* superior to those of the secular world is a particularly troubling form of the sin of pride. The Church is present in the world somewhat differently, depending on whether we focus upon the institutional hierarchical Church, what Rahner was calling the official Church, or the living witness of individual Catholics. While, of course, the Church in the first sense, the official Church, is in the world as a historically bound, visible reality, changing its form and its manner of operation across the centuries, interacting with monarchs and democratically elected leaders, and indeed inevitably colored by the times in which it happens to be living, this historical presence of the Church, this official presence, does not of itself even begin to exhaust the meaning of the community and sacrament of salvation.

The Church as sacrament is only as efficacious as its individual members are faith filled and loving witnesses to the Gospel. So, thinking about apostolic activity, the Church-world relationship is between the secular world and the baptized Christians who live and work within it, and indeed who are indeed part

of it. While the institutional Church certainly exercises its prophetic function from time to time by teaching at some level of abstraction, the baptized Christian, lay or ordained, lives out her or his priestly and prophetic call in baptism by teaching through concrete actions and decisions in the secular world.

The Church as institution can be so magnificent and so troubling, so sublime and so flawed. It is this Church, which can at times make its members proud to be part of it, and other times can frankly make it harder for Christians to believe. It is this Church, about which Karl Rahner - again Karl Rahner wrote so eloquently - this is the great theologian Karl Rahner, I quote, "If we are honest, we must say that to us of today, the ascent of faith, hope and charity to this Church, as she exists in the concrete, does not come easily. As Catholics," Rahner continues, "we have to live within and identify with," these are his words, "a society made up of individuals and official authorities, which all too often appears pitiful, narrow minded, old fashioned, and out of date." (Laughter) That's Rahner, not me. I'm not saying that; that's Rahner. (Laughter) "Even after the Council," he says, "it may seem to Catholics that," and I quote again, "the Church still prefers anxiously to build upon the past, which she feels to be true and trusted, rather than upon a creative future, which is still unsure. And yet," and here he goes on again, Rahner the faithful, devout Catholic, just like Congar, "and yet the Catholic Christian," he says, "nevertheless finds it possible to give a whole hearted and honest ascent to the Church as she exists in the concrete." We are part of this Church, which we find pitiful, narrow minded, old fashioned, and out of date from time to time. Evidently the ascent which we give to the Church is not these imperfect concrete realities, but to the community of faith behind and sometimes obscured by these concrete realities.

There are two very serious problems in the American Catholic Church today; and they are more closely related than we might think. Actually, since I've wrote that, I decided that there really are probably 27 very serious problems, (laughter) but unfortunately, there's only so much time, so there's two for now.

1. The first very serious problem is the tendency to choose the wrong issues with which to challenge American pluralist society, and the wrong way to issue the challenge. (Applause)
2. The second is the almost total loss of confidence among the Catholic laity in episcopal leadership on the national level, some of which has to do with their intrusiveness into American political life, but most of which is connected to their failures as spiritual leaders. When what we want are men of prayer, pastoral leaders, genuinely married to their dioceses in the way of the ancient Church, too many of our most prominent dioceses seem to be occupied by posturing ecclesiastics with over developed egos, (laughter) who think that the way to distract the people of God from their episcopal weaknesses is to go after religious sisters and girl scouts, (laughter) and to beat their chests about religious liberty and the first amendment, while exercising autocratic rule that is at least 200 years beyond its selby date. (Laughter and applause) I know that's a cheap shot, but I enjoyed writing it. And yet the principle problem does not come down to the folly of some bishops.

Back to Theology.

This won't be too technical. As we look at the state of our Church today, we are understandably inclined to interpret its condition as a result of how we choose our leaders, or their backward looking attitudes, or their failures in hope, or their poor leadership skills. Rahner and Congar saw the problem to be the integrist mentality at work in certain sectors of Church leadership. And I'm sure they were right. I think that it is integrism in Rome, and among at least some of our American bishops, that have lead to the kinds of exercisable authority and poor choices that have marked our recent history. Integrism is absolute and unwavering certitude that we have all the answers; and this is dangerous nonsense. But behind integrism, and indeed in the mindsets of many Christians, who would not ever have heard of integrism, or who would reject the label, whether they're are bishops, or clergy, or laity, there is a much more deep seated problem. The divorce between the integrists and the rest of us is not just ideological; it's certainly not just a matter of style or temperament. Nor is the integrist mentality the possession only of some bishops and clergy; it is endemic in the Church. Something about Catholicism encourages an understanding of authority that goes with utter certitude, a poor substitute for faith.

Fundamentally, it is a question of which God you are worshipping. The integrists, God bless them, are not worshipping the God of Jesus Christ, and, in consequence, not imagining the Church in the way it is described in the opening words of *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II as, and I quote, "a sign and instrument of

communion with God and of unity among all peoples, a sign that transmits or reflects, but is not identical to the light of Christ in the world.” The integrists have been seduced by the God of philosophy, whose mind they claim to know.

Faith seeking understanding - that great mantra of so many of our theological forefathers and foremothers; faith seeking understanding means that faith in the biblical God is the basis on which all further speculation is tested. But the integrist preference for what is sometimes called natural theology clouds the issue by implying that, because unaided human reason can come to some knowledge of God - this has been the standard Catholic position - because unaided human reason can come to some knowledge of God, that knowledge exercises an interpretive function over faith. So what happens is the relationship gets reversed. Instead of starting from the biblical God who is incarnate in Jesus, we have a tendency to start with the God who is omnipotent, omniscience, eternal etc.; and that God we know, in so far as we know that God at all, we know that God in and through Jesus.

Faith in the God of Jesus Christ is born in the death and resurrection, which is itself the end of absolute certitude, even the end of philosophical systems of metaphysics that are so connected to this absolute distant God of philosophy, and to the convictions that go with that objective truth is available to us in the here and now. If we think we've got God figured out, then the danger is that we think we can read off what is the objective truth of things. Thomas Aquinas, whom you might imagine was guilty of this, was not guilty of this at all. He always started from Scripture, and at the end of his life, as you may know, Thomas Aquinas had a vision of his work as just so much straw. He understood its role in the revelation of the person of Jesus Christ, being capital B of metaphysics, bows before weakness, where God is supremely encountered. What we know about God, we know in the first instance through the incarnation; the incarnation as the self emptying of God, even the weakening of God, not through scholastic distinctions about God's attributes of omnipotent, omniscience, and so on. And this has significant consequences for how we think about the Church, and how we understand our relationship to the secular world.

In the Catholic Church in the United States at least a significant number of our bishops, and a sizable minority of the rest of us, are suffering from what I would like to call *kenosis amnesia*. *Kenosis* means self-emptying; it's the Greek term: so God self-emptied in history. This is God's kenosis. And *kenosis amnesia* is something we are suffering from, or some are suffering from; that is to say, they have forgotten that the starting point of our faith is in Jesus Christ, in whom God is weak, not powerful, or to use the words of the great protestant theologian Hans Fries, "Powerful powerlessness." Jesus Christ is the self-emptied God who shares in the human condition, buffeted by history, assailed by doubt and ambiguity, subject to mortality, and called to hope, despite and maybe, because of the inescapable fragility of life. Sharing this human condition, our hope does not rest in a God who will swoop down and rescue us from this situation; rather, it is hope in Jesus Christ, in whom God calls us to friendship, sealed in the Spirit that Christ promised would be with us for all time. Faith is nurtured in the potting soil of love, joy, grief, friendship, generosity, and even doubt, and fertilized by the spirit of Christ.

Why this forgetfulness has occurred is a matter for speculation, no doubt, but it has at least in part to do with the desire for certitude that leads directly to suspicion of history and the secular world in which we live. Our world today is comfortable with the fact of historicity and suspicious of all absolutes. Integrists cling to absolutes, including the absolute, omnipotent, and omniscient God of the philosophers; and they continue to be seduced by the objective "truth" quotes of the natural law; and the divine order is not visible in the Gospel. And so the integrist mentality comes into focus as a particular form of fundamentalism, which, like all other forms of fundamentalism, is driven by desire for certitude and fear and suspicion in the face of the modern world.

Integrism in power goes even further, since it possesses certitude even if only to drown out the very different message of history. And where integrism and power succeeds in persuading those it is suppose to lead of the truth of absolutes, it falls under the judgment of Jesus in Matthew 23, where "the religious leaders", says Jesus, "crush people with unbearable religious demands, and never lift a finger to ease the burden." 2 Corinthians also speaks directly to integrists when it says that "the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

These two quotations alone should merit reconsideration of our eucharistic practice for the divorced and remarried, if not in deed our attitude to same sex marriage. (Applause) So, confronting the integrist mentality, whether it's among the baptized as a whole, or in the ranks of our leaders, is not so much a matter of liberals challenging conservatives, but of Christians proclaiming the Gospel. The future of our Church is not dependent on us battling the latest episcopal act of folly, but on the re-evangelization of the integrists within our ranks; and this can be achieved only through recalling them to the Gospel message. The Bible is not a story of objective truth but of the dynamics of revelation. Our salvation history is ongoing in Jesus's interpretation of the message of the prophets; and in Jesus's gift of the Spirit to the world. I do not think this is what Cardinal Wurl or Pope Benedict means by the *New Evangelization*, but I am pretty sure that this is the new evangelization that we need: proclaiming to one another afresh the message of the Gospel is the single antidote to the contagion of integrism. With our eyes on the incarnate God, our growth in faith can only be what has been called by an Italian philosopher I like, a man called Gianni Vattimo, has been called "moving away from the metaphysical dreams of natural reason, and the God of violence and power that accompanies those dreams."

The Church of Jesus Christ.

If I am right, that the integrists mentality involves worshipping the wrong God, then it follows, as I believe, is the case then, integrism has a distorted view of the nature of the Church. The integrist church is essentially necrophiliac: it loves dead things - (Laughter) I wish I had dreamed that one up, but I stole it - it loves dead things, whether they are rules and regulation, catechisms, rubrics, or supposed objective truths utterly within its control.

At this point in our discussion, I can no longer keep pushing aside Dostoevsky's parable of *The Grand Inquisitor*. You may recall that in the story of *The Grand Inquisitor*, in the great book, *The Brothers Karamazov*, Jesus returns to earth and the *Grand Inquisitor*, recognizing Jesus speaking to people in the streets, immediately has him arrested and thrown in jail. Later the two of them meet. *The Inquisitor* explains that the Church exists to provide people with a message of certainty in return for their obedience, a message that will absolve them from responding to the challenging and troubling words of Jesus Christ. The church of *The Grand Inquisitor*, he says, would kill Jesus again if it had to. Dostoevsky's point is that the institutional Church has set aside the message of the Gospel in favor of something that is easier for people. The Church replaces faith with consoling, but untrue certitude, convinced that this is what people want, and what will make them happy. In the parable Jesus never speaks to *The Inquisitor*; instead he plants a kiss and departs. Now, I am not suggesting, I am not suggesting, as Dostoevsky did, that the clergy are a bunch of altruistic atheists, who control and manipulate people in lives secure from the challenge of the Gospel. But I do sometimes wonder what would happened if Jesus returned tomorrow?

Dostoevsky's parable suggests two possible churches; and the truth of the matter is that, at the present time, we have both. There is the integrist church that has all the answers, and compels ascent in the name of truth with a capital T. And there is the church of the *anawim*, the poor who depend on the Lord. There is the proud church and the humble church, living side by side within the same historic community of faith. The challenge I think for us is finding the resources to assert an ecclesiology of humility.

What would a more humble Church look like, and how can we get there? Specifically, what would it mean to live as a humble Church? What would it mean to teach as a humble Church? And what would it mean to believe as a humble Church? Because the American Catholic Church, especially viewed institutionally, is so large, and rich, and powerful, we need to look elsewhere for models of what it is to live as a humble Church. Within the United States we could benefit greatly from the lessons of the Catholic Worker Movement, or the convictions of the Mennonites. Outside this country we might do even better looking, perhaps, to the experience of base Christian communities of the poor in Latin America, or maybe even more instructively, Asian Catholic communities, where the Church lives out its mission as a tiny minority in service to the poor, and shoulder to shoulder with the great ancient religions of the continent. If it is the Church of Christ, our community of faith should never give in to the temptation to flex its muscles, real or metaphorical. Those places where it cannot do so have a great lesson to teach those places like ours, where self-restraint is needed.

The Jesuit theologian, Joseph Webber, once wrote, “The responsibility of the Church is not to impose its institutional life upon the world, such an undertaking would make the Church into just another institution with its own power planes. Instead, the gospel memory of the life of Jesus,” writes Webber, “serves as a basis of the Church’s discernment of how the lordship of Christ is operative in the world.” Or as Yves Congar once so memorably put it, thinking about the relationship between church and world, these are his words, “Final salvation will be achieved by a wonderful refloating of our earthly vessel, rather than by a transfer of the survivors to another ship wholly built by God.” I’m not sure if you get that exactly. “Final salvation will be achieved by a wonderful refloating of our earthly vessel, rather than by a transfer of the survivors to another ship wholly built by God.” The work of the Church is the service of the salvation, which comes to the world; and it comes to the world not, says Congar, by transferring everything into the categories of the Church. It’s another image for humility, I think.

Another place to look for clues to a Church that lives humbly would be the New Testament; and here I would recommend reflection on the parable of *the Good Samaritan*. On first reading, that parable teaches us a fine lesson about the temptations to exclusion that Yves Congar identified as one of the marks of the integrist mentality. Who shall we exclude? the divorced and remarried from the Eucharist? same sex couples from sacramental marriage? or the right to adopt? women from positions of executive authority and pastoral leadership? children with two mommies from parochial school? growing numbers of faithful Catholics from at least weekly access to communion? or just the whole people of God that some say on how that Church conducts itself? The parable of the Good Samaritan, remember, is Jesus’s response to the hostile question, “Who then is my neighbor?” At first glance the lesson seems obvious, because the Samaritan shows that he knows that his neighbor is whoever is in need, unlike the scribes and priests who walk by on the other side. But on further reflection, we are being challenged a little more, since the Samaritan is the one that any pious Jew is reluctant to consider to be a neighbor. The outsider is teaching the insider how the insider should abandon the category of outsider. Nor does it stop there.

The great French, philosopher Simone Weil, wrote a lot about the Good Samaritan. She tells us, for example, that when the Samaritan gives, he also loses something; and in that loss of self, which is a gain for the wounded victim, the Samaritan is divinized and the victim humanized. She suggests that, when we follow the example of the Samaritan and act selflessly toward the stranger, it is as if we become God in God’s moment of self-emptying. And all of this is relativized when we recognize that at times, at least, we may be the wounded victims. Why should we see ourselves as the Samaritan? The victim is the insider after all; but if and when we are the victim in need of sucker who is the Samaritan? When the other gives us a little humanity in our moment of need the other, whatever her or his faith, or lack of it, is, is the presence of Christ to us. We’re not sure of this. Jesus in the encounter with another outsider shows us perhaps more clearly the way.

You will recall the story of Jesus and Syro-Phoenician woman. This is a person to whom a rabbi should not even speak; and it seems for a moment as if Jesus, for once, follows the expected pattern, because when she asks him for help he seems to brush her aside, saying that he is called only to the house of Israel. “Yes Lord,” she replies, “but even the dogs may eat the scraps that fall from the master’s table.” And, you know, his eyes are opened; and he rewards her for her great faith, but the greater event is that this woman teaches Jesus something he had not previously known. She enlightens him. She opens his eyes, not only to the outsider as an object of charity, but to the outsider as a teacher of wisdom, someone whose wisdom enriches the Gospel itself.

Obviously enough, to be a humble Church is to know that we do not have all the answers. Internally, it is to know that no one constituency, and certainly no one person, has all the answers. But neither of these positions could be maintained if we, as a community, think we are worshipping a God who has conveyed all the answers to us, or to our magisterium. The God we worship is the One who taught the parable of the Good Samaritan, and who learned from the Syro-Phoenician woman, the One who surrendered his life in hope, and agony, and confusion; the One in whom being is weakening; that is, in whom certitude and the illusion of objective truth are being replaced by love and hope in the midst of the pains, perils, and joys of human life.

Conclusion

Let me wind up with a few brief thoughts about secularity, always the enemy of the integrist mentality. Some of these ideas are from my own book 2003, *The Liberation of the Laity*, some from a remarkable little book by the man I just mentioned Gianni Vattimo, little book, kind of a dense book, but full of gems. Many years ago the great English Jesuit historian of philosophy, Frederick Copleston, who was one of my teachers, told me that he had been converted to Christianity by reading Hegel's *Logic*. Now if you have even looked at Hegel's *Logic*, what connection this has to the Gospel is really hard to see. I thought that I was remarkable enough, until I discovered that Gianni Vattimo credits his reawakened Catholic faith to the influence of Nietzsche and Heidegger. In one of my books I wrote the following, "The Christian makes an act of faith not in some usurpation of secular worldly reality, but in the one who affirms the goodness of the world, so that we live within a secular reality that is in no way different than from that of the non-believer. Gianni Vattimo is much more profound; and he draws upon the fact that contemporary philosophy, something I said to you earlier, contemporary philosophy, contemporary culture, contemporary science, has largely abandoned searching for objective reality, and has opted for what Vattimo calls *the weakening of being*. So he says, Vattimo, "If we encounter God self-emptied in Jesus Christ, if we take kenosis seriously, we can see that the message of the Gospel coincides exactly with the movement of secularization. Secularization is the progressive disillusion of the natural sacred." That is, the progressive disillusion of this objective reality that we know fully. And "the progressive disillusion of the natural sacred," says Vattimo, "is the very essence of Christianity, because the message of Jesus Christ is the abolition of the God of philosophy."

Now I'm not going to ask all of you to rush off and read Heidegger, on *The Forgetfulness of Being*, or Nietzsche, on *The Death of God*. Vattimo's intellection pilgrimage may be particular to him; but I think he very importantly points to the common quest for truth in which both Christians and secularists are engaged, and more strikingly, shows how the two are really allies and not enemies. Because integrist do not recognize faith as a search in the light of the spirit of Jesus, but rather, the confident possession of truth with a capital T, they cannot see the secular world as an ally. At best, for them, it is possessed of truth and grace to the degree that its conclusions coincide with revelation, seen as a fixed deposit of faith. Even other Christian traditions we are told are defective. So what hope is there for secular reality?

In my most recent book I propose ten challenges for today's Church. At this point in our session, you are far too weary for me to go into all of them; but I thought I would conclude by pointing to one or two to suggest how and why the more radical challenge I have offered here to the integrist reality changes the way we think of the challenges to the Church.

So, for example, one of the challenges I am propose in that book asks how the Church can remain a cohesive community of faith when patrons of institutional commitment are changing dramatically?" But I think the bigger question is, whether, indeed, we can claim to be a cohesive community of faith anymore? Heresy splits the Church; and I accept Karl Rahner's designation of integristism as a heresy. But, if you remember, he also said a Catholic nevertheless finds it possible to give a whole hearted and honest ascent to this Church as she exists in the concrete. This is a hard saying, even a mystifying one. For myself, I prefer Jesus's response to *The Inquisitor*: the kiss on the cheek. But is Jesus going out the door to continue to preach his Gospel, or back to the jail cell into which *The Inquisitor* had placed him?

Several of the challenges in that book have to do with magisterial teaching that is not "received." The most spectacular example on that is the teaching on birth control; but this is increasingly true for teachings on clerical celibacy, women in ministry, and same sex marriage, among other things. I argue with respect to all examples of failure to receive teaching, that unless one claims that the people of God, as a whole, is mired in invincible ignorance, if not actual sin, the bishops are either teaching the wrong thing, or teaching the right thing badly. In either case, they need to look at what and how they are teaching, and, like good teachers everywhere, resist the temptation simply to blame the students. (Laughter) Now, however, I want to say that all this kind of teaching is suspect if it is true that the authority for this teaching is referred to the wrong God. The right teaching follows from faith and the right God; and I am almost on the brink of uttering the evangelical query, "What would Jesus do?" (Laughter)

Some of my challenges, as I already mentioned, asked about the causes of a weakening sense of institutional commitment to the Church, even among those who continue to claim that their Catholic

identity is important to them. One can suggest all sorts of reasons for this well attested phenomenon, including upward social mobility, you remember that? soccer on Sundays, marriage to non-Catholics or non-Christians, cultural dislocation, and so on. But if my presentation this afternoon is even partially true, might it not be that the Spirit is moving people to a better place? whether that means continuing Catholic practice, with the support of the local community, and in sublime disregard for the integrist mentality at levels which do not directly impinge, or simply switching allegiance to another Christian community where things seem better. Let us not forget the recent statistics from the Pew Foundation that showed clearly that the principal reason Catholics join other churches is not because they are tired of waiting for women priests or married clergy, but simply because of, and I quote, "lack of spiritual nourishment." (Applause)

In the end, of course, all this is a call to conversion. While we are all sinners, who need to be reminded of the need for a change of heart on a daily basis, in ecclesial terms at the present day, I feel bound to say that it is upon the integrists that the call to conversion is most urgent. The great Canadian Jesuit Bernard Lonergan wrote eloquently about religious moral and intellectual conversion; but he was clear that all conversion begins with religious conversion. "Religious conversion" he said, and it is very simple for a man who could write in a very complicated way, "being grasped by love." Something essentially religious, since it requires openness to transcendence, although the person who experiences it may not recognize that it's religious, whenever you are grasped by love, he is saying, you are undergoing religious conversion. Sometimes he calls it affective conversion. Only then can we begin to address the need for moral conversion, the shift from satisfactions to values for the difficult process of intellectual conversion, in which we learn to look beneath the surface of things to learn what knowing really is. The teaching Church must address all three levels: the religious, moral, and intellectual; but the second and third are hobbled if the first is not present. Teaching follows from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not from the manuals of de-historicized doctrine, or the archaic philosophical-theological systems that produce conclusions contrary to the law of love.

So let's kiss them on the cheek, and get on with the business of being the loving presence of God in the world. This is what it is to be part of the priesthood of all the baptized; and this we do in virtue of our baptism, not because we have been commissioned by the Church. And that final remark is also from Yves Congar. Thank you. (Applause)

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1/ *Cockroaches* is a name Cardinal Edmund Szoka, then Archbishop of Detroit, assigned to a group of priests who formed a group to bring about education about the forms of confessions. Cardinal Szoka had ruled that general confessions would not be allowed in the Archdiocese of Detroit, and called those priests who challenged him a "bunch of cockroaches." The name stuck, and many years later, many of the priests who were part of the cockroaches formed the group, Elephants in the Living Room.

