

# Holy Things, Holy People

Exploring Catholic history in the Northwest through treasures from the past

PART 33: ARCHBISHOP CONNOLLY'S MAP OF ROME

6 DECEMBER 2015

Next Tuesday, December 8, 2015, marks the beginning of the Year of Mercy—and the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. In fact, that anniversary is the primary reason Pope Francis selected this date for the beginning of the Jubilee: “The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history... The walls which too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way” (Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*).

In hindsight, the importance of the Second Vatican Council is overwhelmingly evident. But in the months leading up to the Council, its true significance was not nearly so obvious. Only gradually did the world's bishops realize that they were being invited to the Council not only to listen, but to speak, to share their own wisdom and pastoral experience in a radical re-envisioning of the Church's approach to her mission.

This evolving understanding is especially evident in the correspondence of our own Archbishop Connolly. As the Council unfolded, he became more and more deeply engaged, culminating in his own address on the Council floor in 1965.

Pope John XXIII had announced the Council in January, 1959, very shortly after his election in November of 1958. Preparatory work began almost immediately, but for Archbishop Connolly of Seattle—and for many other bishops as well—it all seemed very far away. Only in the early part of 1962 did the Council begin to become more tangible.

One of the earliest letters Archbishop Connolly wrote about the Council, dated April 2, 1962, was addressed to Father John Sullivan, SS, the rector of St. Thomas Seminary. “The thought recently struck me (no kiddin’) that at last a means has been placed at my disposal to express my gratitude to you for the able assistance you afforded us in the planning and construction of the new Major Seminary of St. Thomas the Apostle. Since the Ecumenical Canons permit me to have a theologian (so-called!) accompany me to the forthcoming Ecumenical Council to be opened in Rome on October 11th, I desire to avail myself of your services in that regard.” Archbishop Connolly clearly saw the presence of a theologian as a mere formality. In fact, he saw his own presence as a formality: “I understand that the first session opens on October 11th and that it may possibly continue until December 10th. However, the above mentioned offer is only valid for the first session, since I myself am rather dubious about attending some of the subsequent conferences.”

Father Sullivan responded swiftly and enthusiastically. “When I see a letter coming in from 906 Terry Avenue, I'm not always



This tourist map of Rome accompanied Archbishop Connolly to the Second Vatican Council. Courtesy of the Archives of the Archdiocese of Seattle.

certain that the birds are singing and that all's well with the world. But when I read your letter of April 2, 1962... I knew spring was here... For a few minutes I was in something of a trance just dreaming about it all. Nothing like this had ever happened to me before, and, I'm sure, won't happen again. In a breathless, bug-eyed way, Your Excellency, I'm trying to say that I'm *most grateful* for your magnanimous invitation to attend the Ecumenical Council with you.” Father Sullivan went on to question his own abilities to assist Archbishop Connolly as a *peritus* or expert advisor at the Council. “I am no Cicero or even Father Hoey when it comes to Latin,” he joked, offering to step aside in favor of some other more able theologians. But none of that mattered to Archbishop Connolly, and Father Sullivan went along.

During the summer, preparations for the Council intensified. The National Catholic Welfare Conference (which has since become today's USCCB) sent the bishops of the United States detailed notes to help them prepare for the Council. “Most of the buildings are unheated until the middle of December and although it seldom reaches freezing it does get rather uncomfortable.... Accordingly, it would seem necessary to bring heavier clothing, woolens, etc., especially if one is susceptible to colds.... It is

suggested that bishops send their cigars on ahead.” The letter concluded: “There is the delicate question of street dress once the bishops are in Rome. Possibly there will be a directive on this but it is well to be aware of the problem beforehand.” Bishop Dougherty of Yakima, Archbishop Connolly's good friend, summarized the challenges in a letter: “It all adds up to our bringing our ferraiolos. See you at Gamarelli's!”

Archbishop Connolly took on the travel arrangements not only for himself but for the other bishops of the Northwest. He booked passage for them on the *Leonardo da Vinci*, one of the great ocean liners plying the Atlantic, and arranged for guided tours of Gibraltar, Pompeii, Capri, and Naples along the way. He secured rooms at the Hotel Flora on the Via Veneto, not far from the U. S. Embassy. (Signora Signorini not only provided rooms for Connolly and his brother bishops, but also a large parlor where they could say Mass in the mornings.)

With all of this going on, it is perhaps little wonder that many bishops had very little time to review the hundreds of pages of draft *schemas* which began to arrive from the office of the Apostolic Delegate in mid-August.

Archbishop Connolly set sail for Rome on September 22. He would not be in Rome many days before he began to realize the scope and scale of what “Good Pope John” had planned at the Second Vatican Council.

*To be continued.*

—Corinna Laughlin, *Pastoral Assistant for Liturgy*