

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

October 16, 2012 at 5:14pm

Vatican II a rollicking success 50 years later, says *Time* reporter who was there

by Robert McClory

NCR Today

Robert Blair Kaiser provided a rousing cheer for the achievements of Vatican II at the 2012 Tablet lecture in London in early October. As the religion reporter for *Time* magazine in the 1960s, Kaiser covered the council and had access to many of the bishops and theologians who shaped the event. His upbeat analysis of how the church was forever changed stands in contrast to the continuing insistence of Pope Benedict XVI on emphasizing his "hermeneutic of continuity." That sober evaluation of the council has marked the pope's recent remarks and is sure to be major theme during the church's coming Year of Faith. In presenting his own view, Kaiser noted only in passing that his take is in marked contrast to the papal position.

"I want you to be aware during the coming year of efforts to dumb the Council down, of efforts to convince you that the Council didn't change the Church very much," he said. "I think it did, and after you recall what kind of Church we lived in before Vatican II, I think you will agree with me, and rejoice with me and be glad for what the Council did do, irreversibly, I hope."

He went on to exult in the many ways Vatican II broke with the past and reconfigured the way Catholics look at the church and the way the church looks at the world: "The Council changed the way we thought about God, about ourselves, about our spouses, our Protestant cousins, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Jews, even the way we thought about the Russians. When a handful of bishops kept pushing for conciliar condemnation of Communism, John XXIII kept insisting that that kind of talk would only blow up the world. Pope John and his Council made some preliminary moves that helped end the Cold War. For this, the editors of *Time* made John XXIII the Man of the Year."

Read the whole talk here.

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