

# CHURCH CHAT

BY

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## BIG STUFF, LITTLE STUFF

You know, when you get right down to it, there's big stuff and then there's little stuff. Mountains and molehills. But what is big and what is little can be very relative. Someone's big may be someone else's little.

Lots of people spend lots of money and time trying to get other people to agree with their list of what is big and what is little. In a formal setting, we call this process, "prioritizing", and companies, governments, and groups do it all the time to establish goals and objectives. They then allocate resources to achieve those goals and objectives. It's how the world works. But it's not how the institutional Catholic Church works.

The last time the Catholic Church did the big stuff was the Second Vatican Council fifty years ago. When dealing with the Catholic Church, fifty years is not very long. When dealing with our lives, fifty years is a very long time. And while I am interested in the long term direction of the Church, my primary focus is my lifetime. Call me selfish but, after fifty years, I want the results of Vatican II NOW!

Here is some of the big stuff from Vatican II:

- *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*: reestablished a collegial form of governance which included regular Papal consultations with bishops, usually through synods. This Constitution initiated similar collegial structures throughout the Church: Episcopal councils, Diocesan Pastoral Councils and Parish Councils. The primary image of the Church as outlined in this document is the People of God.
- *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*: acknowledged "the signs of the times" and pledged to engage in dialogue and action on the major issues that face the human race.
- *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation*: reinforced modern insights and methods of interpreting Sacred Scripture.
- *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*: reestablished vernacular languages for the liturgy and encouraged the People of God to take active and leadership roles in our rituals.

And what has become of the big stuff initiated at Vatican II? It has been undermined, rejected, deliberately neglected, ignored, crushed, and ridiculed by a small minority of Vatican insiders, sniveling loyalists, two backward-looking Popes, and a host of conservative Bishops who left their courage in their cradles.

How did they do it? They snuffed out the big stuff by over-emphasizing the little stuff. Some examples:

- There hasn't been a genuine Episcopal synod in decades, and with good reason. They couldn't decide or recommend anything anyway. The Vatican inside-raiders, (rhymes with Wall Street inside-traders), would do whatever they wanted anyway. These raiders use little stuff like bureaucratic procedures and governing policies to undermine the big stuff and install

their little stuff. Effective diocesan pastoral councils and parish councils are headed to the same fate as the genuinely pastoral bishops and pastors retire or die to be replaced by pre-Vatican II hierarchs.

- Dialogue with the world? Don't make me laugh. All they want to talk about is abortion and sex. Simple message: don't do either one. More little stuff.
- Dynamic emphasis on Scripture? Not a chance. Doctrine, as spelled out in the Catechism, is their one and only tune, with the lyrics from the sixteenth century and the melody from the 1940s. Little, small, tiny...
- Liturgy? Well, we've just been hit with the euphemistic "reform of the reform" which is a callused, transparent, power play to put the People of God back into their pews and elevate the role of the male presider.

That's the status of the four key Constitutions of Vatican II, promulgated with such hope and enthusiasm fifty years ago. My prediction: we will pay, we will pay! Actually, we already are paying, but it will get worse. We are the Diaspora within the Church, not counting the millions who have left. The Scriptural theme of "the remnant" sounds prophetically contemporary.

I ask myself: am I becoming a cynic in my elder years? And I answer: Nah, this analysis is simply the truth. The big stuff is too much for the raiders. They can't comprehend it, and they certainly don't want to promote it because it changes their status. That's not cynicism; that's reality.

Find your faith, nurture your hope, and always love joyfully in your smaller faith communities, hopefully even in your parish. That's where these harsh realities become the small stuff, and that's where you can deal with the genuine big stuff.