

Reflections on American Catholic Council  
Florence Kissane

June 10 to 12, 2011 Detroit MI

**Gratitude for**  
**“The Radical Vatican II Catholics”**

At a gathering on Long Island in October, 2009, sponsored by LIVOTF, I heard of the American Catholic Council for the first time. It was announced that there would be a gathering in Detroit, MI on Pentecost weekend, June 10-12, 2011. I promised myself the moment I heard this, that, God willing, I would be there.

Friday afternoon, I got to part of VOTF pre-conference meeting, with Fr. Tom Doyle, OP and Jason Berry, author of “Render to Rome, the Secret Life of Money in the Church”.

Fr. Hans Kung, Anthony Padavano, James Carroll were all very inspiring. Jerry Filteau, Washington correspondent for The National Catholic Reporter, did an outstanding job reporting on all the talks.

I went to two breakout sessions on Saturday. Jeanette Rodriguez, who also gave a keynote address, and Jason Berry.

**Dr. Rodriguez** spoke on Hispanic Spirituality/ Spanish Culture.

We consider the appearance of Mary at Guadalupe as “the Lady of Guadalupe”. Hispanic people call her “Madonna of Guadalupe”, because she is shown with a black sash around her waist, indicating she is “with child”.

**Jason Berry** spoke of the need for us to understand finances in the Church, good and bad. I personally do not know much about this topic, but I plan to learn. Unfortunately, his new book on the topic was not yet available for the Conference.

I was very upset and angry at the Detroit Archbishop, Allen Vigneron, for his attitude towards us. Someone estimated that half of those attending were 65 or older. My ‘guesstimate’ is 75% of those attending, were 65 or older. I felt I was at a Senior citizen’s gathering. People in wheelchairs, many with canes and walkers, impressed me so much. I was proud to be among them, “The Radical Catholics, the Vatican II Catholics”.

Traveling to the COBO Center, waiting on lines, I met people from all over. I met priests, some were retired, married couples. I traveled alone, yet I was not alone!

Listening to stories people told about the difficult situations they encountered in their own parishes, especially after a new pastor or bishop had been appointed, it made me realize, once again, how lucky we are in St. Rosalie's parish in Hampton Bays, NY. When our former pastor had to retire because of health problems, he set up an open meeting with all parishioners and three clergy representatives from the Diocese. We were asked what we wanted in a new pastor. And we got him!

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## **“The Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities”**

- 1) **Primacy of Conscience.** (Pope Benedict wrote a paper on that topic, before he was Pope. It didn't help Fr. Roy Bourgeois, MM).
- 2) **Community,** 3) **Universal Ministry,** 4) **Freedom of expression,** 5) **Sacraments,** 6) **Reputation.**

The first six assumptions are in many ways, already functioning.

7) **Governance,** and 8) **Participation,** need much work.

9) **Councils.** The ACC and other lay groups, VOTF, CTA, Future Church, are areas that have started, but receive much criticism from the bishops, etc.

When VOTF is permitted to meet on Catholic Church property that we help pay for, I will again contribute to my diocese. Until then, I focus on parish support and parish outreach, and other Hope ministries, and private charities that touch my heart.

10) **Social Justice.** We don't need the church's permission to promote/fight for Social Justice.

**Sr. Joan Chittister** - My final reflection on the conference is on Sr. Joan's talk. I've read her books and I've heard her speak before. She always amazes me. But this year, on **Pentecost Sunday**, she outdid herself.

Starting with a quote from a Zen master from another culture, “No seed ever sees the flower”, all the things I needed to hear, I heard her say.

**“You are the VOICE of today's church. Speak loudly”.**

**“You are the HOPE of the church, now and for centuries to come.”**

**AMEN.**

Florence A Kissane