

THE COUNCIL OF SOUTH BEND

It's October 2017 and Pope Francis has just released word that the Church will be holding an ecumenical council in December 2017. He issued the news suddenly and hastily, much as Pope John XXIII did back in 1962 when he called the Second Vatican Council. Thanks for the advance notice, Holy Father! This one will occur in South Bend, Indiana on the campus of the greatest university in the world. Among the fruits that the Pope hopes will come from the Council is a series of encyclicals that offer guidance on issues that are both urgent for our time and unsettled in the Church's social teaching. He knows that in order to write a good encyclical, he must depend on the expertise of the Church's best minds. What more natural a source than the students in *Catholicism and Politics*? Taught by Professor Philpott, they are brilliant, well grounded in the tradition, eloquent, and good looking. He asks the students of this class to serve jointly on an Ad Hoc Pontifical Council on Social Issues (AHOPOCSI). On behalf of the students, Professor Philpott graciously accepts.

Organization of the Council

In early December, then, the Pope will hold a session of the AHOPOCSI that will focus on a particular question, considering arguments on both sides of each issue. Being politically savvy, the pope has recruited both hawks and doves within the church. Knowing of the sparkling quality of the students involved, he expects great insights to emerge.

The two issues, with rough hawk and dove positions, are:

- 1) Is it the duty of governments to provide universal health care?
 - Hawks: No. Health care is ambiguous in its meaning (how much is enough?) and dependent on the ability of a regime to provide it. Whether it ought to be provided by the state is a contingent question, depending on budgetary issues, the likely consequences of creating large bureaucracies, dangers of governments using health care to promote unjust practices, and the like. Perhaps a case can be made for it in a given country but it is not a universal duty.
 - Doves: Yes. Health care is an essential part of human flourishing and a human right. It follows the governments have a duty to provide universal health insurance or something much like it. It is unlikely that economies will generate adequate health care for everyone, particularly the poor, on their own, and so it is the duty of the state to guarantee it. This duty reflects an ethic of care that in turn reflects the justice of right relationship depicted in the Bible.

- 2) Should the Catholic Church take up a robust dialogue with Islam?

- *Hawks*. No. Or at least, any dialogue with Islam must honestly confront Islam with the irrational violence and terrorism in its ranks, its failure to support religious freedom, its treatment of women, and its lack of democracy and be honest about the theological differences between Catholicism and Islam.
- *Doves*. Yes. The Church ought to welcome a vigorous dialogue with Islam in which the two sides focus on common religious, moral, and political beliefs and stress their agreement. Like all religions, Islam is a multivalent religion and is capable of peace and justice. Finding common ground on issues of peace and justice is essential for world peace.

3) Should states vigorously incorporate forgiveness into their politics with other states?

- *Hawks*: Forgiveness, though Popes Benedict XV and John Paul II commended it to nation-states, should rarely if ever be practiced by heads of state. At best, it can be practiced by individuals and members of the church regarding political events. But generally, it does not belong in statecraft.
- *Doves*: What Benedict XV and John Paul II proposed was a visionary practice that should be incorporated more vigorously into state behavior in order to make the world a more peaceful place.

At the Council of South Bend, hawks and doves will present speeches in favor of their arguments. Teams of students will be assigned to argue one side of one of this issue. The structure of each session is as follows:

Hawks' speech: 20 minutes

Doves' speech: 20 minutes

Preparation time: 5 minutes

Hawks' questioning of Doves: 10 minutes

Doves' questioning of Hawks: 10 minutes

Audience participation: 10 minutes

What The Pope Expects of Participants

The hawk and dove positions outlined above are stated only very roughly. It is the job of each team to research the details and substance of the position, decide what its specific argument is going to be, formulate it into an outline, and then present it through speeches at the Council. Concretely, each team is required to produce two major "products": 1) its oral presentation at the Council;

2) a transcript of the team's presentation. The speech ought to present a thesis that encapsulates the entire hawk or dove argument and then defend the thesis through convincing sub-arguments, reasons, and evidence. The pope is particularly keen to know that your argument is continuous with past church teaching. Your speech, then, should refer to 1) basic sources of Catholic doctrine, including scripture and classical teachings, drawn from the course readings; 2) church documents from the Vatican II period on forward; and 3) relevant secular (and in one case, Islamic) books, articles, internet sites, and other sources. See Professor Philpott's "What Makes For an A Paper and Presentation" posted on Concourse. Team members should work together in developing a plan of research, finding and reading sources, and combining the findings into a common presentation at the Council of South Bend. You are required to draw upon at least seven sources in your research, including at least three that are not exclusively internet sources.

The speeches at the Council should contain all the virtues of a standard paper, rigorous and careful in their argumentation, but should also appeal to the heart. They should involve attention-grabbing introductions and conclusions, superb rhetoric, metaphor, rhetorical questions, invocations of spiritual themes, voice projection and modulation, eye contact, colorful illustration, and emotion. You are expected to use at least three of the rhetorical techniques mentioned in class. You are to conduct the speeches entirely orally, without use of videos, power point, other electronic aids, or a chalkboard, and with no handouts. You should divide up the period of the speech so that each person speaks for roughly equal periods of time. Whether you each speak for one continuous block of time or speak in several alternating segments is up to you.

It is in the transcript that citations of your sources should appear, showing where the information in the speech comes from. You can use the parenthetical format (Philpott, 2009) to cite this information. Please include a bibliography at the end of the transcript.

Finally, each team is required to submit one week prior to the Council session at which you will speak a "plan of action" that sets forth an outline for how you will use your 20 minutes at the Council of South Bend – how you will structure your speech, what your thesis will be, who will speak when and on what subjects, etc. This need not be more than a page and the style in which you want to present it is not strictly prescribed. Professor Philpott is mainly looking to see that you have thought ahead about your strategy and that you are on track for your speech. This will be graded for completion and for basic competence but is not one of the two final products that will constitute the bulk of your grade. After receiving it Professor Philpott will review it and let you know if any major revisions are needed prior to the Council performance.

Bibliographical Suggestions to Get You Started

For All Council Sessions

** See certain Catholic journals of opinion, whose contents are accessible through “e-journals” on the Hesburgh Library site. On the right is *First Things* (which also contains Protestant and Jewish perspectives) and *National Catholic Register*. More to the left are *America*, *Commonweal*, *The Tablet*, and *National Catholic Reporter*.

** Several of these journals have blogs in which debates take place over Council issues. *America*, *Commonweal*, *First Things*, and *National Catholic Reporter* have websites with some type of forum for running commentary.

** For modern Church teachings, the Vatican website is an outstanding and comprehensive source of documents. www.vatican.va.

** For positions of the U.S. bishops conference on Council issues and other great resources, see the conference’s website at <http://www.usccb.org/>

** An excellent blog on the Church’s teaching on various political and social issues is: <http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/?eng=y>

** See also – and conduct searches in – various Catholic news services, including Catholic News Services and Zenit.