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Fresh Air & Vatican II

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Distinctly Catholic

There are few things better than driving through the New England countryside in the summertime with the windows open, the fresh air coming through the trees, the smells of the forests inland and the sea along the shore. But, this summer, round a bend in the road near my home, just before the state forest, a skunk had been killed and the windows had to go up as the putrid aromas filled the car.

I thought of this when reading my colleague Maureen Fiedler's comment about Vatican II and Pope John XXIII's famous metaphor for the Council of opening the windows of the Church to let the fresh air in. The Second Vatican Council certainly let some fresh air into the Church. There has been much fresh air let into the Church, but I would also point out that the last fifty years have brought some putrid odors through the windows and I have no objection to the Church's authorities occasionally shutting the windows. Despite Fiedler's unqualified contention that since the close of the Council, the windows have been increasingly shut by the powers that be at the Vatican, I will only note that today the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury is addressing a Synod of Catholic bishops. That would have been unthinkable in the early 1960s.

I would also ask Fiedler to point me to any single solitary line in the documents of Vatican II that would seem to justify her hope that within a few decades priests would be married and women would be ordained. Wherein do we find the hope that parishes would be run on a democratic model? She might have entertained those hopes, but there was no warrant for them in anything ever uttered by good Pope John or the Council he convoked.

I will be posting on Vatican II tomorrow at greater length.

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