



EDITORIAL

Rediscovering the Second Vatican Council

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While opening this year's series of catechetical addresses, Pope Leo XIV remarked:

Together with the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, in 2025, we remembered the sixtieth anniversary of Vatican Council II. Although the time that separates us from this event is not so long, it is equally true that the generation of bishops, theologians and believers of Vatican II is no longer with us. Therefore, while we hear the call not to let its prophecy fade, and to continue to seek ways and means to implement its insights, it will be important to get to know it again closely, and to do so not through “hearsay” or interpretations that have been given, but by rereading its documents and reflecting on their content. Indeed, it is the Magisterium that still constitutes the guiding star of the Church's journey today. (Leo XIV 2026, “General Audience,” January 7, 2026)

The present volume of *Verbum Vitae* constitutes a response to this papal call. It represents an attempt at a scholarly reflection on the Second Vatican Council from a variety of perspectives, seeking to present this event as firmly rooted in Tradition, attentive to the living pulse of the Church and the world in the mid-twentieth century, and bearing fruits in various spheres of post-conciliar ecclesial and social life.

This issue was inspired by the scholarly symposium Dialogue in the Church in the Light of the Documents of the Second Vatican Council. The event took place at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow on November 27–28, 2025, attended by the specialists in conciliar studies from across Europe. Michael Quisinsky from Karlsruhe University of Education delivered the opening lecture, expanded in this volume with the article “On the (Ir)Relevance of the Second Vatican Council.”

The second conference session, entitled “Around the Council's Idea of Dialogue,” featured two additional presentations, both of them published in this issue in the revised version. The first one by Rafael Vázquez Jiménez from the San Pablo Higher Center for Theological Studies, Loyola Andalucía University, is dedicated to the “Dialogue *Ad Extra*: The Relevance of *Unitatis Redintegratio* and *Nostra Aetate*,” and the second one by Dirk Ansoerge from the Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy

and Theology—to the “Dialogue *Ad Intra*: The Relevance of *Lumen Gentium* and *Christus Dominus* for a Synodal Church.”

The third session, “Dialogue and the Council from the East-Central European Perspective,” expanded the previous discussions by bringing together three speakers who explored the Second Vatican Council through the experiences of theologians behind the Iron Curtain. The session featured papers by Urszula Pękala from Saarland University (“Dialogue and the Council from Polish and East German Perspective”), Adela Muchova from the Protestant Theological Faculty, Charles University in Prague (“Dialogue and the Council from a Czech Perspective”), and István Csontai from Pécsi Püspöki Hittudományi Főiskola (“They Were There but They Were Not: Hungarian Bishops’ Participation at the Second Vatican Council”). The presentation by Muchova has been further developed in the article included in this issue: “Faith and Culture in Dialogue: Tomáš Halík en Route from Vatican II to Synodality.”

The second day of the conference began with the opening lecture delivered by Damian Wąsek and Marek Gilski from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, on the “*Vota* for the Second Vatican Council: A Diagnosis of the Pre-Conciliar State of the Church.” This issue of *Verbum Vitae* includes further developed themes from that lecture in the form of two articles: by Wąsek, “The Reform of the Roman Curia in the *Vota* for Vatican II,” and by Gilski, “Papal Primacy and Episcopal Collegiality in the *Vota* for Vatican II.”

The first session of the second day, dedicated to the “Constitutive Conditions of Dialogue,” included papers delivered by Przemysław Artemiuk from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw (“The Church’s Openness to the World as a Condition for Dialogue”) and Antoni Nadbrzeżny from the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (“Religious Freedom as the Foundation of the Church’s Dialogue with the Contemporary World”). Artemiuk further developed one of the themes of his presentation, namely, the perspective of the Warsaw School of Apologetics, and submitted to this volume the article on “The Reception of Vaticanum II in the Apologetics of Józef Myśków (1927–1988).”

The final thematic area of the symposium was focused on the “Dialogue of the Church in Its Religious Dimensions.” During this session the following speakers were included: Marek Błaza from the Collegium Bobolanum – Catholic Academy in Warsaw (“*Orientalium Ecclesiarum* and Dialogue with the Eastern Catholic Churches”), Zygfryd Glaeser from the University of Opole (“*Unitatis Redintegratio* and Ecumenical Dialogue”), and Tereza Huspeková, from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow (“The Notion of ‘Religion’ in *Nostra Aetate*: Said, Unsaid, and Still to Say”) whose expanded paper is also included in this issue under the same title.

It is also worth noting that the conference mentioned above and many of the articles published here are connected with the implementation of research projects financed with three research grants: The Science for Society II Programme of the

Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, entitled “The Church as a Space for Dialogue: The Second Vatican Council Read Anew” (Project No. NdS-II/SN/0050/2023/01; The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow); the National Program for the Development of Humanities of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Poland, entitled “Pillars of Polish Apologetics and Fundamental Theology” (Project No. NPRH/DN/SP/0009/2023/12; The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow), as well as the Program of the Charles University Research Centre (UNCE/24/SSH/019).

Some of the authors of the articles present in this volume are members of the Research Center for the Second Vatican Council, affiliated with the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow. For this reason, many of the themes addressed to in the presented papers are the results of the scholarly research conducted within this institution. The source materials used together with commentaries and auxiliary studies to deepen and critically assess the key issues related to the Second Vatican Council are provided on its website (<https://vatican2center.upjp2.edu.pl/>).

Contributions to the above mentioned conference have been complemented by several additional articles. Robert Woźniak (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow) discusses the hermeneutics of conciliar texts (“Dogmatic and Pastoral Coherence of the Second Vatican Council: A Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Its Texts and Message”). Jarosław Nowaszczuk (University of Szczecin) presents the Polish bishops’ position on language in the liturgy (“Latin and Vernacular: *Vota* of Polish Bishops to the Second Vatican Council”). Andrzej Napiórkowski (The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow) addresses the problem of applying appropriate methods to conciliar documents (“From the Anti-Reformist Method of the Documents of the Council of Trent to the Pastoral Methods of the Second Vatican Council”). Jacek Kempa (University of Silesia in Katowice) explores the contemporary issue of the tension between autonomy and theonomy, which has characterised both the teaching of the Church and modern thought and culture (“Freedom and the Dilemma of ‘Autonomy – Theonomy’: On a Possible Reading of *Gaudium et Spes*”). Krzysztof Kościelniak (Jagiellonian University in Krakow) presents a detailed account of the evolution of references to Islam during the Second Vatican Council (“The Council Fathers’ Discussions and Controversies on the Inclusion of References to Islam in the Second Vatican Council Documents”). Kazimierz Pek (The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin) demonstrates the influence of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the development of a Polish concept of Mariology (“*De Maria Numquam Satis Vere: The Conciliar Genesis of Stanisław Celestyn Napiórkowski’s Mariology in Context*”). Wojciech Grygiel (University of Opole) analyses how the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on science found a mature and influential form of expression in the teaching of John Paul II (“Speaking from Within Science: Vatican II’s Legacy in John Paul II’s *Letter to George Coyne*”). Finally, Felipe Sérgio Koller, Márcio Luiz Fernandes, and Christiane

Meier (Pontifical Catholic University of Campinas and Pontifical Catholic University of Paraná, Brazil) examine the significance of the legacy of the Second Vatican Council for artistic creativity (“The Work of Cláudio Pastro in the Context of Sacred Art After the Second Vatican Council”).

We express our deep gratitude to all the contributors of this volume of *Verbum Vitae*, especially to the conference participants. We hope that the published articles will encourage the readers to continue their creative reflection on the challenging legacy of the Second Vatican Council.