QUESTIONS FOR AN INTERVIEW ABOUT VATICAN II

The purpose of the interview is to obtain testimonies about the impact of the Second Vatican Council on the lives of Catholics and, it may be, others. Ideally, then, it should be conducted with people old enough to remember life in the Church before the Council and perhaps something about the Council itself, but will in any case know about the changes that have been introduced since the Council. The interview can be conducted with one person or with two or three--any more than that is likely to be chaotic and not likely to produce any clear information.

It may be delicate and you will have to decide whether you want to or can get into this, but it would be helpful to know about the people you interview whether they were serious about their religion before the Council or are serious today. It may be that someone has been converted or that someone has left the Church entirely. In either case, if they're willing to talk about it, it might be good to find out whether the Council had anything to do with it.

I will want you, in summarizing and interpreting what you learn in the interview, to relate it to what we have done in class. So take the interview seriously, and ask the people to do so too.

At the beginning of your report, tell me something about the person or people interviewed: their age, ethnic background, occupation, place where they lived, schooling, religious education, etc. This can be brief, but it helps me to locate them.

To focus the interview and to prevent it from wandering all over the lot, I suggest the following kinds of questions:

Before the Council

1. What features or elements of being a Catholic would you say were most distinctive in themselves and important to you in the period before the Council? (If you don't get easy responses, suggest such things as: Mass in Latin, no meat on Friday, favorite devotions, relations with Protestants and others [What did Catholics tend to think of them? What did they tend to think of Catholics?], relations with priests and nuns, etc.

Ask them if they belonged to any organizations such as: the CYO, Holy Name Society, Blessed Mother's Sodality, Children of Mary, Young Catholic Students, etc. Ask men if they were altar boys?

Did they ever read the Bible? Did they know much about it?

Did they remember much about the church music then? Did they have any favorite hymns?

Did they have favorite saints?

Or make use of the brief paragraphs from Garry Wills that I gave you to spark memories.

2. Are there any aspects of your life as a Catholic before the Council that you didn't like, that you're glad have changed? Why

3. On the other hand, are there things that you miss, wish had not been changed, wish had not disappeared? Why? (Again, if necessary, ask about such things as indicated under #1.)

N.B. The people should answer *both* (2) and (3).

The Council

3. Do you remember Vatican II? Pope John XXIII? How did you learn about the Council: from priests or teachers, in the newspapers? What do you remember thinking or feeling about what was going on in Rome?

4. Did you ever read any of the documents the Council produced?

After the Council

5. What aspects, if any, of your life as a Catholic have changed most since Vatican II?

6. If that question doesn't work, try asking: Growing up Catholic today is a different thing in many respects from what it was like in the 1940s or 1950s. What do you see as the biggest differences? (This is meant to be an "objective" question, evaluation comes in later questions.) Once again, if answers are slow in coming, use particular examples like those in #1 above.)

7. Which changes in the Church and in your own Catholic life are you happiest with, are you grateful for? Try to get them to be specific.

8. Which changes in the Church and in your own Catholic life do you regret, wish hadn't happened? (This is another way of asking question #2 above.)

9. In the videos on Vatican II, people are often asked to complete the following sentence: "If it hadn't been for Vatican II, ..." Try asking this and see what people say.

Writing Your Essay

In writing your essay on the interview, begin with a brief description of the person, as indicated above.

Then look over your notes and see if any kind of pattern emerges. If so, use that as a guide in your essay. If not, then give a good description of what was said.

At the end give your impressions of the interview, what kinds of things you learned from it, perhaps also how it illumines or is illumined by the course.