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| Name of the Challenge | Vatican II |
| Source of the Challenge | When Pope John XXIII announced the creation of the Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II) in January 1959, it shocked the world and it would create a massive internal challenge in the Roman Catholic tradition. There hadn't been an ecumenical council — an assembly of Roman Catholic religious leaders meant to settle doctrinal issues — in nearly 100 years.  There were significant internal factors that led to action to maintain the continuity of this resurrection faith at the second Vatican Council.  Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 document *Rerum Novarum* paved the way for a socially conscious Roman Catholicism.  As Rome spoke against unbridled Capitalism and all forms of Communism, Catholic Action is its various forms around the globe, became a significant influence for the change. Catholics had a role in the world. Mission was becoming much more than proselytising (making converts). The importance of social justice and the development of people in “this life” were changing in the minds of Roman Catholics. There had been a resurgence of biblical scholarship caused by Pope Pius XII’s *Divino Afflante Spiritu* in 1943. This allowed for the advancement of biblical studies, new translations and the historical critical interpretation of the sacred text. The council would turn scripture for repeatedly in its documentation. Throughout the twentieth century the movement for liturgical reform in the church had been at work. Pope Pius XII in 1950 also had started to reform the Easter ceremonies so that the focus was more clearly on the Paschal character of Easter faith. The first council document was the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy calling for liturgical renewal with particular emphasis on the paschal mystery. Pope John XXIII, (Angelo Gueseppi Roncalli) also became perhaps the most significant internal factor when he called for “aggorniamento” or updating of the church. He also called for a ressourcement. *Ressourcement* involves a “return to the authoritative sources” of Christian faith, for the purpose of rediscovering their truth and meaning in order to meet the critical challenges of our time.  The ideas of ecumenism and interfaith dialogue were already a feature of his pastoral ministry and became a part of his encyclical program. Roncalli was clear that he wanted the council to reaffirm the ancient faith as well as address the concerns of the modern age, the new circumstances.  There were also external factors that contributed to Vatican II. The static view of the world held by the church was in question, note in the least because of advances in astronomy, physics and evolutionary theory. Theologians, like the Jesuit palaeontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, had developed new proposals for an evolutionary Christianity. While not published in his lifetime for fear of theological oppression that revolutionary thinking can know, Teilhard had reimagined and reinterpreted Christian faith and Christian living to account for evolution, which he called the *Divine Milieu*. Another factor was the impact of the World Wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945. These were not religious wars (other than Hilter’s final solution against the Jews) and Protestants and Catholics and Orthodox Christians were able to recognize a deeper humanity in the inhumanity of the massive destruction of human life.  Ronacalli was intimately connected with the implications of this emerging sense of the human condition that grew from the European war. |
| Details of the Challenge | The Council itself was a challenge to the existing theological, ethical character of Roman Catholicism as it had been known and practiced virtually since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century. The process of the council of 1962-65 reinterpreted many Roman Catholic Traditions. The council called between 2,000 and 2,500 bishops with their periti (theological experts), the Popes, John XXIII then Paul VI, and thousands of observers, auditors, sisters, laymen and laywomen to four sessions at St. Peter's Basilica. Cultural changes in the aftermath of World War II spelled a need to reconsider church practices. These meetings did just that — 16 documents in total came out of it, laying a foundation for the church as we know it today. There were 4 constitutions: *Sacrosanctum Concilium; Lumen Gentium;* *Dei Verbum*; *Gaudium et Spes*. And there were commissions established to consider the ramifications of the documents and to create the Church emerging from Vatican II. John XXII’s opening address was clear: *The greatest concern of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously.* |
| Era | Modern Era (World Wars to the end of Vatican II) |
| Dates & Event | 1914-18 World War I  1939-45 World War II  1943 Divino Afflante Spiritu  1962-65 Vatican II |
| Places | Rome and the Universal Church |
| People | Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli – Pope John XXIII  Giovanni Battista Montini – Pope Paul VI  Curia  Periti |
| Aspects of Religious Traditions effected by the challenge or used to respond to the challenge | Scripture: Extensive use of the bible in all documents  Belief: Openness to truth in other Christian denominations and openness to dialogue with other major world religions and the whole world; Less reliance on medieval theological ideas  Ritual: Full, conscious and active participation in the liturgy expected; vernacular; removal of altar rails  Ethics: Openness to all who are afflicted; Renewal of moral theology: Informed conscience is central to ethics.  Sacred Time: revision of the lectionary  Social Structure: decentralised church authority; local associations of bishops to work together on practical questions of faith; massively increased lay involvement |
| Stance taken by the tradition | Open stance to the world: dialogue |
| Responses taken by the tradition | A key theme of the documents was reconciliation. In keeping, they allowed for Catholics to pray with other Christian denominations, encouraged friendship with other non-Christian faiths, and opened the door for languages besides Latin to be used during Mass. Other new positions concerned education, the media and divine revelation. |
| Significance of the Challenge | Prior to this time, the church had been almost seen as a fortress, very much concerned about its own internal stability and integrity and engaging the world in terms of missionary activity. Pope John wanted to reinforce that missionary mandate, but he also wanted to create an environment of dialogue, where the church would engage in all the forces of the modern world. Today, the council is credited with essentially shaping the modern Catholic Church. Pope Benedict, for one, is careful to emphasize that Vatican II was not a condemnation of the pre-council church. Vatican II was a council of reform but a council that's in continuity with the Catholic past. |
| Theological Challenge/  Ethical Challenge/  Challenge to Continued existence | The challenge was to all aspects of the Roman Church – see above. Some Catholics still look fondly on the old days, and others are concerned about the interpretation of the council's legacy. Old rites are still practiced in some areas but the Catholic Tridentine Church is largely a thing of history. An organic renewal, an evolution, has and continues to take place in Roman Catholicism |
|  | John XXIII Opening Address  *The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another. And it is the latter that must be taken into great consideration with patience if necessary, everything being measured in the forms and proportions of a magisterium which is predominantly pastoral in character.* |
| References | <http://www.npr.org/2012/10/10/162573716/why-is-vatican-ii-so-important> (30/07/2017)  Doyle, Denis. The Church Emerging from Vatican II. Mystic, Conn Twenty-Third Publications 1992  <http://vatican2voice.org/default.htm> (12/07/2019) |