



**A short series of thoughts on the impact of this historic, critically defining event of our Church not just for the 20th century, but for this new millennium as well**  
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On January 25, 1959, Pope St. John the XXIII announced to everyone's astonishment, his intention of convoking an ecumenical Council!! But what would this Council do? After the First Vatican Council (1869-70), many theologians and historians speculated that, with its definitions of papal primacy and papal infallibility, councils had become superfluous—the pope could solve all problems. Pope St. John made no mention of Vatican I and he never seemed to have considered the new council he envisaged as a resumption of the First Vatican Council. Why, then, a Council and what was it supposed to do?? The answers will become more evident as we look more closely at Vatican II in this short series.

Well, it's been more than 60 years since Pope St. John XXIII announced that there would be a world wide Council and it has been more than 55 years since the last session of Vatican II ended under the leadership of Pope Paul VI. So unless you are a real student of history, you might be wondering why you should read this series of short insights about Vatican II. Maybe you weren't even born when the council did its work. Maybe you think you learned all you needed to know about it in parish adult education sessions immediately following the close of the council. Maybe you think it is high time for Vatican III to get underway!! Or, maybe you don't even know what we're talking about when we use the term Vatican II, and you're not sure why you should care!

Whoever you are, I've met many of you over the close to 50 years I've spent ministering in parish religious education programs, serving on the regional and national level of Church educational organizations, attending liturgy conferences, religious educational congresses and theological workshops across the United States. Together, you and I have seen an enthusiastic embrace of the spirit of Vatican II, as well as a neglect of its teachings. We've seen a Church at home with the spirit and insights of this council, as well as a Church more frightened of these times. We've seen a Church become more polarized and divided over the very issues this council addressed. It may be true, as the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardine suggested, that the continued implementation of the council has produced a "mean-spiritedness" among groups in the Church. Often this mean-spiritedness comes from fear and lack of information. It is timely, then, for us to re-visit this treasure called Vatican II, either to refresh our memories or to learn about it for the first time.

Over the next six weeks, we will look at some key issues addressed in Vatican II and see how these issues affect our parish life here at St. Catherine of Siena-St. Agnes. Stay tuned!