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Vatican II and the lessons of the Johannine community

Pat Perriello | Aug. 6, 2012 NCR Today

Stephen Stahley writes a strong retrospective on Vatican II in Sunday?s *Baltimore Sun* [1]. He is a former Catholic priest who suggests that it is time for the Catholic church to open the ?stained glass windows? once again.

Stahley points out that the issues front and center of the Catholic church today continue to be the sex abuse crisis, the fight with the nuns, same sex marriage, and the battle with the administration in Washington over contraception. It is disheartening to see a church that was once so vibrant and ready to engage with the world around it, closing in on itself and seeing only villains on every street corner.

Suddenly dissent is unacceptable. New ideas are unwelcome. Thoughtfulness is considered a bad thing. We are back to ?pray, pay, and obey,? and even worse than the old days, the penalties for failing to fall in line can be severe. These are not encouraging signs for the future of our church.

Consider the Johannine Christian community we learn about in John?s Gospel and the Johannine Epistles. The community developed a strong dualistic outlook against the world, and eventually against all those within their own community that disagreed with them.

Everything was either black or white, good or evil, to the point that one could not even pray for those ?in darkness.? Ultimately, the Johannine community disappeared from the history of Christianity, unable to survive its bitter internal struggles.

For a fuller understanding of Johannine Christianity I refer you to Raymond E. Brown?s Book, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* *[2]*.

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[1] http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bs-ed-vatican-20120805,0,6804292.story
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