

Who owns the Holy Spirit? The Hierarchy thinks they do exclusively. Vatican II gave it to everyone. Pope Francis invites a Synod; let the pews speak what the Spirit tells them. Will the Synod be a battle of Bishops over the Pew's Spirit?

The Vatican Battle of Bishops: A View from The Pew

By Gil Gadzikowski

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GIL GADZIKOWSKI



— THE —
VATICAN
BATTLE OF
BISHOPS

A VIEW FROM THE PEW

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

After Marquette High School in Milwaukee, on August 19, 1949, I entered the Jesuits' St. Stanislaus Seminary at Florissant, Missouri. At the time I presumed I had a vocation to the priesthood, but that wasn't the case. On Christmas Eve, 1957, I closed the door on the Jesuit residence and the Jesuit Order. I remember a gentle Milwaukee snow and my heart full of gratitude to the Jesuits. I am forever in debt to them for their kindness. Most importantly, my spirit was at rest because I had given myself fully to the Jesuit program, although I'd found out I was not called. I'd left the Jesuits, but what I did not leave behind is a deep interest in, and concern for, all things pertaining to the Catholic Church. I had fallen in love with what Church really is: an astounding relationship whereby God and his children talk to one another!

I later became a businessman. During my business career I paid regular attention to news of the Church. I observed incidents in which a restriction was placed on who was allowed to listen and talk with God. I noticed a pattern emerge: only the ordained were allowed to listen and speak to God. I thought this was unfortunate, but now many years later I see hope: Pope Francis is calling the pew-Catholics to tell of their concerns and their inspirations from the Holy Spirit. The Pope is telling the Hierarchy to listen.

Fortunately strong voices, especially German Catholic women, are speaking. Others have joined them. As one might expect, powerful members of the Hierarchy are resisting. There is indeed a skirmish, and Pope Francis is in the middle of the not-so-subtle fighting. He is trying to keep both sides loyal to the Church, but that is becoming more difficult with a slow hardening of positions by each contending faction. In order to have time to address the potential fracture, some observers

believe, Pope Francis has postponed the final assembly of the Bishops for the Synodal Process until October 2024.

Either way, Francis has hold of the proverbial tail of a tiger. His postponement of the Assembly of Bishops is his reaction to the build-up of tensions: Francis measured the depth of the resistance of some Bishops and Cardinals; he observed the swarm of serious challenges by the pew-Catholics. He concluded they both needed time to cure. At the same time, certain Bishops and Cardinals consider the Synodal Process a waste of time because the laity are not anointed. Finally, a considerable number of leading pew-Catholics have demonstrated a determination not seen before. The Bishops rely on tradition; the lay-leaders come with accelerated theological developments.

The Pope knows there is no turning back at this point. As most executives know, to stall on a problem can be a very simple and effective tool of management. However, at some point the shuffling of the deck has to end and the cards need to be dealt. Hence, Pope Francis wants time to avoid a public showdown.

Having postponed the Assembly of Bishops, Francis has work to do—to temper the Hierarchy who drown in a culture that says *WE* are the Church; and to cultivate the laity whose impatience demands that *NOW* is their time. How does Francis reconcile the two? Does the Holy Spirit have a solution up its sleeve? There’s a battle brewing in the Vatican—this book draws its name from it: the battle is between Bishops, opposing Bishops, and pew-Catholics. They are battling over who owns the Spirit.

A Special Note to the Reader

The book does not discuss the Hierarchy's claim to authority based on what are called the "commissioning passages" in the New Testament. You probably can recall them by heart: "Peter, You are the rock..." and "The gates of Hell..." and "Go and teach all nations..." and so on.

These passages have been thoroughly examined by Biblical scholars who have written many books about their validity, pro and con. Therefore, there is no need for an extended discussion here. To state this book's position on those passages and the reasons for that position will suffice.

This book accepts the position of independent scholars who have concluded too many serious questions arise from the text of the "commissioning passages." The problems in regard to the text's history, authorship, idiom, word usage, and purpose have caused independent scholars to conclude the passages to be accretions. In addition to the problems with the texts themselves, serious questions arise that are problems associated with all oral histories.

Also there is one theological dispute, still unresolved, among the theologians and the scriptural scholars. How one interprets the fact of two different Greek names for "Peter" in the same passage makes a difference: does the passage apply solely to Peter as the head of the Apostles, or to Peter as head of the disciples? That leads some scholars to understand the commission in a very broad and extensive sense: Peter is viewed as head of all the disciples (all believers are commissioned) as opposed to Peter as head of the Apostles (only he and successors are commissioned).

Finally, this book accepts the gospels not as history but as four theological treatises. Each is written to show Jesus is God and differing as to when Jesus became God. As to when Jesus became God, Matthew has Jesus become God at his baptism: the heavens part to the voice of God (i.e., “This is my beloved Son”). John has Jesus as God before history: “In the beginning was God and with God.” Luke has the Archangel announce Jesus as God at his conception, and that is followed by choirs of angels at Jesus’ birth. Mark is concerned about Jesus’ Jewish-ness, and his exhaustive “begats” are meant to trace Jesus back to King David, royalty, and to Divinity.

Biblical Scholar Fr. Raymond Brown, OSB, cautions us the evangelists were competing at the time with the Caesars as gods. The various natural miracles attributed to Jesus are the response to the sighting of a comet in association with Caesar upon his death.

Finally, the most practical reason for not including the discussion of the “commissioning passages” here is to keep the book under 200 pages in order to maintain the spirit of brevity.

PROLOGUE:

The Church Before the Synodal Process

In an August 2019 letter, Pope Francis urged his priests to consider the sin of the Church's Hierarchy as a call to purification. Pope Francis refers to the condition of the Church as the Spouse of Christ being "a Bride caught in adultery." The admission of sin is very sad because we were taught the gates of Hell shall not prevail against the Church. But we need to remember a little bit of Latin from Vatican II: *ecclesia semper reformanda* translates to, "The Church is always in need of reformation." Vatican II reminded us the Church is an institution of men here on Earth. The leadership of the Church can and did sin, and not just once, as we shall find out as we learn more of what's happening in our Church.

An "Institution of Men" on Earth Sinned

Indeed, the Catholic Church as an institution has sinned. The worst of the scandals was the sin of the Hierarchy—their attempt to cover up the sin and crimes of priests' destroying the innocence of children. The only justification for talking about the sin of the Church is to remind ourselves that the Church on Earth is a "becoming." That is, the People of God have not yet come to be the Kingdom of God. We strive to Jesus-ify this world just as Jesus did. We strive until the end time when we, the People of God, shall be actualized as the Kingdom of God. Therefore, we need be open to new ways and reforms, if necessary, to come closer to realizing the Kingdom.

Eschatology: Becoming the Kingdom of God

The process of “becoming” in Church theology refers to the study known as “eschatology.” Eschatology offers theological conclusions about the grand finale of the world—when history ends. It is the time of Jesus’ second coming and the ultimate realization of the Kingdom of God.

Jesuit theologian Fr. Karl Rahner is reported to have seriously considered Jesus was convinced the Kingdom of God would be realized here on earth. God’s Kingdom would occur in mankind’s history. Just in case Jesus was not waiting for an end time, the need to explore the best paths for his church would then become a high priority right now and right here.

Cardinal John Henry Newman suggested how we should understand change. According to Newman, “Here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” The Cardinal explained that change is a conversion—an interior transformation. Consider this: we have change all around us. Almost every day, there are new “becomings” in all the facets of life including physics, medicine, communications, space science, etc. The Bishops of Vatican II enjoined us to discern the place of those “becomings.” They wanted us to judge their value in the overall scheme of the Kingdom of God. In addition, the Church must be committed to its own “becoming.” Unless the Church is open to “becoming,” its hope and task to Jesus-ify the world will be frustrated and fail. The People of God will not become the Kingdom of God.

Theologian Fr. Richard McBrien of Notre Dame’s Department of Theology offered an explanation of the Vatican II document *Lumen*

Gentium (i.e., *Light to the World*). He first noted importantly that *Lumen Gentium* defines the Church as the whole people of God. The Faithful of every rank, the person in the pew to the Pope himself, are given the gifts of the Spirit. These gifts are to be used toward the “becoming” of the People of God.

We are to use the gifts for the “sacramentation” of the Church and the world. We are to be the outward sign of God’s operation in this world. Fr. McBrien points out that the person in the pew is required to respond to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He stressed that responsibility comes with the gifts of the Spirit. Pew-Catholics are required to participate fully in church matters—to help the Church be that outward sign of God on earth. And then Fr. McBrien noted our responsibility is very serious; it includes even criticizing Church leaders when there is sin in the Church. The pew-Catholic may criticize the Hierarchy, if necessary in public, when there is sin in the Church.

Fr. McBrien tied our participation in the Church to eschatology. The Church is both “now” and “not yet.” To get to the Kingdom, we work in our present “not yet.” Thus, the pew-Catholic must strive to be perfect. As Cardinal Newman observed we must change often; we must be “becoming.” Furthermore, the Faithful must participate fully in the Church.

Fr. McBrien stressed his point: the Faithful own their gifts of the Spirit, but with these gifts comes a responsibility. The Faithful are hence required to speak out for change—for “becoming.” The Church begins with Jesus in history. The Church is right now. The Church becomes the actual reality of the Kingdom at the end of history. Thus, the Church is not yet. Therefore, the word of the day for all Catholics must be “Becoming” and requires our full participation in the Church!

The Hierarchy and Change

The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church is overly sensitive to even the slightest suggestion of change. Just say, “Change!” and immediately the Hierarchy puts their dukes up. They are ready to battle to maintain the status quo. What is obvious is the Church needs to “become” but the Hierarchy’s motto and slogan is “status quo.”

Possibly, the idea of change or reform conjures up thoughts of Martin Luther and the Reformation, yet that is such a long time ago. Further, the Bishops of Vatican II talked about reform—about change—in gentle terms, even calling on the pews to become fully helpful. The *Decree on Ecumenism* reminds us that *ecclesia semper reformanda* (i.e., “The Church is always in need of reformation”). The decree notes that Jesus “summons the church to that continual reformation for which she always has need, insofar as she is an institution of men” here on earth. It is there the Catholic Church allows that its administration is a human “institution of men.” Therefore, as human, the Church has erred and even now errs, yes, sins: consider the past and present-day violations of Charity. For example, some called women Satan from the altar steps, practicing misogyny; clerics vilified the very person of a homosexual; a one-person Congregation served as prosecutor, judge and jury to deny a theologian his livelihood.

However circumspect the Church might be about admitting its sin, the Decree on Ecumenism recognizes that the Church is provisional. It is never complete in time. It calls us to strive to “become” God’s Sacrament on earth, just as Jesus showed what the true “becoming” means. Therefore, *Lumen Gentium*, in encouraging and prescribing that its members be sensitive to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, also encourages and prescribes they level with church leaders about what’s on their

minds—just as Jesus did during his lifetime, calling out the Pharisees. And the most important but neglected admonition, the Decree on Ecumenism prescribes that the Hierarchy open their minds to what the Faithful tell them.

Does the Church Hierarchy Listen to the Spirit?

Three factors explain why the Church Hierarchy does not generally listen to the Holy Spirit as spoken to the pew-Catholic. To begin, the Hierarchy is not open to “becoming.” They view the status quo as sacred. This is sad, since clinging to the status quo means God has retired and no longer is present to us. The Hierarchy is communicating to us that God isn’t involved anymore. All we now have is the Hierarchy. That compares, for example, to several years ago. There was a “God-is-Dead” movement. The message of the God-is-Dead movement was God no longer cares; we have been left to ourselves; we now need to duke it out among ourselves as best we might all alone! That hurts because the Hierarchy has eliminated hope. How do you spell despair?

Second, the Hierarchy is truly convinced they constitute the Church. The oils of Holy Orders mark the anointed with the special gifts needed to guide and oversee God’s society. They have codified their special status in a Church Canon, which indicates only the ordained may govern. Yes, the Bishops often say the right words, words like “People of God,” but one wonders, do they mean them? This is a legitimate question because they consider they alone constitute the Church, and there is no reason to listen to the Faithful.

Finally, the Hierarchy has traditionally been a caste of privilege. The privilege came by accident. The Hierarchy took to the privilege almost

by osmosis. The Roman Emperor Constantine gave the clerics official Roman rank which in turn commanded honors and status, and very telling, a paycheck to go with the rank. That resulted in the clergy being no longer required to work for a living alongside the regular believers. As a result, they lost touch with all the other believers in Jesus. After enjoying their privileges and pocketing the funds, over time they began to puff themselves up in fancy Church robes and titles. Hence, they eventually became “Your Eminence.” Given the privilege, they considered their rank, status, and funds were a result of their ordination, not an accident of history, of Constantine’s beneficence. Therefore, in their minds, the class of the ordained are above and beyond listening to the laity.

Preserving the Status Quo

The Council on the Amazon confirms how Rome is stuck in the status quo. Pope Francis called the Council on the Amazon to order with great fanfare. Answering his call, there were heavyweight discussions and consultation between Cardinals, Bishops, and laity who worked in the Amazon. Consequently, they developed a multifaceted set of recommendations. In particular, the Bishops of the Amazon recommended the Church ordain priests from among the *probati*, men of the region who are proven and committed to true Jesus values. The Bishops also recommended the ordination of female deaconesses. Those who would be ordained were nuns, and women who were already working in the remote villages of the Amazon. The motivation was to provide for the native Catholics off in the hard-to-reach forests of the Amazon the Mass and the Sacraments more than once a year.

Oddly enough, Pope Francis passed over those recommendations. Francis did not even acknowledge them. In turn, he deliberately ignored

change in the Church and concentrated on what businesses should do about trees!

Why the deliberate disregard? The ordinary person has trouble understanding the Pope's mind: Francis emphasized forests and neglected the people! But is Francis not the Pastor of the People? We know he is not the Forest-Ranger of the Trees, but still Francis skips over the Cardinals, Bishops, and lay persons' sincere recommendations to "become." Thus, Pope Francis sticks with the Hierarchy in maintaining a frozen course to foster the "status quo."

Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission to Open October 2021 and Close October 2023

Pope Francis has called the Bishops of the world to a Synodal Process. Over two years, the Bishops are called to discern the Holy Spirit as it is expressed through the People of God. The Synodal Process offers the pew-Catholic hope. The pew-Catholic heard Cardinal Mario Grech, Secretary-General of the Synod of Bishops, speak of the need for the sense of the Faithful. He is quoted as saying that "without consultation... there would be no Synodal process." Very to the point!

Nevertheless, Cardinal Grech added a serious reservation by urging a "listening to...the synergy of the People of God...each according to their proper function." There's the rub! Question: what does the Hierarchy see as the Faithful's "proper function?" They consider the Faithful's "proper function" as second class. Is Cardinal Grech promising to listen to the People of God if they speak what the Hierarchy wants to hear? Indeed, that would be deceptive and sad.

What is most sad about the Hierarchy's stance to preserve the status quo is they even deny themselves the excitement of learning something new—the possibility of growing the Church into a more exciting future. They prevent the Church from “becoming” alongside the “becomings” of the world.

Is the Church the Hierarchy, Not the People of God?

Pope Francis seems to blow hot and cold. He knows the Church to be the People of God. Sure, he has called for the voices of the pew-Catholics but sometimes he exhibits the Hierarchy's backward attitude. Pope Francis worried about what will happen to the Church after the pandemic shutdown. He recognized the relaxed protocol of the pandemic-Church, the non-attendance at Sunday Mass, the virtual television Masses, the practice of home devotions, even the religious meetings on Zoom. Francis is worried whether they will permanently change the attitudes of the Faithful—and understandably so. Certainly there will be a relaxation and a general casual feeling of freedom. That attitude may very well soften the bond of the Faithful with the formal Church, and Pope Francis is right to fear such an outcome. Nevertheless, it is the way Pope Francis expressed his fear in an April 2020 homily that is strange. He said that people may find a strong spiritual life on their own without the formal Church. People might become comfortable in an intimate isolation with Jesus.

That makes one wonder: why would anyone fear people developing a spiritual life on their own, of getting close to Jesus? growing intimate with Jesus? Pope Francis reveals his reason: “Because people could start living on their own... detached from the Church.” In the Pope's mind, the Faithful will be detached from the Church, from the clergy, the Cardinals, the Bishops, and the priests. Only if the Pope thinks the

Church is the Hierarchy can a Catholic be detached from the Church. Pope Francis blows hot and cold—at least at times he seems to express his clericalism. Furthermore, clericalism demands priests mediate between God and the pew-Catholics. The Hierarchy seems afraid to trust God alone with His People. This begs the question: where exactly is the danger in a person’s direct relationship with God? Jesus urged us, “The Kingdom of God is within you.” The Hierarchy seems concerned that Catholics might go directly to God.

A Caste of Nobility, Lords over the Masses

In the pews, Catholics have long seen themselves as second-class citizens. How did the Hierarchy arrive at their noble status, the Princes of the Church? The Roman Emperor Constantine initiated the process; seeing the community-minded Christians as a unifier for his empire, he favored the Bishop of Rome with his very own personal headquarters, the Lateran Palace, and made all clergy officials of the State—along with a paycheck!

A paycheck proved to be key. Up to that point, all clergy worked a trade right alongside the Faithful. With the paycheck came release for clergy from having to work. The clergy lost touch and began to think of themselves as above the Faithful. The clergy “became” part of the Roman nobility, were shown deference, and had official power. Over time, while enjoying their regal status, the Hierarchy became convinced their privilege came from being ordained, not a privilege of empire. That’s when the clergy took on religious pomp and turned state privilege into Church privilege, thereby the culture of clericalism entered the Church.

A Frozen, Bureaucratic Catholic Church

Today, the Church Hierarchy justifies itself by its tradition with the motto, “We’ve always done it this way.” Thus, the Church became a frozen organization with frozen operations and frozen doctrines, and worse, frozen minds. The Church today is yesterday-today, and tomorrow is yesterday-tomorrow, etc. “Becoming” is not possible; “becoming” is frozen; and “becoming” certainly would not be allowed because it requires thawing the status quo.

Therefore, the aim in noting the sins of the Church is to focus attention on the very human administrative organization of the Church. The Hierarchy refuses to open up to “becoming,” which is essential to fulfilling its eschatological destiny. To freeze the “now” prevents any “not yet.” But the Faithful understand the Spirit continues to blow where it will. They are prepared to offer their *sensus fidelium* in the Synodal Process.

People of God Involvement: Needed Reform

The needed reform of the Catholic Church requires more pew involvement. Talk of reform occasions outrage by the Hierarchy. For example, German Archbishop Woelki of the Cologne diocese has given typical voice to the Hierarchical response to any suggestion that recognizes the pews: “What do they think? The Church is a democracy?”

The response should be, but never is: “Well, as a matter of fact, the Church should be a democracy!” Certainly, Jesus did not have in mind an oligarchic theocracy. In fact, Jesus did oppose the Roman and Jewish theocracies. Finally, a case for democracy in the Church flows

rather readily from the decrees of Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Dignitas Humanae*, and *Lumen Gentium*.

This case for democracy is as follows. First, “Joy and Hope” posits the Church in the modern world which is characterized by pluralism. It goes on to exhort each of the Faithful to engage the world as a child of God, steeped in study and devotion. Second, the “Dignity of the Person” emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit are given to each and everyone, the children of God. That makes each vote of a child of God an inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Third, “Light to the World” reaffirms each person’s responsibility as a bearer of the Holy Spirit’s gifts; an obligation to step forward with their *sensus fidelium*.

Actually, a democratic republic form of governance is a natural way to guide a society that holds a common consensus such as the Catholic Faith. The vote would apply the Spirit’s gifts to guide the People of God on their eschatological journey. Thus, there is an answer to Cardinal Woelki’s question, “What do they think? The Church is a democracy?”

The answer is this: the Church could be and should be a democracy.

Conclusion

There are two problems with the Catholic Church: the Hierarchy think they own the Holy Spirit, and the pew-Catholic is too comfy in his cushioned pew. The Catholic Laity have been enablers of the Hierarchy. The basic and formal difference is how the laity and the Hierarchy view the question: Who owns the Holy Spirit? At times, the Hierarchy have acted against the Spirit and sinned.. Lay folks [some] have challenged the Hierarchy in those instances. In general, the lay

folks have had their voices ignored or denied, but The Bishops of Vatican II have decreed and Pope Francis has issued a formal invitation to the pews to present their *sensus fidelium*. Pope Francis has reminded the Cardinals and Bishops that listening is with the heart as well as the ears. This is important since the role of the laity in responding to their gifts of the Spirit presents a serious challenge for the Hierarchy in the Synodal Process. Invited to speak, the pew-Catholics voice their inspirations. The Hierarchy [many] disdain much, if not all, of the Faithful's inspirations. Heavy odds, therefore, suggest a Vatican Battle: Bishops defending the status quo versus Bishops defending the pews.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Gil Gadzikowski retired as Chairman of the Board, President, and Chief Executive Officer of First National Bank in Sioux City and First Federal Savings & Loan of Council Bluffs, Iowa.

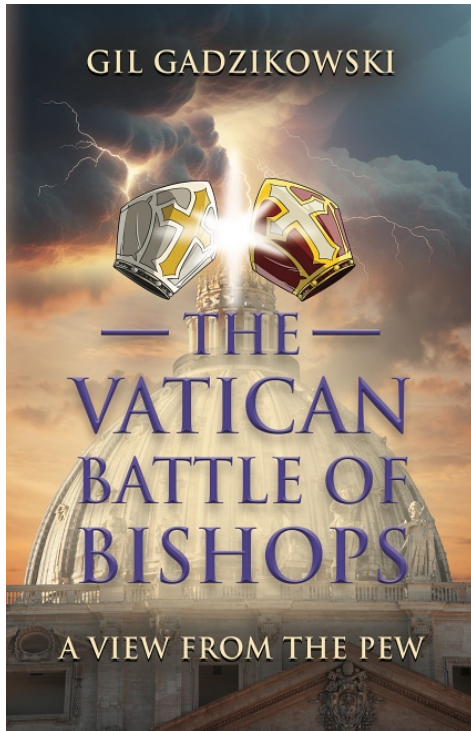
As a young man, Gil joined the Jesuits in the hope of a presumed vocation to the priesthood. That was not to be, and after eight years of Jesuit study and training, Gil entered the business world as an IBM Service Bureau salesman. That was followed by middle management and executive positions in insurance and banking. Prior to assuming his Chief Executive Officer positions in banking, Gil was Senior Bank Consultant with the Chicago firm of Lester B. Knight & Associates and its European partner Knight-Wiegenstein in Zurich. He served clients in the United States, Italy, Belgium, and the United Kingdom.

Gil devoted his retirement time and energy to the study and analysis of religion and specifically the Catholic Church. From that research comes *The Vatican Battle of Bishops: A View from the Pew*. Immersed in the work of the Bishops of Vatican II, Gil concentrated on the programmatic features of the decrees and especially on the contribution of John Courtney Murray, S.J. The empowerment of the Faithful by the Holy Spirit, the failure of the Hierarchy to act on priestly sexual abuse, their attempt at a cover-up, and Pope Francis' calling forth the Holy Spirit from the pews all motivated this self-publication of his retirement research into the Catholic Church.

Gil earned the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Economics and Rome's Gregorian Degree of Licentiate in Philosophy at St. Louis University; at Marquette University, the Master of Arts in Economics. Gil served as Instructor in Latin and Greek, Campion Jesuit High

School; Instructor in Economics, Benedictine University; and Visiting Professor in Finance and Management, Creighton University, Heider Business School.

Gil relishes the license of retirement to stay up way past midnight delving into the thoughts of others, reliving the passage of historic times, or frustrating over an entry in a crossword puzzle—conscious of the snugly pleasure of sleeping in the next morning. Family and friends are embraced by favored home visits, dawdling over lazy lunches and engaging the convenience of today’s electronic mail. A would-have-been athlete, Gil follows Marquette and Creighton in Big East basketball; and in football favors Notre Dame and Green Bay.



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