

The Vicar and the Diocese

“The most important office in the diocesan curia is that of vicar general.”

From Decree on the Bishop’s Pastoral Office in the Church

“I also have another title called vicar general which means I am vice president of the Archdiocese and the chief of staff for the Archbishop.

... I give leadership to our work with matters of clergy discipline. I deal with sexual misconduct which includes the sexual abuse of minors, sexual exploitation of adults under the care of the bishop, priest or deacon—and I deal with sexual harrassment of coworkers. I also deal with matters of abuse of trust, such as theft of funds. And finally I deal with questions of abuse of power, inappropriate displays of anger, misuse of preaching to teach false doctrine, that sort of thing.”

“Generally you asked specifically about this Archdiocese when the matter (sexual immorality) is consensual, generally speaking a priest is not subject to sanction but is given pastoral help.”

Testimony of Fr Kevin McDonough in State of Minnesota vs John Joseph Bussman (July 2005)

When 2500 Church fathers gathered in Rome in 1962 for the Second Vatican Council, they were presented with seven schema written by a Central Preparatory Commission. Most of the vocabulary and organization of subject matter as prepared by the Commission was eventually rejected and then reformulated by bishops who shaped the eventual documents of the Council. Forty years later in the Archdiocese of St Paul, a similar revolution of language and fraternity challenges a tired bureaucracy wedded to a

formulation of the Church inadequate for the mission at hand. It might surprise Fr Kevin McDonough to consider himself the “villain of the Curia” suppressing the young priests of a divided diocese ripe for renewal. But whereas the old Roman Curia can be forgiven for their scholastic attempt to safeguard a sacred deposit, the St Paul Vicar bears a heavier onus for inverting the definition of sexual order and the sacred in the life of the local Church. When the Rhine flowed into the Tiber at Vatican II, German speaking bishops led a movement of resourcement to find an earlier biblical vocabulary to present a more self conscious Church to the modern world. The German Cardinal Frings and his theological advisor Joseph Ratzinger as well as their mutual teacher Hans Kung were all part of the fraternal revolt against the encrusted formulations of the prepared schemata.

In our archdiocese, the dynamic texts and biblical personalism of the Council were ignored as men substituted the spirit of their own age for the wisdom of the Church. The continuity of the Council with the great tradition was jettisoned by men in love with the new. As always, those who fell in love with the new ended up serving a very old trickster. The sordid love affair of confused clergy with the American sixties and seventies masquerading as Vatican II is ending with the whimper of retirements and an occasional death yelp of bewildered protest. The dissident generation still holds on to most positions of diocesan authority and they continue to handpick the compliant and the complicit from a shrinking pool of the next generation to rule the bureaucracies. At the same time an emerging fraternity of priests and seminarians who are actually reading the texts of Vatican II are finding out there is nothing in them about the end of celibacy, the need for women priests, or a confusion of government lobbying with Catholic charity. These priests and seminarians with many Catholic laity are rejecting the tired “schema” of the local Curia and preparing for a new Pentecost in the Archdiocese.

From Fr. Dennis Dease, the President of St Thomas to Fr. Michael O’Connell, the rector at the Basilica to Fr. Larry Snyder, the national head of Catholic Charities, a fundamental misreading of Vatican II is now playing

out its final hand. Vatican II certainly cannot be blamed for these foul fruits: the intellectual and moral weakness of President Dease most recently displayed at the 2006 St Thomas commencement, the scandal at the Basilica of Our Lady enthroning gay queenship in Fr. O'Connell's mouse like presence and finally the sickening "social justice as high life" in Fr. Snyder's very new and hip rendition of Catholic Charity.

The deepest error of the era has been ecclesiological. There was a populist political misinterpreting of the People of God as a celebration of congregationalism. This has nothing to do with the text of the second (**People of God**) chapter of Lumen Gentium which is really a deep reading of the Church in relationship to the Jews and the Old Covenant. The real text places the Church in continuity with Israel as a corporate actor in history. The misinterpretation highlights "the people" as a congregation (with both lay and clerical roles) superseding the apostolic priesthood as the defining paradigm of the church. No interpretation could be more erroneous. Unfortunately, no interpretation is so widely held.

As we view this spectacular misinterpretation with some perspective, the dwindling disheartened bureaucrats once so full of hope and vigor for a new church seem almost pathetic. They thought they were scientific-in their embrace of psychology divorced from the God centered Catholic anthropology. They thought they were prophets in predicting an end to an all male priesthood and diaconate. They leave bitter deacons' wives and sullen sixty year old nuns who were told they too would be ordained. They thought they were communitarians in mocking Eucharistic adoration as wafer worship while they alone understood the Body of Christ in the community. They thought they were helping women by dethroning the cult of Our Lady as an unreachable perfection that was really blocking women from power sharing in the more human and attainable apostolic roles. They reduced the Catholic University intellectual tradition to a department of Catholic Studies just when the modernists of academia are bemoaning their own soulless ill conceived epistemology. Their final bizarre embrace of homosexuality as an experience of love, once so cutting edge and obvious to those in the know, now seems embarrassingly perverse.

The true believers of these false teachings are still employed but they are ducking for cover and hiding their old tracks which led to the corrupt garden patios where they once danced and serenaded. Their dedication to feminism, pacifism and gay rights is real, but a deeper allegiance has emerged. They form with employees of government and non profit corporations a new class bound by a narrow economic interest in eternal job tenure for social service staff of church and state alike. In the Church, they fear the coming “reform of the reform” promised by Benedict XVI. They scurry to institutionalize their 40 year revolt as a sacred tradition of the people. They shattered all the china and broke the dining room table into kindling wood. Now they ask us to reverence their paper plates and picnic blankets as the permanent things. The vandals who mocked the Church’s purity codes now sit on boards selling risk management advice to Catholic dioceses. These new paid lay roles have driven out some old jobs which may have to be reinstated. The priest’s housekeeper and parish secretary were lost in the job shuffle, often fired by priests who enjoyed the domestic arts themselves and wanted their living space as a haven for their “private lives.” The non paternal priests expanded their private lives and living quarters while turned over parish life to church “ministers.” Those ministers now seek to entrench their expanded roles as a quasi third order in “the sacrament of staff hood.” No doubt this will involve an indelible imprinting on the soul of the ecclesial lay minister. The bureaucratic children of the sexual revolution are the new “old guard” battling the emerging fraternity of priests. It is the drama of Vatican II— forty years later on the local stage of diocesan life.

In the Archdiocese of St Paul-Minneapolis it was an expanded curia and diocesan offices that emerged from the reforms of the Council. (From 1965-2005, diocesan employment went from <10 employees to 150) In an inexcusable insult to lay Catholic women, a new Women’s Commission of more feminist thinking females was established to bypass the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women. It took two decades to transform Catholic colleges and high schools into private upper middle class corporations losing their communal sexual identities, ecclesial character and mission. Catholic Charities became advocacy driven, government funded and more closely aligned with secularized allies in the DFL party than the *caritas* strategy

outlined in Pope Benedict's first encyclical. In Minnesota like most states the synodal idea of regional bishops morphed into a distinct political form of Catholic State Conferences dominated by staff members advocating the concerns of their social class and fixated on lobbying State legislatures. The Ecclesial Petrine brotherhoods of Pope and World Synod as well as a renewed Eucharistic relationship of a Bishop and his diocesan priests are still emerging as fundamental forms of the Council. Regional Synods of brother bishops may need their own Fulda* conference to free themselves from the mistakes in category and voice so stifling in their present staff driven national and State conferences.

The Archdiocese of St Paul for fourteen years has suffered a false shepherd in our Vicar General. He has been committed to job security for family and friends, and miter envy for himself. He has failed as a father, abandoned the Decalogue and made a mockery of the sacramental order while normalizing his brother's pathology and covering his friends' immorality. He has offered a living history lesson of tales that once seemed remote and unbelievable. The Churchman's proclivities for nepotism and the once inconceivable story of the Borgias' open celebration of immorality is not so far away. The self serving high cleric of the Hunchback of Notre Dame can no longer be blamed on an overactive Protestant imagination. We have lived with him. Our beautiful Church who recapitulates the great moments of salvation history seems also destined to replay our more sordid memories.

Fulda Conference : A conference of German speaking bishops in Fulda, Germany(Aug26-29,1963), between the first and second sessions of Vatican II in which the bishops developed a more satisfactory language and theological approach to the major schemas to be discussed in the next session of the Council. This chance to formulate their own approach outside of the "scholastic schema" gave them a great advantage in vision and strategy throughout the rest of the Council sessions.

It will be a difficult assignment to rectify this fourteen year abuse of office. This cannot be left in justice to the “new bishop”. It will take an older priest of this diocese on a very short assignment under the present archbishop to clean the stable—and the stable includes the perversion of the Christian Brothers involved in our high schools and Sisters of St Joseph at the College of St Catherine. This is not a job for a new bishop but a duty of those priests who are here now in union with our bishop. How can this happen?

Consider the misguided but good King Theoden and his corrupt advisor Grima Wormtongue in the Lord of the Rings. That is the best description of the relationship of Archbishop Flynn and Vicar General Kevin McDonough. When Archbishop Flynn came to the area it was Kevin McDonough more than any other local priest who explained the situation to him. He was also the one who took on the tasks of disciplining, conflict management, and other administrative unpleasanties so Archbishop Flynn could build his own day around prayer, teaching, personal encounters with priests, and his national bishop duties. Kevin McDonough was a real help to him. Fr. McDonough understood the strengths and weaknesses of the Archbishop. He was smarter than other priests in the diocese in understanding what the Bishop needed and how to meet those needs. He won the loyalty honestly but if he understood how to placate a personality he had no interest in furthering the gospel or sacramental order that Archbishop Flynn thought was a given among his priests and Vicar. Behaviors and morals which Archbishop Flynn and Pope John II could not imagine as debatable for Catholic priests was very much in play in his Vicar’s diocese. After the murder of a Wisconsin layman and a host of other lesser tragedies the concealed subculture is now being exposed.

Someone—somehow-- must play Gandalf and break the spell to give the Archbishop a right hand who will not betray him but supplement his teaching and sanctifying role with the ruling role of a masculine Vicar capable of spiritual paternity. “Orphans” in biblical parlance are the “fatherless” and that is the sad state of so many in our diocese. It includes the feminist nuns who have not heard a father’s voice from a correcting

priest for two decades. It includes our confused high school students who have been deprived the rich teaching of the Church because most of their teachers don't know or can't speak that truth without fear of being accused of sexism or homophobia. It includes most of our priests who have been formed in a seminary and diocesan fraternity that can only be described as a "school for castrati". **All** of our priests have been deformed by this corrupt culture. (*Pope Benedict recently warned the Polish priests that their long history of living under a totalitarian regime fostered habits of hypocrisy. Even though now they are free they must be vigilant of this tendency formed in a different moral cauldron. Our own priests must recognize the destructive effects which they have suffered living in a devious and fractured local priesthood. This has affected all the priests - whether they were in the cliques or lived circumventing them.*) The story of the evil counselor and the propensity for even good kings to fall under a kind of spell of trusted subordinates is not just a children's fantasy:

Grima Wormtongue

Grima Wormtongue is known as the chief Counselor of King Theoden of Rohan as well as the servant of Saruman the White. We meet Grima in the second part of "The Lord of the Rings" when Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli came to the King of the Golden Hall. "Grima's sweet talks only proved that in reality he didn't care for the King of Rohan. Wormtongue didn't trust anyone and with all his might tried to prevent Gandalf from seeing Theoden, for he knew – the wizard would reveal his evil designs. After Gandalf's visit, Grima's carefully woven webs of deceit began to unravel. Though Theoden continued to heed Grima's counsel, others began to defy him. Theodred took command of the forces of Rohan and strengthened the defenses on the western marches. Finally Gandalf sees the king and breaks the spell of Wormtongue.

Theoden

We meet Theoden in "Two Towers" and see him as "a man so bent with age that he seemed almost a dwarf; His beard was laid like snow upon his knees; but his eyes still burned with a bright light, glinting as he gazed at the strangers." Gandalf broke the spells and "the black staff fell from king's hand clattering on the stones. He drew himself up, slowly, as a man that is stiff from long bending over some dull toil. Now tall and straight he stood, and his eyes were blue as he looked into the opening sky." Theoden's transformation is highly symbolic as it reveals superiority of Good over Evil. Valor revived inside the King. He did not hide himself behind the walls of Rohan, but led

his army and shared the common fate on the battlefields. Despite his royal pride, Theoden was self-critical and capable of admitting his mistakes alongside with being a person of great wisdom. Theoden is a symbol for the unity of his people. He boosted his army's enthusiasm and challenged the [Witch-King](#). He died in battle. But before passing away he inspired all those who fought in the name of Good with his smile. Brave warriors carried away dead Theoden from the battlefield, and then mourned their King's death. Rohan lost its King but he died like a true hero. **Lord of the Rings Fantasy World © 2001-2002**

Unlike Theoden, our bishop has taught and sanctified and in certain key appointments even ruled well. However in general the ruling function in St Paul (as is true in a majority of dioceses) was largely the responsibility of the Vicar General. The Vicar General did not rule. The communal character of the diocese fell under a lampshade except for the person of the bishop. The refrain, "we have St Agnes and we have St Joan of Arc" really meant we are no longer a single church but a collection of interest groups, independent contractors and congregations. It was an insult to the St Agnes parish but a great cover as congregants of Joan of Arc spread their influence throughout the diocesan bureaucracy. Diocesan officials would characterize St Joan's as a parish that accepted Vatican II while St Agnes resisted. St Agnes which followed the Council by developing the liturgical patrimony of the Church as the center of our Eucharistic life was somehow marginalized as anti liturgical reform. Meanwhile St Joan was seen as ecumenical, though the congregation was so narcissistic that it often inserted secular poetry for the Sunday Scripture readings which we share with Christians all over the world. As St Joan closed her South Minneapolis grade school, she swooned before the dominant urban cult of homosexuality. St Agnes maintained a tougher witness—keeping open an integrated Catholic grade school in one of St. Paul's worse neighborhoods. If Joan of Arc had trouble with the dirty work of serving the poor they were the masters at diocesan intrigue. Except for blood relatives of Kevin McDonough, no group was so represented in the diocesan staff offices as the Joan of Arcians. There might have been "a St Agnes and St Joan of Arc" but that never meant equal opportunity hiring for

high school religion teachers or parish liturgists or religious educators. The congregation of pacifism, feminism and gay rights had their most famous pastor return from the Holy Land and report in the Minneapolis Tribune that Christ had probably not risen and it didn't matter anyway. There was no reprimand from the Vicar General whose duty it was to discipline priests who misused their office of power by teaching false doctrine. For the insiders, the public denial of the historical center of salvation history was no problem. A little tiff about the resurrection was no reason for fellow employees of Catholic Inc. to quarrel.

Being Pastoral as Exercising Authority

All community life needs authority to ensure the common good. It is a cardinal Catholic teaching seldom mentioned in the literature of peace and justice but a first principle in the Catholic Catechism. For the Archdiocese of St Paul, however, exercising authority in the name of the apostles, the Creed and the sacraments was no longer the goal of the Vicar General. A new notion of pastoral as somehow not related to doctrine or discipline became all the vogue. Pope Benedict explained the real meaning of pastoral in his homily on the priest as shepherd. When he uses the word pastoral he does not conjure the image of green grass blowing whatever way the wind might blow. He sees a shepherd armed with his staff. He sees wolves in the distance and thieves at the back fence. He describes the pastoral shepherd as a protective role not a permission slip. He had sharp words for those who abdicated the exercise of a Shepherd's authority for the personal desire for careerism.

Jesus highlights very clearly this basic condition by saying: "He who ... climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber" (John 10:1).

This word "climbs" -- *anabainei* in Greek -- conjures up the image of someone climbing over a fence to get somewhere out of bounds to him.

"To climb" -- here too we can also see the image of careerism, the attempt to "get ahead," to gain a position through the Church: to make use of and not to serve. It is the image of a man who wants to make himself important, to become a person of note through the priesthood; the image of someone who has as his aim his own exaltation and not the humble service of Jesus Christ.

**Pope Benedict XV on priestly ordination of fifteen
deacons in diocese of Rome May 7, 2006.**

The Diocese as the locus of Vatican II Renewal

The springtime of evangelization promised by Vatican II and Pope John Paul II is not going to be led by the new lay movements or new orders of priests and religious. It is going to be demonstrated most dramatically in a living public culture of the Catholic diocese in which priestly fraternity around a Eucharistic bishop emerges from a pruned diocesan bureaucracy. At the same time the diocesan symphony of patriarchal parishes will be joined by intellectually vigorous universities and high schools rising again from the heart of the church not clamoring to copy the errors of soulless academia. Parishes will be led by priestly fathers with real authority to direct their households with the housekeepers, vicars and secretaries that most priests need to do their work well. At the same time parishioners will have clear and ready recourse through the Vicar General or Tribunal when liturgical or teaching errors are promulgated. When the Catholic laity is overly scrupulous, they will be charitably corrected. When the priest has exceeded the boundaries of his office, he will be fraternally corrected. There is no Catholic life without ensuring a certain doctrinal and liturgical coherence. There is no possibility of strong authority without a mechanism to check the abuse of that authority. This can only be insured by the ruling oversight of a pastoral diocesan Curia which keeps fathers with real authority in obedience to the Father of us all. The church has already figured this out and the Curial offices are in place to enact this reform.

The Archdiocese of St Paul owes its architectural twin monuments and its seminary grounds to the vision and great soul of Archbishop John Ireland. (Archbishop 1888-1918). The Cathedral of St Paul (that man with a sword) and the Basilica of Mary (that woman with a crown) are the architectural models of apostolic masculinity and Marian femininity. Archbishop Ireland's fatherly presence and his great souled vision were of a different era but he reminds us how horribly we have been shrunken by the likes of Kevin McDonough, Dennis Dease, Larry Snyder, Michael O'Connell and the aging feminist bureaucrats who multiply their regulations in place of Paternity, the Decalogue and the sacramental order. There is evil in our diocese that must be corrected. But like all evil-- it is much weaker than it appears. It shrinks the boisterous dynamic life of a diocese into the miniature world of girlish cliques. We are not dealing with the giant McDonough. We are dealing with someone who has shrunk the diocese of Archbishop Ireland to a stage where his brother is considered an intellectual, Fran Donnelly is considered tough, Katerina Schuth is called a scientist and Michael Papesh and Dick Rice are spiritual gurus. How far we have fallen. And yes it is uncomfortable to name names but how else distinguish the spotless Bride from those who have muddied her dress. It is a large measure of our problem that hundreds of men and women paid by the church are in opposition to *Vatican* (speak with appropriate sneer) *teaching* and say so publicly. While this insult and criticism of the Vatican has been fostered for thirty years, the first attempt to start "naming names" in exposing the deceit and dissent project is considered scandalous, impolite, detraction and grounds for censorship. The Vicar has it exactly backwards. Plunder the church's sacred treasure of teaching but nary a world criticizing the person of the Vicar. Ravish the bride but don't unmask the masquerading groomsman.

Vatican II on a Local Stage: the Mississippi and the Tiber

After the disastrous domination of Christian Europe and Christian Russia by atheistic totalitarian regimes in the twentieth century, John XXIII wished that the Church would become more self conscious of her public presence and role as a corporate actor on the stage of history. While the church would no longer rule states, she could not forfeit the public sphere to the Evil One.

John XXIII brought the Church into a single room within hearing range of the Shepherd's voice. This historical act of self consciousness must now be lived out in local dioceses. The Holy Spirit makes conscious the communal existence of the Church in a territorial diocese in order to publicly proclaim the Christian narrative, witness the ordered love of Christ in the priesthood and marriage and assemble the baptized as a Eucharistic community in memory of the Pasch and anticipation of the Second Coming. When the Church is who she is meant to be-- the cities and nations will learn their roles. Let us listen to the Holy Spirit and we will find the true spirit of Vatican II is quite congruent with the texts of that great Council which He also inspired. The Mississippi will flow into the Tiber when our local Church witnesses to Christian Unity and the new Evangelization by acting out the full orchestra of worship and love which is the Catholic Church. That happened two thousand years ago when strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Peter came to his senses with his fellow apostles. That only happened after Judas left the Twelve and the Eleven were purified by their own repentance. For our diocese, for the Church: Pentecost is ever new and the same.

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