Since its founding, *Catholic Family News* has never ceased to call upon the hierarchy of the Church to recognize the destruction wrought by the Second Vatican Council and to do something to correct the errors and dangers that stem from it. In these dark times, two brave voices have been raised up among the episcopacy who have called, although in different ways, for a critical appraisal of this unique event in the history of the Church. Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and Bishop Athanasius Schneider have been for some time issuing statements calling for a correction of the Second Vatican Council. Not surprisingly, their Excellencies have received harsh criticism and unjust insults as a result of their fortitude in preaching the truth "out of season" (cf. 2 Tim. 4:2).

Today, July 15, 2020, a group of 51 scholars, journalists, dignitaries, and clerics published an Open Letter in Support of these two courageous bishops. Among the initial signatories are Italian Church historian Professor Roberto de Mattei (a CFN contributor); the U.S. Fox News Senior Judicial Analyst and professor of law, Andrew P. Napolitano, as well as fellow law professors Brian McCall (CFN Editor-in-Chief) and Paolo Pasqualucci; well-known Catholic authors such as Dr. Peter Kwasniewski (also a CFN contributor), Jose Antonio Ureta, Henry Sire, and Dr. Taylor Marshall; the retired Oxford Research Fellow Fr. John Hunwicke, as well as numerous other priests; and Catholic journalists such as Matt Gaspers (CFN Managing Editor), Marco Tosatti, Aldo Maria Valli, Jeanne Smits, and John-Henry Westen (*LifeSiteNews* Editor-in-Chief).

The Open Letter (reproduced below) is being published simultaneously in English, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and French.

Other priests and scholars interested in having their name added to the official list of signatories may contact Openlettercouncil@gmail.com.

Furthermore, anyone who supports the Open Letter can add their name to the Petition to the Holy Father and the Entire Hierarchy in support of the initiative.

Below is the full text of the Open Letter. We at CFN are honored to support this effort and only wish that our longtime editor John Vennari (RIP) could have seen this day when two bishops call openly for this substantial reconsideration of Vatican II. This has not been seen for decades since Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and Bishop Antonio de Castro Mayer joined forces to call on John Paul II to return to Tradition.

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Open Letter to Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò and

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Bishop Athanasius Schneider

July 9, 2020

Your Excellencies:

We the undersigned wish to express our sincere gratitude for your fortitude and care for souls during the ongoing crisis of Faith in the Catholic Church. Your public statements calling for an honest and open discussion of the Second Vatican Council and the dramatic changes in Catholic belief and practice that followed it have been a source of hope and consolation to many faithful Catholics. The event of the Second Vatican Council appears now more than fifty years after its completion to be unique in the history of the Church. Never before our time has an ecumenical council been followed by such a prolonged period of confusion, corruption, loss of faith, and humiliation for the Church of Christ.

Catholicism has distinguished itself from some false religions by its insistence that Man is a rational creature and that religious belief encourages rather than suppresses critical reflection by Catholics. Many, including the current Holy Father, appear to place the Second Vatican Council—and its texts, acts, and implementation—beyond the reach of critical analysis and debate. To concerns and objections raised by Catholics of good will, the Council has been held up by some as a "super-council,"[1] the invocation of which ends rather than fosters debate. Your call to trace the current crisis in the Church to its roots and to call for action to correct any turn taken at Vatican II that is now seen to have been a mistake exemplify the fulfillment of the episcopal office to hand on the Faith as the Church has received it.

We are grateful for your calls for an open and honest debate about the truth of what happened at Vatican II and whether the Council and its implementation contain errors or aspects that favor errors or harm the Faith. Such a debate cannot start from a conclusion that the Second Vatican Council as a whole and in its parts is *per se* in continuity with Tradition. Such a pre-condition to a debate prevents critical analysis and argument and only permits the presentation of evidence that supports the conclusion already announced. Whether or not Vatican II can be reconciled with Tradition is the question to be debated, not a posited premise blindly to be followed even if it turns out to be contrary to reason. The continuity of Vatican II with Tradition is a hypothesis to be tested and debated, not an incontrovertible fact. For too many decades the Church has seen too few shepherds permit, let alone encourage, such a debate.

Eleven years ago, Msgr. Brunero Gherardini had already made a filial request to Pope

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Benedict XVI: "The idea (which I dare now to submit to Your Holiness) has been in my mind for a long time. It is that a grandiose and if possible final clarification of the last council be given concerning each of its aspects and contents. Indeed, it would seem logical, and it seems urgent to me, that these aspects and contents be studied in themselves and in the context of all the others, with a close examination of all the sources, and from the specific viewpoint of continuity with the preceding Church's Magisterium, both solemn and ordinary. On the basis of a scientific and critical work—as vast and irreproachable as possible—in comparison with the traditional Magisterium of the Church, it will then be possible to draw matter for a sure and objective evaluation of Vatican II."[2]

We also are grateful for your initiative in identifying some of the most important doctrinal topics that must be addressed in such a critical examination and for providing a model for frank, yet courteous, debate that can involve disagreement. We have collected from your recent interventions some examples of the topics you have indicated must be addressed and, if found lacking, corrected. This collection we hope will serve as a basis for further detailed discussion and debate. We do not claim this list to be exclusive, perfect, or complete. We also do not all necessarily agree with the precise nature of each of the critiques quoted below nor on the answer to the questions you raise, yet we are united in the belief that your questions deserve honest answers and not mere dismissals with *ad hominem* claims of disobedience or breaking with communion. If what each of you claims is untrue, let interlocutors prove it; if not, the hierarchy should give credence to your claims.

Religious Liberty for All Religions as a Natural Right Willed by God

- Bishop Schneider: "Examples include certain expressions of the Council on the topic of religious freedom (understood as a natural right, and therefore positively willed by God, to practice and spread a false religion, which may also include idolatry or even worse)…."[3]
- Bishop Schneider: "Unfortunately, just a few sentences later, the Council [in *Dignitatis Humanae*] undermines this truth by setting forth a theory never before taught by the constant Magisterium of the Church, i.e., that man has the right founded in his own nature, 'not to be prevented from acting in religious matters according to his own conscience, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits' (*ut in re religiosa neque impediatur, quominus iuxta suam conscientiam agat privatim et publice, vel solus vel aliis consociatus, intra debitos limites*, n. 2). According to this statement, man would have the right, based on nature itself (and therefore positively willed by God) not to be prevented from choosing, practicing and spreading, also collectively, the worship of an idol, and even the worship of Satan, since there are religions that worship Satan, for instance, the

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'church of Satan.' Indeed, in some countries, the 'church of Satan' is recognized with the same legal value as all other religions."[4]

The Identity of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church and the New Ecumenism

- Bishop Schneider: "[I]ts [the Council's] distinction between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church (the problem of '*subsistit in*' gives the impression that two realities exist: on the one side, the Church of Christ, and on the other, the Catholic Church); and its stance towards non-Christian religions and the contemporary world."[5]
- Bishop Schneider: "To state that Muslims adore together with us the one God ('*nobiscum Deum adorant*'), as the II Vatican Council did in *Lumen Gentium* n. 16, is theologically a highly ambiguous affirmation. That we Catholics adore with the Muslims the one God is not true. We do not adore with them. In the act of adoration, we always adore the Holy Trinity, we do not simply adore 'the one God' but, rather, the Holy Trinity consciously—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Islam rejects the Holy Trinity. When the Muslims adore, they do not adore on the supernatural level of faith. Even our act of adoration is radically different. It is essentially different. Precisely because we turn to God and adore Him as children who are constituted within the ineffable dignity of divine filial adoption, and we do this with supernatural faith. However, the Muslims do not have supernatural faith."[6]
- Archbishop Viganò: "We know well that, invoking the saying in Scripture *Littera enim occidit, spiritus autem vivificat* [*The letter brings death, but the spirit gives life* (2 Cor 3:6)], the progressives and modernists astutely knew how to hide equivocal expressions in the conciliar texts, which at the time appeared harmless to most but that today are revealed in their subversive value. It is the method employed in the use of the phrase *subsistit in*: saying a *half-truth* not so much as not to offend the interlocutor (assuming that it is licit to silence the truth of God out of respect for His creature), but with the intention of being able to use the *half-error* that would be instantly dispelled if the entire truth were proclaimed. Thus '*Ecclesia Christi subsistit in Ecclesia Catholica*' does not specify the identity of the two, but the subsistence of one in the other and, for consistency, also in other churches: here is the opening to interconfessional celebrations, ecumenical prayers, and the inevitable end of any need for the Church in the order of salvation, in her unicity, and in her missionary nature."[7]

Papal Primacy and the New Collegiality

- Bishop Schneider: "For example, the very fact that a '*nota explicativa praevia*' to the

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document *Lumen Gentium* was needed shows that the text of *Lumen Gentium,* in n. 22, is ambiguous with regard to the topic of the relationship between papal primacy and episcopal collegiality. Documents clarifying the Magisterium in post-conciliar times, such as the encyclicals *Mysterium Fidei*, *Humanae Vitae*, and Pope Paul VI's *Creed of the People of God,* were of great value and help, but they did not clarify the aforementioned ambiguous statements of the Second Vatican Council."[8]

The Council and Its Texts are the Cause of Many Current Scandals and Errors

- Archbishop Viganò: "If the pachamama could be adored in a church, we owe it to *Dignitatis Humanae*. If we have a liturgy that is Protestantized and at times even paganized, we owe it to the revolutionary action of Msgr. Annibale Bugnini and to the post-conciliar reforms. If the Abu Dhabi Declaration was signed, we owe it to *Nostra Aetate*. If we have come to the point of delegating decisions to the Bishops' Conferences – even in grave violation of the Concordat, as happened in Italy – we owe it to *collegiality*, and to its updated version, *synodality*. Thanks to *synodality*, we found ourselves with *Amoris Laetitia* having to look for a way to prevent what was obvious to everyone from appearing: that this document, prepared by an impressive organizational machine, intended to legitimize Communion for the divorced and cohabiting, just as *Querida Amazonia* will be used to legitimize women priests (as in the recent case of an 'episcopal vicaress' in Freiburg) and the abolition of Sacred Celibacy."[9]
- Archbishop Viganò: "But if at the time it could be difficult to think that a religious liberty condemned by Pius XI *(Mortalium Animos)* could be affirmed by *Dignitatis Humanae*, or that the Roman Pontiff could see his authority usurped by a phantom *episcopal college*, today we understand that what was cleverly concealed in Vatican II is today affirmed *ore rotundo* in papal documents precisely in the name of the coherent application of the Council."[10]
- Archbishop Viganò: "We can thus affirm that the spirit of the Council is the Council itself, that the errors of the *post-conciliar period* were contained *in nuce* in the Conciliar Acts, just as it is rightly said that the *Novus Ordo* is the Mass of the Council, even if in the presence of the Council Fathers the Mass was celebrated that the progressives significantly call *pre-conciliar*."[11]
- Bishop Schneider: "For anyone who is intellectually honest, and is not seeking to square the circle, it is clear that the assertion made in *Dignitatis Humanae*, according to which every man has the right based on his own nature (and therefore positively willed by God) to practice and spread a religion according to his own conscience, does not differ substantially from the statement in the Abu Dhabi Declaration, which says: 'The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed

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> by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives.'"[12]

We have taken note of the differences you have highlighted between the solutions each of you has proposed for responding to the crisis precipitated at and following the Second Vatican Council. For example, Archbishop Viganò has argued it would be better to altogether "forget" the Council, while Bishop Schneider, disagreeing with him on this specific point, proposes officially to correct only those parts of the Council documents that contain errors or that are ambiguous. Your courteous and respectful exchange of opinions should serve as a model for the more robust debate that you and we desire. Too often these past fifty years disagreements about Vatican II have been challenged by mere *ad hominem* attacks rather than calm argumentation. We urge all who will join this debate to follow your example.

We pray that Our Blessed Mother, St. Peter the Prince of the Apostles, St. Athanasius, and St. Thomas Aquinas protect and preserve your Excellencies. May they reward you for your faithfulness to the Church and confirm you in your defense of the Faith and of the Church.

In Christo Rege, (signed)

- Donna F. Bethell, J.D.
- Prof. Dr. Brian McCall
- Paul A. Byrne, M.D.
- Edgardo J. Cruz-Ramos, President Una Voce Puerto Rico
- Dr. Massimo de Leonardis, Professor (ret.) of History of International Relations
- Prof. Roberto de Mattei, President of the Lepanto Foundation
- Fr. Jerome W. Fasano
- Mauro Faverzani, journalist
- Timothy S. Flanders, author and founder of a lay apostolate
- Matt Gaspers, Managing Editor, *Catholic Family News*
- Corrado Gnerre, leader of the Italian movement "Il Cammino dei Tre Sentieri"
- M. Virginia O. de Gristelli, Director of C. F. S. Bernardo de Claraval, Argentina
- Jorge Esteban Gristelli, editor, Argentina
- Dr. Maria Guarini, S.T.B., editor of the website *Chiesa e postconcilio*
- Kennedy Hall, book author
- Prof. Dr. em. Robert D. Hickson
- Prof. Dr.rer.nat. Dr.rer.pol. Rudolf Hilfer, Stuttgart, Germany
- Rev. John Hunwicke, Senior Research Fellow Emeritus, Pusey House, Oxford
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- Massimo Magliaro, journalist, Editor of "*Nova Historica*"
- Antonio Marcantonio, M.A.
- Dr. Taylor Marshall, author of *Infiltration: The Plot to Destroy the Church from Within*
- The Reverend Deacon, Eugene G. McGuirk
- Fr. Michael McMahon, Prior of St. Dennis, Calgary
- Fr. Cor Mennen
- Fr. Michael Menner
- Dr. Stéphane Mercier, Ph.D., S.T.B.
- Hon. Andrew P. Napolitano, Senior Judicial Analyst, Fox News; Visiting Professor of Law, Hofstra University
- Fr. Dave Nix, Diocesan Hermit
- Prof. Paolo Pasqualucci
- Fr. Dean Perri
- Dr. Carlo Regazzoni, Philosopher of Culture, Therwill, Switzerland
- Fr. Luis Eduardo Rodríguez Rodríguez
- Don Tullio Rotondo
- John F. Salza, Esq., Catholic Attorney and Apologist
- Wolfram Schrems, Wien, Mag. theol., Mag. Phil., catechist
- Henry Sire, historian and book author
- Robert J. Siscoe, author
- Jeanne Smits, journalist
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- Marco Tosatti, journalist
- Giovanni Turco, Adjunct Professor of Philosophy of Public Law at the University of Udine (Italy)
- Jose Antonio Ureta
- Aldo Maria Valli, journalist
- Dr. Thomas Ward, President of the National Association of Catholic Families
- John-Henry Westen, co-founder and editor-in-chief LifeSiteNews.com
- Willy Wimmer, Secretary of State, Ministry of Defense (ret.)

Additional signatories added July 15, 2020

- Emmanuel Allingry, professor of economics at the rectorat de Nice (France)

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- Douglas Bersaw, President and Editor, Loreto Publications (Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire)
- Fr. José Miguel Marqués Campo, Diocesan TLM priest, Archdiocese of Oviedo (Asturias), Spain
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- Fr. Jay Finelli
- Dr. Lee Fratantuono, Professor and Chair of Classics, Ohio Wesleyan University
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- Fr. Richard Heilman
- Ester Maria Ledda, co-founder of *Cooperatores-Veritatis.org*
- Dorotea Lancellotti, co-founder of *Cooperatores-Veritatis.org*
- Don Andrea Mancinella, diocesan priest of Albano and hermit
- Jack P. Oostveen, acting president of the Federation Una Voce 2006-2007, emeritus assistant professor at the Delft University of Technology
- Maurizio d'Orlando, doctor in Political Economics
- Guadalupe Ortiz, Agricultural Engineer, Córdoba, Argentina
- Abbé Guy Pagès
- Don Mugurel Puia, Catholic priest, Oradea (*Magnovaradinum/Nagyvárad/Großwardein*/Granvaradino), Province Bihor, Romania
- Renacito Refuerzo Ramos, MD, DFM, Catholic physician
- Janet E. Smith, Ph.D., Moral Theologian
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Additional signatories added July 16, 2020

- Marianna Bartold, author and founder of "Keeping It Catholic" homeschool apostolate
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- Diogo de Campos, translator, Portugal
- Walter Eichhorn, retired teacher, Germany
- Dr. James Fennessy, MA, MSW, JD, LCSW
- Susanne Held, translator
- Dr. Maike Hickson, Ph.D., scholar and journalist
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- William R. Luckey, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Christendom College
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- Dr. Edmund J. Mazza, Ph.D., VirginMostPowerfulRadio.org & edmundmazza.com
- Dr. Dan McGuire, Professor of Theology, University of Providence
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- Rev. Dcn. Joe Pasquella, Pastoral Associate
- David Pietrusza, historian and author www.davidpietrusza.com
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- Philippe Poindron, Professeur honoraire des Universités, former Vice-President of the University Louis Pasteur de Strasbourg
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- Fr. Rainer Treutlein, Hermit and Priest
- Rev. Fr. Andrew M. Walter, Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut

Additional signatories added July 17, 2020

- Renaud Marlier, artist
- Martin Rautenberg, President of the St. Michael's Association/Vorsitzender des Michaelsbundes
- Conte Carlo de'Reguardati di Castelfranco
- Ernesto Sánchez Cortés, Ph.D., U.Laval, Québec, Canada
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Additional signatories added July 18-19, 2020

- Fr. Daniel J. Becker, Ph.D., Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts

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Additional signatories added July 20-21, 2020

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- Père Jacques de Saint Joseph, OCarm., France
- Prof. Enrico Maria Radaelli, International Science and Commonsense Association (ISCA), Department of Metaphysics of Beauty and Philosophy of Arts, Research Director and Professor of the Formal Gnoseology
- Father Timothy Sick, Headmaster of Notre Dame de La Salette Academy

Additional signatories added July 22, 2020

- Fr. Dylan Flanery
- Fr. Daniel Chavarria

Other priests and scholars interested in signing the Open Letter may contact Openlettercouncil@gmail.com. Other people interested in supporting this initiative may sign a petition here.

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1. Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger 13 July 1988, in Santiago, Chile.
2. *Concilio Vaticano II: Un discorso da fare* (Frigento: Casa Mariana Editrice, 2009), subsequently published in English as *The Ecumenical Vatican Council II: A Much Needed Discussion*. The excerpt here is taken from https://fsspx.news/en/vatican-ii-council-much-needed-discussion.
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4. https://www.lifesitenews.com/opinion/bishop-schneider-how-church-could-correct-erroneous-view-that-god-wills-diversity-of-religions
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