

Dear Friends in Christ,

October 1962 was 60 years ago. (I know, I know - I missed it by a month. But I know most of you just put these newsletters by your fireplace and push off reading them until the winter. As I write this, we're experiencing the first snowfall of the season, so you'll be reading this soon.)

Two things happened in October 1962 which we do well to study. On October 11, The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (commonly known as Vatican II) opened. The council lasted until 1965. Vatican II was the most significant thing the Roman Catholic Church did since The Council of Trent, which was held in reaction to the Reformation (thank you, Martin Luther). Vatican II was the church's attempt to bring the church into the modern world. Some things were good, others weren't so good. One good the Council did was authorize the Mass to be in the vernacular language. Until the 1960s, every Mass was supposed to be in Latin; now, the people could worship in their own tongue.

On October 14 (just 3 days after Vatican II opened), US Air Force pictures revealed something going on in Cuba. Very soon, the world would be watching what we call the Cuban Missile Crisis. Talks of nuclear war are as relevant today as they were back then. Marxism is as relevant today as it was back then. Some things never change.

I've been to a District Convention and several Pastor's Conferences. The word "nuclear" doesn't particularly come to mind when it comes to functions of the Minnesota North District of the Missouri Synod. But at Vatican II, the church was facing down nuclear war. I pray that we can learn from and gain wisdom from the Roman Catholic Church's response, and that we don't go down the same road.

The man responsible for the Vatican's response was Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, and the response came to be known as *Ostpolitik* (so now if you ever encounter the term *Casaroli's Ostpolitik* you'll know exactly what it's talking about. The main aim of this newsletter is to make you more likable at social gatherings. Bring up Casaroli at this year's Thanksgiving Dinner, and you'll be a hit.) The strategy was this - stop all public condemnation of communist persecution. They thought by doing this, they could save the church behind the Iron Curtain. To sustain the church in communist countries, they made deals with communist regimes so that they could have bishops in those places. The communist regimes were clearly anti-Christian, and yet, the church's hands were tied. They could not say anything against the godless regime, and it was the church who tied their own hands.

We have the benefit of other people's mistakes. I understand why the church tried this approach. It's a tough situation. We're called to be shrewd for the sake of the Gospel. But *Casaroli's Ostpolitik* did not work. There was no viable Roman Catholic Church behind the Iron Curtain. In

Hungary, the church became a wing of the communist party. The communists infiltrated the Vatican and had spies compromising what the church set out to do. Despite all of this, the Roman Catholic Church still considers their policy a success and one reason why the Soviet Union collapsed. No, it wasn't staying quiet that played a role - it was Pope John Paul II's bold stance. He gave 129 lectures in the series *Theology of the Body* in which he argues for human dignity because we've been made in the image of God. Totalitarian governments can't be tolerated because they set themselves up as god and then seek to eliminate the true God.

What's the lesson for us? We need to push back and speak out against totalitarian regimes. People sometimes think that if the church keeps her head down and stays quiet, we'll be more effective that way. That's not how it works historically or theologically. God wants us to speak. That's why He sends preachers.

Some people will say, "The church should stay out of politics." (Here's what they really mean - the church should only embrace a liberal ideology.) They're the same type of people who, after John the Baptist got beheaded for preaching against Herod, say, "He had it coming."

I've seen a refrain from some who criticize our church body for making pro-life, anti-abortion, pro-nuclear family statements. They insult the Missouri Synod by saying, "Looks like they're following Tucker Carlson rather than Jesus." So if someone, who happens to host a political show, happens to say something right, we have to write it off as political? If Tucker condemns abortion, it's all of a sudden a political issue? Wasn't it Jesus who said, "Let the little children come to me?" If Tucker blasts the godless state of marriage, all of a sudden pulpits have to be silent on the issue? Wasn't it Jesus who condemned his generation for being adulterous and having perverse hearts?

Now is not the time to twiddle our thumbs and be uncomfortable because some political correspondent happened to say something biblical. Now is the time to open the Bible, read and inwardly digest it, and then make a bold confession to the world. If Fox News, CNN, or whoever else would like to join us, they're more than welcome to. And don't stop them.

“Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.’ But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us” (Mk 9:38-39).

It was Jesus, not Tucker Carlson, after all who said about Herod, **“Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course” (Lk 13:32).**

Pastor