

# THE ROLE OF BISHOP IN TRANSFORMING THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD: TWO NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

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*Are there differences in how Canadian and United States bishops understand the pre- and post-Vatican II Church, its salvific purpose, unity, authority, collegiality, equality, empowerment, the role of women, and the bishop's role in transforming the Church and the world? Data originally collected from interviews with five Canadian and seven United States bishops as part of a study (Bunz, 1994) investigating the role of bishop were reassessed to examine this question. Differences and similarities in how Canadian and United States bishops perceived the challenges facing the Church were discerned. It is suggested that cultural variation may account for the different perceptions of Canadian and United States bishops.*

In June 1999, retired Bishop Remi De Roo of Victoria, British Columbia, was barred from speaking to the international conference of married priests (Corpus) in Atlanta; but he faced no such ban in addressing the Canadian Network for Women's Equality, a group founded under the name Canadian Catholics for Women's Ordination. Only 2 months after receiving word from the papal nuncio in Canada not to attend the Corpus conference in Atlanta, De Roo gave the keynote address to the women's conference in Kemptville, Ontario. Little surprise, the question sprung from the floor. Why was the bishop allowed to speak to the conference that supported women's ordination in Kemptville, but not to Corpus who supported married priests in Atlanta? Bishop De Roo reportedly responded:

The press has covered that issue adequately. You can make your own decisions. I just want to make one statement to the credit of Canadian bishops. In 36 years I have never been asked by the Canadian bishops, any Canadian bishop, to stop. I say that to their credit. We're in Canada. (Babych, 1999, p. 6)

Bishop De Roo's response begs the question. Are there any differences in how bishops of Canada and of the United States operate, or, for that matter,

how they understand Church, Vatican II, authority, theological opinion, peer relationships, and special interest groups within the Church? In reflecting on this, I wondered whether I might gain some insight into the question by revisiting the data of my interviews of five Canadian and seven United States bishops (Bunz, 1994). The qualitative study intended to seek insight into the world of 12 contemporary disciples: how they understood the pre- and post-Vatican II Church, its salvific purpose, unity, authority, collegiality, equality and empowerment, the role of women, and leadership, specifically the role of bishop in transforming the Church and the world. Though the primary focus of the study was not to compare bishops on the two sides of the border, revisiting the data may provide glimpses of how the Canadian and United States bishops of this study are similar or different. It may also lead to further study and understanding of the role of bishops in leading their flocks and in influencing the Church in their nations and the universal Church (Reese, 1989).

The bishops were randomly selected from a larger group of bishops nominated by priests in Canada and the United States as transforming leaders who desired to move their Church toward the vision of Vatican II. The Canadian bishops were Archbishop Joseph MacNeil of Edmonton; Archbishop Adam Exner of Vancouver; Monsignor Jean-Guy Hamelin of Rough-Noranda, Quebec; Monsignor Robert Lebel of Valleyfield, Quebec; and Bishop Remi De Roo of Victoria. The United States bishops were Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen (retired) of Seattle, Archbishop John Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Bishop Ken Untener of Saginaw, Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee, Bishop Raymond Lucker of New Ulm, Bishop Francis Murphy of Baltimore, and Bishop Peter Rosazza of New Haven.

## METHODOLOGY

Ethnography was the qualitative research method used in this study. "The goal of ethnography is to describe and discover the cultural meaning system that people use to organize their behavior and to interpret experience" (Spradley, as cited in Bunz, 1994, p. 7). Ethnographers use several techniques in exploring social phenomenon: participant observation, artifacts, and interviews (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). Data for this study were collected via interviews, pastoral letters, publications, and papers provided by the bishops. The interviews allowed the bishops to express themselves in their own terms; the data collected were soft, that is "rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedure" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 2).

The interview questions were open-ended. The bishops received the general interview guide in advance to allow them to focus on the broad issues prior to the interview (Bunz, 1994). The general interview guide and the interview questions appear in the appendix.

## ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The process of triangulation (Patton, 1990) was used to analyze the data. Triangulation is based on the belief that no single method adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors since each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality. Each type of data has its own strengths and weaknesses; combining the types of data may make up for the weaknesses of one another.

Coding and categorizing the data created a framework from which to begin the analysis. I employed the cross-analysis method in examining the data. Cross-analysis groups the answers to common questions from different individuals in order to discern patterns of ideas, words, phrases, and relationships that recurred when coding the data. As more and more data were analyzed, "initial categories either remained the same, were included in broader domains, were subdivided into narrower categories, or deleted" (Bunz, 1994, p. 14).

## THE IDEA OF CHURCH

The Canadian and the United States bishops expressed similar images of the pre-Vatican II Church: European, rigid hierarchical structure, top-down authority, introspective, fount of truth, controlling, protectionist, defensive, isolated, and proselytizing. However, even in this early stage of the study, they revealed some differences in sentiment. The United States bishops tended to be more direct, more ready to call things as they saw them. The Canadian bishops tended to qualify their images with more affection for and sensitivity to the pre-Vatican II Church in its time and place in history. For example, Lucker stated:

It was an order: God, hierarchy, bishops, priests, people, etc. I think that over centuries the Church had been identified with leaders, and often Church leaders were identified with the imperial system, the feudal system. So, we've picked up the trappings of a feudal lord, all the titles and all the fancy outfits, all the privileges, and also the top-down structure. Many of the forms in which the Church was governed in past centuries tended to take on the forms of the culture around us. European Catholicism was expressed in the bishop, who was Lord. We even called him Excellency, which means My Lord. We gave him titles, prestige, garments, all that kind of stuff, very much like the Lord of the Castle. That's a European thing. That doesn't fit in with the people of Guatemala, Central America, or Brazil where you're dealing with abject poverty, exploitation by the privileged few over the masses, and so forth. (Lucker, Taped Interview, May 4, 1993)

Acknowledging a hierarchical, exclusive, and protectionist pre-Vatican II Church, MacNeil expressed the following sentiment:

I was born in 1924, so I lived through a Church that was very monolithic in many ways and very hierarchical, but it was a good Church. It was a Church that we loved very much, but our notion again was very much of a pyramid. There was the Pope, bishops, priests, and religious, and a whole lot of other people. I would say the Pope was the Vicar of Christ, and the Pope gives us guidance and direction, also the bishops and priests. I would see the Church having responsibility of what we call the deposit of faith, the teaching of Jesus and of the early Church. We had to guard this. We had to protect this. We shared with others but much more in a proselytizing way, rather than evangelizing. So there was in many ways a ghetto notion of Church. Perhaps we didn't necessarily feel that on a day-to-day basis, but there was much about the Church that was defensive. (MacNeil, Taped Interview, March 30, 1993)

The key difference cited by all the bishops in the pre-Vatican II Church and the Church of Vatican II was the revelation that the indwelling Spirit no longer was the sole domain of the hierarchy but abided and worked in every member of the Church. All members of the Church were ascribed givers and ascribed receivers, for Jesus Christ commissioned all the People of God to renewal and evangelization.

While individual bishops expressed a variety of images like Body of Christ and sacrament to describe the Church, only two were common to all, People of God, introduced in *Lumen Gentium* (Vatican Council II, 1995), and community. Notwithstanding the rhetoric that the Spirit was alive in all the People of God, as a pattern it was clearly more integrated in the core belief of the bishops who had directly experienced Vatican II Council, regardless of nationality. De Roo participated as a young bishop in all four sessions of the Council. Hunthausen was consecrated Bishop of Helena just 2 months before the Council began, and Lucker was studying in Rome for a doctorate in Sacred Studies at the time of the Council and took in several sessions. They expressed unequivocal certainty that the *sensus fidelium*, the conscience of the faithful, existed in the entire People of God as part of the authentic authority of the Church. Somewhat less passionately, most other bishops both in Canada and the United States also expressed that they valued the image People of God and indicated they actively sought inclusiveness of all believers in authentic interpretation of truth and its expression in the life of the Church. However, archbishops Exner and Roach expressed more explicitly than all others that they valued the Magisterium more than the laity in shaping the Church because of the succession of wisdom in the divinely ordained Magisterium. They expressed unequivocally that the Spirit speaks more clearly and more authentically through the Magisterium than the laity. All the other bishops affirmed the Magisterium as a divinely authorized authority; however, they also expressed deeper authenticity to the Spirit alive even in the "whispers of the weakest voices" (Weakland, Taped Interview, May 3, 1993).

While the bishops stated the main function of the Church was to proclaim the Word, all expressed that the Gospel had no real meaning if it was not lived. The United States bishops more definitively than their Canadian counterparts, except for De Roo and Hamelin, affirmed the importance of themselves personally taking a stand on issues that may be unpopular within the Church and the broader community. The strongest call for walking the talk on challenging issues came from the United States bishops, Hunthausen, Murphy, Untener, Lucker, Weakland, and Rosazza. The data indicated that these men believed that acting on their conscience and putting themselves on the line were inherent in leading in the example of Jesus Christ, even if it meant tiptoeing to the fringes of the Church's theological and ecclesiastic limits. A United States bishop expressed empathy that Bishop Murphy likely "cooked his goose" for any promotion when he called for the ordination of women and revealed the encounter between the United States bishops and Vatican during the drafting of a Pastoral on the role of women in the Church (Murphy, 1992). Bishop Murphy stated that he could not in conscience accept the Vatican representatives telling the United States bishops that they were teachers not learners in proclaiming the role of women in the Church. He stated that his was not a response in anger or emotion, but one of considerable prayer and discernment after which he felt obligated to share the story with the public. He further expressed that he had long accepted and appreciated his current role as auxiliary bishop and had no desire to be promoted up the hierarchy (Murphy, Taped Interview, May 24, 1993).

Relating to who belongs to the Church, the bishops indicated that the common bond of the People of God is Baptism, the common food is the Eucharist, and the bond that unites them is God. Most expressed that the Church was universally inclusive in that all people of the world are God's chosen people, and the mission of the Church is to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all humanity, so they will be called to share in his mission. Most bishops held that the Church had bounds, but the doors were open to all people for conversion of human hearts to God, and some expressed degrees of belonging in partial or full communion with the Roman Church. Though not definitively, a few United States bishops, Hunthausen somewhat more than others, hinted that in the depth of their hearts, belonging included the unbaptized of the world—that Church, People of God, in its mystery, is nothing less than all God's people.

## **THE SALVIFIC PURPOSE OF CHURCH**

The bishops were asked about their understanding of salvation—how are people saved, from what are they saved, and what role does the Church have in salvation? Theologians have evolved two opposite theologies of God's justice, distributive justice and salvific justice, and a range in between. The theology of distributive justice is derived from St. Augustine's teaching of the

inherent bondage of humanity to God's wrath. It is premised on the idea that when Adam and Eve sinned, they brought upon themselves and their progeny an avalanche of sin and moral corruption (Pagels, 1988). Augustine's *Massa Damnata* eschatology assumes that most people will be damned because they are intrinsically evil and do not know the way to goodness without intervention. Only a few faithful who manage, juridically, to get through a complicated set of rules are saved. Michelangelo's apocalyptic fresco, the Last Judgment, in the Sistine Chapel in Rome depicts the theology of God's distributive justice. Salvific justice, however, is a distinct shift from Augustinian pessimism (Hastings, 1991). It is premised on the interpretation of Genesis that God created every human being good in God's own image, and God loves all creation so much that God desires all humanity to be saved and will never forsake anyone.

The data indicated that there was no distinct pattern of differences related to salvation based on the nationality of the bishops. In responding to the questions, Bishop Rosazza humbly admitted; "How can I judge what God's judgment will be, or estimate how many people will be saved?" (Taped Interview, May 25, 1993). He postulated that the evolution of the image of a punishing God was likely cultural because it seems humanly impossible to imagine that people who inflict horrendous evil on others should not pay for their actions. The bishops indicated a belief that the cry for vengeance, an eye for an eye, is a human response to transgression, and that it takes the divine in people to turn the other cheek and forgive. Bishop De Roo and Archbishop Weakland opposed polarizing the theologies of salvation, for they believed the Church gains insight from diverse theologies. Notwithstanding their affirmation of different understandings of salvation, overall the bishops held quite consistent belief in God's salvific justice versus distributive justice. No bishop spoke of heaven and hell in typical images that evolved through centuries of Christianity—heaven as a place above with St. Peter at the gate checking the ledger of people's lives and hell as the pit where those who do not qualify are condemned forever.

Regarding punishment, Monsignor Lebel postulated that sometimes people in their human response for vengeance deny the possibility of an all-loving, non-punishing God because they fear people will turn to selfishness and evil if there is no suffering for their actions. He expressed that people always suffer following bad actions they cause, but such suffering was not a punitive response by God. He suggested that suffering is a natural consequence of sinfulness, separating oneself from God and others. It can be intense in the process of metanoia, turning back to goodness, especially after a life of sinfulness because turning to God, giving oneself to others, is letting go—a dying of ego and the birth of humility. He offered the following insight into the mystery of salvation:

Suffering is not punishment. It is a trial, a series of experiences that one has to make to change his soul and his heart to make his soul and heart able to receive God. If somebody lived in egoism and selfishness, he has to suffer. As we suffer when we lose a friend by default, we have to suffer and change and ask forgiveness. In the delight of the saints, the mystical experience of the saints, they experience that suffering. They see how they are selfish and how they are not receiving the influence of God. So they go through purification, and at the end they are able to be united very deeply with God. It is not a punishment; it is purification. If we don't have this before death, we have it after. This is the effect of the love of God. God is not punishing us. He helps us go through suffering. (Lebel, Taped Interview, May 28, 1993)

All 12 spoke of God's infinite love and compassion for all humanity. Several expressed that salvation was a relationship, a full union of the human being with God, and that God desires all humanity to share in this union. They tended to view salvation as less a condition of merit than a gift from God, that life is something you work through, a pilgrim journey, and God is always present in your good times and bad times. For the most part, the bishops shared a belief that God motivates people to goodness and relationship through love, not fear. God persistently calls every human being, righteous and sinners, into relationship now and in the afterlife. While the bishops expressed a common theme that God's love is infinite and unlimited, most retained the possibility of some individuals refusing God's love, remaining selfish and unloving, and in so doing they remained apart from union with God. None, though, stated that hell was a finality.

No voice proclaimed the mystery of God's unconditional, universal love more profoundly than that of Archbishop Hunthausen. He expressed that every human being on the face of the earth was created in the image and likeness of God and is the object of God's love. He affirmed the wonder of God in the beauty, the majesty, and the glory of creation; and the role of Church was to bring the Word to all people by familiarizing them with Scripture, the Paschal mystery, and the mystery of salvation revealed in the lives of people. He stated that the salvific role of Church was not to be the proprietor of salvation. Rather, the Church is to be transforming, to be the light to the world as Christ is the light to everyone who will listen and to even those who do not listen, so that others will be charged with his love. Hunthausen contended that in a true loving relationship, every human being is challenged to be true to their conscience; and in so doing, each person is blessed with salvation, even though he or she may not have heard about God.

So the God that I know, the God that I believe loves me, and the God that I love is the God who invites all to salvation. Clearly Jesus is not known by all the human beings on the face of the earth. Maybe the name has never touched their ears. For me to say that because they haven't, therefore, they

have no chance for salvation is not to respect again the God that I believe is the God of all. We must function with the light given us, the Spirit that is shared with us, and any human being who has done that or who does that is precious. We are all precious in the sight of God, and this is what I think, in finality, brings salvation. How Jesus comes to be known to some of these people, I don't know that, but I certainly have no hesitation in saying this. (Hunthausen, Taped Interview, April 26, 1993)

Somewhat less definitively and with varying value of individual conscience, all the bishops shared Hunthausen's belief in a broad, inclusive salvific family. In expressing their inclusive views on salvation, most bishops preserved a place for redemption in one's union with God, several stating that salvation requires a human response to God's love. Several expressed that redemption transcends passive healing of personal condition to active involvement in giving one's heart to others, saying "yes" to God through being "yes" to others. I would describe the synthesis of the bishops' vision of redemption as recharging oneself with love, thereby empowering others to love.

### **UNITY, PLURALISM, AND AUTHORITY**

The bishops were asked how they understand and deal with issues of unity, pluralism, and authority—with diversity of theological opinion, the relationship between freedom to seek and professed truth, and how they feel about Catholics speaking openly on positions that challenge or seem to contradict Church teaching. They also were asked their opinion of the way Rome deals with clergy and theologians who walk the edges of current thought and what changes they would like to see. All 12 bishops affirmed that the universal Church, like the world in which it exists, blossoms in a mosaic of people, cultures, customs, ideas, music, art, and traditions. They acknowledged that the Church's concern with issues of unity, pluralism, and authority spans the length, breadth, and depth of the Church over its 2,000-year history. They agreed that the present is connected to the past, that unity in a pluralistic Church continues to be a preoccupation of the Church (Doohan, 1984), and like today's leaders, Paul was concerned "with the question of unity as it affects the assembly, particularly the liturgical assembly" (Mulligan, 1986, p. 28). Several bishops acknowledged that the preoccupation with unity has been so much a part of Church history that moments of hiatus occurred mainly through the exercise of authority. A few bishops pointed out that notwithstanding its endless struggle with unity, no organization has withstood the test of time as the Church.

The bishops generally concurred that the greatest problem in regard to unity is the failure, often a sheer unwillingness, of Church leaders to distinguish theological opinion from articles of faith. They revealed that this prob-

lem is aggravated by the tendency of Rome to demand compliance of local churches to all its theological expression as though it were infallible, universal teaching. As a result, people feel obligated to accept everything coming from the Vatican to be core, equal in weight, and universally binding, and that offering a different opinion brands one less faithful. For this paper, I chose this quote from Bishop Untener to offer a taste of the rich data expressed in this regard.

Unity in essentials, freedom in non-essentials, maturity and charity in all things. But the mistake that I think we used to make, more than we do now anyway, was that everything was on the same plane. You read the *Baltimore Catechism* and they were all of the same weight. The one I have, the copy I still have, has 499 questions. They were all even. You had to believe what was there, all of them. So, identify the essentials. There are not many. I think you have to see it the reverse of the Pharisees. The Pharisees saw religion as complicated, and they devised all these laws to make sure religion was properly organized in all its complexity. I think they had 613 laws, and they treated life as simple. This person, you're in; this person, too bad you're out. You are gentile; you are not a gentile. Whatever it is, you fit the law, or you do not. Jesus, it seemed especially by his use of parables, treated religion as simple and respected the complexity of life. I think that pluralism comes from the very simplicity of essentials blossoming out into the complexities of human life, various cultures, various philosophies, and various windows that people look through. But you have to have essentials. Our faith has content, and our faith is in Jesus Christ. (Untener, Taped Interview, April 30, 1993)

Several United States bishops expressed that when they or a colleague questioned a theological opinion publicly, the reaction from Rome was one of tension and silencing motivated by fear, not love. Public reaction to controversy was observed to be more of a problem in larger archdioceses with greater media interest. Interestingly, those few bishops who had experienced personal reprimand, for example Archbishop Hunthausen in mid 1980s, never expressed bitterness toward the Vatican. Hunthausen only shared his disappointment that the concerns were not handled in a more effective, less hurtful way, and he humbly suggested that Rome use alternative approaches in dealing with concerns. He suggested that before reacting Rome should invite the national bishops to spend more time on site observing for themselves what is going on. He also suggested that the Vatican reassess its tendency to deny personal conscience in moral reasoning and the course of people's actions.

While some United States bishops expressed they felt comfortable to express their views in their national assembly, they were disappointed at their inability to influence change. For example, one bishop expressed frustration

that his repeated efforts to have the words the bishops use to describe themselves—priest, prophet, king—changed to “priest, prophet, servant” were to no avail. In regard to speaking out on issues, several bishops of smaller dioceses both in Canada and the United States acknowledged, some with appreciation, that they can say things more freely than their colleagues in larger centers can. Although most Canadian bishops expressed some tension with the way the Vatican deals with people who challenge mainstream theological opinion and expression of the faith, they were less critical. None expressed that they had received a personal reprimand or silencing from Rome or the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops.

Most of the bishops, to greater or lesser extent, were disturbed by the harsh sentences pronounced on colleagues and theologians in recent times for speaking out on issues they felt should be open for dialogue in light of new understanding of revelation. Several expressed the belief that the Pope has little to do with decisions about the process of investigation, who should be silenced, the severity of the judgment, and how sentencing will be carried out. They believed that Cardinal Ratzinger and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith exercised the power of judgment and execution. The United States bishops tended to express more disappointment than Canadian bishops in the way “the Cardinal and his curial crowd” (Name Withheld, Taped Interview, 1993) deal with those who challenge theological opinion, Church teaching, and expressions of the faith. While all bishops respected the responsibility of Rome to investigate cases of error, dissent, or heresy, the United States bishops expressed greater empathy for colleagues or known theologians who have been hurt exercising academic freedom or personal conscience. The United States bishops expressed more explicitly, some passionately, the need for tolerance, local participation, and respect of academic freedom and conscience in expressing theological opinion and in local decision making. This finding is not to suggest that the Canadian bishops did not have concerns with the Vatican’s method of protecting the doctrine of the faith. Several Canadian bishops harbored quite similar sentiments as their colleagues south of the border, but almost all were less prone to voice public opposition to Rome in its work protecting the doctrine of faith. In a nutshell, United States bishops expressed more empathy for the sentenced, and Canadian bishops expressed more empathy for the executioner in Vatican investigation and discipline.

The two most striking differences of how bishops felt about theologians who challenge convention related to Hans Kung, an architect of thought in the Vatican II Council, who later received reprimand by the Vatican for expressing views not compatible with its teaching. Because of the personal nature, I chose not to identify the bishops out of courtesy to them and to Kung. A bishop from the United States affirmed Kung and admonished his treatment by the Vatican.

I think it was shabby the way he was treated. Now, I think because of his great faith, he is continuing to function as a theologian and making great strides in his relationship with the ecumenical dialogue and the non-Christian religions. He is doing an incredible job. (Name Withheld, Taped Interview, 1993)

In contrast, a Canadian bishop admonished Kung and affirmed the Vatican.

Hans Kung was in (a city) a few years ago. He is a tremendous speaker. He won everybody over to his view, and he is talking about undue procedure and lack of due process and all of this. No, he has never been heard by Rome, and so on, and so on, and so on. A German theologian a few years back showed me a file of correspondence between Rome and Hans Kung and between the German bishops and Hans Kung; and I am not kidding you, it was 2 inches thick. And then this man has the gall to stand up and say to the media and to the public and to the people that he was not heard. (Name Withheld, Taped Interview, 1993)

Notwithstanding recognition of the importance of protecting the doctrine of the faith, the data indicated that if the bishops could offer five suggestions to the Vatican in regard to investigation and discipline, they would be that:

- the investigation of a theologian deviating from conventional understanding of the Church be done with meaningful participation of their colleagues in their respective countries, thereby providing a measure of fairness by putting the idea expressed in context of the cultural traditions of the nation;
- an international team of theologians be used to give juridical balance in context of the rich cultural mosaic of the Church;
- the Vatican be more tolerant and not overreact to lobby groups;
- the local bishops, the subsidiary, handle disputes first because they carry the authority of the Church in their diocese; and
- when authority is exercised, be prudent, fair, and caring for the accused as well as the Church, leaving the door open for review and reconciliation of both.

## **EQUALITY AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH**

While the bishops affirmed the hierarchical structure of the Church, they were divided on how they saw the issue of equality within the structure and praxis of the Church in an increasingly democratic world. They saw the issue of the role of women as either a factor or not a factor of equality, and their vision in this regard paralleled their understanding of equality as either a theological or a cultural issue. Does equality mean equal in creation, equal in image and likeness of God, equal in dignity but not in roles, equal in opportunity to serve, or equal in opportunity to influence decisions of the Church affecting the reality of people's daily lives?

The Canadian bishops tended to view equality and the role of women in the Church more as a theological issue and less one of social or cultural evolution of equality. The United States bishops tended to parallel the issue of equality and the role of women in the Church with the issue of human rights in today's society. However, they spoke of the social expectation of women's equality as inherently theological. Though open to studying the issue, the Canadian bishops tended to cite tradition and Paul (Romans 12: 3-8) to justify the different roles people play in the life of Church ministry. The United States bishops tended to strongly affirm the need to study the issue of women in the priesthood. Several expressed that because God created all men and women equal and that this theology is well established today, it may be wrong to continue the tradition to deny women equal opportunity to serve in the ordained ministry of the Church.

It should be noted that between the interviews and the analysis of the data, the Vatican elevated the teaching that denies women access to the ordained ministry of the Church to the highest level of truth, because they said it was God's will. It was difficult to assess whether differences between the Canadian and United States bishops regarding ordination of women were of the heart or the voice for the Canadian bishops, because following the decree from Rome, two Canadian bishops contacted me by telephone to change their message. Though I actively invited all bishops to change any content, no United States bishop did so in regard to their position on equality and the role of women in the Church. In fact, two United States bishops made it a point to contact me stating they stood by their words. It also should be pointed out that the bishops of the United States had just come through a difficult debate at the national level in drafting a Pastoral on the role of women in the Church, ending with Vatican intervention and the fourth draft unfinished. As a researcher at the time, I feel confident to state that whatever went on behind closed doors in drafting the Pastoral on the role of women in the Church (Murphy, 1992), it left the United States bishops with disappointment, some even with distress.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This paper tried to discern differences in the way bishops in the United States and Canada understand the challenges facing the Church today. The bishops I interviewed were a small and somewhat select group, but the data did indeed identify some patterns of differences among them. In affirming the Canadian bishops for not silencing him in expressing his views on controversial issues, Bishop de Roo added, "We're in Canada." Upon analyzing the data, I was able to identify commonalities that perhaps reflect some of the values and personalities of their respective countries. Generally the Canadian bishops were less direct and more conciliatory, especially on controversial

issues. They tended to temper their views with words of tolerance, understanding, and support for both sides. For example, all bishops supported the vision of Vatican II Council. Indeed, they were selected for this study because they were identified as leaders of transformation and change. However, when speaking of the pre-Vatican II Church, the Canadian bishops tended to be gentler in their critique. Though they welcomed the fresh air of Vatican II and expressed no desire to return to the tired Church of the past, it was more common for the Canadian bishops to share positive aspects of the Church they grew up with and to remember it with some affection.

On the question of unity, pluralism, and authority with the Church, almost all bishops voiced concern with the way Rome dealt with dissension; but the United States bishops expressed more explicitly and passionately the need for academic freedom, conscience, and collegiality in the decisions relating to investigation and discipline. The United States bishops were also more likely to challenge the decisions of the Vatican in a more direct way, such as on the issue of women's ordination. Almost all bishops expressed that the ordination of women should be a topic for discussion in the Church (remember the interviews were conducted just before the ban on such discussion). The United States bishops, however, were more likely to stand firm in their voiced positions on the issue of women's ordination, seeing equality in the ordained ministry of the Church as a human rights issue, affirming such as inherently theological. While several Canadian bishops shared similar sentiment, they were less likely to voice public opposition to Rome in line with the new message and to support the Vatican's theological justification of its elevated teaching in this regard.

Overall, the Canadian bishops expressed a softer, less direct stand on the issues that challenge our Church today. They were somewhat more open to look at both sides of issues and to reach some common ground. Might this be what Bishop De Roo was referring to in affirming the Canadian bishops for never refusing him to voice his opinion? The United States bishops tended to stand on principle and less on authority, especially where they had no say in the decision, and were more willing to risk in voicing their hearts on key issues. Some will see strengths and weaknesses in either case. Also, more study is needed to generalize that the Canadian bishops were more conserving and the United States bishops more transforming. Is it possible that differences discovered in this research are a reflection of their respective cultures and democracies? The United States, for example, highly acclaims its foundation on the principles of individuality and freedom of expression. While both are valued national principles, Canadians tend to acclaim these rights in context of the rights and needs of the larger community. Canadians also speak with pride of Canada's cultural mosaic, while we often hear, in Canada at least, of the United States being a melting pot of cultures.

Whether the findings within this select group of bishops can be generalized within a broader population of bishops is a matter of further investigation. These bishops shared one common theme: The Church has changed and will continue to change over time with new insights and understandings. As St. Augustine so wisely observed in the infancy of the structured Church on earth, *in semper referenda*, the Church is always in need of reform. This ongoing change requires us to engage in open and compassionate dialogue as we journey together in our search for deeper and fuller understanding of God and our world. It also requires us to live with some uncertainty and confusion, trusting in the Spirit alive in and working through the People of God. There is truth and there is untruth, there is light and there is darkness, but there is also dawn and dusk—and there is beauty in that, too.

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## APPENDIX GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. It has been some time since Vatican II Council. There have been many changes, and there are likely to continue to be many changes in the Church. You will be asked to reflect on the pre- and post-Vatican II Church and offer your perceptions of these changes, positive or negative, for the Church and for yourself personally.

2. The way one understands Christ's life, death, and resurrection undoubtedly affects the way one understands the Church and its salvific purpose. You will be asked about your understanding of what the Church is, about its salvific purpose, what changes should occur, if any, and your work to renew the Church and the world in this regard.
3. Unity, pluralism, and issues of authority are no strangers to the Church, historically. You will be asked for your thoughts on these issues, positive or negative, how Rome and you personally deal with these issues, and how you go about making change regarding these issues.
4. Increasingly, collegiality, equality, empowerment, and forming community are becoming issues as more people experience democracy in their lives. You will be asked how you feel about these issues and the way the Church responds to these issues. You will be asked how you personally deal with these issues in your diocese and beyond.
5. Bishops are called by Vatican II to serve in the image of Christ. You will be asked to reflect on the meaning of Christ's leadership, how you feel about the Church historically and currently in this regard, and how you personally exercise leadership.
6. You will be asked to reflect on how your role has changed and is changing as you go about your work to renew the Church and the world. You might elaborate on issues already mentioned or any other ways you feel are significant to the Church and this study.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Vatican II Council has been described as opening up the windows and letting fresh air into the Church:
  - a) What are your feelings about the Council?
  - b) What did the Council mean to you personally?
2. Vatican II kindled opportunity for different ways of understanding the Church and its salvific purpose:
  - a) What is your understanding or definition of the Church?
  - b) What is your understanding of salvation; how are people saved; from what are they saved; and what role does the Church have in salvation?
  - c) How is your understanding of Church and its salvific purpose different from or similar to the pre-Vatican II Church; to the prevailing view of Church today in Rome; in the United States or Canada?
  - d) How do you go about making change in relation to your idea of Church; how do you make change in relation to your understanding of salvation; and what problems do you encounter in this regard?
3. There have been times of greater and lesser certainty in Church heritage relating to ideas on Christology, eschatology, ecclesiology, and authority:
  - a) How do you understand and deal with the issue of unity in light of plu-

- alism and diversity in theological positions with the Church today?
- b) How do you make changes relative to your perspective on the issues of pluralism, diversity, and authority?
  - c) What are your feelings about Catholics who speak their minds publicly on positions that contradict or challenge official Church teaching?
  - d) What is your opinion of the way Rome deals with clergy and theologians who dissent from official Church theology; and what changes, if any, would you like to see in this regard?
  - e) How do you deal with people who publicly voice theological perspectives and opinions that are inconsistent with Catholic teaching?
4. Some Catholics believe Vatican II intended to open a few windows for the fresh air of collegiality or power-sharing, equality, and empowerment of all People of God as community; but they are finding that the windows are sealed or bolted open only minutely, perhaps tokenly. Others believe that the Church has no divine mandate to empower its people equally or to form community in the social sense, for it was founded by Christ as a sacramental, hierarchical Church, not as a democracy; they insist the windows are open far too wide and desire the official Church to stop the turbulence of change and instability:
- a) What is your understanding of the *sensus fidelium*?
  - b) How do you, as part of the institutional Church with a tradition of centrality, lead in an increasingly democratic world?
  - c) How do you understand and deal with issues of equality, in particular that of women in the Church?
  - d) How does the Church empower or not empower people; and what changes, if any, are needed within the Church leadership to empower people?
  - e) How do you empower people, particularly the marginalized of your diocese; and what problems do you encounter?
  - f) What does community mean to you; and what is the role of the Church in forming community?
  - g) How do you go about forming community; and what problems do you encounter?
5. Vatican II calls bishops to govern their churches as vicars of Christ and to exercise power by his example:
- a) What does it mean to you personally to lead as vicar of Christ?
  - b) What risks do you take in exercising your leadership?
  - c) How do you go about seeking truth?
  - d) How do you deal with clergy who struggle with existing doctrine, laws, and conformity in their search for truth?
6. How do you see your role of bishop changing?

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