

The American Catholic Council – Detroit June 10-12, 2011

The Promise of Pentecost is NOW!

By
Kathleen Hartmann

Where do I start to describe the experience of the ACC? There is no way for me to put into words the impact on me personally of this meeting but I will try to give you somewhat of an overview of the days' events.

On Friday evening there was a beautiful & moving opening prayer experience officiated by **Sheila Peiffer**. Then a powerful video of **Hans Kung** being interviewed by Anthony Padovano was shown. Dr. Kung said, *When people suffer they change and if we do not change now we will suffer more*. The Roman Curia is out of touch and the people of God are calling for a change. The Curia's present policy is of restoration of pre-Vatican II days and the world will be moving on with or without the Church, but that the gospel of Jesus is more powerful than the Pope.

The next speaker, **Jeannette Rodriguez**, was dynamic and had a hard act to follow. She did a great job of speaking about the Latino experience of liberation theology, walking a fine line of maintaining their Latino identity and being American. She said Jesus is not just a pronoun ...Jesus is VERB!! She quoted Oscar Romero, "You cannot be followers of the Word without disturbing the world."...are a few highlights of her talk.

Saturday was opened by **Anthony Padovano** who gave a powerful message based on Canon Law about the betrayal by the hierarchy of the people they were called to serve. He spoke about the "Sensus Fidelium", and scripture is inspired because it is accepted by the people of God. It is not the pope that is infallible, it is the "the Church", the people of God, and their acceptance of the teachings, that makes it infallible. The Sense of the Faithful is incarnational and concrete and exists in a larger framework than the Curia. Without the sense of the faithful the church cannot breathe. The salvation of souls is always the supreme law of the church, he said, and spoke about contrary laws which have developed (i.e. the Eastern Rite's rejection of celibacy, abolishing the meatless Friday rule, rejection of limbo, etc.) because the experience of the faithful rejected them so they were changed.

We were introduced to a **group from Europe called "We are the Church"** which has the support of Hans Kung and was created after the pedophile scandal in Austria in 1995. They are calling for inner church reform on the parish level, education about Vatican II, bishops' accountability, and they obtain a good deal of media coverage. They came to Detroit because they plan to have similar councils in their respective countries, Germany, Austria, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands and want to discuss how to do this. They are also planning an INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE LAITY in Rome in 2015. Plan on going!!!! That will be an awesome event.

Saturday afternoon the talks were by James Carroll and Matthew Fox.

James Carroll, author of *The Practicing Catholic*, spoke about historical and experiential events that lead to the calling of Vatican II by Pope John XXIII – and the impact of Bishop Cushing and his proteges Courtney Murray and Bishop Dearden. They helped develop the *primacy of conscience* - everyone that acts in conscience can attain salvation. He believes that if we can change the church we can change this world.

Matthew Fox said, "Do not underestimate the importance of this Conference! This gathering is the future of Christianity and necessary to deconstruct the clerical machine that is devouring the church." He believes the papacy is in schism and this conference in America is doing something about it!!

Sunday we heard from **Sr. Joan Chittister**, the prophet of our time! There are no words that I can say to express my response to her and the ideas that she espoused. She believes that this restoration papacy is trying to put out the smoldering embers of the people of Pentecost. Jesus ignored the Curia of his day and it is the model of the life of Jesus to which we aspire. The laws that would make that impossible are illegitimate. Vatican II brought the church out of the insular, parochial, ghettoized life of the middle ages, and to turn away from that would null and void that council. We are now the embryo of a new church and everything that is dying is another age coming to life. You, the people of God, are the hope of the Church.

And lastly, the closing Liturgy was officiated by a priest in good standing (who was threatened with dismissal by the Detroit bishop). The Gospel was read by a lay woman and the homily given by a lay woman!!!

The promise of Pentecost IS now!

And it is up to us!

Kathleen Hartmann