

# Vatican II featured breakthroughs

Cardinal Franz König, archbishop emeritus of Vienna, recently shared his reflections about participating in the Second Vatican Council in *The Tablet* of London (December 21/28).

He said that "Vatican II set in motion four trail-blazing, creative and lasting stimuli" to church renewal and reform.

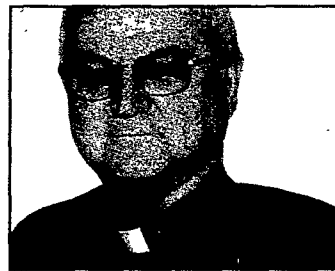
The first had to do with the universality of the church. Apart from what the council taught in its 16 documents, the event itself was a manifestation of the church's multicultural and global character. There were bishops of every color and nationality speaking and debating in many different languages.

"This multitude of different nationalities and cultures changed our awareness," König writes.

This change of consciousness was reflected particularly in the dropping of Latin as the universal language of the church's liturgy in favor of the vernacular.

The second breakthrough was the council's support for ecumenism. The two key catalysts were Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Augustine Bea.

John XXIII had been a papal diplomat for a number of years in Turkey and Bulgaria, where he forged close contacts with the Orthodox and other separated Oriental churches. It was at the pope's insistence that non-Catholic observers were invited to the council as official observers.



Father Richard McBrien

Essays in Theology

In 1960, he established the Secretariat (now Council) for Promoting Christian Unity and appointed as its first president the other key catalyst for ecumenical renewal, Cardinal Bea.

According to Cardinal König, "Bea's role at the council cannot be rated highly enough. He and his secretariat took over the responsibility for inviting and looking after the observers, who were by no means passive, as their designation might suggest, but played an increasingly influential role."

The third important breakthrough wrought by the council was its emphasis on the lay apostolate. Before Vatican II, the church was a "two-class system," with the hierarchy on top and the laity below. Against this view, the council insisted that all of the baptized are members of the pilgrim people of God and that all share responsibility for the life, mission and ministries of the church.

The fourth breakthrough concerned the relationship between the church and non-Christian religions, espe-

cially, but not exclusively, Judaism.

The Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, better known by its Latin title, *Nostra aetate* ("In our age"), was the principal conduit for this new and revolutionary approach.

In that document, the council affirmed that the church "rejects nothing of what is true and holy" in other religions and stressed the importance of dialogue with them. The most controversial part of *Nostra aetate*, concerned the church's relationship to the Jews.

John XXIII had been determined to put an end to accusations that the Catholic Church is anti-Semitic and, soon after his election as pope in 1958, he asked Bea to consider how the so-called Jewish question could be incorporated into the council.

A small circle was formed, which included Cardinal König himself. Considering the "many crises and continual ups and downs" the declaration endured. König recalls the violent opposition of the Arab world, the Eastern churches and a "small but vociferous" group of bishops. After four years, however, the declaration was approved overwhelmingly.

Cardinal König credits others for the council's success, but he, too, belongs on that list.

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

## Headline set wrong tone for coverage

To the editor:

While we were very pleased with the *Catholic Courier's* extensive coverage and support for this year's March for Life, we found the headline "A birthday for abortion" (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 30), extremely disheartening. Since "birthday" connotes a celebration, wouldn't it have been more appropriate to have referred to it as a "memorial to abortion"???

Judy Swagler, Religious Education Coordinator, and Mary Lou Reifsnnyder, St. John of Rochester, Fairport

## Staff should be ashamed

To the editor:

The front page of the Thursday (Jan. 31) issue of the *Catholic Courier* was an insult to your readers. How can there be a "birthday" when, thanks to the Supreme Court of the United States, there isn't a birth to celebrate because of abortion?

The front page of the Thursday (Jan. 31) issue of the *Catholic Courier* was an insult to your readers. How can there be a "birthday" when, thanks to the Supreme Court of the United States, there isn't a birth to celebrate because of abortion?

It disturbs me that the *Catholic Courier* would allow the (headline) "A birthday for abortion" to be the

banner in your newspaper. The writer and your editorial staff should be ashamed to be affiliated with such a poor choice of words!

Judy and Jean Brennan  
Briarwood Lane  
Fairport

## St. George is free of debt

To the editor:

Susan Scarlata, the parish council member from St. Philip Neri (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 30), "Members oppose any sale: 2 Protestant groups want St. Philip Neri", has misled the readers on the viability of the various churches in the City East group.

St. George, which she volunteered for sale in lieu of St. Philip Neri, is the only parish in the City East group with no debt and is totally self-supporting. Additionally, St. George has a dedicated priest while St. Philip Neri is a sister parish of St. Andrew. The Lithuanian community of Rochester is making every effort that St. George remains a viable parish in the near future.

Raymond Liutkus  
Trustee, St. George Parish

## Dismayed by Potter review

To the editor:

I was dismayed by the Catholic News Service book review on the "spirituality" of Harry Potter (*Catholic Courier*, Jan. 23: "Pair cite Potter's spirituality"). What "spirit" are we talking about?

The Church of England? John Knox Press? Couldn't you have given some time to the Paulists?!

I've read all four books and seen the first Harry Potter movie. There is no harm in sampling what is offered, but like a slow poison, it is best to decline future servings.

"You can't love God, without loving your neighbor, and you can't love your neighbor without loving God." Thank you, Deacon George, you've put it succinctly!

### Catholic Courier

©2003 Rochester Catholic Press Assn.

1136 Buffalo Road  
P.O. Box 24379  
Rochester, NY 14624

585/529-9530

800/600-3628 outside Rochester

<http://www.catholiccourier.com>

e-mail: [info@catholiccourier.com](mailto:info@catholiccourier.com)

President

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

General Manager/Editor

Karen M. Franz

[kfranz@catholiccourier.com](mailto:kfranz@catholiccourier.com)

Editorial Department

Assistant Editor

Jennifer Ficaglia

[jficaglia@catholiccourier.com](mailto:jficaglia@catholiccourier.com)

Staff Writers

Rob Cullivan

[rcullivan@catholiccourier.com](mailto:rcullivan@catholiccourier.com)

Mike Latona

[mlatona@catholiccourier.com](mailto:mlatona@catholiccourier.com)

Staff Photographer

Karin von Voigtlander

[kvonvoigtlander@catholiccourier.com](mailto:kvonvoigtlander@catholiccourier.com)

Editorial Assistant

Louis Litzenberger

[llitzenberger@catholiccourier.com](mailto:llitzenberger@catholiccourier.com)

Business Department

Office Manager

Mary DiPonzio

[mdiponzio@catholiccourier.com](mailto:mdiponzio@catholiccourier.com)

Administrative Assistant

Arlene S. Gall

[agall@catholiccourier.com](mailto:agall@catholiccourier.com)

Circulation Manager

Donna Stubbings

[dstubbings@catholiccourier.com](mailto:dstubbings@catholiccourier.com)

Graphics Department

Graphics Manager

Kim Parks

[kparks@catholiccourier.com](mailto:kparks@catholiccourier.com)

Graphic Artist

Linda Jeanne Rivers

[lrivers@catholiccourier.com](mailto:lrivers@catholiccourier.com)

Advertising Department

Display Advertising Executives

Tracy Moses

[tmoses@catholiccourier.com](mailto:tmoses@catholiccourier.com)

Donald P. Wilson

[dwilson@catholiccourier.com](mailto:dwilson@catholiccourier.com)

So,  
Potter  
Christ  
are tau  
to conj  
Necro  
the po  
knowl  
source  
from C  
come f  
Him w  
I foun  
ment  
His So  
mas w  
ness a  
himsel  
Birth  
what o  
game?  
Weasle  
ments  
the ori  
Would  
God of  
Light?  
II has i  
to the l  
of the  
liver us  
That  
placed  
framev  
me. Ha