

Healthy Faith, Church, Spirituality, and Morality: Moving from an *Either/Or* to a *Both/And* Mindset

Looking at the Church over the last 100 years—pre and post Vatican II—we have the opportunity to consider the shifts in emphasis within the Church. It is not so much a matter of *Either/Or* but more of *Both/And*. In a sense, it is a kind of pendulum swing; the emphasis needed for a healthy Faith, Church, Spirituality, and Morality may change given different times and situations. However, the inherent underlying truth remains. The teachings, the documents of Vatican II fifty years ago signaled such a change in emphasis without denying or removing the teachings of the Church in pre-Vatican II times. It was a matter of both a pre-Vatican II and a post-Vatican II Church teachings existing with a change in emphasis in order to fulfill the perceived needs of a faithful living in a changed and changing world.

The question presented to us as faithful members of the Church is, “In any given moment in time or in any specific situation, what needs further emphasis?” Each row in the table below deals with fundamental teaching of the Church. The difference between the two sets of concepts or teachings, left and right, are a matter of emphasis within Church teaching rather than each being a denial or rejection of the other. So the question is repeated, “In this day and age, in your life and that of your community, what needs further emphasis?”

Basically emphasized pre-Vatican II	Basically emphasized post-Vatican II
Transcendent God (beyond all that is)	Immanent God (at the core of life, all that is)
Jesus — fully divine	Jesus — fully human
Holy Spirit as gift of baptism	Spirit of God as gift of creation
Experiencing God mediated in and through the Catholic Church, the Mystical Body of Christ	Experiencing God personally in and through encountering Jesus in prayer, in others, in life
Church sacraments as channels of grace	Life as sacrament, all of creation as graced
Church as bringing together committed followers of the Lord	Church centered in mission—recognizing and expressing God's healing, merciful, saving love for a wounded, sinful human family
Structure—Church as institution, emphasis on hierarchical church, authority, order	Spirit—Church as pilgrim people of God, emphasis on all believers, guided by the Holy Spirit with focus on mission to the world
Exclusive	Inclusive

Basically emphasized pre-Vatican II	Basically emphasized post-Vatican II
Focus on human sinfulness	Focus on divine redemption—redeemed sinners
Evangelization as proclaiming our convictions	Evangelization as dialogue, openness, learning
Emphasis on outer morality and righteous judgment	Emphasis on humble, interior spirituality, being transformed by God's love (grace)
Focus on personal moral issues, personal responsibility	Focus on social justice issues—encountering the poor, systemic sins, societal responsibility
Gospel truth—absolutes, certainty, high ideals	Gospel love—compassionate, merciful response to people who are uncertain, fall short of ideals
Grounded in Scripture and Tradition — emphasis on continuity, stability (Roots)	Open to new insights (development of doctrine) and possibilities/innovations for addressing contemporary concerns (Vision)
Taking seriously the cost of discipleship	Experiencing gratitude, joy in following Jesus
Dying to self (the ego self), need to control	Rising to new life, other-centered love, trust

1. *Where do you tend to lean within each of these seeming opposites? Why so?*

2. *What do you believe is the value for the institutional Catholic Church, for individuals within it, and for you personally to be able to move from an either/or mindset to a both/and mindset in these areas?*

3. *Which 2-3 of these polarities do you think most need to be reflected upon and discussed*
 - *Within the Catholic Church as a whole?*

 - *Within your own parish or circle of friends?*