

Prelate claims 'euphoria' from Vatican II has gone

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Second Vatican Council has spawned many positive changes in church life, but the "new euphoria" immediately after the council "has spun itself out," Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland said in a Sept. 28 talk.

"All of the optimism and enthusiasm that characterized the termination of the council seems now to have dissipated," Archbishop Weakland said.

He made his comments at the third annual "Future of the American Church" conference in Washington. Subtitled "From Dream to Reality to Vision: 25 Years after Vatican II," it was sponsored by Time Consultants, a private firm.

Since the end of Vatican II, "polarization is much more common than the willingness to work toward a common solution," Archbishop Weakland said. "Polarization simply means that people no longer dialogue ... That polarization was not found in those early years" after the council.

"The lack of enthusiasm now and the polarization have made life so much more difficult in the church and in so many ways so much more un-Catholic," he said.

"Loyalty and disloyalty become the politicized terms used and words such as 'dissent' become the common jargon for disagreement," Archbishop Weakland said.

One positive effect from Vatican II was that "it seemed of itself to justify the whole question of synods of bishops," the archbishop said.

Pope Paul VI's document *Evangelii Nun-*

tindii (On the Evangelization of Peoples), the result of one such synod, is "a masterpiece and a great help in pulling together all of the ideas that had emerged" from Vatican II documents, he added.

The biblical renewal and the major documents of the U.S. bishops can also be seen as positive results from Vatican II concepts, Archbishop Weakland said.

Since Vatican II, "the church is now much more aware of its racial diversity than it was when Vatican Council II opened," Archbishop Weakland said.

Ecology has been highlighted as well, he added. "We must continue our consistency in teaching about justice and especially enlarge this now to the whole area of ecology," he said.

Vatican II "did not really give us any new insights with regard to human sexuality," Archbishop Weakland said. "In fact, that subject was avoided."

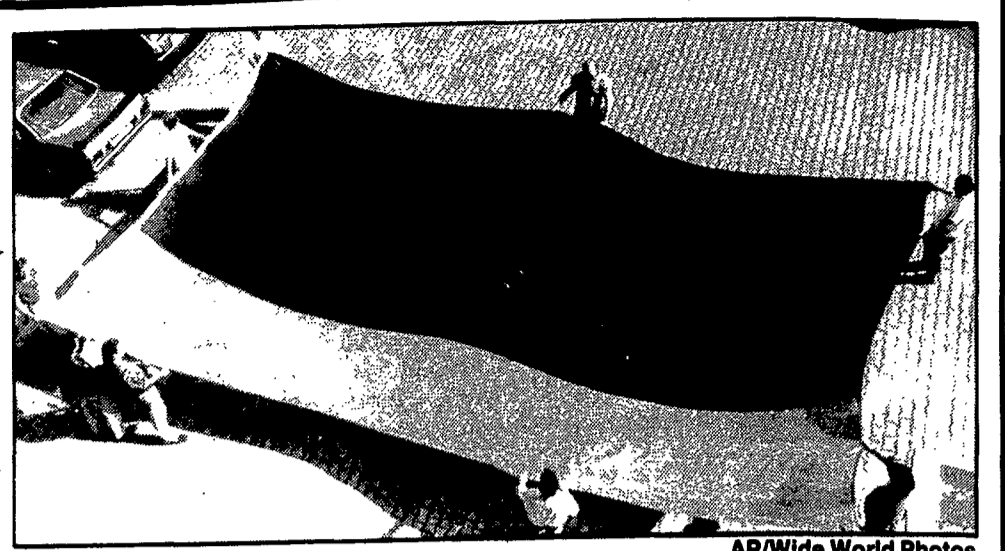
Catholics may have to "accept to do just the best we can without pretense of full knowledge" as science makes more inquiries into human sexuality.

"Human science simply does not have the answers and it is very difficult to base our moral judgments on imperfect knowledge. In such a case we have to realize the imperfection of the whole process."

The role of women in the church, an "intuition of (Pope) John XXIII," he said, "has become now a commonplace."

Archbishop Weakland said, "At a certain point we have to begin to be courageous with regard to the role of women ... I sense that the whole credibility of our church and its future will rest on our ability to face up to this issue."

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AP/Wide World Photos

UNFURLING THE FLAG — Workers spread out a huge German flag in West Berlin Sept. 25. The flag was to be hoisted at the Reichstag building on Oct. 2 to celebrate German unification.

Pope asserts humanity's future at stake in Persian Gulf conflict

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope John Paul II said Sept. 29 that humanity's "very future" is at stake in the Persian Gulf crisis, and he urged leaders to find a fair and peaceful solution to the impasse.

The whole world is deeply anxious over the tense face-off in the gulf, the pope said in a message to an interreligious prayer meeting in Bari, Italy.

"Believers realize they have to pray harder so that God may give wisdom to those who control the fate of populations and lead them to seek fair solutions to their problems," the pope said.

He said the "tormented peoples" of the Persian Gulf, as well as those in Lebanon and Palestine, need peace. The gulf crisis erupted after Iraq invaded and annexed Kuwait, prompting a U.S.-led military buildup.

During a Sept. 28 Mass celebrated in memory of Popes Paul VI and John Paul I, the pope recalled his predecessors' commitment to peace. Their words "are especially relevant now, when the threat of a war seems to hang over humanity, and when criminal violence is spreading," he said.

"We are all deeply aware of this. At stake is the peaceful coexistence between people; at stake is our very future," the

pope said. The pope's remarks about criminal violence referred to a recent outbreak of Mafia killings in Italy.

The pope continued pleading for peace Oct. 1 and linked the gulf crisis with "the drama of Palestine" and "the tragedy of Lebanon."

Wars "never definitively resolve problems," the pope told members of the Latin rite bishops' conference of the Arab region. The conference covers Israel, Jordan, the occupied territories, Cyprus, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, Djibouti and Somalia.

"Cooperation between responsible politicians is the best measure to create confidence and, therefore, security," he said.

The pope, who did not specifically mention the gulf crisis, deplored "the anxieties of the populations" living in these troubled spots and said "cooperation is absolutely necessary" between Christians, Jews and Muslims in these "dramatic situations."

Arab Christians are on "the front-line of dialogue," he said.

The bishops met the pope after holding a Sept. 26-29 meeting in Rome in which they issued a statement asking greater world attention to the problems in Lebanon and Israeli-occupied territories.

Synod

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many men and women.

Even in Europe, often described as "de-Christianized," the church has cause for hope, he said.

"Certain people sink into a nostalgia for the past. Sometimes it's a far-off past like the Middle Ages, which supposedly achieved a fully Christian society," he said.

But this nostalgia often hides a more complicated reality — for example, the fact that in past ages there were calls for church reform that were never realized, the cardinal said.

Others look back longingly to more recent pre-conciliar times when "churches were full and vocations plentiful," he said. But he noted that this period also saw the

rise of totalitarian and atheistic regimes that wanted to "destroy the Christian culture and annihilate the faith."

Cardinal Willebrands urged a balanced view of the last two-and-a-half decades.

"One cannot wholly reject modernity," he said, and one should recognize that today there are many people with a sure sense of themselves and their faith.

For example, he said the idea that Europe is "de-Christianized" is ambiguous. He said this notion raises a question: Is this really a matter of a society becoming indifferent, or rather that religious life today requires less social conformism and more personal conviction?

Cardinal Willebrands said recent developments in Eastern Europe and the plan to "re-evangelize" the continent have created a "new ecumenical urgency," especially regarding the Eastern and Western halves of the church.

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