

## Reflections

by the  
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



### The Significance of the Second Vatican Council

At the beginning of February, it will be my privilege to participate in a unique educational program that is part of the service which the Diocese offers to the people of Eastern Montana. I will be conducting a course on the significance and meaning of the Second Vatican Council through the telephone hookup established by the Diocesan Office for the Permanent Diaconate. This creative means of having a live contact with men throughout the Diocese interested in the permanent diaconate has really evolved into an opportunity for the education and formation of young people and adults in our diocese.

In so many ways, the Second Vatican Council has been the most significant event in the life of the Church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The full impact of so much that happened at the Second Vatican Council is still to be experienced. The Second Vatican Council has affected all our lives in countless ways, from the way in which we come together to celebrate liturgy to a restored and better understanding of the Church itself as a People of God.

In one of the very first documents issued by the Fathers of the Council, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the aims of the Council were clearly articulated. They were:

1. To give vigor to the Christian life of the faithful
2. To adapt what is changeable to the needs of today
3. To promote union among all who believe in Christ
4. To strengthen the Church's mission to all people

For the last 15 years, the Roman Catholic Church has struggled and responded to these challenges. For some, the changes which occurred in the Church were difficult to accept. For others, the changes were a sign of new life and vitality. But for the great majority of people, the challenge was accepted as part of what it meant to be a Roman Catholic in the world today. However, I believe it is really critical that in the area of our religious belief, we should try to understand the reasons and basis for our belief. So much of that foundation is contained in the 16 documents that were part of the heritage offered to us by the Second Vatican Council.

I really look forward to the opportunity to look at the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and to discuss them with people from Plentywood to Miles City, from Havre to Billings. The documents of the Second Vatican Council treat almost every facet of our lives as Roman Catholics from an understanding of the mystery of the Church to ecumenism, from religious education to religious freedom.

More than anything else, I hope this course will not only offer insights into the Second Vatican Council, but I also hope it will be a dialogue with the people of Eastern Montana so that together we might come to a better understanding and appreciation of our faith as Roman Catholics. I'm really looking forward to Tuesday evenings in February and March!

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Despite the cold and the snow, it has been really great to be able to continue to visit the various parishes of the Diocese and to celebrate liturgy with the priests and people.

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The second week in January proved to be extremely cold, but the warmth and friendliness of the people of St. Jude's in Havre offered a perfect antidote. It was good to visit Havre and to meet with the people of St. Jude's and the Jesuit Fathers who minister to the people of Havre and other communities in our diocese.

The Diocese of Eastern Montana is so fortunate to have so many religious priests serving the people of our Diocese such as the Jesuits, the Nobertines, the Oblate Fathers, and the Benedictines...During the last week, it was good to be able to speak with the parents of children attending Catholic schools in the community of Great Falls. A capacity crowd was present at Our Lady of Lourdes parish and the presence of so many people was a tremendous witness to the commitment that people in our Diocese have to Catholic education.

This past weekend brought me to Fort Shaw and Cascade for the celebration of liturgy and the opportunity to meet the parishioners...And next weekend, I plan to celebrate my first conferral of the Sacrament of Confirmation at Plentywood and journey on to celebrate with the people of Sidney. Afterwards, I will continue on to Ashland and conclude the week with a few days in Billings.

Though such journeys are long, I really find them exciting and enjoyable because they offer me the opportunity to meet the people who are the Church of Eastern Montana. And that's a tremendous experience!