

Le pontificat romain dans l'époque contemporaine The Papacy in the Contemporary Age

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Living the Gospel in History 'Aggiornamento' and 'Rinnovamento' in John XXIII

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Abstract The study examines the attitude of Roncalli faced with the problem of renewal and reform of the Church. New researches tend to detect the proximity of the young Roncalli to some instances of Catholic reformers of the early twentieth century, despite the harsh condemnation of modernism by Pius X (1907). Roncalli paid attention to history, at least in part considered in terms other than those proposed by the intransigent Catholicism. The propensity of Roncalli to grasp the positive aspects of history is clearly revealed during his pontificate, as in the opening speech *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* at the Vatican II Council and in other texts, but it was hampered by conservatives in the Curia.

Summary 1 The Council as Centre of the 'Aggiornamento' Promoted by John XXIII. – 2 A Council for a Church Acting in the History of Humankind. – 3 Between Spiritual Renewal and the Reform of Institutions. – 4 The Deepening of the Truths of the Christian Faith. – 5 Concluding Remarks.

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1 The Council as Centre of the 'Aggiornamento' Promoted by John XXIII

Roncalli was elected Pope by the conclave on October 28, 1958. In the days immediately following his election he began to mention the possibility of holding a Council to his secretary Monsignor Capovilla.¹ It was a goal which required extraordinary commitment, the significance of which he was aware.² This prospect may have seemed at odds with the sentiment

In English 'aggiornamento' e 'rinnovamento' normally translate to 'updating' and 'renewal'. As Roncalli usually spoke in Italian, I have decided to also keep the Italian version of the key words that are useful for my analysis (english translation by Susan De Nardi).

1 Cf. Roncalli, *Giovanni XXIII*, 446-7. See 447-51 on the first hints of Roncalli to the council.

2 With regard to the dynamic relationship that John XXIII established with the Council event, cf. Galavotti, "Il concilio", 115-18.

he expressed during his acceptance speech after his election and, that is, the awareness of the probable brevity of his pontificate.³ It seems, therefore, that in aiming to call a Council, John XXIII wanted his service to the universal Church⁴ not to be conditioned by his advancing age, which he evidently assigned a contingent value⁵ but which would prepare the way to a vision such as the one he urged at the third meeting of the Latin American Episcopal Council on November 15, 1958:

Be far-sighted! At a time that is still one of growth and conquest, know how to create solid foundations for a splendid religious future for your peoples, remembering that even if with you "One sows and another reaps", the sower will not be denied their share of joy and reward. On the contrary, they will be able to already experience it when, contemplating in thought, they can see the fields that they have irrigated with sweat and tears ripe for harvest.⁶

Two months later, around January 15 or, more probably 20, as evidenced by his personal diaries, he spoke of the Council for the first time to Tardini, the new Secretary of State.⁷ The scant personal records reveal some hesitancy about the possible reactions of the new Pope's first collaborator. Tardini, instead, was fully in favour, prompting an intimate satisfaction in Pope John.⁸ However, those notes say something of John XXIII's initial intentions: "In audience with Tardini the Secretary of State for the first

3 "Vocabor Ioannes. [...] nomen, quod in serie pervetusta Romanorum Pontificum gaudet de maximo primatu pluralitatis. Sunt enim enumerati Summi Pontifices, quibus nomen Ioannes, viginti duo. Fere omnes breviter in Pontificatu vixerunt". "Actus acceptationis Summi Pontificatus", 878. On this awareness see also the homily of John XXIII for the possession of the Chair of the Bishop of Rome, 23 November 1958, "Romanae cathedralis possessio", 920.

4 With regard to the manner in which John XXIII developed his pontificate cf. Miccoli, "Chiesa e 'mondo'", 37-44.

5 See also what Roncalli confided in his personal spiritual reflections towards the beginning of his fourth year of Pontificate as discussed at the end of this section.

6 Original text: "Siate lungimiranti! In un momento che è ancora di costruzione e di conquista, sappiate porre salde le basi per un più splendido avvenire religioso dei vostri popoli; ricordando che, se pur dovrà verificarsi anche per voi che 'alius est qui seminat, et alius est qui metit', non sarà negata al seminatore la sua parte di letizia e di ricompensa; che anzi, egli potrà già pregustarla sin d'ora contemplando, col pensiero, biondeggianti di messi i campi che irriga del suo sudore e delle sue lacrime". Giovanni XXIII, "Ad Emos Patres", 1003.

7 Cf. Roncalli-Giovanni XXIII, *Pater amabilis*, 23-5; and 25-6 fn. 34, for a critical dating of the talk with Tardini. See also Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 206-14.

8 "I was very hesitant and uncertain". Original text: "Ero assai titubante e incerto". Giovanni XXIII, *Pater amabilis*, 24. See also 25. Regarding the difficulties and resistance encountered with the Curia and the College of Cardinals in understanding Roncalli's particular perspective on the Council, cf. Alberigo, "L'annuncio", 36-7; Alberigo, "L'amore alla chiesa", 171.

time, I happened to mention almost by accident the word *Council*, as if to say what the new Pope could propose as an invitation to a vast spiritual movement for both the Holy Church and the entire world".⁹

The first thoughts that Roncalli put down in his diaries in reference to Vatican II were to lay the groundwork in eliciting a broad spiritual movement that was not limited to the Roman Catholic Church but was able to engage the whole world. The conviction was outlined from the first, following the announcement of the Council in terms of a renewed action on part of the Church that would be appropriate to the times. This, after having already mentioned the future assembly in his discourse of January 25, 1959, the Roman Synod, and the revision of the Code of Canon Law in the "sole prospect of *bonum animarum* and in a correspondence of a new and well-defined Pontificate in line with current spiritual needs".¹⁰ In his apostolic exhortation of April 1959 for the return of the remains of Pius X to Venice, he expressed the desire that the Council relive the experience of the Apostolic Church after Pentecost. Making particular references to two aspects he hoped for: "a single unanimous thought and prayer with and around Peter, Pastor of sheep and lambs, the offer of a restoring of energies that are renewed via the search for what will better meet the needs of today's apostolate".¹¹ Finally, in his first encyclical, dated 29 June 1959, John XXIII asserted: at the Council bishops "will consider, in particular, the growth of the Catholic faith, the restoration ['rinnovamento'] of sound morals among the Christian flock, and appropriate adaptation ['aggiornare'] of Church discipline to the needs and conditions of our times".¹² Therefore, the cares of a pastoral 'aggiornamento' weighted against the conditions of contemporary society was clearly present in Roncalli from his first steps towards the council initiative.

9 Original text: "Nella udienza col Segretario di Stato Tardini, per la prima volta, e, direi, come a caso mi accadde di pronunciare il nome di *Concilio*, come a dir che cosa il nuovo Papa potrebbe proporre come invito ad un movimento vasto di spiritualità per la S. Chiesa e per il mondo intero". Giovanni XXIII, *Pater amabilis*, 25.

10 Original text: "Ci sta innanzi la sola prospettiva del *bonum animarum* e di una corrispondenza ben netta e definita del nuovo Pontificato con le spirituali esigenze dell'ora presente". Giovanni XXIII, "Questa festiva ricorrenza", 65. Alberigo emphasizes the relevance of the quoted recommendation and delineates those "criteri direttivi" [guiding principles] just to the Council. Cf. Alberigo, "L'amore alla chiesa", 172. On the announcement and preparations of the Council, in addition to Alberigo, *Il cattolicesimo verso*, see Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 195-225. On the secondary importance - in comparison with the Council - of the summon to the Roman Synod and even of the revision of the Code of Canon Law cf. Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 213-14.

11 Original text: "unanimità di pensiero e di preghiera con Pietro e attorno a Pietro, Pastore degli agnelli e delle pecore: offerta di energie che si ritemprano, che si rinnovano per la ricerca di ciò che potrà meglio corrispondere alle odierne esigenze dell'apostolato". Giovanni XXIII, "A quarantacinque anni", 380.

12 John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, § 61.

At the same time, in a short note in his diary made on January 20, 1959, Roncalli expressed the will to place the future Council at the centre of his pontificate. Of course, the years in which John XXIII led the Roman Catholic Church were characterized by other important moments. His encyclical *Pacem in terris*, with its innovative teachings on the presence of the Church throughout the historical events and the interpretation of the 20th century (the references to the “signs of the times”) is just one example, as are the issues of peace and human rights and the forms of civic participation for Roman Catholics.¹³ These were, to some extent, the point of arrival of a pontificate that was marked by the development of Roncalli’s teachings and attitude over the years. However, Vatican II, as it was called, after a brief moment in time and some initial uncertainty on Roncalli’s part,¹⁴ was what he wanted to dedicate his service for the Church and humankind to as the Bishop of Rome. In the August of 1961, after almost three years, Roncalli wrote of his understanding of his pontificate in his *Journal of a Soul* stating that it was anything but marginal even though he realized that he had been elected as “a provisional and transitional Pope. Yet here I am, already on the eve of the fourth year of my pontificate, with an immense programme of work in front of me to be carried out before the eyes of the whole world, which is watching and waiting”.¹⁵

2 A Council for a Church Acting in the History of Humankind

John XXIII wanted to insert Vatican II in the perspective of a Church that was no longer attached to intransigent schemas, a Church that would operate from within mainstream history¹⁶ as emerged from his opening speech to the Council, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, dated October 11, 1962:

In the present order of things, divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relationships which, by the efforts of men and even beyond their own expectations, are tending towards the fulfilment of

¹³ John XXIII’s last encyclical was the result of the editorial work of Monsignor Pietro Pavan, and concerned the resistance encountered in the more intransigent curial environments as well as the expression of his own decisive statements as found in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. Cf. Melloni, “*Pacem in terris*”; Menozzi, *Chiesa e diritti umani*, 189-208. The second essay underlines also the importance of the encyclical teaching on human rights. For John XXIII’s contribution to the magisterial reflection on peace cf. Menozzi, *Chiesa, pace e guerra*, 265-71 (257-65 on Roncalli’s attitude towards the topic of peace before the papacy).

¹⁴ Cf. Alberigo, “L’annuncio”, 66.

¹⁵ John XXIII, *Journal*, 303.

¹⁶ Cf. Miccoli, “Chiesa e mondo”, 45.

its own higher and unanticipated designs; and everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church.¹⁷

He decided to convene an “Ecumenical” Council to promote reconciliation among Christians, initially understood from a perspective of unionism, which characterized Roncalli, and which implied the return of the “separated brethren” to the one Church under the leadership of the Pope. This, however, was also accompanied by an uncommon ecumenical inspiration and an open willingness to leave disputes regarding the deeper understandings of the truths of the faith for the theologians to debate¹⁸ to favour an ‘aggiornamento’ of the Roman Catholic Church that would initiate a period characterized by the witness and a renewed ability to proclaim the Gospel. He linked the latter to the recovery of a more profoundly authentic Christian Tradition¹⁹ and an attention to history different to that of his immediate predecessors. The popes in the approximately one hundred years between the mid-1800s and Roncalli’s election had viewed contemporary historical events with substantial detachment, almost as if the Church were extraneous to them. Their position was characterized by harsh judgement and reprimand for mass apostasy of professing Christianity that, as analysed by intransigent Catholic culture, constituted the parable of modern society from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution onwards.²⁰ Roncalli himself, who grew up within intransigent Catholicism, gradually detached himself from this position to distance himself only during the course of his pontificate.²¹ In fact, he faced the historical events and their lay developments of

17 Critical edition of “Gaudet Mater Ecclesia” in Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 299-335. English translation (*GME*) by J.A. Komonchak, fn. 3. This refers the principal Italian variants found in the text distributed by the Council Press Office, closer to Roncalli’s manuscript than the Latin version read by the Pope at the Council inauguration and that, one must remember, constitutes the official text. See also Melloni (ed.), “Sinossi”, 255-6. The passage I quoted diverges from the version in *L’Osservatore Romano*, 12 October 1962, 3-4. This one, instead of “human differences”, reports “contrary human events”, more congruent to the Latin version (“adversos etiam humanos casus”). Cf. Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 302.

18 Cf. John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, nos. 59-96. The path of the “return to Rome” was a characteristic of the significant attention paid to the question of the union of Christians by Roncalli in previous decades: cf. Melloni, “Il cammino”, in particular 546-7; Vian, “I patriarchi”, 63-70. With reference to the ecumenical attitude of John XXIII’s papacy see Velati, *Una difficile transizione*; Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 149-64; Galavotti, “Il concilio continua”, 140-2.

19 During the Audience of 1st August 1962, he stated: Vatican II “wants to be a Council of aggiornamento mainly in the deeper knowledge and love of the revealed truth, in the fervour of the religious devotion, in the holiness of Christian life”. Original text: “vuol essere Concilio di aggiornamento principalmente nella più profonda conoscenza e amore della verità rivelata, nel fervore della pietà religiosa, nella santità della vita”. Ioannes XXIII, “Ad pueros”, 576.

20 Cf. Miccoli, “Chiesa e ‘mondo’”, 24-7.

21 Cf. Miccoli, “Chiesa e ‘mondo’”, 29-33.

those years openly and with detailed consideration both at a personal level and as the Bishop of Rome. In the Apostolic Constitution *Humanae salutis*, with which he officially announced the Council on December 25, 1961, he did not deny the serious state of worldwide spiritual poverty. At the same time, however, he considered the possibility of tracing the presence of the Holy Spirit and, that is, of transcendence even outside the confines of Christianity, as characterized by the actions of ecclesiastical institutions. In doing so, he advanced the possibility of overcoming the age-old theological assertion of the absolute frailty of humankind when denied the Church's guidance as stated in the adage *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*: outside the Church there is no salvation. For Roncalli, the evangelical message, immutable over time, needed to be better understood. He had already stated this at the beginning of his first encyclical expressing the desire to attain that goal as well as stimulate a more Christian way of life and reconstruct unity and peace. In *Ad Petri cathedram* he had immediately established the connection to the Second Vatican Council, along with the Roman Synod, the Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canon Law for the Church of the Oriental Rite, referring to "the universal hope that the hearts of men would be stirred to a fuller and deeper recognition of truth, a renewal of Christian morals, and a restoration of unity, harmony, and peace".²² In fact, the need for a deeper understanding of the "truth" implied grounding the precise formulations of Christian faith in history, something that did not leave the contents of the same unaffected. It was a point which Roncalli seems to have arrived at the beginning of his pontificate. However, traces of these ideas can be found before that time.

In convening the Council, John XXIII initially indicated the need to grapple with history through an adaptation of pastoral actions to the real needs of culture and society that would make for a more effective Church presence among people and society. In the Apostolic Constitution with which he convened the Council, Roncalli reaffirmed the Church's specific mandate to spread Christianity and to provide an outstanding contribution to solve the problems of modern society, such as that of peace, issues the future assembly was about to carefully discuss and propose, paying attention to the demands of the times:

the coming Council will, finally, offer all men of goodwill the possibility of laying down proposals for peace – a peace which can and must come from the spiritual and supernatural truths, from human intelligence and conscience enlightened and guided by God, Creator and Redeemer of mankind.²³

22 John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 3.

23 John XXIII, "The Bull for the Council".

However, the assertion of *Humanae salutis* did not deny, albeit in implied terms, the possibility that peace, above all the result of “spiritual and supernatural truths”, as Roncalli wrote, might also arise by other means and movements. And, this was already a significant statement which broke with ideology of Christianity.

The Pope's opening remarks at Vatican II, the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* address, pronounced on October 11, 1962, made this even clearer. This was a discourse which had an evident programme qualifying the pontificate; one which historians have focused on, on multiple occasions.²⁴ In it, John XXIII indicated the possibility of gleaning from history and social movements, processes and dynamics that were not of Christian matrix inspiration but could pertain to the Christian message. At first, he emphasized how the new Council was anchored to mainstream history: its aim would have been

to affirm again the continuity of the Church's teaching authority in order to present it in an extraordinary form to all the people of our age, taking into account the deviations, needs, and opportunities of the modern age. [...] The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this, that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be more effectively defended and presented. [...] But for this teaching to reach the many fields of human activity which affect individuals, families, and social life, it is first of all necessary that the Church never turn her eyes from the sacred heritage of truth which she has received from those who went before; and at the same time she must also look at the present times which have introduced new conditions and new forms of life, and have opened new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.²⁵

John XXIII's desertion of the drastically negative judgement expressed by intransigent Catholicism of the modern world, a cornerstone of the ideology of Christianity, was clear:

It often happens, as we have learned in the daily exercise of the apostolic ministry, that, not without offense to Our ears, the voices of people are brought to Us who, although burning with religious fervor, nevertheless do not think things through with enough discretion and prudence of judgement. These people see only ruin and calamity in the present conditions of human society. They keep repeating that our times, if compared to past centuries, have been getting worse. And they act as

²⁴ Cf. the address “*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*”. About the Opening Speech to the Council cf. Alberigo, “Formazione, contenuto”; Melloni, “Descrizione delle redazioni”; Melloni, “Sinossi”, 239-83; Martina, “A proposito”.

²⁵ *GME*, 2, 3-4 fn. 1.

if they have nothing to learn from history, which is the teacher of life, and as if at the time of past Councils everything went favorably and correctly with respect to Christian doctrine, morality, and the Church's proper freedom. We believe We must quite disagree with these prophets of doom who are always forecasting disaster, as if the end of the world were at hand.²⁶

Roncalli's perspective in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, given almost at the end of his fourth year as pontiff, effectively worked towards overcoming the Post-Tridentine Age and the Constantinian paradigm in Christianity, centred on an immutable Church and on a complete and definitive definition of Catholicism as the basis of civil society. There was still a clear indication of this view in the *Ad Petri cathedram* encyclical of June 29, 1959, and a slighter one in the *Inde a primis* Apostolic Letter of June 30, 1960. Further indirect suggestions can be found at the beginning of his opening speech to the Council.²⁷ Thus in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, alongside a modernization that continued to move within an apologetic perspective even if extensively revised with respect to the more uncompromising view, a number of specific aspects of Modernity²⁸ were received. Roncalli's speech opened the way to a Church which acknowledged that it

26 *GME*, 2-3.

27 In the encyclical *Ad Petri cathedram*, John XXIII stated: "All men [...] are bound to accept the teaching of the gospel. For if this is rejected, the very foundations of truth, goodness, and civilization are endangered" (no. 8). Instead he wrote in the *Inde a primis* this: "God wants all men to be saved, for he has willed that they should all be ransomed by the Blood of his only-begotten Son; he calls them all to be members of the one Mystical Body whose head is Christ. If only men would be more responsive to these promptings of his grace, how much the bonds of brotherly love among individuals and peoples and nations would be strengthened. Life in society would be so much more peaceable, so much worthier of God and the human nature created in his image and likeness". His statement did not assign the submission to Catholic principles the sole foundation of society, as expressed by the strongest proclamations of intransigent Catholicism, but it limited itself to opening up universal grace to an element of greater and more significant quality of life both at individual and collective levels. In other words, history was not harshly judged for the fact that it was not guided by Christian principles. Roncalli, however, was fully convinced that a Christian faith would favour a clearly a more worthwhile development for humankind. It should be noted that the *Ad Petri cathedram* statement was also indirect implied, especially if compared to the teachings of the time. Furthermore, in *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, Roncalli asserted: "The very serious matters and questions which need to be solved by the human race have not changed after almost twenty centuries. For Christ Jesus still stands at the center of history and life: people either embrace him and his Church and so enjoy the benefits of light, goodness, order, and peace or they live without him or act against him and deliberately remain outside the Church, so that confusion arises among them, their relationships are embittered, and the danger of bloody wars impends". *GME*, 1.

28 With regard to the limits of a religious historiography that has, at times, neglected the differences between modernization and modernity (with reference to John XXIII too), see Menozzi, "Introduzione", 32; "Le biografie", 25-6.

operated within the history of humankind, which welcomed the issues raised by the “signs of the times”, modified the modes of its presence and witness as a response to the urgencies of history,²⁹ and which forced herself to recognize that in these issues the signs of a saving action could mysteriously develop even outside the Christian institutional context. His objective was to task the Second Vatican Council with taking this perspective further.

3 Between Spiritual Renewal and the Reform of institutions

As we have seen, John XXIII showed the intention of placing the Council at the centre of his pontificate from the start. It was to the Council, fully underway at the time, and entrusted with the objective of renewal, that he turned to in his apostolic exhortation, *Novem per dies*, dedicated to the novena for Pentecost on May 20, 1963. It remains one of the pontiff's last official texts, as John XXIII would die exactly two weeks later. According to the Italian version of the document, edited by Monsignor Capovilla in the ample anthology of the pontiff's letters, Roncalli stated:

The universal invocation of the Holy Spirit, *Dominum et vivificantem*, hasten the hoped-for renewal in the family of believers, towards which the whole Council leans to; and make the dedication to serve God and

²⁹ According to Roncalli, prayer itself was positively influenced by the changes happening at the time. In his Apostolic Letter *Il religioso convegno* (29 September 1961), with which he recommended the recital of the Rosary for peace among the peoples of the world, John XXIII stated that “in the act of respecting this old-time, everyday and touching form of Marian devotion, according to the personal circumstances of each one of us, we may, among other things, add that the changes which have occurred in modern times and in every area of human life, scientific inventions, the organisation and focus on improving work conditions, have led men to view things from a wider perspective and a more focused awareness of the appearance of the modern world. This new way of seeing things has brought a new sensitivity also towards the functions and the forms of Christian prayer. At this point every soul that prays no longer feels alone and preoccupied exclusively with their own spiritual and worldly interests but is today more aware of belonging to a social body to which they are accountable, enjoy the advantages, and fear the uncertainties and the dangers” Original text: “Nell’atto di rispettare questa antica, consueta e commovente forma di devozione mariana, secondo le personali circostanze di ciascuno, Ci è permesso per altro di aggiungere che le trasformazioni moderne, sopravvenute in ogni settore della umana convivenza, le invenzioni scientifiche, lo stesso perfezionamento della organizzazione del lavoro, conducendo l’uomo a misurare con maggior ampiezza di sguardo e penetrazione di accorgimento la fisionomia del mondo attuale, vengono destando nuove sensibilità anche circa le funzioni e le forme della preghiera cristiana. Ormai ogni anima che prega non si sente più sola ed occupata esclusivamente dei propri interessi di ordine spirituale e temporale, ma avverte, più e meglio che per il passato, di appartenere a tutto un corpo sociale, di cui partecipa la responsabilità, gode dei vantaggi, teme le incertezze e i pericoli”. Giovanni XXIII, “Il religioso convegno”, no. 1254.

people with more resolve so that life is illumined by the truth, led by justice, enriched by works of charity, driven to great Christian achievements by the spirit of freedom that Christ gave us.³⁰

Most likely, Roncalli wrote the document in Italian. For this reason, it is interesting to note the significant differences with respect to the official Latin version of the apostolic exhortation. In fact, the translator³¹ hastened to clarify the meaning of that “hoped-for renewal” to which John XXIII made unspecified mention. In this way, the scope of the exhortation was limited and reduced to the more accepted version “in fidelium universitate exoptatam appropere mentium morumque renovationem, cuius causa Oecumenica Synodus potissimum indicta est”. In it, the renewal that according to the Italian text should occur within the family of believers as an expression of widespread change and which, to some measure, involves the structure of the Church³² cannot be incontrovertibly understood. However, if it is not possible to take this aspect for granted, it can neither be excluded a priori from the pontiff’s discourse, as I shall attempt to demonstrate. Instead, what is certain is that the specification contained in the Latin version clearly excluded this viewpoint and directed the discussion to regard individual, internal change that, on the other hand, is also well-attested alongside other perspectives in Roncalli, as will be seen. Later, with Paul VI, papal teachings would put this version forward as the authentic key to interpreting Vatican II in alternative to petitions, which advocated a reform of institutions and criteria.³³

30 Original text: “L’universale invocazione allo Spirito Santo, *Dominum et vivificantem*, affretti nella famiglia dei credenti quell’auspicato rinnovamento, al quale tende innanzi tutto il Concilio; e renda più deciso l’impegno a servire Iddio e le anime con una vita illuminata dalla verità, diretta dalla giustizia, arricchita dalle opere di carità, sospinta alle grandi conquiste cristiane dallo spirito della libertà donataci da Cristo”. Giovanni XXIII, *Lettere*, 483-4 (484). Latin version in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 55, 1963, 440-1 (441).

31 It is not clear if the reference is to a member of the Secretariate of Briefs to Princes (the secretary Amleto Tondini or Guglielmo Zannoni), or of Latin Letters (the secretary Giuseppe Del Ton or Giovanni Coppa). Cf. Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 241 and fn. 51, 259 fn. 3.

32 I believe that the term “Church” can be used as a synonym for this locution, as is used by Roncalli. See, e.g., Giovanni XXIII, “Discorso del santo padre Giovanni XXIII al sacro Collegio”, 40 (24 December 1960); “Discorso del santo padre Giovanni XXIII alle comunità orientali”, 316 (23 April 1961); and the homily for the canonization of the saints Pierre-Julien Eymard, Antonio Maria Pucci, Francesco Maria da Camporosso (9 December 1962): Ioannes XXIII, “In sollemnibus canonizatione”, 9.

33 On this aspect of the Paul VI pontificate cf. Menozzi, *I papi*, 74-76. De Giorgi, in his extensive treatment of the Montini papacy, proposed an interpretation in terms of “modernità non modernistica” [non modernist modernity] which was critical of the present time and able to place itself “oltre la fine dell’epoca moderna” [beyond the end of modern age]. De Giorgi, *Paolo VI*, 743-4.

In order to verify whether the Latin version of the *Novem per dies* hid a misunderstanding on a fundamental point of Roncalli's pontificate or, perhaps, a lack of willingness on behalf of the Curia to depart from the Latin version of the Exhortation following John XXIII's movement towards renewal in a broader sense,³⁴ I have examined the meaning of 'rinnovamento' in Roncalli. Firstly, two other passages in the same apostolic exhortation should be noted. In The *Novem per dies* reference is made to the pontiff's decision to gather himself spiritually in order to wait for the "mystical coming of the divine Paraclete, which descends to renew marvel within the Church like a new Pentecost".³⁵ The text then issues, among others, an invitation to the clergy and Catholics from all over the planet to concentrate (the only fundamental aspect) on the sanctity of life, the reform of customs and Apostolic commitment to which the "essentially pastoral objectives" Vatican II promoted.³⁶ It was at this point in the text that the passage regarding the "hoped-for renewal" within the family of believers followed and that the Italian version did not need to define further, as happened for the Latin version limiting the scope of the term to intellectual and moral dimensions. On the other hand, it should be noted that the above lines, to which John XXIII referred as the pastoral objectives of the Council so articulately, found a similar reiteration in the shorter mention of the hoped-for renewal to which Vatican II worked towards. It appears that the latter, in the economy of the text containing the Apostolic exhortation, was only a reprise of the concepts he had just expressed in the lines above but, which indicated a broader and more complex renewal. Further, the clarification introduced in the Latin text *Novem per dies* somehow limited the meaning of renewal indicated by Roncalli. It could, instead, be considered as an indication that the translator had comprehended in the renewal "within the family of believers" on which Vatican II focused on, as not referring to the exact same concept expressed in the discourse on the Council's "essentially Pastoral objectives" as clearly indicated by the apostolic exhortation.

But, what meaning can be given to the term 'rinnovamento' used in this occasion in lieu of the more well-known term 'aggiornamento' used repeatedly in the past by Roncalli to define the aim of the Council? Was it only a simple lexical variant or, rather, a hint of the developments that

34 Similar instances of editorial interventions concerning *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* and *Mirabilis ille* (6 January 1963), which dilute some papal affirmations contained in the initial drafts, in Ruggieri, "Esiste una teologia", 272; e Galavotti, "Il concilio continua", 130.

35 Original text: "la mistica venuta del divino Paraclito, che scende a rinnovare nella Chiesa i prodigi come di una novella Pentecoste". Giovanni XXIII, *Lettere*, 483.

36 Original text: "finalità essenzialmente pastorali". Giovanni XXIII, *Lettere*, 484.

would mark the thoughts and attitude of Roncalli throughout his life³⁷ and that would become manifest even in the course of his brief pontificate?³⁸

Some clarification seems to emerge through an examination of how Roncalli addressed the issue of renewal from his early ministry onwards. One must not forget how this developed in the years of the Modernist crisis, in which the issue of Church reform was openly discussed by the innovators and harshly condemned by Pius X. In the homely of December 19, 1905, Roncalli called for a “total revivification of ourselves in a new life based on the love that Jesus called us to”. Further, in the handwritten notes for the Panegyric of St Francis de Sales, pronounced on January 29, 1906, he introduced a parallel between the Church of the 16th century and the Church of his time. Here he highlighted how the saint had helped the people of his time to uphold “those principles of faith and those reform decrees that, published in Trent, brought with them the renewal of the Church” [“*quei principi di fede, e quei decreti di riforma che pubblicati a Trento portavano con sé la rinnovazione della Chiesa*”] as it was a “time in which the springs of Christian faith had run dry for many peoples”.³⁹ Thus, in his early years, for Roncalli, the prospect of renewal concerned Christians as individuals and the religious expressions of their personal faith, even if there were appreciable considerations which regarded the Church as such. In fact, the St. Frances de Sales Panegyric is an example of what had happened in the 16th century which, beyond the historical evaluation that the events entail, introduced the question of the Council as a particularly fitting instrument to propose renewal within the Church. How much Roncalli’s views on renewal were affected by the ferment, which characterized the innovators of the early 20th century, is, as yet, not the subject of research. In recent years, however, a clearer picture is emerging of the network of relationships the seminarist and then young priest from Bergamo formed with some of the major figures, starting with Buonaiuti, which were more or less marked by appeals for religious reform and upon which, fell the condemnation of Modernism that Pius X pronounced during his pontificate.⁴⁰

With the start of his pontificate, the theme of renewal appears prevalently in the customary terms and, that is, highlighting the spiritual life of Christians. Gradually, however, the idea of a renewal concerning institutions and criteria came to the fore with increasing frequency, which at

37 On the evolution of personal piety through a reduction of its Baroque dimension in favour of the Bible and the patristic tradition cf. Melloni, “Formazione e sviluppo”, 5-11.

38 With reference to the papacy, some exemples in Menozzi, *Chiesa, pace e guerra*, 257-71; Vian, “Dall’antisocialismo al riserbo”.

39 Original text: “tempo in cui si erano disseccate le sorgenti della vita cristiana presso molti popoli”. Quoted in Roncalli-Giovanni XXIII, *Nelle mani*, 26-7 fn. 27.

40 Cf. Vian, “Roncalli”, 115-24; Mores, “Nota al testo”, 34-44.

times found a parallel in the idea of being brought up-to-date. Regarding the issue of renewal, John XXIII's views also seemed to evolve during his pontificate. In the apostolic exhortation with which he celebrated the return of Pius X's remains to Venice on April 21, 1959, John XXIII hoped that the resounding popular fervour the initiative had aroused would "hopefully bring about the highly edifying fruits of interior renewal for many souls".⁴¹ However, the text also raised the issue of what new contribution Pius X's "return" would bring in light of the petitions of the time.⁴² And, if clear indication had been given to the clergy of the priority of the care of their own spiritual dimension, reference was also made to paying "attention to desirable and opportune pastoral upgrading and the application of new resources to approach the diverse categories of the faithful".⁴³

One and a half year following the first encyclical,⁴⁴ at the end of a series of spiritual exercises and while in full preparation for the Council, Roncalli gave a speech on December 2, 1960, in which renewal was stated once again in the terms used at the beginning of the century. Here it was viewed, above all, in terms of spirituality as well as people's concrete behaviour, even if it eventually became so widespread as to affect the whole Church. The expectation for personal renewal, arising from that movement and resulting from the ecumenical assembly, to the peculiar nature of which Roncalli drew attention, was that there would be the possibility of operating in society in all its splendour. In fact, regarding the preparations being made for Vatican II in relation to the whole Catholic doctrine, he stated:

It is so vast in time and space, to almost take the form of habit. [...] Here, the soul finds itself pervaded by a sense of supernatural joy as it faces a true Epiphany, a revelation that is not limited to this or that subject but touches all things, every good Christian fact given by Christianity; the teachings of Our Lord, of Peter, of the Apostles, of the Fathers; all

41 Original text: "sperare edificantissimi frutti di interiore rinnovamento per molte anime". Giovanni XXIII, "A quarantacinque anni", 375.

42 "It's natural that the clergy and the people, but above all priests ask themselves what novelty Pius X will bring, in his return to Venice after almost half a century from his departure: regarding ecclesiastical life in its entirety, what will he call us to of use that is determined by today's circumstances". Original text: "È ben naturale che clero e popolo, ma i sacerdoti innanzitutto, si domandino che cosa porti di nuovo Pius X, in questo suo ritorno a Venezia, dopo quasi mezzo secolo dalla sua dipartita: quali utili richiami egli ci rechi per la interezza della vita ecclesiastica, determinata dalle circostanze odierne". Giovanni XXIII, "A quarantacinque anni", 376.

43 Original text: "preoccupazione di desiderabili ed opportuni aggiornamenti pastorali, e di applicazione di nuove risorse per accostare le varie categorie di fedeli". Giovanni XXIII, "A quarantacinque anni", 378.

44 See above page 117 of this volume.

the Catholic doctrine [...]. It regards a completely ardent and heartfelt renewal of souls, starting with personal sanctification, to resubmit the Church, in all its permanent, immaculate and unchanging splendour to today's world.⁴⁵

Indeed, Roncalli far from setting individual religious renewal against the renewal of the Church, he made this first aspect an implication of the second during his pontificate as is clear also from the speech he gave during the hearing with the participants of the first European Youth meeting on September 2, 1962.⁴⁶ Finally, in the first months of 1963 the issue of institutional reform was addressed explicitly in connection to Vatican II. In fact, on February 19, 1963, John XXIII recalled specifically that his greatest concern continued to be the “pastoral characteristic of institutional renewal, *in bonum animarum*”, pertaining to the Ecumenical Council.⁴⁷

4 The Deepening of the Truths of the Christian Faith

Alongside the theme of renewal, John XXIII seems well aware of the issues surrounding the development and the detailed study of doctrine. In this case, the use of the term ‘rinnovamento’ was precluded by the necessity of avoiding a misconception of the truth of the faith in the current theological Catholic view for Roncalli from the start. Nevertheless, the arguments that Roncalli put forward in reference to these aspects, to all effects, proposed a clear distinction between objective truths considered immutable, their comprehension, subject to further study, and their form or, in other words, how they were expressed. These had to be constantly rethought in order

45 Original text: “Essa è così vasta, nel tempo e nello spazio, da assumere quasi forma di consuetudine. [...] Qui l’animo si trova come pervaso da soprannaturale letizia di fronte a una vera Epifania, a una rivelazione che non si limita a questo o quell’argomento, ma tocca ogni cosa, ogni benefico dato del cristianesimo; l’insegnamento di Nostro Signore, di Pietro, degli Apostoli, dei Padri; tutta la dottrina cattolica [...]. Si tratta di tutto un ardente e sentito rinnovamento di anime, cominciando proprio dalla santificazione personale, per ripresentare al mondo odierno la Chiesa, proprio in tutto il suo permanente, immacolato ed immutato splendore”. *Discorsi, Messaggi*, 3: 502-5 (504).

46 Cf. Ioannes XXIII, “Iis qui ex Europae nationibus”, 668. The meeting was sponsored by the cultural cooperation agency of the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Public Education. In the encyclical *Paenitentiam agere* (1st July 1962) he talked about the need to implore “that renewal of Christian life which is one of the principal aims of the coming Council”. The context suggests that in this case John XXIII would mean above all to express the need that mankind comes back to the Christian faith. John XXIII, *Paenitentiam agere*, no. 27.

47 Original text: “caratteristica pastorale di aggiornamento delle strutture, *in bonum animarum*”. Address to the participants at the first conference of the pastoral agents at resorts and spas: Ioannes XXXIII, “Iis qui interfuerunt Conventui primo”, 232.

to be appropriately communicated to contemporary society, which would occur through a process involving much more than an adaptation limited to the literary forms of dogmas.

Regarding these fundamental issues, Roncalli also appeared aware of the debate that had marked Catholicism in the early years of the 20th century. His thinking, however, evolved over time and was clearly measured against the difficulties that the Modernist crisis, in particular, had posed at length to whoever in the Roman Catholic Church intended to work in the realm of studies.⁴⁸

In his in-depth analysis of young Roncalli's reflections from the first decade of the 20th century on the correct attitude to assume when emulating the saints ("From the saints I must take the substance, not the accidents, of their virtues"),⁴⁹ Giuseppe Battelli convincingly showed how a striking independence of thought prevailed in Roncalli rather than an adherence to the perspective of historical differentiation attributed to Newman who, instead, appeared to have acquired this awareness a few years later. The distinction between substance and accidents in the young priest from Bergamo was, on the one hand, limited solely to the dimension of the individual and not of the community and, on the other, was founded on differences that prevalently regarded his personal characteristics, even though he did not completely ignore the influence of mainstream historical conditions. As a result, Roncalli's position of those years contained objectives he proposed to himself, as an individual, instead of considering their general validity for all people of that particular historical moment.⁵⁰

48 In a chronological reference contained in one of the preparatory drafts of the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* that was not included in the final version, Roncalli indirectly alluded to the generalisations that emphasising the Modernist crisis had had on the more conservative Catholic environments: "It often happens, as we have learned in the daily exercise of the apostolic ministry, that, not without offense to Our ears, the voices of people are brought to Us who, although burning with religious fervour, nevertheless do not think things through with enough discretion and prudence of judgement. For them, today's world is not that ruin. The present conditions of human society, they say, are an abuse of power, a universal perversion, in comparison of the past, as if the history of the world had begun just half a century ago". Original text: "Nell'esercizio quotidiano del Nostro ministero pastorale Ci feriscono talora l'orecchio insinuazioni di anime pur ardenti di zelo, ma non fornite di senso sovrabbondante di discrezione e di misura. Per queste il mondo odierno non è che rovina. I tempi moderni, a sentir loro, sono una prevaricazione, un perversimento universale, in confronto dei tempi andati: come se la storia del mondo si fosse iniziata da mezzo secolo appena". Melloni, "Sinossi", 253-4. Cf. Alberigo, "Formazione, contenuto", 201 and fn. 33.

49 Pope John XXIII, *Journal*, 107, note dated 16 January 1903. Important remarks on the meaning of the distinction between substance and accidents in Roncalli (in a perspective of relationship between signifier and signified) and on the inseparable link between Gospel understanding and reference to history, in Ruggieri, "Esiste una teologia", 253-74.

50 Cf. Battelli, "La formazione spirituale", 53-64. Compare to views on the acquisition, even if in limited forms, of the distinction between the substance of dogmatic truths, held to be unmodifiable by Roncalli, the possibility of progress "nell'oggettiva esplicazione e proposizione dei dogmi" [in the objective esplication and proposition of dogmas], and on

The importance of criticism as a means to a deeper understanding of the truths of faith occurs in the writings of Roncalli even after the condemnation of Modernism, when he appears dominated by the concern to distance himself from the Catholic innovators and to show himself as being completely obedient to the Church's directives and particularly to the Pope's. A singular clue of Roncalli's sharing the stirrings of renewal of the beginning of 20th century, even if not the most radical terms, is contained in a passage of his first encyclical which has not been paid adequate attention in Roncalli's historiography⁵¹ and regards the intellectual dimension, theology and Doctrine in Catholicism. He asserted that the Church, when it is leaving "many questions open to the discussion of theologians" because "that matters are not absolutely certain", as John Henry Cardinal Newman had remarked (in *Difficulties of Anglicans*), "far from jeopardizing the Church's unity, controversies, [...] can actually pave the way for its attainment. For discussion can lead to fuller and deeper understanding of religious truths".⁵²

In the early 1900s a broad debate centred on Newman's works also developed. Their interpretation saw the opposition of innovators against anti-modernists. The latter,⁵³ from the "La Civiltà Cattolica" to Pius X himself, in a range of positions not without relevant differences, supported the congruity with Catholic doctrine of the famous English theologian. The young Roncalli also sided with these positions. Then he was Secretary to the Bishop of Bergamo Radini Tedeschi and Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the local seminary from 1906-7 onwards and, in the following years,⁵⁴ author of the many pages of the monthly *La Vita diocesana*.⁵⁵ In his study of the Roman Breviary, Roncalli hinted at Newman's theory on the evolution of dogmas, distancing it safely from any modernistic interpretation and linking it closely to the thesis of Vincent de Lérins:

In the intimate relationship that exists between Christian worship and the religious conscience of Christian dogma for which the *lex orandi* becomes a norm for believing, a *lex credendi*, in the process of creating and developing the Roman Breviary, one can see a similar evolution which, at times, parallels that of dogma and religious truths. While remaining equal in their objective value, these have progressively changed

the subsequent needs to leave a historical record that he drew from them, cf. Butturini, "Tradizione", 37-45.

51 Anyway cf. Roncalli, M., *Giovanni XXIII*, 466.

52 John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 71.

53 Cf. Battelli, *Un pastore*, 353-4.

54 Cf. Vian, "Roncalli", 106-7.

55 Cf. Battelli, *Un pastore*, 376, 398 fn. 41; Mores, "Introduzione", XXX-XXXII.

logical schemas and subjective representations according to the law divined ["intuita"] from St. Vincent of Lérins and masterfully developed by Cardinal Newman.⁵⁶

The reference to the Vincent de Lérins Canon, almost a *refrain* within the anti-modernist controversy,⁵⁷ seems to constitute a *hapax* in the Italian sources of Roncalli's works; a second case exists only in the Latin version of the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* which will be discussed below. Reflecting on that "intuita" to which Roncalli links the Vincentian thesis to the developments of the issues arising in Newman that followed, it appears opportune to enquire if Roncalli consciously forced the link between the two authors to affirm Newman's doctrinal correctness to which he attributed great importance. The chronological collocation of these affirmations must be kept in mind. The study of the Roman Breviary appeared in the *Bollettino del Segretariato del clero per la diocesi di Bergamo* (the Secretariat Bulletin for the Diocese of Bergamo) from January 1908,⁵⁸ only a few months after the publication of the *Pascendi*. It was here that, among other things, he accused Modernists of considering the adaptation of dogmatic formulas not only necessary but legitimate, as these were accessories to the truths of the Catholic faith.⁵⁹ Later, even after with Roncalli, as well as 'his' Bishop, Radini Tedeschi, the stance taken before the Holy See had become particularly difficult due to the climate caused by intense antimodernist repression. He took a more guarded stand against Newman and in 1911 went on to claim that if the English theologian had found himself living in the situation of the time, he would have definitely expressed himself with "quite different language".⁶⁰

Roncalli's sharing of Newman's theses on the development of dogmas, expressed in the study of the Roman Breviary, seemed to constitute overstepping the mark, as detected by Battelli, who had previously indicated the position regarding historic differentiation over the years. Afterwards, in his

56 Original text: "In quell'intimo rapporto che passa tra il culto cristiano e la coscienza religiosa del domma cristiano per cui la *lex orandi* assume il valore d'una norma del credere - *lex credendi* - nel processo di formazione e di sviluppo del Breviario romano si constata una evoluzione analoga e qualche volta parallela a quella del domma e della verità religiosa, che, pur rimanendo integralmente la medesima nel suo valore oggettivo, ha cambiato progressivamente schemi logici e rappresentazioni soggettive secondo la legge intuita da S. Vincenzo di Lérins e sviluppata magistralmente dal cardinale Newman". Roncalli, *Il Breviario romano*, 46. This essay was initially published in instalments in *Bollettino del Segretariato del clero per la diocesi di Bergamo*.

57 Cf. Miccoli, *Les anti-conciliaires*, 45.

58 The publishing ended with the June issue. Cf. Mores, "Nota ai testi", XXXVII.

59 Cf. Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, nos. 12-13.

60 Original text: "ben altro linguaggio". Quoted in Mores, "Introduzione", XXXII.

years as pontiff, Roncalli's reflections on this crucial aspect took on another dimension that was open to the prospect of doctrinal renewal within the Church in the light of the demands of history. It must be made clear that doctrinal renewal, from Roncalli's viewpoint, always remained formulated in terms of a deeper understanding of the truths of the faith, permanent in substance, that is in their inmost meaning. In fact, the reference to Newman in the *Ad Petri cathedram* affirming the opportunity of freeing theological disputes with an aim of achieving a "fuller and deeper understanding of religious truths" and reprising the theses on the development of dogmas in line with orthodox Roman Catholicism, introduced implications that had far greater impact than those indicated by Newman's statements half a century before. This will be debated further in the discussion of the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. First, however, a further, useful, element needs to be mentioned to clarify the use Roncalli made of the concept of renewal. Years before the publication of his study of the Roman Breviary, while still a young student at the Roman Seminary, Roncalli had manifested a certain agreement with the demands of renewal that marked a part of Catholicism following Americanism. In fact, in a number of personal notes, Roncalli had commented the claims John Spalding, Bishop of Peoria, made during the latter's involvement with the americanist movement with enthusiasm. These concerned the issue of freedom and research and the relationship between faith and science, faith and history, in terms which emphasized the contribution of criticism against the backdrop of a positive concept of history and of the conviction that religious truth and progress were not at odds.⁶¹ Of course, Roncalli in the ensuing years adopted a more prudent and measured attitude that impelled him to privilege the spiritual, underscored by a marked Christocentric view, over the intellectual. This was thanks to the moderating influence the redemptorist Francesco Pitocchi exercised on him as his spiritual director in a decisive phase of his personal training and, following that, due to the abrupt and radical change in overall climate within Catholicism after Pius X became pontiff.⁶² Yet, the conviction that criticism could serve to clarify the truth of faith remained rooted in him.⁶³

As is known, Roncalli's in-depth analysis of this aspect is found in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* address. In opening Vatican II, John XXIII explicitly made an issue of the problem of doctrinal development indicating its criteria:

61 Cf. Butturini, "Tradizione", 19-23. On the Roncalli's attention to other Americanists see Butturini, "Tradizione", 17-19; Roncalli, *Giovanni XXIII*, 56-63.

62 Cf. Battelli, "La formazione spirituale".

63 Cf. the remarks of the time of the spiritual exercises, 9 to 18 December 1903, in Pope John XXIII, *Journal*, 139-50. For a contextualization of this passage cf. Battelli, "La formazione spirituale", 96-9.

But from a renewed, serene, and tranquil adherence to the whole teaching of the Church, in its entirety and precision, as it still shines forth in the acts of the Councils of Trent and Vatican I, the Christian, Catholic, and apostolic spirit of the whole world expects a leap forward toward a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciences in more perfect conformity with fidelity to authentic doctrine, with this doctrine being studied and presented through the forms of inquiry and literary formulation of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the formulation in which it is clothed is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great account, with patience if necessary, measuring everything by the forms and proportions of a teaching authority primarily pastoral in character.⁶⁴

The important distinction introduced by John XXIII between the substance of the deposit of faith and its formulation in diverse historical periods as announced in the above terms in the Italian version of the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* – closer to the Roncalli manuscript than the Latin text read by the Pope on the opening day of the Council –⁶⁵ was significantly mitigated in the official Latin version due to the collaboration of a number of the Curia's collaborators. The introduction of a reference to the First Vatican Council (Apostolic Constitution *Dei Filius*, 2)⁶⁶ in this official version, that in turn cited the "Commonitorium primum" by Vincent de Lérins ("eodem tamen sensu, eademque sententia"),⁶⁷ to all effects, noticeably scaled down the innovative impact of Roncalli's discourse.⁶⁸

John XXIII's distinction was based on the relationship between the truth and doctrine that, as Christoph Theobald noted, had also been Alfred Loisy's principle argument,⁶⁹ and announced a hermeneutics of faith subject to historical dynamism. There are traces of his presence in Roncalli, albeit

64 GME, fn. 4. The same perspective was restated in the address to the College of Cardinals (23 December 1962), mentioning *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*: cf. Ioannes XXIII, "Ad E. mos Patres", 44-5.

65 Cf. Alberigo, "Formazione, contenuto", 212; Melloni, *Papa Giovanni*, 262 fn. 22. Since the first draft Roncalli felt himself deeply involved into the writing of the opening speech for the Council: cf. Capovilla, *Giovanni XXIII. Quindici letture*, 197.

66 Cf. Alberigo, *Conciliorum oecumenicorum*, 809 and fn. 3.

67 GME, no. 6. See also Paul VI, *Udienza generale* (12 August 1970), which gives a different interpretation conditioned from the reference to the "Commonitorium".

68 Cf. Alberigo, "Formazione, contenuto", 212 fn. 52; Theobald, "L'apologétique historique", 688-9.

69 Cf. Theobald, "L'apologétique historique", 688. Loisy dared to show the existence of a historical mediation also between the divine revelation on the one hand and the preaching of Jesus and of his earliest followers on the other hand, developed inside the Judaic cultural categories of the period. Loisy, *La crise de la foi*, 71-2.

in a less comprehensive way in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, in a few of his previous interventions before his pontificate as well as in his rare personal writings.⁷⁰ The Apostolic Letter *Inde a primis*, dated June 30, 1960, at first sight appears to be a text that does not contain any particularly innovative content. It intends to promote the devotion of Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ alongside the devotion of the Holy Name of Jesus and the worship of the Sacred Heart, and is characterized by numerous allusions that are indicative of a traditional orientation and marked by a concern for deviations in doctrinal and liturgical matters. In fact, Roncalli reaffirmed that “vigilance over sound doctrine” and “the proper surveillance and development of piety” was the pontiff’s responsibility, declared the “that only those devotional forms be sanctioned which well up from the unsullied springs of true faith”, and called attention to the necessity of moving “in an atmosphere thus charged with true faith and solid piety”.⁷¹ Nevertheless, there is an undeniable mention of historical dynamism that marks how the truths of faith are understood in the *Inde a primis*, and which seems to anticipate the more evident and more precise statements made during the Vatican II opening speech. At a certain point, Roncalli ascertains that “the Church’s wonderful advances in liturgical piety match the progress of faith itself in penetrating divine truth”.⁷² These are brief mentions, unrequired by the context, the significance of which should not be ignored. It could be suggested that Roncalli was proceeding with caution on these points, aware of their innovative impact in a Catholic Church that was still largely dominated by an antimodernist obsession, especially in the Curia’s highest offices.⁷³

The theme of a deeper study of doctrine was present also in the *Mater et Magistra* encyclical of May 15, 1961. As Roncalli himself would later summarize, the encyclical was intended to develop the teaching of the *Rerum novarum* to “more closely link Catholic doctrine to the new requirements of human and Christian coexistence”.⁷⁴ And, in effect, the encyclical published on the seventieth anniversary of the Leonine document is traversed by an analysis that gathers successive social, economic and political historical changes with an aim to offer a solution to the social issues of the time. To this end, the encyclical reaffirmed, clarified and developed doctrine in reference to the major current socio-economic concerns:

70 Cf. Ruggieri, “Esiste una teologia”, 266 fn. 24.

71 John XXIII, *Inde a primis*.

72 John XXIII, *Inde a primis*.

73 The charge of modernism hit even John XXIII, by means of three articles published by Indro Montanelli in *Il Corriere della Sera*, between 24 and 26 November 1962, and inspired by Msgr. Palazzini. Cf. Marazziti, *I papi di carta*, 153-62.

74 Original text: “accostare sempre più la dottrina cattolica alle nuove esigenze della umana e cristiana convivenza”. Giovanni XXIII, “Il religioso convegno”, no. 1244.

As We pass all this in review, We are aware of Our responsibility to take up this torch which Our great predecessors lighted, and hand it on with undiminished flame. It is a torch to lighten the pathways of all who would seek appropriate solutions to the many social problems of our times. Our purpose, therefore, is [...] also to confirm and make more specific the teaching of Our predecessors, and to determine clearly the mind of the Church on the new and important problems of the day.⁷⁵

Finally, the problem of doctrinal adjustment was touched on a number of times following that contained in John XXIII's *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. During the general audience of November 7, 1962, he expressed the concept of the most apt adjustment in the way doctrine was formulated for that time, to be always reiterated in its entirety following an outlook of continuous advancement. The Bishops of the Council:

meet to further contemplate these high truths, to examine all their aspects and how to represent them, always in their entirety, whilst considering new circumstances and needs to indicate the best way to grasp and preserve them. [...] One lives to progress, cherishing what the past offers us, in terms of practice and experience, to continue to move forward, according to the ways Our Lord has disclosed to us.⁷⁶

Further, the message given to journalists from the *Osservatore Romano* and other Catholic reporters during the hearing held on January 27, 1963, proved to be completely in line with the Vatican II opening discourse:

We feel [...] we are able to say that the fact of the Council in itself has been understood: its superb truth, as a shining representation of the Christian message in its integrity, to adapt it in a form that is more efficacious for our times.

It seems increasingly more evident that we are, in reality, facing a sincere and generous search to reconcile the true needs of the present time, without losing sight of the human soul's supreme aspirations.

⁷⁵ John XXIII, *Mater et magistra*. The second part of the Encyclical, which begins immediately after the quote, in the Italian version is entitled more explicitly: "Precisazioni e sviluppi degli insegnamenti della "Rerum novarum"", that is clarifications and developments of "Rerum novarum" teachings (official english title of Encyclical: "The teaching of Rerum Novarum").

⁷⁶ Original text: "si adunano per contemplare ancor più così alta verità, per esaminarne tutti gli aspetti e ripresentarla, integra sempre, tenendo conto delle nuove circostanze e necessità nell'indicare la strada sicura per raggiungerla e custodirla. [...] Si vive per avanzare, pur facendo tesoro di quanto il passato ci offre, come pratica ed esperienza, per andare sempre più oltre, secondo le vie che Nostro Signore ci ha dischiuse". In *Discorsi, Messaggi*, 5: 287-92 (289).

Here we are, in fact, the sacred Magisterium of the Church, Mother and Teacher, intent on making the living interpretation of eternal Wisdom that comes from the two Testaments flow again.⁷⁷

5 Concluding Remarks

Going back to the *Novem per dies*, the use of the term 'rinnovamento' in place of 'aggiornamento' in the apostolic exhortation at Pentecost novena 1963 was not a simple synonym considering the meaning Roncalli gave to the concept of renewal over the years and the emphasis he made on the continual development of doctrinal formulation which continuously appeared in significant moments of his pontificate. It was, rather, the result of another, more decisive, example of Roncalli's evolving thoughts that emerged exactly during the last part of his pontificate and, in particular, in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, which linked the push to modernization of the Church alongside an opening to the world. The aim of modernization was the acquisition, opportunely regulated, of modern criteria, tools and techniques by the Church, in order to carry out more effective apostolic activity in a modern society that was closed to the usual means of evangelization and Christian presence. This aim was a large part of Roncalli's ecclesiastical ministry starting from his first years as a young priest through to his papacy.⁷⁸ 'aggiornamento' seems to be a peculiar category which he, from a certain point on, described this orientation with.⁷⁹ In effect, Roncalli's formation had occurred in the cultural and religious climate of Leo XIII's pontificate, who for the first time had favoured the adoption of the policy of modernization in the Roman Catholic Church, to better equip her to face a modernity interpreted as being hostile to Christianity.

⁷⁷ Original text: "Ci sembra [...] di poter dire che è stato compreso il fatto in sé del Concilio: la sua realtà grandiosa, come splendente ripresentazione del messaggio cristiano nella sua integrità, per adeguarlo in forma più efficace alle esigenze del nostro tempo. Appare sempre più evidente che siamo, in realtà, innanzi allo sforzo sincero e generoso di conciliare le giuste necessità del tempo presente, senza perdere di vista le supreme aspirazioni dell'animo umano. Eccovi infatti il magistero sacro della Chiesa, Madre e Maestra, inteso a far rifluire dai due Testamenti la viva interpretazione della Sapienza eterna". Ioannes XXIII, "Ad scriptorum collegium", 101.

⁷⁸ John XXIII, commenting on the well-developed preparatory work of the Council, highlighted that the Vatican II would help to provide "an extremely precious matter of modern application for the individual and community Christian life" (original text: "materia preziosissima e di moderna applicazione per la vita individuale e comunitaria del cristiano"). See the speech to Catholics of diocese of Albano, 26 August 1962: Ioannes XXIII, "Clero et christifidelibus", 656.

⁷⁹ Cf. Alberigo, "Transition", 577 fn. 9: only from Venetian years onwards, Roncalli begins to give to 'aggiornamento' a rich meaning, beyond the functional sense with which he too had used the word previously.

Those relative openings, of clear tactical significance had, however, allowed the development of paths, unexpected and largely unwished for by Pecci, which had fueled various attempts to rethink the contents and the forms of Catholic Christianity as well as of the Roman Church in the light of contemporary society. Those attempts were drastically condemned as Modernism by his immediate successor. But, in the brief remaining part of John XXIII's pontificate there also emerged an opening in the acquisition of modern elements such as religious freedom, and peace and human rights, without lessening the push towards modernization that, as Daniele Menozzi has observed, he seemed to recognize as belonging to the same deposit of faith.⁸⁰ So, if the concept of 'aggiornamento' as specified by Giuseppe Alberigo expressed "a readiness and disposition to seek a renewed inculturation of the Christian message in new cultures",⁸¹ it appears that 'rinnovamento' (renewal *tout court*, according the Italian editors of *Novem per dies*) moved the focus on Roncalli's conviction for the need for a more profound understanding of the eternal substance of the Gospel, urged by aspects and values expressed by the history of humanity and, which would mark the same experience of the *Christum sequi*, in the Church, making her more authentic and alive. It is, in any case, a matter of distinctions that were far from being irreconcilable and, as is evident, did not function as such in Roncalli. Nor, on the other hand, does it seem appropriate to stiffen categories and concepts that, by way of a rationalization, also extended to what is difficult to explain in historiographical terms, were not in line with Roncalli's approach, sensitivity, mode of operating and profoundly marked by the search for a relationship with God.⁸²

Of course, on the whole, it was a process that for Roncalli would occur within a history that was always led by Divine Providence. Nevertheless, the fact that this was identified in the dynamics which characterize humanity, in the "signs of the times", outside the prospect of the confessional and even in the developments and the movements that created practical difficulties in the Church, seems to wish to subtract her from a strict identification with the choices made by the same ecclesiastical institutions, especially when, in the long path to modernity, these would not engage with the new issues that were emerging from the people of the time. To help the Church to assume this "pastoral" policy of understanding and proclaiming the Gospel in historically appropriate forms, John XXIII has shown the need to deepen the doctrine by resorting to the distinction between the substance of the deposit of faith and its formulations.

80 Cf. Menozzi, "Le biografie", 25-6; Menozzi, "Cristianesimo e modernità", XXXVI-XXXVII.

81 Alberigo, "Transition", 578.

82 Cf. Ruggieri, "Esiste una teologia", 253-5; Miccoli, "Chiesa e 'mondo'", 35, 43.

Roncalli's words, as gathered by Capovilla only a few days after the *Novem per dies* on May 24, 1963, sealed the sense of renewal held necessary and consistent even in those aspects that regarded understanding the Christian message. As he reports, "it isn't the Gospel that changes: it is we who are beginning to better understand it". John XXIII further added:

Today's circumstances, the needs of the last fifty years and doctrinal deepening have led us to new realities, as I said in the opening speech at the Council. [...] Those who have lived a long life [...] and who have been able to compare different cultures and traditions know that the time has come to recognize the signs of the times, to grasp the opportunities they present and to look ahead.⁸³

In this way, Roncalli, a mere ten days before his death, viewed the path his pontificate had taken indicating the key to interpreting the knowledge of that Christian faith founded in the dynamics of mainstream history as he proposed in the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*.

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⁸³ Original text: "Le circostanze odierne, le esigenze degli ultimi cinquant'anni, l'approfondimento dottrinale ci hanno condotto dinanzi a realtà nuove, come dissi nel discorso d'apertura del concilio. [...] Chi è vissuto a lungo [...] e ha potuto confrontare culture e tradizioni diverse, sa che è giunto il momento di riconoscere i segni dei tempi, di coglierne le opportunità e di guardare lontano". Roncalli-Giovanni XXIII, *Il Giornale dell'Anima*, 500.

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