

Reviews

FREEDOM TO HOPE, edited by Alan Falconer, Enda McDonagh and Sean MacReamoinn. *Columba Press, Dublin 1986. Pp 103.*

This is a collection of essays offered as a festschrift to Austin Flannery on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday, 'and to celebrate the pioneering work in which he has been engaged for nearly thirty years as editor of *Doctrine and Life*, and, more generally, of Dominican Publications.' The theme of the essays is Ireland, twenty years after the Council. Few men have done more to promote understanding of the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar documents in Ireland and the English-speaking world than Austin Flannery. We are truly indebted to him.

Sean MacReamoinn suggests that liturgical renewal has been *the* 'success story of Vatican II in Ireland'. The vernacular liturgy, the wider administration of the sacraments and the heightening awareness of God's Word are all consequences of the Council decrees. But he also notes that the role of the priest 'has become incomparably more difficult, more demanding, more delicate than it was twenty-five years ago'.

Renewal has not been uniformly successful, but in some areas it has been spectacular. In the area of ecumenism a new era of dialogue has begun with other Christian denominations and the 'achievements have been exhilarating largely because they have been so unpredictable... The "barometer of renewal" among religious has been the realization that 'they have set out on a spiritual journey which ... has changed ... their experience of God.' The importance given to human development has had wide-ranging consequences. Formation is now less concerned with 'training people for jobs than with forming them as persons.' The spirit has changed but as yet the image of religious life among the faithful is still, for many, one of large, faceless institutions. It is an image on which religious life can hardly survive. One of the most heartening signs of renewal is the involvement of sisters in pastoral ministry. In an address to religious women, John Paul II said: 'apostolically the presence of religious women in the local Church is more important than that of a priest.'

The renewed interest in Sacred Scripture, the struggles for justice among the oppressed, new respect for the individual person and a deeper understanding of the role of evangelization in the mission of the Church all have their roots in Vatican II. This book is a welcome reminder of the achievements of these years and a fitting tribute to Austin Flannery.

And, perhaps, the greatest tribute to him is the concept of this book—coming mainly from lay people. Austin surely is one who understands that the Church is made up of laity, religious and bishops. Would that we all—laity, religious and bishops—truly understood this truth.

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