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Preparing For Vatican Council II: The General Councils of the Church

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has not yet been written." When it is, its author will certainly have to take into account the researches of FAILURE IN THE FAR EAST.

LEO A. CULLUM

PREPARING FOR VATICAN COUNCIL II

THE GENERAL COUNCILS OF THE CHURCH. By John L. Murphy. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960, x-193 pp., \$3.50.

Pope John XXIII's announcement of the convocation of Vatican Council II has, *inter alia*, resulted in the publication of a number of works on the history of past ecumenical councils. The present book is one of these. Its author, Father John L. Murphy, teaches in the Department of Religion of the Catholic University of America. Readers of Father Murphy's previously published writings, *THE LIVING CHRIST* and *THE MASS AND LITURGICAL REFORM*, will expect that *THE GENERAL COUNCILS* will be a clear and competent study written for the general reader. They will not be disappointed.

After giving a brief summary of Catholic teaching on the ecumenical councils and their role in the life of the Church, Father Murphy takes us through the history of each of the councils, from Nicea to the first Vatican Council. Fourteen chapters give us straightforward accounts — the situation that called for the council, the people and issues involved, the course of the council itself, its outcome; these accounts are interestingly presented, but have little in the way of literary coloring. Regarding the book's general theme, we are told that "the single unifying element in all these chapters is the Spirit of Christ, who dwells always within His Mystical Body."

There are eight pages of illustrations — mainly papal portraits. (Incidentally, the illustration labelled "Council of Trent, 1545-1563" depicts the Sistine Chapel at Rome. Why? The Council's great events are associated with Trent's own *duomo* and Santa Maria Maggiore.) A nine-page index completes the work. One wishes Father Murphy had appended a select bibliography. We might note that a qualified Church historian, Dom Anselm Biggs, has (in *WORSHIP*, 34 [1960] 421) detailed some of the book's shortcomings "in the strictly historical field."

THE GENERAL COUNCILS will be of service especially as a sort of extended encyclopedia article, well-informed, informative and concisely written; it can be recommended as a good general introduction to the subject. This is, we believe, precisely what Father Murphy intended his book to be.

C. G. AREVALO