

# Workshops on Vatican II

## Rethinking Sacraments

VAT403

by Bill Huebsch

General outline

(see below for details and handouts)

General Notes for all the workshops in this series:

- This workshop should fit into about a two hour window of time, depending on the length of the prayer and group discussions.
- For the discussions, you may wish to invite participants to talk first in smaller groups before inviting anyone to comment in the large group. We advise you not to omit the large group conversations as they are a rich experience for all present.
- The room can be set up either with tables around which participants sit, or in theater style. In either case, you do need an LCD projector and laptop to use the PowerPoint.
- The talking points are in the Notes pages of the PowerPoint. To go there, click on view and choose "notes." You may print in this mode and use the pages as your guide.
- The prayer resource and handout is included in this packet.
- You may wish to read Book One of *Vatican II in Plain English* before presenting this workshop. Many of the details which will add color and dimension to your presentations will be found there. You can obtain copies at [PastoralPlanning.com](http://PastoralPlanning.com). Follow the Vatican II links on the home page.

## Rethinking Sacraments

### How did Vatican II Restore the Liturgy?

#### Open the workshop:

Convene the group, welcoming all warmly. Open with a prayer of your choosing, but we recommend you keep it relatively brief. **[Handout included below:]** A suggested prayer can be found below. You may reproduce this for use within your group. The faith sharing and breaking open the Word in the prayer help us share our hearts with each other which is how we draw closer to Christ.

#### First Conversation:

After prayer, lead a large group (or small groups, leading to the large group) conversation, asking people to respond to the question: What do you love most about the Mass, the liturgy of Word and Eucharist? Encourage people to share their treasured

memories, as well as those things about which their memory may be less fond. Record a note about each on a flip chart. This helps people listen well to each other.

## **The Presentation:**

Using the notes on the PowerPoint presentation and your own knowledge, lead the group through a brief treatment of each of the Sacraments and how it was reformed by the Council, pausing after each to allow for questions and comments.

You may need to take a comfort break part way through. We have provided several pages of notes below to assist you as well.

**[Handout included below:]** Give everyone a copy of the handout suggesting ways we can “send the sacraments home.” Invite participants to suggest other ways this can be done. You may wish to divide up the sacraments, assigning each to a small group and ask each small group to report back on ways they feel this sacrament could be woven into the fabric of daily life more fully. Remember

- ✓ We don’t so much “receive” the sacraments as we “celebrate them” in communal actions, leading to personal faith.
- ✓ We are always the Church, living as the People of God in everyday life. Therefore, the sacraments are to be *lived*, not just *received*.
- ✓ Invite participants to name those “other moments” when grace is received and celebrated by a communal act. A communal act (such as praying for each other, giving alms, practicing self-giving love in our daily lives at home, and other spiritual or corporal works of mercy) can also occur when the whole community is not present or we are alone.

## **Close the workshop:**

When finished, invite a large (or small) group conversation once again, asking the questions:

- What strikes you most strongly in what you heard in this workshop?
- What particular point touched your heart?
- What did you not hear that you thought you would?



## Praying with Blessed John XXIII Open Wide Your Arms to All

by Bill Huebsch



### Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Leader:** (Leader alone, in these or similar words:) Friends, it is possible for us to open our arms and our hearts to all, embracing one another in charity and breaking down the barriers that divide us, no matter how great they are. Let us pray for the grace of compassion.

#### Prayer:

Oh Great Unifier of Humankind,  
    you are the one in whom we find our peace,  
    the one in whom we find our unity.  
Grant to us now the spirit of charity  
    as we encounter one another  
        in our businesses, schools, homes, and parishes,  
    so that we might become One in you  
    through Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Learning from Blessed John XXIII & Sacred Scripture

#### The First Reading

(Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)

The Church of the early 1960's was one in which there were those who called for rapid and extensive reform in the liturgy, the place of lay people, the role of bishops in Church authority, and the Church's place in society. And there were also others who believed few such reforms were needed. These latter believed that what was needed was a stronger assertion of Church authority in the face of certain modern movements of thought.

But in a Church which was often agitated by these two currents, one of the progressives and the other of the traditionalists, Pope John surprised both, recalling them to considerations above and beyond their opinions, to a sphere where such opinions no longer matter. His dismay was due to his conviction that Christianity had not yet understood all the requirements of the Gospel.

Monsignor Guerry, the Archbishop of Cambrai, gives us an insight into this feature of Pope John's leadership. On May 3 last year in private conversation, the Pope confided to me his grief that so many [people] of good will in the world thought that the Church rejected and condemned them. Then, showing me the crucifix upon his table, he said with emotion: "But I must be like Christ. I open wide my arms to embrace them. I love them and I am their father. I am always ready to welcome them" Then, turning to me, he said: "Monsignor, all that the Gospel requires of us has not yet been understood."

--A paraphrase taken from Balducci, Ernesto, trans by Dorothy White, *John "The Transitional Pope"*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1964. P 31.

### **Faith Sharing:**

(Here direct the group to share in twos or threes for about 5 minutes.)

To whom do you struggle to open wide your arms? Who are the ones you would most like to exclude?

### **The Second Reading**

(Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)

One day, while walking in the papal gardens with his secretary, Monsignor Loris Capovilla, Pope John was listening to some of his recent notes being read in preparation for upcoming work. In the course of this reading, and while admiring the beauty of Michelangelo's dome lit by the sun, Pope John stopped still. A particular sentence caught his ear from St. John Chrysostom, which read, "Christ has left us on this earth so that we may become shining beacons and teachers who know how to instruct; so that we may perform our task as angels, that is as messengers to [all people]; so that we may be adults among children, and spiritual [people] among the worldly, in order to win them over; so that we may be sown as seed and bear abundant fruit. It would not even be necessary for us to expound our doctrine, if our life were in this way so radiant; it would not be necessary to have recourse to words if our deeds gave such testimony. There would be no pagans if we all behaved like real Christians."

There were a few moments of silence. Then Pope John said, "This is the truth. Anyone who asks what are the characteristic lines of my pontificate, may be answered with this or with other similar words. That is all there is to it."

--Taken from: Balducci, Ernesto, trans by Dorothy White, *John "The Transitional Pope"*, McGraw Hill, New York, 1964. P 32-33.

### **Activity Suggestions**

(Offer the group suggestions for actions as part of their prayer.)

1. In your faith community, who is on the guest list and who is not? Who is invited to the table and who is not? Ask your community to give formal reflection to this question in light of the spirit of Pope John's mission to open his arms, and those of the Church, to all.
2. What do you most fear will result from a more open policy toward those who are not welcomed to your community table? Talk with a friend about which of these fears is the most prominent for you:

- ▶ You fear the Church will be less perfect if everyone is allowed in.

- ▶ You fear God will be angry if we loosen our rules.
- ▶ You fear not everyone will ever understand how deep your faith is.
- ▶ You fear the rule-breakers will have a bad effect on others.
- ▶ You fear the Gospel will be compromised.
- ▶ You fear God doesn't want those others in this Church.

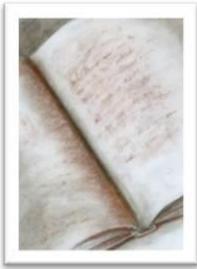
**Reading from Scripture:** (Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)

Passing along, Jesus saw a man at his work collecting taxes. His name was Matthew. Jesus said, "Come along with me." Matthew stood up and followed him.

Later when Jesus was eating supper at Matthew's house with his close followers, a lot of disreputable characters came and joined them. When the Pharisees saw him keeping this kind of company, they had a fit, and lit into Jesus' followers. "What kind of example is this from your Teacher, acting cozy with crooks and riffraff?"

Jesus, overhearing, shot back, "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."

Matthew 9:9-13 –The Message



## Breaking Open the Word

What words or phrases struck you in this reading?  
 How do these words touch your life?  
 What hope do these words bring to you?

**Closing Prayer:**

(Pray aloud together.)

Oh Divine Source of Love

we pray for the grace of openness  
 that comes only from you  
 so that we might welcome to our tables  
 those brothers and sisters  
 who do not now belong to us.

Grant us the courage of our convictions  
 as we establish your Reign in our times  
 and open wide our doors to Christ. Amen.

# Sacraments: Send them Home!

Bill Huebsch

## 1. Baptism & Confirmation

- a) Original focus was on entry into the community.
- b) This focus waned as a great concern about Original Sin became dominant.
- c) Today we teach that we are **initiated into Christ**, which means we enter into the death of the Lord, we learn what it means to donate our very selves in love.
  - a. Conversion to Christ, therefore, precedes baptism. In the case of an infant, the conversion takes place in the hearts of the parents.
    - i. We meet Christ through others, especially the poor.
    - ii. We learn to turn our hearts to Christ through forgiveness and generosity.
    - iii. We share that in love with others.
  - b. We share with others what we are experiencing
- d) Our baptism is the basic way we are called to “minister to others” by loving them and serving them, with Christ as our model.
- e) You can live your baptism at home when you welcome others, forgive freely, share meals, and make peace with neighbors, visitors, friends of the family, and your own family members.
- f) This helps us extend the idea of being “church” to our daily lives as the People of God, wherever we live, work, study and play.

## 2. Eucharist

- a) The original focus of this sacrament was on gathering as a community to remember the story of Christ, share food, and allow solidarity to emerge.
- b) Gradually this focus shifted to a theological definition about what happens to the bread and wine, that they become the body and blood of Christ.
- c) Today we focus again on the idea that Christ left us a **meal** as a memorial of himself – this meal is also a demonstration of this love for us, as he sacrificed and donated himself to us.
- d) Therefore, the more we share meals ourselves, the more we build up the community of our homes, the “domestic church.” It is a good thing to become a **homemaker!**
- e) When we share supper at home together, or in each other’s homes, we prepare to gather for Mass. We open our hearts to one another and, in this opening, the solidarity of oneness in Christ emerges. This sharing of meals is immediate preparation for the Eucharist.
- f) Paul reminds us to include the poor, rejected and newcomer in this as well.

## 3. Reconciliation

- a) The focus of this sacrament should be the mercy of God.
- b) In the years since the middle ages, however, the focus shifted to being a concern for the sins of the sinners, and the fear of hell.
- c) Today we return to an understanding that God loves us eternally, forgiving us “seventy times seven times,” which is the model for how we should treat each other.

- d) Learn the skills of forgiveness in your household.
  - a. Extend the example which Christ gave us while on the cross, into everyday life with your family members, friends, and also with your “enemies.”
  - b. Who are your “enemies?” Anyone whom you hold at arms’ length. Anyone against whom you hold a grudge. Anyone whom you have not forgiven.
  - c. Forgiving is the pathway to understanding the “enduring freedom” which is the promise of the Gospel.
- e) So today we also shift the focus of “being freed” to the arena of justice. See Luke 4: 16-22 to see how central justice was in the ministry of Christ.
  - a. Once we see injustice, we must set it right: Matthew 3:15 – “we must do what God wants.”
  - b. The liberation of Christ is not so much from “personal sin” as from oppression, injustice, rejection, & alienation.

#### **4. Healing & Anointing**

- a) For many years the focus of this sacrament was on “the last rites.”
- b) Today the focus is on healing. We are healed as we enter into relationship with Christ and the Church.
- c) In your daily life at home, come to understand the nature of God:
  - a. God does not cause illness, death, injury, or accidents to happen – God loves us and a loving parent would not behave that way, even to “test our faith.”
  - b. God suffers with us - but God is not a “satellite” floating in the clouds, beaming down healing to those who “pray correctly” for it.
  - c. We are still in the process of “being Created” along with the whole world (science, history, medicine, poetry, athletics, music, & love!). We are discovering cures for diseases, with the hand of God guiding us.
  - d. There is an element of randomness and chance in life. God desires that we find grace in our suffering, but the suffering itself is not the blessing we receive.
  - e. Some things that happen are accidents, pure & simple. These are not planned by God for us. They are just accidents.
- d) God gives us grace - the power to cope and overcome. This grace is celebrated in community and shared. We touch and heal each other. We offer each other strength and support, “in sickness and in health.”
- e) This sacrament celebrates this and helps make it real for us.

#### **5. Matrimony & Holy Orders**

- a) The focus of Matrimony is on a covenant shared between two people and God. This covenant is the essential building block of daily life in our household.
- b) But the focus had shifted to a primary concern with the procreation of children. Today that focus remains, but is balanced by an equal focus on the mutual love of the couple, and how that love is shared with children, family, neighbors, and others.
- c) The focus of Ordination is on service to the People of God. Priests stand among their people as servants, teaching, leading, and presiding – all in order to bring “holy order” to the community.

- d) But the focus had shifted away from service to a concern for the “power” of the priest to forgive sins and preside at Eucharist. While that power is not in question, it is now balanced by the focus on service.
- e) For both of these sacraments, the key is to die to oneself, to surrender oneself in love for others, either family and spouse, or parish.
  - i. The Paschal Mystery is at the core of commitment.
  - ii. We learn to surrender - but “one day at a time!”
  - iii. We learn to donate our very selves to each other.

**In sum:**

Baptism	A way to erase Original Sin	Invitation and entry into the community of God and a celebration of grace
Confirmation	Becoming a soldier of Christ	A continuation of what began at baptism
Eucharist	Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, but in a private devotional style during Mass	A community event to celebrate both the sacrifice of Christ and a shared meal
Reconciliation	Emphasis on sin and the sinner	Emphasis on the mercy and endless forgiveness of God
Anointing	The “last rites” usually performed only at the point of death	Healing in the context of the whole parish community
Matrimony	A focus on procreation and the legal bond of the marriage	An equal focus also on the mutual love of the couple
Holy Orders	A sacred power, exercised at the will of the priest	Servant leadership for the sake of the community