

The Live and Unwell Papal Schism

Issues of the papal schism of Rome and Avignon (1378-1417) are still a problem for the Church; an underlying issue is the unsettled matter of *infallibilism* (absolute authority of the pope) versus *conciliarism*, collegiality, shared authority with bishops.

The Second Vatican Council meant to put conciliarism in practice within the Church. The popes, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul I (Italians) were collegial-minded. The two subsequent Germanic popes, John Paul II and Benedict XVI were and are infallibilist-minded. Collegiality and the good intentions of Vatican II crashed with Paul VI's *Humanae Vitae* encyclical issued under advice of Karol Cardinal Wojtyla.

Liberation Theology developed as a product of the collegial mind of Vatican II. Global Communism and Liberation Theology were concurrent events. John Paul II, for his own reasons, identified Communism and Liberation Theology as being too much like each other, so he determined to defeat both. To suppress Liberation Theology he devised a strategy of appointing infallibilist-minded bishops like himself; which he did.

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger had much the same mind of John Paul II, which probably was a major factor in his being elected pope; so, many expect him to continue the recidivism of the John Paul II papacy. The "Roman Imposition" has been long at work; in our time it has morphed into what Arthur Jones calls "the Wojtyla-Ratzinger continuum." [NCR, Vol. 41, No. 39, Sept. 9, 2005, pp. 7, 8]

At the time of the Rome/ Avignon Schism there existed one important condition that doesn't exist today, and that is that the laity was largely ignorant of what was going on and impotent even if they did know. Today, a well-informed laity exists who have the added knowledge that the Constitutions of Vatican II formally determined the shared authority of the laity. The mind of the laity is ignored with serious damage to the Church.

How more hurtful the ongoing conciliarist/ infallibilist schism will become is yet to be determined. At times Pope Benedict shows sensibilities toward collegialism, then again he acts unabashedly in the infallibilist mode. It's time for the voice of the people to be heard, for the women of the Church to be heard. The laity and the religious women of the People Church are of one mind against the return of old church infallibilism.