

# The Inaugural Rosemary Goldie Lecture

presented by **Clifford Longley**

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## Synopsis

*This lecture follows story of the of the People of God, the laity's status and involvement in and with the Church over the years prior to the Second Vatican Council to the present. Clifford Longley is a story teller, using material from diaries, his sharp observation and experience to show us some of the contentious issues of the times. His main point is the growth of lay activity, education and sense of ownership of their role in the Church and indeed society.*

*Longley's message is a plea to return to the ethic of virtue, seemingly weakened in the Middle Ages and Enlightenment. The Church turned to issues of right and wrong, good and bad, sinfulness and reliance on a clergy to forgive sin, so sinners could go to heaven. This made for a dependent, guilt ridden and anguished people.*

*The virtue ethics moves the lens from rule constrictions (and its trappings of titles, dress etc.) to personal responsibility, goodness for its own sake, respect for others' life experience. It leads to equality of relationships, and attention to Catholic lay women. These are some of the signs of a maturing laity.*

*This talk is a very fitting tribute to Rosemary Goldie, whose courage, faith and prudence spoke of and for the recognition of all, male and female, in the Church of God's people.*

## The Lecture

This inaugural Lecture, which it is my entirely undeserved honour to be called upon to give, bears the name of one of Australia's most distinguished Catholic figures. Rosemary Goldie had a central role, as participant and spectator, in some of the most important events in recent Catholic history, not least the Second Vatican Council itself. If a giant in intellect and influence, however, she certainly was not so in physical stature. Pope John XXIII called her affectionately "la piccina", which means something like "the little bit of a thing". A Vatican journalist labelled her "la bambina Vaticana", and The Tablet described her as "tiny, wise, spirited - and elfin".

She was first and foremost an apostle of the lay apostolate - by which I means she was a tireless advocate of the importance of the Catholic Church taking the laity seriously, and developing a proper understanding in the Church of the laity's appropriate role.

It is right, as this lecture is also one of a series to mark the 50th anniversary of the start of the Second Vatican Council, to remind ourselves of what the Council achieved in this area, an achievement to which she immensely contributed. Now it just so happened that about 15 years ago I embarked on my own exploration and research into this exact field, in order to prepare a biography of the late Archbishop Derek Worlock of Liverpool. I had access to virtually all his papers, including the detailed secret diary he kept as a

close observer and participant in the Second Vatican Council himself. He was, as it happened, also an expert on the laity. In that capacity he had been appointed a periti, that is to say an expert theological adviser to the commission which was working on the drafting of the Council's own document on the laity. He must have worked alongside Rosemary many times.

This extract from his diary, written in 1962, gives is a revealing and somewhat disconcerting picture of the state of the argument at the time. Catholic laity who had not been properly trained as lay apostles could easily become a "menace", Derek Worlock remarked. They needed training in the sacramental, doctrinal, social and professional spheres.

"It is a mistaken belief," he goes on, "to encourage priests to become experts in secular affairs in order to be able to guide the laity. It is the layman who must become an expert in union matters and other industrial subjects which are of such a great concern to the laymen today. The layman should then bring those problems to a priest for advice and guidance from the social principles which have been laid down by the Church. Whilst a priest must know about the conditions in which his people are living and working... it is better for him to steer clear of them but remain at hand to advise the layman in their treatment of the problem..."

We cannot get a fair measure of the achievement of people like Rosemary Goldie and Derek Worlock unless we know what was the status of the laity, as seen by the Church, before the Council started.

In many Catholic countries the predominant model for lay Catholic involvement in what would be termed "social action" - a broad Catholic euphemism for politics - was through a structure known as Catholic Action. The principle behind Catholic Action was that lay activity in the name of the Church had in some sense to be directed by the Church - which meant it had to be under the control of the local hierarchy. Loose control in some cases, fairly tight control in others. It was this link to the official Church that enabled lay Catholic initiatives of this kind to be regarded as an "apostolate" - missionary work as an extension of the Church's apostolic vocation.

As we have seen, Worlock's model for the lay apostolate drew a clear distinction between what was appropriate for the laity and what was the proper function of the clergy. All the campaigning and organising of political or trade union life was within the competence of lay people, but outside the competence of priests and bishops. Their job in the first place was to teach lay people the general principles of Catholic Social Teaching, generally as laid down in the Social Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XIII, published in 1891, and *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI, published in 1931.

In the second place it was to supervise the spiritual formation of lay Catholics involved in this work. They had to be "good Catholics". In practical terms that meant seeing that they attended to Bible study, frequented the Sacraments (especially Sunday Mass and Confession), studied church teaching, and developed their prayer life (saying the Rosary regularly, for instance, or occasionally going on retreats.)

Much of the debate at the Vatican II commission on the laity arose from the fact that the particular experience of delegates related closely to the situations in their own country. Only slowly did they grasp the point that a general document should not generalise from the particular.

Their pre-war history still had a major influence on how they saw the world. In all those countries they had been actively opposed by anti-clerical movements of the left and actively courted by authoritarian movements such as Mussolini's Fascists or Franco's Falangists, from the far right. But Catholicism was not comfortable in such company, probably because the principles of the 1891 and 1931 Social Encyclicals were egalitarian rather than oligarchic. Fascists tended to glorify violence: Catholic social theory tended towards pacifism. Indeed while Catholic political sentiment gravitated towards the right in much of Europe and Latin America, the opposite was the case in countries like Australia, Great Britain and the United States, where it lent on the whole to the left.

What tended to weaken Catholic lay action was the overarching influence of the Church hierarchy, which wished to have a veto over leadership and policy and to overrule the membership in the name of some greater good that was more visible to bishops than to anyone else.

In at least two cases, Italy and Germany, this desire to control Catholic political movements led the church authorities to undermine those they could not control. Pius XI disapproved in principle of Catholic parties that were independent of the Church, and in Italy actively encouraged Catholics to join Mussolini's Fascists as being more amenable and respectful to the Church than the Catholic Popular Party had been. With regard to Germany, Pius XI, advised by Cardinal Pacelli (later Pius XII), had actively collaborated with Hitler in undermining and eventually dissolving the Centre Party, which was in effect the Catholic party, again because the Church could not control it. Arguably - for instance as in John Cornwell's book *Hitler's Pope* - this removal of the Centre Party from the stage was one of the principle reasons why German political life was so quickly and completely dominated by the Nazis after they came to power in 1933. We should not however infer from this that Catholicism found Nazism congenial. If you look at a map of votes cast for National Socialism, region by region, you will notice an inverse relationship between support for the Nazis and the proportion of Catholics in the population. The more Catholic a region was, the less Nazi.

These Catholic parties, from the church's point of view, were difficult to deal with as they set up in each society an alternative pole of Catholic leadership to the bishops. No matter with how much pro-Church goodwill they may have started with, sooner or later headstrong prelates and headstrong politicians would disagree about something - and eventually, human nature being what it was, about almost everything. So the existence of Catholic parties tended to divide the Church and weaken the authority of the bishops. They were not regarded as a suitable instrument for translating Catholic social theory into action, therefore. Any other body which was to meet this criterion, on the other hand, had to have formal links to the Hierarchy: to be, so to speak, its agent in the world of politics. Hence the concept of the Lay Apostolate.

Incidentally, even in countries where Catholic opinion lent to the left, it was not unusual for senior prelates to have behind-the-scenes influence on the way politics was shaped. To give one example - before the war in the city of Liverpool, England's most Catholic city, the presence of a Protestant Party naturally brought forth an equal and opposite Catholic party. The archbishop was approached on behalf of the Labour Party in the city to see whether he was prepared to merge the Catholic party with Labour, which would henceforth be committed to protecting Catholic interests. The archbishop agreed to do so, but only on condition that he had a right of veto in the selection of candidates, in both local and national elections. He had to make sure that whoever was chosen was not a Bad Catholic. And so it happened. The Labour party would quietly submit a list of names to Archbishop's House, and Archbishop Downey would delete the ones he did not like. I don't doubt that Catholic folklore in Australia has similar tales to tell.

In the ecclesiology prevailing prior to 1962, power and authority in the Church was envisaged as trickling down from the top. The divine "entry point", so to speak, was at the peak of the pyramid. The closer one's position was to that, the holier it was. The laity were the bottom layer, not very holy at all. They were neither ordained nor consecrated to higher office; they had not been called. They were assumed to be generally ignorant of the twin Catholic sciences of theology and canon law. They were deemed much more liable, left to their own devices, to get things wrong rather than right. As their status in the church placed them at a lower level than priests, it was through their priests that they were connected to the total life of the church. And of course, the laity had sex; some of them were even women.

The bishops, of course who didn't and weren't, were successors to the apostles. It was they, above all, who had an "apostolate", a mission to spread the Word of God throughout the world. Whether this commission came directly from God, or was transmitted, so to speak, through the office of the Pope, was a moot point which the Second Vatican Council eventually tried to resolve in favour of the former position against the Ultramontanists who favoured the latter, but without a definitive solution. This would soon have interesting consequences.

The priests were sharers in the work of the bishop, under his leadership. They had a share in his apostolate, therefore. What of the laity? They too could share in this apostolate, by loyally assisting the priests and bishops. It was not only a matter of financial support. The lay person was "out there" in a way priests and bishops were not. The lay person was sometimes the best person, therefore, to fulfil the Church's mission in a particular situation. If he was a good lay person, he would be a humble one, and if a humble one, he would be prepared to take instruction from his Church on what the methods and goals of his lay activity should be.

After the council Worlock himself became a bishop - in Portsmouth which is where I first got to know him as a young reporter on the local newspaper. The newly formed Bishops' Conference of England and Wales set itself up, after the council ended, with a series of expert committees or commissions who were to advise the bishops on various matters - an ecumenical commission, for instance, a social welfare commission, a commission for the what was coyly called "world of work", and so on.

Because of his role in Vatican II and his continuing interest in the issue, Worlock was made president of the Laity Commission for England and Wales, which he promptly packed with his own hand-picked lay nominees. They represented to him the epitome of the idea of the Vatican II lay person. It was through himself, of course, that this cream of the Catholic laity, carefully selected members of the Laity Commission, were to receive guidance on all matters spiritual or moral. So this was the immediate post-Vatican II model.

And three years after the end of the Council, it crashed. The publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* in the summer of 1968 saw an immediate and strong reaction, as laity and priests up and down England and Wales went public to declare their opposition to what the encyclical had to say about birth control. Numerous priests were instantly suspended by their bishops for disloyalty to the magisterium. The papers were full of it.

The Laity Commission was hastily assembled to discuss the crisis, and it was plain that Bishop Worlock had lost control. They demanded the end to further priestly suspensions and the immediate reinstatement of those already suspended. They wished to make known their total opposition to the encyclical. The best that Worlock was able to do was to persuade them to address their objections in the form of questions rather than declarations, and send them to the Bishops' Conference in private. The questions they asked were never answered, incidentally. They were reluctantly persuaded not to go public with their views.

This was quickly overtaken when the document was leaked - to me, in fact, as I had by then gone to work at *The Times* in London. Not by Worlock, I hasten to add. A parallel body to the Laity Commission in the structures of the Bishops Conference, the Social Welfare Commission, which was not so exposed to Worlock's feline subtleties, simply declared that the encyclical was wrong, and dissolved itself.

But the significance of this for our subject tonight is that it represented, in England at least and for Worlock at least, the sudden and catastrophic end of the lay apostolate model he had so painstakingly helped to construct. His hand-picked lay Catholic leaders, his shining examples of the lay apostolate theory in action, hadn't asked him for guidance on sexual ethics in the wake of the encyclical, which is how the model was supposed to work. They simply told him the Pope was wrong, the infallible Pope had in their eyes been proved fallible. They knew more about sex and marriage than he did; and they were not about to be budged.

This was what happened in just one country, and I think it helps to look at a particular example. But similar events occurred elsewhere. The results, eventually, were much the same.

Can I just now shift the focus, because it seems to me to be very relevant to a crisis which is still unresolved in the Catholic Church - about the role of the laity and its relationship to the hierarchy.

In his recent visit to Mexico, Pope Benedict XVI made an extraordinary remark. "It is not right that laity should feel treated as if they hardly count in the Church," he said. "It

is particularly important for pastors to ensure that a spirit of communion reigns among priests, religious and the lay faithful, and that sterile divisions, criticism and unhealthy mistrust are avoided." Well amen to that. Note that the Pope made two points - one, that the laity were indeed now being treated as if they did not count; and two, that they should not be so treated. "It is not right."

That requires a much more equal relationship. If the clergy and hierarchy continue to insist on the dichotomy I have just described - "they as the teachers and leaders; we as the taught and the lead" - that relationship of inequality will inevitably lead to the "sterile divisions, criticism and unhealthy mistrust" that the Pope deplored. In my experience many priests have already grasped that truth. They have rejected the infantilisation of the laity that came from the old priest-people relationship based on a downwards gradient of power and significance. They want to be equal; indeed they want to serve rather than be served. The buzz words now are partnership and collaboration.

It will only be after the recasting of these relationships that the Church will be ready to tackle the crisis represented by the widespread dissent among lay Catholics from traditional church teaching on sex and gender. It will mean for example paying serious attention to what lay Catholic women have to say about their experience - their relationships, their status, even their sexuality.

I have long had the impression that the two fundamental flaws in Catholic sexual morality, for instance, were, first, that it was based on a very male idea of what sex was about, and second, that it ignored what we now believe to be the way sexual and reproductive behaviour has evolved in our species and the species that came before us.

What if human sexuality has evolved primarily not as a reproductive device, more or less completed once it results in pregnancy, but instead as a "binding" mechanism, so that the growing human infant has the benefit of the nurture and protection of one parent of either sex - bonded together by a life of sexual intimacy - throughout its extended childhood: a far longer childhood than any other mammal, and closely connected with the gradual development of the human brain from infancy to maturity? What if, indeed.

To put it crudely, putting all the emphasis on the importance of the genital act itself is rather a male thing to do - would you agree? - and putting more of the emphasis in the total long term relationship would strike me as a more female perspective. But a male clergy is not going to find it easy to understand the female voice, and it would be all the more difficult if the female voice is speaking out of the experience of her side of a long term sexual relationship and the raising of children.

But I have to say I do not think the church has yet reached the point where it would allow Darwin's Origin of Species to sit in judgement over Pope Paul VI's encyclical Humanae Vitae. The time will surely have to come eventually.

Meanwhile, we are stuck where we are. The story of the relationship between hierarchy and laity moves to 2009, and the place - the United States of America. In accordance with its long-established tradition the University of Notre Dame in United

States proposed to award the incoming President Barack Obama an honorary degree, just as it had done with previous incoming presidents. The United States Bishops conference, however, strongly objected to the conferring of any such honour on President Obama on the grounds that he had promoted as public policy an approach on certain issues, such as abortion, which was contrary to Catholic teaching.

There was a furious row, as you can imagine. The authorities in the University stood their ground and went ahead with the award; bishops boycotted the event, even told Notre Dame it was scarcely entitled to call itself Catholic any more. But both the academic and student body stood united behind the decision. In the event, at the ceremony when the award was made President Obama received a standing ovation. Clearly there was a wide split between lay opinion, as represented by the academic community both staff and students, and the bishops.

This was a sign of things to come. As the Obama healthcare reforms made their cumbersome way through Congress, the United States Bishops' Conference lobbied hard against them and let forth a stream of criticisms, on the grounds that the reforms could or might in some circumstances involve taxpayers' money - including therefore Catholic taxpayers' money - being used to finance abortions. They were not satisfied with assurances to the contrary, but proceeded to put pressure on Catholic members of the House of Congress and the Senate to defeat the health reform bill. Indeed, they presented it as an order, a binding instruction.

However the organisation representing Catholic health-care workers, and the organisation representing the very substantial Catholic healthcare industry which controls literally hundreds of Catholic hospitals throughout the country, did not share the Bishop's objections. They gave the healthcare reforms their welcome and support.

What made the controversy all the more perplexing to me, familiar as I am with the situation in the United Kingdom, is that the bishops of England Wales and Scotland have never to my knowledge objected to British taxpayer's money, Catholic or not, being used to finance the British National Health Service, even though the NHS does perform abortions. Under the British system doctors and nurses are allowed to register a conscientious objection to abortion and are not required to participate in them, but there is no such opt-out for taxpayers. The political involvement of the Catholic Church regarding abortion has been directed at revision of the abortion law, not at withholding State funding for it. I would very much like to learn what the situation is here. More like the UK than the US, perhaps?

These are the sort of tensions and this is the sort of confusion which continues to exist on the interface between politics and religion. A friend of mine, a distinguished professor of Christian ethics within a Catholic University, found himself not long afterwards sitting next to Cardinal Francis George of Chicago at dinner. He asked the cardinal, who had been prominent in criticising the Obama healthcare reforms, whether it was permissible to regard the question of the wisdom of the reform as a matter calling for prudential judgement. He knew, and the cardinal knew, that if it was a matter of prudent judgement, that would imply that the politicians were free to decide for themselves, after weighing all the factors, which course of action best upheld the common good. No, said the cardinal. It wasn't about prudence. It was about obedience.

This anecdote brought to a head my feeling that the Catholic Church has yet to come to a full understanding of the principles of democracy. That should not surprise us too much. I recently came across the startling statistic that at the outbreak of World War II the number of true democracies in the world was precisely eleven, no more. Few of them were Catholic countries. If we look at the career of Pope John Paul II, who was anxious to tell us what were the duties of a Catholic legislator in such a system, we find that he lived almost his entire life in non-democratic societies and had virtually no contact with or experience of any democratic system.

Officially, when it comes to legislation involving moral questions, the Church still seems to regard the Catholic politician as simply an agent of the local bishops without any discretion. Yet the case for exercising a prudential judgement is overwhelming.

Standard Church teaching on the issue, as set forth by Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, still leaves no room for such judgement but insists Catholic politicians must adhere to an absolute position. "In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it or to 'take part in a propaganda campaign in favour of such a law, or vote for it,'" he wrote.

I myself find this theory puzzling, as it seems to suggest that Catholic politicians must share in the blame, on the principle of cooperation or consent, for every immoral act that they have not actually voted to outlaw by legislation. If they are responsible for the guilt of abortion, by not having voted to make all abortion a criminal offence, then are they not equally guilty, for instance, of every act of adultery, not having voted to make all adultery a criminal offence? Having voted for instance to decriminalise suicide, are they then not morally responsible for the death of every person who kills himself? Nobody seems to think so. Abortion seems to be an anomaly.

It is not without interest by the way that the stand-off between President Obama and the Catholic bishops of America does not seem to have stood in the way of good relations between President Obama's administration and the Vatican. In their absolutist judgement of the duties of Catholic politicians, the American bishops seem somewhat isolated. But they can claim they are applying the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. That suggests to me that the teaching of the Second Vatican Council does not go far enough in its treatment of democracy.

It is not without significance that most if not all of the fault lines in the church concern issues of sex and gender. And the standard pattern repeated again and again shows a conservative hierarchy trying to manage a difficult relationship with a laity which, by and large, does not share the hierarchy's basic assumptions. Not always and everywhere, of course, but more often than not.

The same is perhaps true of Australia, but you will know more about that than me. It is extremely difficult for the Church's leadership to know how to react to this situation without making it worse. Fulminating against it only get you so far. Merely replacing retiring bishops with more conservative ones is manifestly not the easy to win hearts and minds. What appears to have happened as an indirect consequence is the

decline of any sense of the laity being subordinate to the hierarchy. All those notions of lay apostolate had become obsolete.

It may seem a curious thing to say, but one reason is the success of Catholic education. Church schools do not operate in a vacuum, but reflect to some extent the educational values of the surrounding society. Thus in Church schools as in others, emphasis is put on teaching children to think for themselves, and how to be critical in their judgements. RE is no different from any other subject in that respect, though Catholic RE starts from the assumption that the Catholic faith, reasonably presented, will attract assent - what one might term critical assent. If the ethos of the school is Catholic, that assent will be culturally supported. But it has nothing whatever to do with turning out Catholic children who are, where their faith is concerned, mindless zombies. On the contrary. A Catholic who is a citizen of the state as well as a citizen of the Church will apply a similar mental attitude in each case. They will automatically ask themselves - does this politician, or this priest, know what he is talking about? Does the kind of person he is, and the things he says, convey sincere conviction and honest commitment?

So in the years since Vatican II have developed new and more mature ways of being the Catholic Church's faithful laity. But here we need a word of warning. To define the laity as simply those outside the Church's control, or as those in opposition to the way the Church is currently governed, or those who are against certain aspects of church teaching on sex and gender, is a very inadequate expression of what it means to be a Christian, and a very anaemic fulfilment of the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself. Nor does it do justice to the ringing declaration at the start of the Vatican Council final document, *Gaudium et Spes*, known as *The Church in the Modern World*:

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. "

So where do we turn? I think a clue comes later in this document, where it states that "individual men and their associations cultivate in themselves the moral and social virtues, and promote them in society", and it elsewhere calls the Catholic Church "an unspent fountain of those virtues which the modern world needs the most." But it does not say much about what they are. The only one given a name, it perhaps will not surprise you to hear, is the virtue of conjugal chastity.

This insistence on the importance of virtue while failing to be more specific is not confined to this one document from 50 years ago. The papal encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI published in 2009, *Caritas in Veritate*, asserts that "Technologically advanced societies must... rediscover within themselves the oft-forgotten virtues which made it possible for them to flourish throughout their history."

It is right that we should acknowledge three major areas where the Second Vatican Council set in train developments which were overwhelmingly positive, which in my view outweigh all the negatives things it is possible to say about the present state of the Catholic Church - many and serious though they are.

First, one which wasn't so successful - collegiality. The bishops attending it generated an extraordinary dynamic during the council. They wanted this to continue afterwards, so that the Church would henceforth be governed and be seen to be governed by collaborative decision-making between the Bishop of Rome and all the other bishops of the world. The theory was that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was no confined to curial departments in the Vatican - indeed if it was there at all - but was spread throughout the church.

Let us look at one example where the breath of the Holy Spirit seemed to blow in through the windows opened by Pope John XXIII with the force of a gale. This is an extract from the secret diary of Derek Worlock that I referred to earlier. The subject matter is religious freedom, probably the area where the results of Vatican II most closely confirm a hermeneutic of rupture rather than of continuity. But while religious liberty was affirmed, collegiality, sadly, never found the institutional expression that fathers of the council had plainly hoped for.

Thursday 19th November will rank as one of the historic dates in the history of the Council both for good and for evil. The morning's debate was divided into two parts, first of all on Christian Education and secondly on the Sacrament of Matrimony... But the whole debate was completely overshadowed by the rumpus on the question of the document on Religious Liberty. I had spent the early part of the morning at my desk at the College and didn't arrive at St Peter's until just on eleven o'clock. By then things were really boiling. It seems that before the debate started Cardinal Tisserant, acting in the name of the Commission of Presidents, announced that the Council would not after all proceed to a vote on Religious Liberty. The previous day he had said that a preliminary vote would be taken to see whether or not the Fathers wanted to deal with this matter during the Third Session. But today he announced that a sufficient number of persons had asked for more time to consider this new Declaration that the President decided to postpone further discussion on the matter until the next Session.

One recognises of course that the new Declaration did contain a certain amount of new matter but the manner in which this things was handled was certainly sufficient to set off the furore which followed. It seems that as soon as Cardinal Tisserant had made the announcement, Cardinal Meyer got up from the table and went to Cardinal Tisserant to dissociate himself from this announcement made on behalf of the Presidents. His objections were obvious and clearly and quickly spread into the Aula itself. Nearly all the American bishops trooped out of the benches and moved into the side aisles and they were followed by a large number of others who were gravely disturbed at what was reckoned to be a calculated attempt by possibly the Curia and some of the right-wing conservatives - the Spaniards were named, though they subsequently denied that they were responsible - to block this contentious matter once again. When I arrived it was in time to find the American periti setting up shop in the side aisles where they had large sheets of papers and bishops were queuing up, one behind the other, to sign a petition to the Holy Father to beg that a vote be taken on this Declaration this Session. It was an incredible sight.

The story went round that in order to prepare the petition, one of the periti had slipped into the office and pinched Felici's typewriter.

Be that as it may, the organisation of this protest petition was remarkably efficient, even though one could regret the vehemence with which the whole matter was being tackled. It soon became clear that the majority of the bishops present were prepared to sign this petition, but could anything be done about it? Meantime Bishop de Smedt had been called to the microphone in order to read the Relatio for the Declaration, even though it was not to be voted upon. This of course was just the opportunity that was needed for high drama. Bishop de Smedt started off by saying that it was with feeling that he introduced the Declaration - and here he changed his text from "which is now to be voted upon" to "which is now not to be voted upon". As he began his impassioned plea for a matter which is thought generally to be closest to his heart, his full flights of oratory soared around the ceiling of St Peter's. He sobbed, his voice broke, and he delivered the most impassioned appeal that I have ever heard, even from a Continental. As he was drawing towards his end, those bishops who had been out in the side aisles all packed in round the President's table and the Confession of St Peter's and looked down the Aula to where this lone figure was standing in a state of high emotional tension.

To an Englishman it was all rather embarrassing but there is no doubt that the cause was served by this Continental oratory on this occasion. Archbishop Heenan told me afterwards that he squirmed as he listened to his friend but I do not think that it was a put up performance: he really felt as he sounded. Finally he regained control of his voice as he reached the end of his text. In a complete monotone, which was the more effective in that it followed after the high oratory of the earlier parts of the Relatio, he quietly said that the Secretariat for Christian Unity had finished with this document and passed it to the Co-ordinating Commission some three or four weeks ago: I forget the exact date which he mentioned. It seemed that nothing had happened about it until a short time before and then it had been suggested that the Vatican Press, which has to do all the printing of the official documentation for the Council, had become absolutely jammed up with the various documents which had to be given to the Fathers. He left it quite open as to whether one accepted this story or not and he merely gave the date on which the document had reached the Fathers, earlier in the week. Then with great deliberation he said: "Let us pray at this moment for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in an issue which is of supreme importance to the Church".

There was thunderous applause, quite the loudest I have ever heard in St Peter's and after a while one realised that it was going to take a long time before it died down. When eventually it showed some sign of flagging, it rose once more from the far end of the Aula and it became evident that what had started as applause for a feat of oratory had now turned into a positive attempt to pass the document by acclamation. Cardinal Meyer was standing in the side aisle with some of the other American Bishops and the atmosphere was quite electric. On several occasions the Moderators tried to break in over their microphones but the applause did not cease. In fact it continued for about four and a half minutes, so far as I could time it, but when at last it did die down Cardinal Döpfner, the Moderator, called the first speaker for the debate on the remaining document of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Once it was realised that the Presidents had carried the day, the atmosphere changed from one of exhilaration to one of acute bitterness and disappointment. Cardinal Meyer went back to the Presidents' table, clearly in two minds as to what he should do. He was

beckoned once more to the side and I saw Father Molinari, an Italian Jesuit and a very good man, advising him quite straightly that he should take the petition directly to the Holy Father. Word evidently reached Cardinal Ritter and Cardinal Léger, both of whom left their places in the Aula and came down to join Cardinal Meyer. The petitions were brought in by the periti from the various parts of St Peter's and Cardinal Meyer rolled them up and put them under his arm. It was reckoned that there were over 800 signatures already and later that day we were told that the number had risen to over 1,000. It was a straight request for a vote of some kind on the Declaration before the Session stopped.

As poor Cardinal Gilroy laboured away, almost without anyone seeming to listen, on the subject of Matrimony, the three cardinals with some other bishop whom I could not recognise in attendance walked slowly across behind the Confessional and away up the stairs towards the Holy Father's apartments. I could not help wondering what would have happened had the cardinals walked the whole length of St Peter's before making their way out to the doors to go to the Pope. I fancy that half the bishops would have stood up and gone with them. Perhaps it was as well that they didn't but even so it was a moment of great tension and drama: something which one is unlikely to see again...

Rome buzzed all that day with the excitement of the morning and not without reason. Some of the periti, notably Monsignor Osterreicher, could be seen after the morning Congregation giving a full account to the press and inevitably the thing was blown to fantastic heights in the press reports which followed the next day. (When I got back to London I found this incident described widely as a "punch-up" which it certainly was not.) But there is no doubt that it was all very regrettable and, though one must question the policy of Cardinal Tisserant and the General Secretariat in the decision which they made, there was little evidence of approval of the bitter vehemence of the American bishops. They seem to think that they have a corner in this question of Religious Liberty but I suppose that they were so disappointed in their failure to take the document home at the end of the Second Session that this third delay was just the last straw.

This electrifying account tells us a great deal about episcopal collegiality - even episcopal democracy - and how it works. You could almost feel the wind of the Holy Spirit blowing through the corridors of power. It isn't a tidy process, and it often works against the tide of official thinking. With the end of the Vatican II, all scope for its expression as a means by which dissent against official policy and teaching takes over and becomes official policy and teaching, as on this occasion, seemed to disappear. In no way is this collegiality adequately expressed through bodies like the International Synod of Bishops or by including international Catholic church leaders among those who are consulted by the main Roman dicasteries. Indeed, both structures seem implicitly designed to make sure that nothing like the spontaneous rebellion of Thursday November 9th 1964 could ever happen again.

Nor for the successes, which were of course amazing. First - human rights, and we should include religious liberty in that package. In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, Pope John XXIII gave the Catholic Church its own charter of human rights which is still to this day one of the most comprehensive and best argued explanations and defences of the concept of human rights. It was a long time coming, of course, and it took all the terrible

mayhem of the Second World War to make it necessary. But the Catholic Church is now recognised as one of the leading players in the human rights field in the whole world.

The second is ecumenical. One of the great initial hopes when the Council started, inspired chiefly by Hans Küng's best-selling book *The Council and Reunion*, was that the Catholic Church would so change as a result of the Council that many of the churches which dated themselves from the Reformation in 16th century Europe would realise that the reform that Luther and Calvin had called for had at last happened, and separation was no longer necessary or justified.

That optimistic view always was naive, not least because it failed to notice that those Reformation church traditions had acquired a history and identity - and indeed a sense of a tribal "us and them" - which erected strong social and emotional barriers against the sort of structural unity that was envisaged. They will take generations to overcome, and they would take a good deal more movement on the Catholic side than actually seems possible, given the constraints.

I have one positive suggestion. In the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*, Pope John Paul II confessed to the fact that the papacy as at present structured was a stumbling block. He asked the Catholic Church's ecumenical partners to declare what they would require to be done to remove that stumbling block. In the case of Anglicanism, and the Church of England in particular, a tremendous opportunity for progress towards church unity was missed by failing to make a formal response to that invitation, and to follow it up with proper negotiations. Can you imagine how valuable it would be for the Catholic Church to be asked to state what its bottom line was with regard to papal authority, the irreducible minimum below which it could not go? Would any of the Vatican dicasteries, congregations, institutes, commissions and councils survive such a cull?

An opportunity missed, but maybe it will come back some day. But what is still extraordinary is the transformation of the climate of ecumenical relations, the friendly feelings, the mutual respect, the cooperation and collaboration, the sharing of each other's treasures and traditions. Catholics have taken to Methodist hymns with enthusiasm, and Methodists have taken to Catholic Social Teaching with delight.

And Catholic Social Teaching itself is a major success story for the Church, with much of that success owed to Pope John Paul II. His major social encyclicals - *Laborem Exercens*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* and *Centesimus Annus* - were not only ground breaking but said things the world badly needed to hear for its own good. Pope Benedict's encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* was widely acclaimed. For instance one prominent British economist, Lord Brian Griffiths of Goldman Sachs who was formerly head of the Downing Street policy unit under Margaret Thatcher, described it as "without doubt the most articulate, comprehensive and thoughtful response to the financial crisis that has yet appeared." It is the basis of a project sponsored by the Archbishop of Westminster, in which I am involved, to hold a profound discussion with business leaders and financiers in the City of London about the morality of what they do. The key word here is "virtue."

It was as a result of reflections on this that when the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales issued their own document on Catholic Social Teaching in the course of 2010, they recognised that the issue of virtue needed more attention.

"Everyone involved in politics and public life must accept the personal character and a moral standards are as relevant to public life as they are to private life," it declares.

"The restoration of trusted institutions, whether in politics or in business, places a particular responsibility on those in leadership roles. They help shape the culture of the institutions they lead. Over time, leaders wield immense influence, and carry a heavy responsibility, especially now, to help bring about a real transformation by their vision and example. As Pope Benedict XVI has said: "development is impossible without upright men and women, without financiers and politicians whose consciences are finely attuned to the requirements of the common good".

To act in this way requires more than not breaking rules. It demands the cultivation of moral character, the development of habits of behaviour that reflect respect for others and a desire to do good. It requires, in fact, the practice of virtue.

And here I think we are getting somewhere at last. "Virtue helps to shape our lives as people," it goes on. "By the pursuit of virtue we act well not because of external constraints but because it has become natural; thus do the virtues form us as moral agents, so that we do what is right and honourable for no other reason than it is right and honourable, irrespective of reward or punishment and regardless of what we are legally obliged to do. Virtuous action springs from a sense of one's own dignity and that of others, and from self-respect as a citizen. It is doing good when no one is looking."

The classical virtues form us as people who are prudent, just, temperate, and courageous. Christian virtues of faith, hope and charity root our human growth in the gifts of God and form us for our ultimate happiness: friendship with God. And what is the role of the Church in all this? Well, surely, to be a school of virtue, especially by teaching by example. Virtue can be learnt; virtue improves with practice.

The virtue of prudence or right reason is the opposite of rashness and carelessness. The virtue of courage ensures firmness and the readiness to stand by what we believe in times of difficulty. Justice is the virtue by which we strive to give what is due to others by respecting their rights and fulfilling our duties towards them. The virtue of temperance bids us to moderate our appetites in the use of the world's created goods.

These virtues and the exploration of them belong to all humanity. They're held in trust for all not least in the Christian traditions of thought and moral teaching. I should add, perhaps, that the recovery of trust through a revival of virtue needs to happen in the Church too. The hierarchy have to learn to trust the laity, in whom the spirit also dwells. The laity have to learn to trust the hierarchy, anointed stewards and guardians of the deposit of faith. This is not the time to rehearse in detail those things that have undermined that trust in recent years; just to note that they exist.

Now why is it so unusual if the find a treatment of the classical virtues in a Catholic document of this kind? What has happened to this ancient tradition that was so alive in

the Middle Ages but which modernity has managed to forget? It seems the Catholic Church has been suffering from the same amnesia as the secular world. It is surely time for that situation to be reversed. My contention is that it is necessary to recognise that the emergence of a mature laity means not a revival of obsolete models of the lay apostolate, but above all the rediscovery of virtue as central to the Christian life.

We owe the beginning of the revival of interest in virtue ethics to the English philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe, who was a disciple and literary executor of the Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. I should add by the way that she did believe certain actions to be intrinsically and absolutely wrong. But even more important to the recovery of the memory of virtue ethics was the later work of the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, who published about 30 years ago a groundbreaking work, called *After Virtue*. Incidentally both Elizabeth Anscombe and Alasdair MacIntyre converted to Catholicism in the course of their philosophical work.

Alistair MacIntyre started something of a revolution in moral philosophy, with journals, seminars and even a learned society, the International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry, devoted to promoting and developing his work on the ethics of virtue. And yes, it has a website and a journal. MacIntyre's basic insight was as follows: if we look around the modern world we quickly notice fragments, shreds and traces of an older moral universe, but one which has lost its coherence and has become disconnected from its philosophical foundations. We do not even know what it was called. But we continue to make use of it, if we can. Its origins lie in the work of the ancient Greek philosophers, Aristotle above all, who asked the basic question: what are the qualities required of a good citizen to make Athenian democracy flourish? It is an excellent question, easily transferred to the present day. What are the qualities of character needed to make a good citizen of Church and Society in the year 2012 AD? And the answers turn out to be not very different the answers Aristotle arrived at in 300 and something BC.

To him we owe the four categories of civic virtue which I mentioned earlier. The route by which these ideas about virtue entered Catholic moral theology was largely through the role of St Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century. The virtues had sometimes been thought of as essentially pagan, and were viewed with some suspicion for that reason. At the risk of oversimplifying a very long story, Aquinas Christianised them by adding to the four civil or cardinal virtues the three supernatural or theological virtues of faith, hope and charity.

So what happened to the virtue tradition? It was severely criticised during the Reformation, for instance on the grounds that it promoted the notion that individuals could earn their place in heaven by their good works. This attack, initially from Luther and Calvin, was responded to by the Catholic Church itself by renewed emphasis on salvation by faith and grace in its own doctrine. And in line with Reformation thought, emphasis was placed on the Ten Commandments.

Thus did Catholic morality, like Protestant morality, become more interested in the avoidance of sin and observance of rules than in virtue, and indeed in the Catholic case in the gradations of sin in the working out of the appropriate penance. The concept did not altogether die, and indeed was kept alive most of all within the order to which Thomas Aquinas has himself belonged, the Dominicans. But the tradition was in decline.

An even greater assault on Aristotelian virtue ethics occurred in the Enlightenment, because its radical rejection of metaphysics left no room for Aristotle's philosophical idea of moral character because it depended on the idea of telos, the end towards which our lives are directed.

Virtue ethics places the emphasis on what kind of person you are rather than on your actions or even your intentions. That raises the teleological question, asking "What kind of person ought you to be?" It presupposes that we are constructed according to a pattern not of our own design. This becomes highly complex when we live in the age of the self-made man. For Catholics there is an easy answer - easy to give, hard to practice. The kind of person we ought to be is, essentially, Christlike.

But MacIntyre is right that virtue ethics has left a loud - if rather incoherent - echo in our culture. We still refer to moral character, for instance, as when we say a person has a good character or a bad one. Virtues are essentially moral habits, and our virtuous acts flow from the sort of person we are. We can learn how to be prudent or just, and we can get better at it. Indeed this is how wisdom is acquired.

So here at last are some answers to the question of how we ought to behave, and what is the route to a truly mature Christian laity? Think what a transformation there would be if examinations of conscience in ordinary Catholicism concentrated on our virtues rather than a vices. We would no longer be so interested in what homosexuals did with each other sexually; instead we would ask in what way does their relationship serve the common good, and is their relationship governed by virtue?

Think what a difference this would make to the impasse over contraception in the Catholic Church... Or the remarriage of divorcees. Certainly marriage should be a school of virtue, not only for the adult partners but above all also for their children. This is surely a much richer concept of conjugality and fidelity. Education has to be seen not as the teaching of knowledge and skills, but as the formation of the whole person, the intellect and memory but above all of the character.

As I read those who remember her, the one thing everybody who knew her seemed instinctively to recognise about Rosemary Goldie was her virtue - not just her humility, but her prudence, courage, justice and temperance. And of course her faith, hope and charity. Indeed it may be no exaggeration to say that it was this which empowered her, gave her strength; and won her friends and influence. And that is why we honour her today.

It would be presuming too much for me to requisition her to my cause by saying that in her whole life she was an apostle of virtue; but the proposition is surely not absurd. Why did people trust her? Because they saw the moral character that shone through her.

I've nearly finished, but I've saved the best 'til last... I spoke earlier about the concept of the lay apostolate as it was understood 50 years ago, at the time of the Vatican Council. The lay person was regarded as someone who needed instruction from the clergy concerning Christian doctrine, before going out to do apostolic work in the community - what is still known, in the UK at least, as "social action".

So let me tell you the current state of play in my country. We have an impressive network of Catholic agencies dealing with various aspects of welfare and community activity, ranging from working with young people and immigrants, legal and otherwise, to care of the elderly, vulnerable children, the mentally infirm, etc. They are almost exclusively lay. We are currently trying to organise this network on a national basis, as it had become too disjointed and uncoordinated. I am a member of the steering committee trying to bring this about. (It has been described as trying to herd cats.) Caritas Social Action Network, as it is called, intends to promote the ideas of Catholic Social Teaching through this network. It also intends to be engaged in advocacy, that is saying addressing governments and the media on behalf of those people with whom we are working, and thus able to be the voice of the voiceless.

The bishops are on board of course but the initiative is in the hands of lay people. Policy making is not reserved to the bishops, though they have a valuable role - which they are willing to play - in amplifying the message. But nowadays you see very few dog collars at the lively and entertaining meetings called by Caritas Social Action Network. I would almost go so far as to say, if you meet a priest at such gatherings he is pretending to be a layman.

More to the point, it is intended to appoint "theologians in residence" to various parts of the network, because there is a perceived need for expert input to the work, based on Catholic Social Teaching - perceived not by bishops trying to keep the laity in line, but by the laity themselves. Those theologians in residence are likely to be lay, and to have learnt their theology in lay academic institutions - and I have to tell you, they are very likely to be female. Women are drawn to this work, and are very good at it.

I have a feeling that the right metaphor here is about the damming of a river. The Church's rejection of the possibility of ordaining women to the priesthood could be likened to a giant dam thrown across a wide river from bank to bank, holding back the flow of water. As a result the land below the dam becomes dry and barren. But then what happens? As the water builds up behind the dam, it starts to find other ways to go forwards, it forms little trickles and streams which go round the dam, gradually expanding to bigger streams and even rivers, until eventually the original flow is restored and the land becomes irrigated and fertile again. The dam is still there, but it has been rendered ineffective.

We have some first rate young women theologians coming forward. Does it matter that they are not priests? Not at all. It is an advantage. They are not part of any clerical power structure. Indeed, they share the lived experience of those they are working with. That is what gives them authority. And they are the channel through which the social teachings of the Church are conveyed to the active laity.

Now isn't that interesting? Isn't this everything Rosemary Goldie could have wished for, worked for, devoted her life to? I wish she were here, for me to tell her about it. So I am very happy to dedicate this lecture to her memory, and very privileged to be able to do so.

Thank you for inviting me, and for giving me so much of your attention. I hope I have been provocative enough to bring you to your feet with questions, which I shall be happy to answer to the best of my ability.



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