



Reuters/CNS

Pope John Paul II blesses a child during Mass in St. Peter's Square Nov. 26.

Pope calls for return to Vatican II

By John Norton
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — Pope John Paul II urged the church's lay members to read the documents of the Second Vatican Council, saying a return to the council was the key to eliminating lukewarmness among believers and to tackling the world's social problems.

"Study the council, explore it deeply, assimilate its spirit and guidance: You will find in it the light and strength to witness the Gospel in every field of human existence," he said Nov. 26 at the end of a jubilee Mass dedicated to the laity.

Underscoring his appeal, the pope gave heavy, hardbound copies of the council documents to five pairs of lay people who were attending a Nov. 25-30 world laity congress at the Vatican.

Brief torrential downpours and the rumbling of thunder punctuated the St. Peter's Square liturgy. Some of the 40,000 participants, umbrellas sagging under the weight of the rain, ran for shelter, but most resolutely stood fast for the drenching.

In his homily, the pope said the Second Vatican Council fathers — of which he was one — entrusted the church's lay members with the mission of working in the world and transforming it according to God's plan.

"With the council, the hour of the laity in the church truly struck," he said.

"Today more than ever, dear brothers and sisters, your apostolate is indispensable in order for the Gospel to be the light, salt and yeast of a new humanity," he said.

Among the worrying challenges to be faced, he said, were the advance of biotech-

nology, economic underdevelopment in vast areas of the world, and widespread hunger and warfare.

"Awaiting you are tasks and goals which can appear out of proportion to human strengths. Do not be discouraged!" he said.

He said today's lay Christians can find their necessary strength and guidance from teachings of the Second Vatican Council.

"Thirty-five years from its conclusion, I say: It is necessary to return to the council," said the pope.

"It is necessary to take again in hand the documents of Vatican II to rediscover their great richness of doctrinal and pastoral stimuli," he said.

The council taught that all people are called to holiness, and personal conversion is the necessary foundation for transforming the church and the world, he said.



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Renovations: 'Are We Done Yet?'

Churches always need repairs — new roofs, plaster, paint, lighting and electrical upgrades. When this work is being done, churches often are renovated as well.

For years, parishes tended to make a few such changes as replacing high altars with smaller altars moved forward in the sanctuary; and removing altar rails.

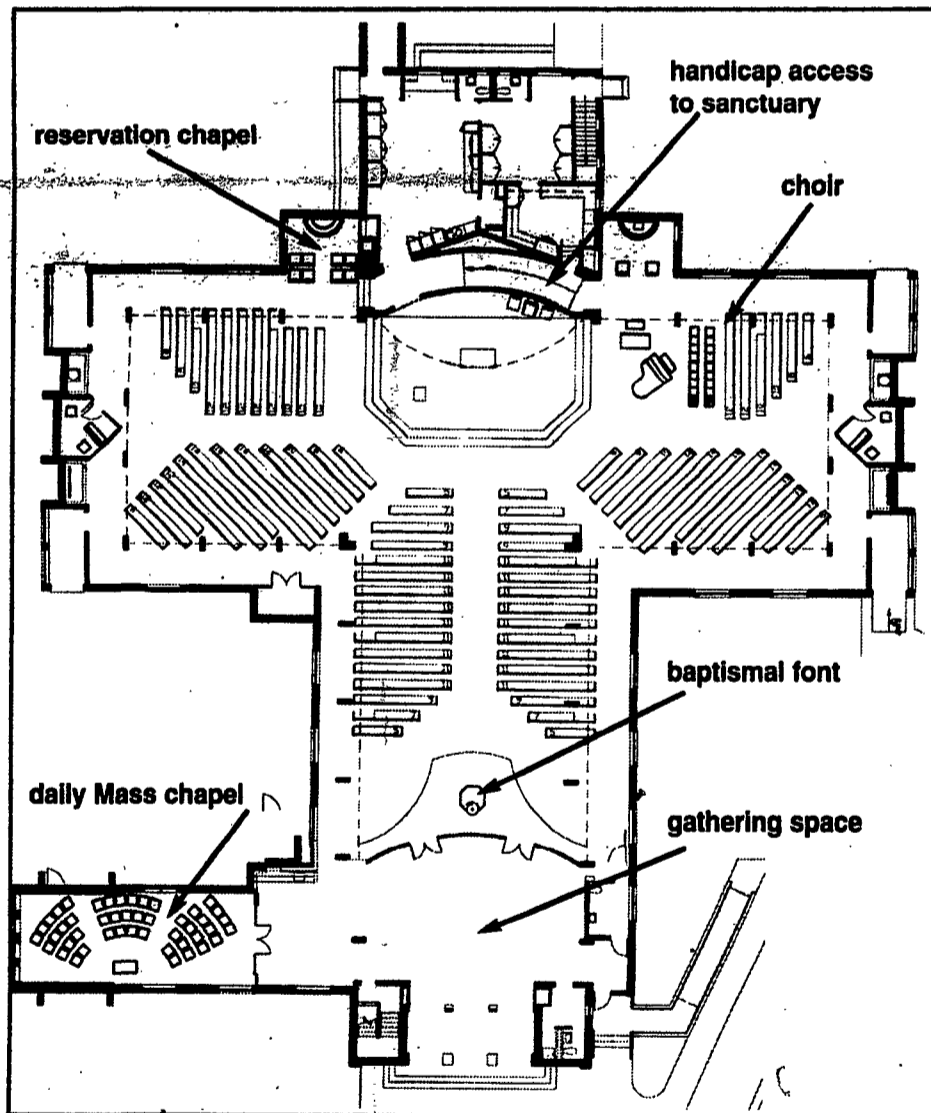
In the past several years, however, more parishes are opting to make many changes at one time, for example: rearrangement of pews around the altar; establishment of reservation chapels for eucharistic adoration; creation of gathering spaces; the addition of handicap access to the church and sanctuary.

While opponents favor changing as little as possible, proponents say making numerous changes simultaneously is cost-effective and sensitive to current worship needs.

"I was out to St. Ambrose the other night with other priests and saw what was happening," said Father William Darling, pastor of St. Salome Parish in Irondequoit. "I know people are upset, but to spend a huge amount of money to repaint or put a bulb in and not to pay attention to the liturgical needs of the people would be a foolish move."

St. Ambrose Parish is completing a \$700,000 project that will bring its 1958-59 design up to date with liturgical reforms enacted by the Second Vatican Council. The 1,600-family parish moved slowly and took into consideration the feelings of parishioners, noted Father Michael Schramel, pastor. Besides two parishioners who left as a result of the changes, and two or three others, "the parishioners are behind this," he said.

Clearly not behind the project is the creator of a Web site fea-



Courtesy of LaBella Associates, P.C.

Renovation design for St. Ambrose Church, Rochester.

turing pictures of the work in progress at St. Ambrose, which the site terms a "reckovation." Once connected with a group called Catholics for the Real Presence, the Web site carries a disclaimer that it "is not connected to any group name." It bears the name of Michael F. Brennan, a leading opponent of anticipated Sacred Heart Cathedral renovations.

Father Schramel said that if he knew exactly who had entered his church and taken the pictures, "I would like to invite them back when we're finished."

"My invitation to everybody is wait and see," he said. "We really worked hard not to make it look like a remodeling, not a creating but a renewing of space." That space, he said, should provide a more intimate atmosphere for better worship experiences.

"I was reading about St. Ambrose in the Rochester paper," Father Darling com-

mented. A letter to the editor said the renovated church "was just a town meeting room. I thought, 'Yeah, right. It's supposed to be that.'"

And as soon as the people who sing and speak of the faith of the church enter, he said, "it transforms to something."

Liturgy reform

"I think one of the things that gets lost in (controversy over renovations) is that as part of Second Vatican Council, reform and renewal of liturgy almost forces you to look at a better use of the space," said Joan Workmaster, diocesan liturgy director. "And because it so clearly talks about the assembly as one of the primary ministers and how important ... is the ability to interact, to form it-

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STORY BY KATHLEEN SCHWAR