THE VISION OF VATICAN II: ITS FUNDAMENTAL
PRINCIPLES – SELECTED SESSION

Topic: The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles
Convener: Catherine E. Clifford, Saint Paul University
Moderator: Edward P. Hahnenberg, John Carroll University
Presenter: Ormond Rush: Saint Paul's Theological College
Respondents: Paul D. Murray, Durham University
                Susan K. Wood, Regis College

Ormond Rush addressed the theological motives that inspired the writing his recent, volume, *The Vision of Vatican II: Its Fundamental Principles* (Liturgical Press, 2019). This work builds on an earlier book, *Still Interpreting Vatican II* (Paulist, 2004), where he reflected on the hermeneutical principles for interpreting the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, stressing the importance of inter-textuality and the need to attend to the triad of authors, texts, and receivers. In this new work Rush sets out a complex series of 24 interpretive principles, each formulated as a pair of values held in a balanced and tensive relationship and reflecting the fundamental orientations of Vatican II. These 24 dyads are helpfully organized according to three major elements of the council's vision: the hermeneutical, *Theo*-logical, and ecclesiological, respectively. This tensive, open-ended approach to the interpretation of the council aims at overcoming the zero-sum discourse of recent theological debate. It aims "to recover the ecclesial authority of the principles over against a tendency to piecemeal interpretation." Rush argues for an approach that sees the teaching of Vatican II not as an end point, but that locates it within the trajectory of the eschatological people of God, journeying through history in a continuous process of renewal and self-actualization.

Under the heading of "hermeneutical principles, Rush maintains that a sound interpretation of the council must hold together the conciliar event with the published documents; the pastoral orientation with its doctrinal reformulation; the task of proclaiming the gospel with dialogue; respect a methodology that combines *ressourcement* with the task of *aggiornamento*; the continuity of tradition with ongoing reform; and finally, the council's vision of reform and renewal with its actual reception in the concrete life and structuring of the church. His consideration of *Theo*-logical principles invites the interpreter to give priority to revelation/faith; Christological/pneumatological; Mystery/sacrament; soteriological/ecclesiological; and the protological/eschatological as dimensions of God's self-communication in history. Rush's prioritization of the *Theo*-logical is essential for a proper contextualization of Vatican II's abundant attention to the nature and mission of the church.

The first two ecclesiological principles, scripture/tradition and faith/history, help to further contextualize the council's concern for ecclesial renewal within the broad trajectory of God's plan in salvation history, its diachronic realization in history, and the missional requirement of reading of the signs of the times. Four subsequent principles—particular/universal; *communio*/*missio*; unity/diversity; *ad intra*/*ad extra* —relate to the dynamics of catholicity. These are followed by a series relating to the

various vocations and charisms of the baptized (*fideles/fidelis;* people of God/hierarchy; college of bishops/Bishop of Rome; magisterium/theologians), and to the church's dialogical engagement with others (catholic/ecumenical; Christian/religious; church/world).

Respondents paid homage to the remarkable scope and achievement represented by Rush's synthetic approach to the interpretation of Vatican II. Paul Murray held it up as "the most sophisticated synthetic reading" of the council to date, suggesting that it embodies an exemplary "performance … of catholicity" in its refusal to collapse the apparent binaries represented in each principle. He helpfully located this work within the trajectory of Rush's scholarly career, beginning from his early study of the hermeneutics of reception. We should look forward, he suggested, to the next step of Rush's work, which would naturally attend to the reception of conciliar teaching into the spiritual lives Catholics and the concrete realizations of a lived Catholicism.

Susan Wood's response helpfully presented a distillation of Rush's methodology which proceeds from a consideration of the council's own vocabulary, noting that many of the principles are drawn from frequently used words and their cognates. Rush's reflections proceed by way of a historiography of the conciliar text, including an inter-textual reading of both central and complementary passages, attending at every stage to the tensive relationships and locating them within a broader trajectory of doctrinal development. She rightly observed that Rush succeeds in drawing the reader into the dynamism of the council's teaching, identifying the self-communication of the Triune God as the "Ur-principle" that governs all others.

CATHERINE E. CLIFFORD
Saint Paul University
Ottawa, Ontario