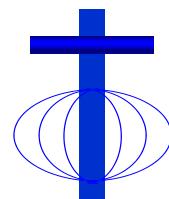


Voluntas Dei Institute
Canadian District



Voluntas Dei Members coming from
other Congregations, Dioceses
or Institutes
A personal reflexion

John Yake

Voluntas Booklets - 2016-2017

The Church will be a more spiritual Church, not presuming upon a political mandate, flirting as little with the Left as with the Right. It will be hard going for the Church, for the process of clarification will cost her much valuable energy. It will make her poor and cause her to become the Church of the meek. The process will be all the more arduous, for sectarian narrow-mindedness as well as pompous self-will will have to be shed. But when the trial of this sifting is past, a great power will flow from a more spiritualized and simplified Church.

Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret. And so it seems certain to me that the Church is facing very hard times. The real crisis has scarcely begun.

We will have to count on terrific upheavals. But I am equally certain about what will remain at the end: not the Church of the political cult but the Church of faith. She may well no longer be the dominant social power to the extent that she was until recently; but she will enjoy a fresh blossoming and be seen as man's home, where he will find life and hope beyond death."

I believe that the I. V. Dei is better structured to evangelize in this milieu because its members are in the world, in culture, as disciples of Jesus to be the yeast in the dough.

John Yake I.V.Dei

He made a striking prophecy." Here is a passage: "From the crisis of today the Church of tomorrow will emerge a Church that has lost much. She will become small and will have to start afresh more or less from the beginning. She will no longer be able to inhabit many of the edifices she built in prosperity.

As the number of her adherents diminishes, so will she lose many of her social privileges. In contrast to an earlier age, she will be seen much more as a voluntary society, entered only by free decision.

As a small society, she will make much bigger demands on the initiative of her individual members. Undoubtedly she will discover new forms of ministry and will ordain to the priesthood approved Christians who pursue some profession. In many smaller congregations or in self-contained social groups, pastoral care will normally be provided in this fashion.

Alongside this, the full-time ministry of the priesthood will be indispensable as formerly. But in all of the changes at which one might guess, the Church will find her essence afresh and with full conviction in that which was always at her center: faith in the triune God, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, in the presence of the Spirit until the end of the world. In faith and prayer she will again recognize her true center and experience the sacraments again as the worship of God and not as a subject for liturgical scholarship.

Dear Sisters and Brothers Voluntas,

At the 2016 Congress held in Trois-Rivières, we heard three colleague priests in a conference-testimony, inside a block entitled: "These Voluntas who came from elsewhere". To each of these members from other Institutes, Congregations or Dioceses I had asked to share with us the motivations behind this move and also to tell us what their expectations were, their hopes, when joining the Institute.

I found it interesting to hear from them on this subject and to realize the contribution of these Members in our Family, who, like me, have arrived with their life history, their culture, the imprint of the spiritualities that shaped them in the past, their desire to be in coherence with their being and their quest for the will of God.

Also, in connection with the theme of last year's Congress, we asked them to react to this theme proposed to all members: "Voluntas Dei, more than a name: a passion, a vision, a mission" They talked about their passion, their vision of the Institute, their own mission and how it fits into our own and colors it. All three have spoken to us with inner freedom, conviction and their joy so communicative.

For our benefit, John Yake, Arunprakash Paul and Jublas Nolasco, have put on paper the reflections they have delivered to all the delegates. We are grateful to offer them to all Voluntas, Members and Affiliates.

Yes, a big thank you to you three, John, Arun and Jublas for the care taken in responding to this invitation. And thank you for sharing the richness of your persons!

Robert Lebel, Director

Voluntas Dei... Much more than a name: a passion, a vision, a mission

Preamble

The theme for Congress: Passion, Vision, Mission intends to guide these reflections. These three qualities belong to Jesus Christ because it is his passion (unifying love that was his only recorded prayer [John 17: 21]), his vision (God's dream for the world redeemed), and his mission (a commitment to implement his passion and vision).

Christ intends to share his passion, vision, mission with his disciples and in that way this charism belongs to me/us. I/We first come to Christ and then he sends me/us out. Note that the first recorded public word of Jesus was "come," and the last public word was "go." To whatever degree that I/we are graced to receive these gifts we may exercise them at the core of our faith. I discovered that in the measure that I could learn and assume these qualities from Jesus I then achieved a self-understanding with him. As St. Peter at Caesarea Philippi discovered his deepest vocation as 'rock' only when he encountered the truth of Jesus' identity.

For me, the historical context of my following of Jesus to priestly ministry parallels the experience of the Prophet Ezekiel: As he was moving from a period of training for ministry his nation was taken into captivity. All of the elements that could be assumed to support him religiously were removed, for example, the temple with its assurance of God's presence. There was a loss of both national and religious identity. Ezekiel needed to be creative in ministry, to challenge his people to religious maturity, to exercise faith in a powerful God when God appeared to be defeated and powerless.

Like a driver who ignores stop signs and red lights will eventually kill or be killed our culture is headed for disaster. Philosopher Plato and Theologian Bernard Lonergan wrote extensively in their time because they saw the direction of their cultures towards the latter's demise and they tried to prevent it.

The challenges to religious faith that these movements present cannot be successfully addressed by the ministry of priests alone because the growing atheism of Western culture has made God irrelevant to what is deemed truly important. Like any institution: banks, Government offices, schools, hospitals and churches, one must attend the institution in order to be served. The more persons absent themselves from the institution of church God's Word will diminish more and more against the constant meaningless communiques issued non-stop with the aid of technology.

Already, religious perspectives are disallowed from participating in public discourse. Gregory Baum has observed, for example, the dominance of what he called technological reason. Catholic views are disqualified because faith prejudices Catholics against accepted social practices, for example, abortion. Because the religious problem has become cultural the means to change it will be cultural, persons of faith need to be 'leaven on the dough,' witnessing to religious values within the public square.

Then there is the prophecy of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI who as a young Joseph Ratzinger, published *Faith and the Future* in 1970, when he was 43, republished by the Vatican Press in 2006 after Ratzinger became Pope. He was aware of the rise of such "aChristian" and anti-Christian movements as Nazism, Communism, Fascism, and Secular Humanism.

3. Related to the above is the absence of the prophetic voice and the voice of reason. God's word is not taken seriously and so God is not glorified or praised as is justly deserved. (To have glory means to have weight, to be a burden, and when God's word no longer burdens us we are out of sync with ourselves in creation.) Some examples: Human beings may claim their high dignity because they are made in the image of God and the law of God that is the exercise of human dignity is to love God and neighbour. God is directly affronted today, for example, by abortion and (soon to be) euthanasia. Sin as an offence against God no longer exists in a culture of relativism where human willing is deemed to be the greatest value. That which is legal is not necessarily moral and so we have lost the eternal perspective.

Being dominated by political correctness we have lost the contribution of the philosophical tradition that enabled us to understand ourselves in the world and so be protected from the foibles of human nature. The classical control of meaning enabled issues to be addressed by intelligence, reason, and wisdom gained through the efforts of the greatest minds of the centuries. Its all gone and is replaced by radical individualism and postmodern's hatred for tradition and any absolute authority. Ideologies and opinionation dominate in a culture where what "I" want is all that matters because existent structures only victimize persons. Truth as a meaningful category no longer exists in this environment. What this means is the end of civilization and persecution of any voice that opposes political correctness because, like an immature child running wildly on his or her own without the guidance of law, will inevitably succumb to the dangers imposed by reality.

He invented the synagogue (the gathering) and he forbade any images of divinity, a practice that continues today.

I had one foot (in my youth) in the pre-Vatican II Church and once ordained entered the post-Vatican reality. (Note that Church historians teach that the first twenty-five years after such a Council there is a sense of chaos and that it takes a hundred years before we may understand what happened.) Global culture has assumed, as Archbishop Fulton Sheen warned back in the 1950s, a secular viewpoint. All of us are having Ezekiel's experience. Secularization and ethical relativism presents the Church with a unique challenge because religious indifference of Christians means that in their self-chosen exile from the Church they have come under the powerful influence of secularization that is ot neutral about Christianity but opposed to it. Some examples:

1. In his song, Walking Jesus, rapper, Conroy West admits that if he mentions God in his work his songs will not be played or purchased.

2. Journalist, John Waters wrote, *Beyond Consolation: Or How We Became Too Clever for God...and Our Own Good*, noted three truths that are essential characteristics of human beings that are denied or ignored by secularization: persons are created, dependent, and mortal.

He defined religion as persons' relationship with reality and stated that all persons are religious. He wrote this book on the occasion of an atheistic colleague who was dying of cancer and had to face reality.

A Foundational Truth

Since God may be understood in the Judaeo-Christian religious tradition as Lord of history we may interpret our discipleship as a following of the Divine Will. It was the conviction of Carmelite saints Teresa of Jesus (Avila) and John of the Cross that we need to view history providentially in order to understand it correctly. That which makes this so happens via the activities of two players: the divine and the human.

The divine component is revealed by Jesus whose Messianic mission communicated the Heart of God, the one he called Father. God's love for each person that he has created is a doctrine of faith and thus the foundation of discipleship. The human component is to recognize that our brief history is always vocation; to listen attentively and prayerfully to what the Lord is saying to us in the concrete reality of our experience and to act upon that voice that is ever calling us to life regardless of the circumstances of any given situation. A recent example of this may be seen in the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, a move that demystified the papacy, so that God could employ the vision and pastoral ministry of Pope Francis. God was able to change the visible head of his Church due to the ongoing discernment of disciples of Jesus.

My Road to Voluntas

At a social hosted by a colleague and also attended by teachers, I spoke with a former classmate from theological study days (1970s), Rev. Jim Saginario, who was also a chaplain and teacher for the York Catholic Separate School Board. I told him of my need to find a new context from which to exercise the priesthood and he told me about the Voluntas Dei Institute. After speaking to Andrew Mayer I travelled with Rev. Cecil Noronha to Montreal for an interview with the District Director, Rev. André Côté.

2. In the West the religious perspective has lost its former authority. It may be called atheism. Archbishop Sheen noticed this back in the 1950s when he said that we have the light but they have the heat.

Secularization and relativism have replaced Christian culture that has built the Western world with its institutions and values. On Canada Day PM Trudeau listed what he called Canadian values such as kindness and compassion. But these are not Canadian values but Christian values.

The best of Greek and Roman philosophy did not include compassion, that is unique to Jesus in his world where over 90% of the world's population were slaves.

Our political leadership has totally bought into the political correctness perhaps believing that we can keep a humane culture without the ongoing support of Christianity. Even the best of Greek and Roman philosophy did not teach compassion.

This virtue is uniquely Christian. While persons may still assert that God exists their attitude and behaviour tell of atheism. President Kennedy once remarked that we call God 'Father' on Sunday but act like orphans on Monday.

It was reported at the last World Youth Day in Poland that the Polish hierarchy do not accept Pope Francis approach. But Francis knows that there is no point in being a Church that teaches (*ecclesia docens*) because people/Catholics are living according to secular culture's permissive morality, what St. John Paul called, a Culture of Death. So Francis is trying to dialogue with the world, listening and being reasonable to explain the wisdom of the faith so that the Church (*ecclesia dicens*). St. John Vianney taught that our only happiness in the world is in loving God and Francis is trying to have persons recognize that truth.

From Passion to Vision to Mission

Because the I. V. Dei Institute is structured to engage the world without the separation that can isolate clergy it can more effectively employ the scriptural metaphor of leaven in the dough. When we look at the challenges that oppose evangelization today we may better understand the advantage that the Institute has. Some examples:

I. As indicated above, the passive posture of laity can be guided by the cliché, "pay, pray, and obey." This may be called middleclassness that has the effect of domesticating an enterprise.

Adult Christians who merely attend church services as the sum of their religious response cannot inspire youth (See ch. 8 of my book *The Theory of Religious Ministry with Youth: Faith Development and the Christ in Others Retreat*) and they do a disservice to a religion that is a movement whose purpose is to convert the world. In the history of the Church it has been the young who have provided the energy needed for the mission but the young need role models and sponsors for their faith.

The process of entering the Institute began shortly thereafter.

A New Form of Religious Commitment

The history of religious life had observed that the structure of religious life was in the process of change: From its origins with Antony, Pachomius and the desert Fathers, then monasticism guided by the Rule of St. Benedict, to the mendicant orders, the teaching orders such as the Jesuits who were considered "contemplatives in action," and on to Pope Paul VI's attempts to renew religious life (*Perfectae Caritatis* [1965] and *Evangelica Testificatio* [1971]) as well as Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium*, there is a contemporary need to see religious commitment in the modern context.

Numbers seem to be decreasing in the traditional religious structures even though there will always be those who are called to some permanent form of monasticism. E. g. Buddhism predates Christian monasticism. Even my former community, the SCJ in Canada, has assumed a Regional Status having lost its Provincial status and even after English and French Provinces joined together.

One of the realities in practice of religious life is that the originating charism given to the founder/foundress became trapped within the establishment rather than being communicated to the wider Church. For example, parishes led by a religious order seldom know how their pastoral leadership differs from diocesan priests except to say that sometimes they are dressed differently. Interestingly and as I understand it, the initiating force behind I. V. Dei was that the General Superior of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate asked Fr. Parent to find a way to get the charism of the O. M. I. into the Church.

A New Approach to Mission

The Christian mission was mandated by Christ to his disciples on the occasion of his Ascension: To preach the gospel and to baptize; to evangelize the whole world. St. John Vianney asked his people to note the difference between believing in the existence of God and believing in God.

Our time likes an amorphous deity who will do our will but it has no trust in God's Providence acknowledging that God is a person of love who has a plan for persons and nations and that our place is to discern that Will and do it. Pope Paul VI's description of evangelization clearly admits the subversive nature of the gospel as a political document designed to revolutionize persons' beliefs and values. He defined evangelization succinctly in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*,

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. (n. 18)

Note that his directive was not to the clergy but to the Church.

Baptism in the early Church, usually received in adulthood, was a sort of ordination to ministry. It was commonly expected that every Christian had a ministry of service as baptism was not intended for passive belonging but as a call to active ministry. In the long history and evolution of the Church ministry became more and more a professional enterprise and the laity lost the necessity of participation. (See the history of ministry in Thomas O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, 1983) The Second Vatican Council, the council of the laity, has done much to restore the primal thinking of Church.

My passion as expressed both by religious profession and priestly ordination is evangelization. St. John Paul II moved the concept beyond disinterested or passive participation when he emphasized that to be evangelized means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and so to share in God's dream for the world, i. e. salvation of souls, and to work devotedly for that to happen.

Perhaps moving to I. V. Dei provides a better context for ministry as it is less isolated and clerical assuming a more universal notion of Church: clergy with laity.

The fact of Christ and our renewed understanding of ourselves as Church presents a huge challenge, one which I may better face in the I. V. Dei: Firstly, to create a culture of action over passivity in the minds of Catholics, and secondly, to seek pastoral methods that may effectively evangelize against the backdrop of modern times.