

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

“A Future Schism? Really?”

By
Janet Hauter

Co-chairing the American Catholic Council (ACC) in Detroit was the culmination of a three-year planning effort with a number of reform groups to define whether we could find common ground across our individual missions. After dialogue and deliberation, governance was seen as the root cause of the troubling, converging crises of the day (clerical sexual abuse, financial malfeasance and innumerable power abuses). These crises are *symptoms* of a systemic problem, i.e., a monarchical system that is focused on control and a narcissistic need to manipulate the image of institutional Church at the expense of lives psychologically brutalized and lost, donations abused and a return to the Church of the 50's to maintain power and control of its followers.

The ACC Event was a celebrative, inclusively “big tent” event calling Catholics to acknowledge Vatican II and embrace the spirit it gifted the People of God with in an era where Church's leadership is actively moving us back to more obedient, mute and passive times. Many solutions were proposed by attendees and are being currently analyzed for trends to proactively and positively address the triple-threat crises we face today.

Attendee evaluations were incredibly high with strong requests for next steps to be defined. To present a balanced approach, detractors have offered the following criticisms:

§ **The ACC had an aging population in attendance.** While true, the reason for a dominant “Wisdom Generation” attendee base was that this generation lived through Vatican II and understood the promises that it held out to a believer base. Younger Catholics could not have had that experience clearly missing that perspective.

§ **The ACC should have had a major pivotal emphasis on the clerical sexual abuse crisis.** The Council, designed to be celebratory, hope-filled, solution-based and empowering to Catholics for realistic change.

§ **The ACC is a vehicle for schism.** We requested our critics to offer specific information where we were being schismatic but our accusers were mute.

Matthew Fox, a presenter at the ACC, *dealt with the schism issue head on* by saying that we are already, now---in current day, in schism created by the Vatican through all the symptomatic issues that have come to light in the last decade. While many will attack this statement because Fox is no longer Catholic, let us evaluate the comment on its own merit or flaw in total objectivity, as much as that is possible.

Recognizing that Jesus did not come to establish a new Church but rather to challenge the existing practices of his own religion, how are we different? Change is inevitable and ongoing on all fronts of life; this cannot be denied. Catholics are at a crossroads moment as the signs of the times indicate and evidence abounds that this time in history reflects "a black swan moment" where high-impact events converge to awaken Catholics to the huge magnitude and consequences of these events. Some believe remaining in the Church tolerates the injustices occurring and refuse to remain; others believe this is the very moment to respond to the Church's call to work for justice but this time *within the Church*.

I believe change is indeed possible and probable NOW but it would demand that movement in that direction would demand that we rid dialogue exchanges of polemic positions that offer no innovation or solidly entrench us in old arguments that didn't move us forward in the past.

We must bear in mind that we are the Church and for the Church to change, **we must change!**

Janet Hauter, VOTF Vice President