

## Prophecy of Dissent (no date given)

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These are notes written in longhand by Margaret Ellen Traxler, SSND prior to a presentation to the Phoenix Club. They were copied just as she had written them on a legal pad.

--Story of the invitation to address the Phoenix Club

--We are in a long long Advent within our church.

The special period began in 1962—

Pope John 23

Beginning of Council Vat. II

Tide of Hope encompassed us

call to liturgical renewal

Questions were always upfront

will successors to John 23 preserve the renewal

will theologians abide with new and deeper insights into scriptural roots and ethical updating of the technological developments.

Questions of course continued and then came Pope John Paul I and John Paul II.

The last 20 years have seen more change in society than in the previous 200 years.

The plain and simple truth is that the Church and Churchmen have not kept step.

The recent Synod of the Laity was neither by the laity nor about the laity.

It was unfortunately a pitiful puppet show in which Mr. Piggy kept the stage.

What is missing and what can we do? What is missing seems quite clear. The model and message of Jesus is needed by all in the church and above all by the leadership. The model was not a top-down command and the message was to love, to show mercy, forbearance, tenderness, forgiveness, gentle understanding and compassion.

Jesus showed us the way—

“Go sin no more”

“Has anyone condemned you? Neither will I”

“Father forgive them”

“Let the little ones come”

“Forgive thy brother and sr 70 x 70 times”

To religious leaders of his day who were too legalistic in their interpretations, Jesus said: (Matthew 15: 9) "They teach man-made rules as though they were my laws."

There is no doubt that the moral witness is necessary. Bosofof S. Africa:

"We will go before God for judgment  
God will ask "Where are your wounds,"  
"I have no wounds." and God will ask,  
"Was there nothing worth dying for"?"

We do see some clear glitches of sanity in the Churchmen's radar screens. For example, in the latest document from the NCCB on sexuality, the US Bishops did reservedly, yes, but did see the viability of teaching the safeguard of use of condoms. The Chicago glitch of some hope came too when Cardinal Bernardin in response to; Cardinal Ratzinger's letter on in vitro fertilization, "consult your conscience." Consult your conscience. We will all be judged not on what the Vatican said, but on our conscience. Yes, it is understood that we have an educated or enlightened conscience but that does not mean that only out of the Vatican can come the necessary enlightenment. Unfortunately the churchmen do not consult the experience of the laity, the experience of women and experiential knowledge is part of on-going revelation. That is why you, each of you is called to faithful dissent within the Church.

During Pope John Paul's costly visit to the US one of his more memorable statements, given several times over, is that the church cannot tolerate dissent.

A new Syllabus of Errors.

We have an obligation to dissent, to dissent as a very act of loyalty to the church of Jesus, who was its founder and first dissenter against the religious improprieties of his day. We must dissent against all things that threaten the integrity of the Gospel to which we are committed. Dissent then becomes, not negative but gloriously positive.

If the Catholic position is to stifle dissent as disloyal, we have a new command to encourage it and insist that dissent is our act of loyalty, lest we enthrone as God given absolutes, ideas and points of view that are human and fallible. The way for example/to witness dissent from the papal (man-made) ruling that divorced people cannot receive the sacraments is by receiving communion often. We know Jesus celebrated the first Mass and communion by taking bread and blessing it, he gave it to the disciples. Not a word about only ordained can do this, or only the chosen receive it. "Take and Eat" and as often as you shall, you do it in memory of me."

Our task is not to change the church but to find ways of following our conscience in peace of heart and mind by living out the faith which is our heritage, our inheritance, our revelation given to us by Jesus. Those faithful in dissent must take seriously the scriptural reminder that

(1 Peter 4:17) "The time has come for judgment to begin with the household of God" which is our house, our church which no one can take from us.

The real estate is the official church

The bank accounts

The pompous trappings of 4<sup>th</sup> C regalia

But the faith of Jesus belongs to each of us

the hope Jesus gave and the example he left to us. "This no man can take from us.