



# The Reform of the Roman Curia in the *Vota* for Vatican II

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**Abstract:** This paper addresses the problem of the scope and directions of the reform of the Roman Curia postulated in the *vota* submitted for the antepreparatory stage of the Second Vatican Council. It has been structured around three thematic areas identified from the source material: procedural and organizational changes, calls for the internationalization of the Curia, and postulates for the decentralization of power in the Church. The study employs a theological-historical and linguistic analysis of the *Acta et documenta*, complemented by a hermeneutical interpretation of the written submissions and proposals of reforms. The findings reveal a striking unanimity among bishops from the different continents: the reform of the Curia was viewed not as a secondary topic, but as a necessary condition for the renewal of the Church. The analysis concludes by identifying the triple dynamics of anticipated changes: increasing the efficiency of the Curia, expanding its catholicity in the sense of universality, and strengthening collegiality—all while full respecting papal primacy.

**Keywords:** Second Vatican Council, Roman Curia, Church reform, decentralization, *vota*

Without thorough reforms of the Roman Curia, it is impossible to accelerate any changes in the Church. The Curia governs the Church not only in Europe, but throughout the world. Therefore, it urgently needs to be adapted to the scale and complexity of contemporary problems (*adaptare ad amplitudinem et complexitatem quaestionum*) (CVE Pars I, 260–261). This opinion was submitted by the Church in France in response to John XXIII's call to formulate issues to be addressed by the Second Vatican Council. It was not an isolated voice. Similar postulates for the Curia's reform came from all over the world, from both bishops and universities. Thus, by the late 1950s, the need to reform the Curia appeared essential to the renewal of the Church. Many believed that without it, other reformatory efforts would be doomed to slowdown if not to failure.

The aim of this article is to collect and systematize texts concerning the reform of the Roman Curia, submitted from around the world as the *vota* for the Second Vatican Council. I intend to seek answers to the problems which bishops and faculties of theology saw in the functioning of this institution, as well as to indicate the directions for the changes they proposed.

The main source material is the *Acta et documenta Concilio Oecumenico Vaticano II apparando*. Antepreparatoria 1, i.e. twelve volumes containing the *vota* for Vatican II. Although the Central Preparatory Commission created a synthesis of the

*vota* in its document *Analyticus conspectus*,<sup>1</sup> it is selective and at times biased; therefore, I have decided to analyze the main *Acta*.

The very issue of the Roman Curia has been the subject of analysis by the Magisterium of the Church as well as by numerous theologians, lawyers, and historians. Among the normative texts, we find constitutions successively reforming the Roman Curia.<sup>2</sup> Other works include various monographs and articles, whose authors have attempted to outline the issue in a broad perspective, as well as monographic studies on specific subjects.<sup>3</sup> However, none of these publications have provided comprehensive references to the *vota* for the Second Vatican Council as well as their systematization and analysis. In this respect, the present paper is innovative. Besides providing an overview of the pre-conciliar period, it sheds new light on the subsequent conciliar debates and the solutions contained in the Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, as well as the popes' consequent reformatory efforts and theologians' proposals.

Although the entire text of this paper has taken the form of a theological-historical synthesis, developing this process required the use of theological and linguistic analysis as well as the use of a hermeneutical approach in order to draw conclusions from the historical material.

The preliminary analysis of the *vota* in the scope undertaken has allowed me to distinguish three thematic groups, which will constitute the next points of this paper. First, I am going to address procedural issues, then the internationalization of the curial officials, and finally, the postulates for the decentralization of the Church in the area of activity and competence of the central ecclesial offices.

## 1. Changing the Way the Roman Curia Is to Function

When analyzing the *vota* regarding the Roman Curia, the submissions most frequently concerned changes to the way matters entrusted to this institution had been handled and to the organization of its work. The authors addressed issues of bureaucracy, communication, structural reorganization, selecting the right people, shaping the right attitudes among those already serving in the Curia, and preparing candidates to be employed there. Since the changing world required adapting to new standards, the Roman Curia should reflect on improving its ways of functioning.

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<sup>1</sup> *CVE* Ap. II.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth mentioning the most important ones: Pius X 1908; Paul VI 1967; John Paul II 1988; Francis 2022.

<sup>3</sup> The most important publications in the chronological order: Sztafrowski 1981; 1990, 21–81; Del Re 1998; Szczot 2007; Catta, Palombi, and Salvatori 2022; Faggioli 2022; Ghirlanda 2022, 355–420; Kućko 2022, 169–88; Rozkrut 2022, 57–71; Ghirlanda 2024; Ekpo 2024; Prudlo 2025.

Bishop John Edward Petit (England) suggested reducing the scale of reporting to Rome. He meant that there would be no need to send so many reports to the different congregations (*CVE Pars I*, 25).

In turn, Archbishop Gordon Joseph Gray (Scotland) drew attention to the communication problems between Rome and distant regions. He suggested that the *vacatio legis* should be at least three months for Roman decrees. Less important matters—he emphasized—could be announced over the Vatican radio at a set date and time (e.g., at 6:00 p.m. on Friday) in Latin, and immediately afterward in the vernacular. It happened that decrees of the Holy See had reached the local Churches too late. Bishops often extracted the first information about them from profane journals (with great risk of error), and the decrees themselves were only sent after a useful time (*CVE Pars I*, 34).

According to Bishop Bruno Wechner (Austria), it was primarily the lack of permission to use national languages in communication with the Roman Curia that led to negative consequences. Therefore, he proposed that in the Vatican tribunals, the German language may also be admitted so that the burdensome translation of acts, especially in canonical processes, and the excessive loss of time associated with this, as well as the spiritual harm to the faithful (*damnum fidelium spirituale*), which was often related to it, may be avoided (*CVE Pars I*, 99).

Bishop Louis Morel, a Belgian missionary who served in China, criticized the insistence of the Roman Curia on providing the quickest possible answers to questions submitted to the local Churches, while the central institution took a relatively long time to process them. He cited as an example a letter drafted by the Curia on June 18, 1959, which—as indicated by the postmark on the envelope—was not sent until July 31. He concluded that since in Rome, it took 44 days to send a written letter, there should be no requirement that a reply, especially on a matter as serious as the Council, should be returned within 28 days. The author referred to a letter regarding the Council, which he had received on August 3, with a request to write a reply no later than September 1. In his opinion, this was just an example among a thousand and a thousand (*Exemplum hoc sit inter mille et mille*). Bishop Morel continued that requests for dispensations sent to the Roman Curia had taken months (*per menses et menses*) to be considered. Although this issue did not concern faith and morals, in his opinion, it could nevertheless be submitted to the Council Fathers so that appropriate discipline could be established or renewed in the Roman Curia (*CVE Pars I*, 135).

The Curia should be reorganized to meet new challenges and needs. According to the Apostolic Delegate to England, Gerald Patrick Aloysius O'Hara, a separate office should be established, linked to the Secretariat of State, to promote constant and cordial relations with the press worldwide, both Catholic and secular media. This would prevent press publications from being dependent on information from irresponsible individuals, lacking any authority, often referred to as “Vatican spokesmen” (*portavoce vaticani*) (*CVE Pars I*, 52). He also postulated that a new Congregation for

Bishops (*S. Congregatio pro Episcopis*), similar to the S. Congregation for Religious (*assimilari S. Congregationi pro Religiosis*), would be established, since many a time bishops did not know which congregation they could turn to for solutions to their problems (*CVE Pars I*, 50).

Structural modifications were also advocated by the Apostolic Delegate for Australia, New Zealand, and Oceania, Archbishop Romolo Carboni. He proposed to create a new Congregation, “On Catholic Action” (*De Actione Catholica*), which would direct the apostolic activities of the laity throughout the Church. Moreover, he suggested establishing a Statistics Office, which each year would faithfully distribute official statistics of the Holy See, scientifically prepared, with the collaboration of all nuncios, inter-nuncios, apostolic delegates, and local ordinaries, covering all aspects of the work and life of the Church worldwide (*CVE Pars VII*, 617).

Archbishop Joseph-Marie-Eugène Martin (France) raised the question of the need to adapt the number and structure of the Roman tribunals to the growing needs of the universal Church (*CVE Pars I*, 385–86). Yet, he did not develop further the issue of adapting the Roman Curia to modern standards.

The Salesian Pontifical University suggested changes in the Roman Curia and the establishment of new dicasteries: Sacred Congregation for Christian Doctrine (*S. Congregatio doctrinae Christianae*), Sacred Congregation for Secular Clergy (*S. Congregatio cleri saecularis*), Sacred Congregation for the Christian People (*S. Congregatio populi christiani*), Sacred Congregation for Studies (*S. Congregatio Studiorum*), and Office for the Coordination of Competencies and Activities of Dicasteries and Apostolate (*Officium coordinationis competentiarum et activitatum dicasteriorum et apostolatus*) (*SVU Pars I.2*, 143).<sup>4</sup>

Bishop Josef Schoiswohl (Austria) saw the need to take action to change the attitudes of all those who served in the Church so that their service would be more evangelical: “to overcome vain glory, the desire for power over others, personal intolerance, the false prudence of the world, cunning, and flattery, so that from the Roman Curia to the last parish house all may serve all in charity” (*ut a Romana Curia usque ad ultimam domum paroecialem omnes omnibus in caritate serviant*). He suggested that although this seemed to be beyond human strength, the Lord was fully aware of these difficulties, so He placed the commandment of love above all other commandments (*CVE Pars I*, 66).

A postulate to changes in the way of selecting those who work in the Roman Curia (*mutationes in modo eligendi eos qui in Curia laborant*) was voiced by the French circles. However, Bishop Pierre-Marie-Joseph Puech, who formulated this request, did not propose any specific procedure for selecting suitable candidates (*CVE Pars I*, 261).

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<sup>4</sup> The Salesian University presented a number of detailed proposals for dividing the dicasteries along with the justification for such actions (*SVU Pars I.2*, 141–42).

Bishop John William Heffernan, an Irish-born priest who served in Kenya, emphasized that prelates in the Roman Curia should be experienced and learned in missionary matters. He believed it would be particularly desirable that they had some personal experience of missionary life (*ut quamdam experientiam personalem vitae missionariae habeant*) so that they might better understand the difficulties and more easily propose solutions (CVE Pars II, 105).

There were also other critical voices concerning this area, emphasizing that officials working in the Roman Curia were derealized. Their excessive “removal” from people and a lack of relationships with those they express opinions about—as Pierre-Marie Théas pointed out—led them deeply injure many souls (*profunde laedunt plurimas animas*). The French bishop emphasized the value of interpersonal relationships (CVE Pars I, 421).

In its decisions, the Roman Curia should take into account the particular conditions of each nation (*peculiares cuiusque nationis condiciones respiciat*). It was Cardinal Franz König (Austria) who drew attention to that problem. He did not elaborate on it, merely appealing for the possibility of using the German language in the acts transmitted to Rome (CVE Pars I, 78).

Among the frequently recurring requests was the need to improve coordination and cooperation (*coordinatio ac cooperatio*) between the different congregations in those matters which pertained to the various mission regions. For example, Archbishop Ferdinand Périer of Calcutta (India) proposed this issue as a topic for reflection for the council. He emphasized the need to select in the Congregations consultants and others who best understood the way of thinking, feeling, and acting of peoples living in different regions so that the Congregations would not issue decrees that would contradict the praiseworthy customs of these nations, but rather may foster and help a certain adaptation of rites, ceremonies, and religious practice as far as possible, in accordance with the traditions and customs of these peoples (CVE Pars IV, 116–17).

Archbishop Louis-Marie-Fernand de Bazelaire de Ruppierre suggested that, while maintaining the wisest traditions of the Roman Curia, methods adapted to contemporary customs and techniques should be used in considering various matters (*adhibeantur methodi hodiernis moribus et technicis adaptatae*), guided by prudence (CVE Pars I, 269). However, he did not develop his proposal.

A request from Australia aimed at improving the functioning of the Roman Curia, which the Apostolic Delegate Carboni understood that the offices might hasten the processing of cases and providing answers, and this was all the more so—as he noted—when the fastest means of transmission were available on both sides (CVE Pars VII, 617).

The University of Toulouse addressed the issue of governing the congregations, requesting that given the pace of world change (*mundi mutationum celeritas crescit*), the function of governing the dicasteries should not be reserved only for cardinals.

The dicasteries should be renewed taking into account the age of their members. Many cardinals were old and *de facto* irremovable, a situation that should be changed. The University submitted a number of detailed proposals regarding the function of the particular dicasteries. Here are some of them:

- a) similar cases should not be dealt with by the different dicasteries (clearly defined scope of their competences);
- b) priority in the dicasteries should be introduced (apostolic dicasteries should be given priority over political or administrative ones; and in each dicastery, priority should be given to the propagation of the faith and the care of souls);
- c) the dicasteries should be internally divided into departments responsible for the different regions of the world (analogously to the division in religious orders), with those heading them coming from the countries whose cases they were to deal with, and after the lapse of 10 or 15 years, they could be appointed as bishops in those countries;
- d) the Congregation of the Holy Office should include people who were experts in each field of study so that they could deal with new questions that arise in the world (for it is impossible to be vigilant about doctrine unless one is aware of the new circumstances in which doubtful things appear; it would be more useful to help and show the way to those who deal with theology in the Church than to merely suppress errors) (*SVU Pars II*, 578–79).

The Faculty of Theology of the Lateran University drew attention to the frequent criticism of the organization of the Roman Curia. It was noted that the complaints were heard not only outside Rome but also among the curial officials themselves, who lamented the deficient organization of their institution. The complaints primarily concerned the actual organization of the Curia, focused on granting privileges and graces. Instead, there was a need for a central organization (*organisatio centralis*) that would be prepared to defend ideas, systems, and methods, exerting a positive influence on the peripheral areas. Therefore, the Lateran University opted for centralism, only postulating that the currently existing pathologies in the functioning of the Roman Curia should be responded to by its reorganization. Action is necessary, as stated, “to overturn pernicious distrust” (*ad evertendam perniciosam diffidentiam*) toward this institution. It was emphasized that although the reorganization of the Roman Curia fell within the scope of the competence of the Holy See, the Council Fathers could make a positive contribution to determining its main directions (*SVU Pars I.1*, 224–25).

To sum up, the critical voices from the aforementioned circles formed a coherent picture of the Roman Curia as an institution increasingly out of touch with the reality it was fundamentally intended to serve. Its actual procedures made it resemble a bureaucratic “labyrinth,” where documents took weeks to process, and bishops from distant countries learned about decisions more quickly from journals than

from official communiqués. The slowness of action, the obscurity of competences, and communication difficulties created an image of the Curia that required radical, rather than cosmetic, changes.

The new proposals raised a systemic question: Should the Curia continue to function as a central organ concentrating power or rather as a coordination center supporting the particular Churches in their diversity? The proposed reforms—from better coordination, through the creation of new congregations, to the admission of the vernacular languages—were intended to improve the Curia’s pro-evangelization function.

Many voices called for a more evangelical style of ministry: humility, service, realism, and closeness to the faithful. Others emphasized the need for professionalization—selecting competent candidates, especially those with missionary experience, and refreshing the structures, too often ruled by irremovable and elderly dignitaries. To achieve many of these goals, the internationalization of the office in question was required, and I will look at this in more detail in the next section of the present paper.

## 2. Internationalization of the Roman Curia

All nations, as stressed by Bishop Georges-Marie-Joseph-Hubert-Ghislain de Jonghe d’Ardoye (a Belgian prelate who worked in Egypt for a long time), should be increasingly called upon to cooperate and help in the governance of the universal Church, especially at the level of the Curia of the Supreme Pontiff, so that even non-Catholics could perceive the universality of the Church. The hierarch referred to his personal experiences and conversations, especially in times of war. This kind of internationalization, he noted, would help attract our separated brethren to the true Church of Christ (*CVE Pars I*, 152).

Another Belgian Bishop, Xavier Geeraerts (Vicar Apostolic in the Democratic Republic of Congo), postulated that the governance of the Church should show its true catholicity and internationality so that its international character could be clearly evident (*character internationalis plane elucet*) (*CVE Pars I*, 149).

Bishop Marcel Daubechies (Zambia) postulated that the assignment of roles and offices for the general administration of the Church (*assignatio munerum et officiorum pro administratione generali Ecclesiae*) were to be even more international. This, he believed, would be of great benefit to the demonstration of the universality and catholicity of the Church, especially to non-Catholics (*CVE Pars V*, 411).

The ecumenical significance of internationalizing the Roman Curia was also highlighted by the aforementioned Archbishop de Ruppierre. Reforming, or rather improving, the Curia would contribute—in this French archbishop’s view—both to the “ecumenical” cause and to the common good of the Church. He had in mind the

supranational and universal character of the reform so that clerics from the dioceses of the whole world (including the regions dependent on the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) would be selected and called to serve in the Congregations, Tribunals, and Roman offices (*CVE* Pars I, 269).

Bishop Louis-Marie-Joseph Durrieu (Burkina Faso) continued in the same spirit. He emphasized the facilitation of communication so that bishops coming to Rome would meet people from their nations, speaking their languages, in the congregations (*CVE* Pars V, 62–64).<sup>5</sup>

The postulates for internationalizing the Curia were not limited solely to matters related to nations, continents, and languages. The Eastern Churches submitted suggestions that various rites should also have representatives in the Roman Curia. For instance, Isidore Borecky, Greek Catholic bishop of Toronto, called for the Roman congregations to be staffed with officials who had a good understanding of the situation of the individual Churches in different nations. He meant not only lower-level officials, but also bishops and cardinals (*CVE* Pars VI, 118–19). A similar suggestion was made by Bishop José Romão Martenetz (Brazil), who proposed increasing the number of officials belonging to the Eastern rites and facilitating access to these offices for the faithful of the Eastern rite (*CVE* Pars VII, 334).

As we can see, the calls for internationalization were justified primarily by the possibility of facilitating contacts within the Church, making her more credible outside (ecumenical perspective) and improving her management. The point was to bear witness to the universality of the Church and to help the pope. Archbishop Benjamín De Arriba y Castro of Tarragona went even further in his postulates, emphasizing the need for the Church not only to be ecumenical in her General Councils, and ecumenical or catholic (*oecumenica seu catholica*) in her constitution, but also to appear to be so, to an even greater extent than it was shown, in her Curia (*CVE* Pars II, 345). The Spanish cardinal understood the concept of ecumenism not only in the sense of multiculturalism, multinationalism, and diversity, but also in the sense of interconfessionality.

Bishop Sergio Pignedoli (Italy) spoke along the same line, urging that non-Catholics attending the Council would experience great hospitality—they feel welcome not only in the house of the Common Father, but also in the Curia (*CVE* Pars III, 851).

In a word, the postulates for the internationalization of the Roman Curia sounded like the cry of the Church being dispersed throughout the world, yearning to recognize herself in the mirror of the central institution—and in that reflection, to see her own face. Bishops from Africa, Asia, America, and Europe spoke with one voice: if the Church was to be universal in the *theological sense*, her

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<sup>5</sup> The same tone can be seen in the response given by Archbishop Josip Antun Ujčić of Belgrade (*CVE* Pars II, 537).

administrative center must cease to look, think, and act as an institution of one nation, one language, and one experience. It seems that such a vision did not merely concern the Church's organization but was imbued with a symbolic meaning: the Church would be more credible outside if her internal structures reflected respect for unity in diversity.

Particular attention should be drawn to the ecumenical dimension of the reforms proposed in the *vota*. Considering the nature of the pre-conciliar relationships between Catholics and other Christian groups, the suggestion that the Curia served as a forum for interfaith meetings seemed revolutionary. The same is true of the proposals that representatives of the different Catholic rites should be allowed to serve in this institution. For the authors of such requests, this was not merely a matter of justice and administrative efficiency, but an attempt to overcome a certain historical tension within the Catholic Church. The background for those voices was the desire for greater responsiveness from Rome to the local Churches, linked to the call for decentralization, which will be discussed in the next point.

### 3. Decentralization of the Church

The decentralization of church structures was a major topic in the *vota* submitted to the Council. Many bishops noted the growing centralization associated with the increasing powers of the Roman Curia. They also signaled voices from outside the Church, perceiving this trend as a hindrance to the unity of the Church and an obstacle to ecumenical dialogue and conversions to Catholicism. For example, in the *vota* from Denmark and Finland there was much emphasis on the Lutherans' admiration for the Catholic Church, while simultaneously expressing concern about the excessive centralization of the Church's structures (*CVE* Pars I, 159, 163).

Reducing the "centralization" of the Church—this was a voice coming from France—was necessary in relation to the Eastern Churches, especially in the perspective of building unity. The Latin Church should set an example in this area (*Ecclesia latina det exemplum*) (*CVE* Pars I, 224).

The Greek-Melkite Catholic Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh, along with nineteen Eastern bishops, voiced a very strong and critical argument against the centralization of the Church. The main cause of this evil, they noted, was the tendency of most Latin theologians and canonists to concentrate all the power entrusted by Christ to His Church in the single person of the pope, and consequently to grant disproportionately centralized and practically sovereign powers to the Roman Curia, which acts in his name. The centralization of power in the person of the pope, and in practice in the Roman Curia, caused the disappearance of all power in the Church (*CVE* Pars IV, 456). Therefore, Patriarch Maximos IV called for strengthening the

powers of the Eastern bishops, i.e. their right to elect both their patriarch and other bishops. In his opinion, the Roman Curia should not stand in the way of such actions (*CVE* Pars IV, 462).

The Latin Rite bishops also voiced strong criticism of the growing, yet senseless, excessive centralization (*sine sensu supercentralizata est*) of executive power in the Church. Bishop Michael Rodrigues (India) expressed this sentiment, closely linking the issues of power with responsibility. He advocated for a reversal of centralization. Bishops should be left with a greater responsibility in governing their dioceses. Decentralization, Rodrigues continued, was desired by the bishops of the most distant regions, which seemed to demonstrate that this was not a question of the “hunger for power” (*non agi de fame potestatis*) on the part of a few, but of an undue limitation of the responsibility (*de indebita limitatione responsabilitatis*) of those who, as successors of the Apostles, enjoyed the fullness of the priesthood. In the world, and even in religious orders, a sure sign of the greater good was to give lower officials a share in the ultimate responsibility, without reserving to themselves the decisions for which the officials were competent. Therefore, in Rodrigues’s opinion, only priests of proven faith and sincere devotion to the Holy See should be appointed to the office of bishop, but then they should be given that authority and power which demand and even call forth the best that is hidden in them. Moreover, the scope of competences of the apostolic delegates in mission lands should be clearly defined so that they did not govern their dioceses above the heads of the bishops (*non vero regere dioeceses supra capita Antistitum*). With very few exceptions, as the delegates did not know the language of their territory, they could not read local newspapers and periodicals, which nevertheless reflected the thinking and feelings of the people living there. Therefore, in their assessments and judgments, they depended on a few whose authority and integrity were often left much to be desired (*CVE* Pars IV, 97–98).

Calling for a certain decentralization of government in the Church, Bishop Joseph-Pierre-Albert Wittebols (Congo) suggested that the privileges and powers enjoyed by the Eastern Churches be granted to other Churches as well. He believed in

a universal and united Church in the future constituted of diverse churches more adapted to the worship of nations; namely: the Latin-Western Church; the Greco-Oriental Church; the Slavic Church; the Asian Church; the African Church. Thus, we will be able to achieve unity in diversity and further promote the adaptation of liturgical, disciplinary and pastoral matters to the proper worship of each nation. (*CVE* Pars V, 196–97)

The aforementioned apostolic delegate to England, O’Hara, proposed that, as part of decentralization, tribunals like the Roman Rota should be established on every continent, which would oversee the speedy resolution of all kinds of disputes. Such tribunals would have the same authority as the Roman Rota and would also be constituted exactly like it, namely with their own judges and other officials fully qualified

for their duties, and appointed by the pope. Therefore, thanks to such tribunals, cases would be resolved more quickly, to the great benefit of souls (*CVE* Pars I, 51).

The decentralization of the Church would also benefit from increasing the competences of bishops, who would no longer have to turn to Rome in many matters, but instead they themselves could decide them. Such voices were most common in the *vota* (*CVE* Pars I, 72, 215, 321, 365–66, 446; Pars III, 519). It is worth citing one of the most spectacular examples. Bishop Martin suggested that cases should be resolved where they arose, without the need to appeal to Rome. He primarily referred to matters relating to marriage. Excessive procedural concentration in one place created the risk of delays and responses that were not appropriate for each case being considered (*CVE* Pars I, 385–86).<sup>6</sup>

In summary, it should be noted that the written submissions concerning the need for decentralization expressed collective opposition to a system that had ossified over the centuries and led to such a concentration of power in Rome that it no longer responded to the actual needs of the local communities. The authors of the *vota* were concerned about the functioning of pyramid-like structures that showed only theoretical respect for episcopal collegiality. This was most strongly expressed in the requests submitted by the Eastern Catholic bishops, led by Patriarch Maximos IV. Their diagnoses revealed the systemic problem of identifying the pope and his administrative apparatus with full power in the Church, leading to the erosion of the hierarchs' powers in their local Churches and to the danger of unification of the diverse traditions.

Bishops from India, Congo, France, Scandinavia, and England observed that excessive centralization harmed the Church's mission and aroused distrust among members of other faiths. Paradoxically, in this way centralization posed a threat to unity.

Certain specific issues were equally important. Curial officials, unfamiliar with the local realities and tasked with resolving problems of local communities, made decisions based on superficial information, which in some cases was not helpful, but even could be harmful. In this context, a solution could be the establishment of continental tribunals or the delegation of greater powers to bishops.

It should be emphasized that the strength of these voices resulted not only from their number, but also from their geographic and cultural diversity. They did not express the protest of the peripheral areas against the center—they were calls of the entire Church for a more synodal, more evangelical, and more responsible structure of the Roman Curia.

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<sup>6</sup> A similar sentiment was expressed by Bishop Laurent Morin (Canada), who emphasized that those wishing to enter into mixed marriages often did so in the presence of non-Catholic ministers due to the excessive waiting time for dispensations. Greater power for the ordinaries would resolve these issues (*CVE* Pars VI, 71–72).

## Conclusions

The research efforts undertaken have aimed to uncover and analyze the contributions submitted during the preparatory period of the Second Vatican Council; they revealed problems with the functioning of the Roman Curia and suggested directions for their resolution. Based on this, several fundamental conclusions can be drawn.

First, the reform of the Roman Curia was perceived not as one of many topics for consideration, but as a condition for the possibility of a broader renewal of the Church. In the eyes of many bishops, the Curia reached a critical juncture, and its real impact on the lives of the faithful was increasingly inadequate to the challenges it faced. At the same time, many diagnosed that this was not merely a matter of procedural changes, but a shift toward a reaffirmation of the ecclesiology of *communio*.

Second, the submitted *vota* can allow us to see a triple intuition: the Roman Curia should become more efficient, more catholic in the sense of universality, and more collegial. The reforms proposed would serve to reshape procedures so that the administrative center of the Church would no longer be a bureaucratic bottleneck, but a tool for efficient decision-making in a spirit of service to the peripheral areas. This would be achieved through both openness to the diverse languages in the exchange of information and the international experience of officials working in Rome.

Third, the voices under analysis show no connection between criticizing the Roman Curia and undermining papal primacy. Neither the role of the pope nor the position of Rome was questioned, but only postulates for a better organization of the administrative apparatus were expressed.

It seems that although over sixty years have passed since the process described, many of the voices cited have not lost their relevance. Questions about the relationship between the center and the periphery, the place of the particular Churches in the decision-making process, the mode of governance, and the credibility of institutions in the eyes of other Christians and the contemporary world are still being asked and should be posed in the future.

In this respect, the study of the *vota* has not only been a reconstruction of the history of theology, but can become a starting point for contemporary reflections on changes in the Roman Curia so that this institution would serve the pope and at the same time constitute the center of ecclesial communion, being not only a governing body.

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