

WILL THIS COUNCIL BRING

September 29, 1963: the Ecumenical Council breathes a sigh after the strain of the death of Pope John XXIII. A new Pontiff enters Saint Peter's to open the Second Session.

At ten o'clock subdued handclapping among the Bishops betrays the appearance of the Pope at the other end of Saint Peter's, and the heads of religious orders take their places just in front of us. Cardinals, preceding the Holy Father, go to their places, filling the rest of the seats in the area of the Council Fathers. The Holy Father on foot, slowly reaches the platform before the altar.

As suddenly as though emotions were something as easy to switch on and off as lights, a spirit of devotion and prayer descends on all of us as the Holy Father opens the ceremonies by intoning the words: "*Veni Creator Spiritus*" — "Come Holy Spirit!"

All, including reporters, fall to their knees.

As I glanced around to observe the faces of those near me, I saw sudden reverence and recollection everywhere.

A pause ensued in the ceremony after the Holy Father mounted the Papal Throne. Cardinal Tisserant, escorted by two other Cardinals, entered to begin the Mass.

Closer to Unity

The Holy Father descended from the throne and went to the foot of the altar. After the first prayers he returned to the throne and Cardinal Tisserant continued the Mass.

It hardly seems possible that just four weeks ago in the House of the Blue Army of Our Lady at Fatima I saw this same Cardinal preside at the Mass and ceremonies dedicating

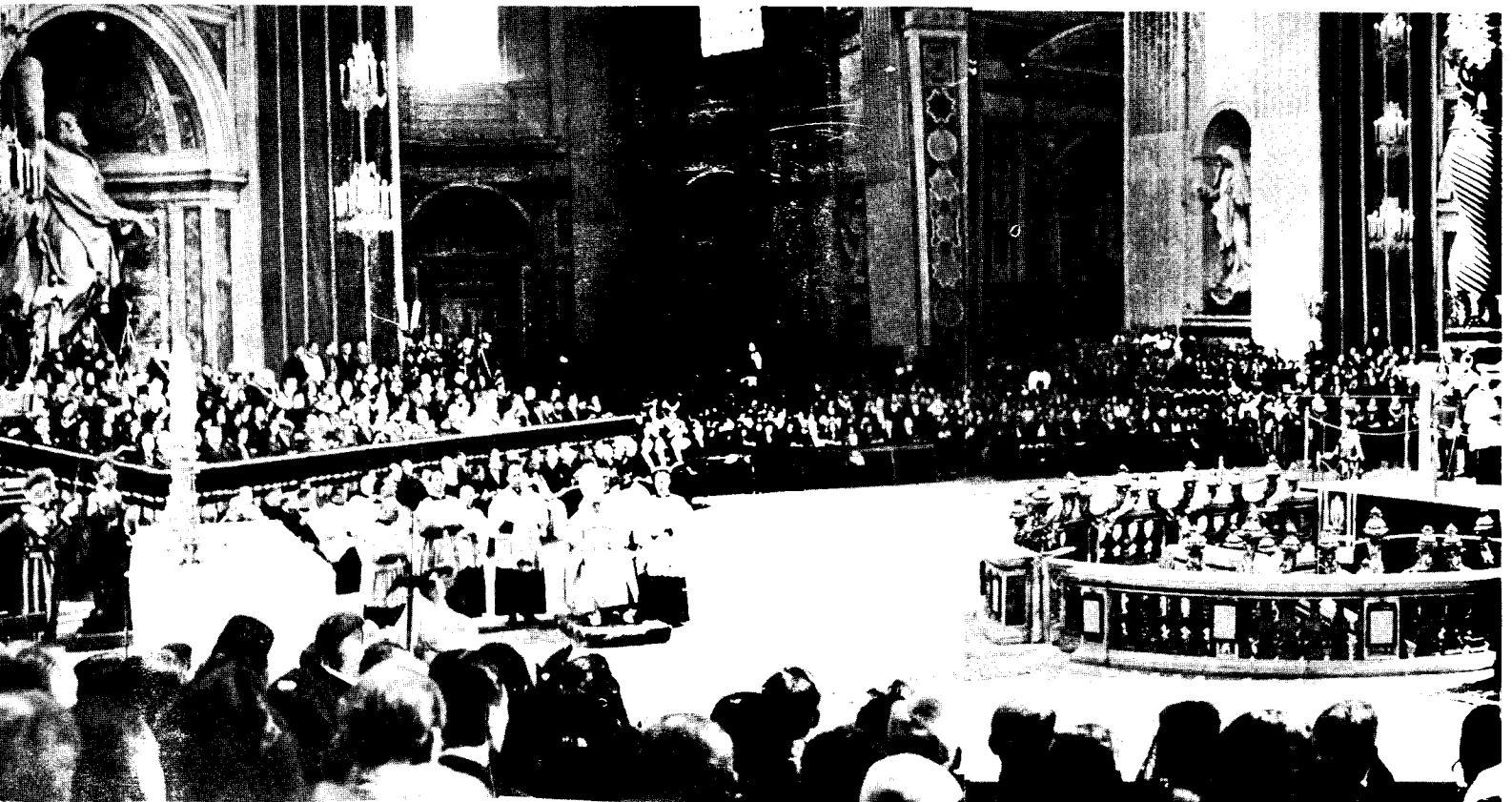
a Russian Chapel there — a chapel which speaks of confidence in Our Lady to convert Russia.

I glanced from the Cardinal celebrating Mass to the Holy Father, then to the Russian observers off on my left, and then down the transept at the hundreds upon hundreds of Cardinals and Bishops. Through Cardinal Tisserant my thoughts were still tied to Fatima.

Will this Council bring us, in the Providence of God, to the unity of which Pope John XXIII spoke so warmly? Might it see the end of the East-West schism?

Whatever might happen in the next several months of this great Council, now solemnly and prayerfully opened with the holiest of ceremonies, it appears certain that unity will come sooner than many of us would ever have dreamed a few short years ago.

Left, seated on small platform, is Cardinal Tisserant. Russian observers are just out of sight from the camera, facing the Cardinal. Hundreds of Bishops and Cardinals are out of sight to the left. In the centre column behind the altar is the Veil of Veronica. In the column at right (angel holding great cross) is major relic of



UNITY?

by John M. Haffert



There were the Russians.

the True Cross of Our Lord. Inside the bronze chair, suspended beneath the ornamental window, is part of a chair actually once used by Saint Peter. In the crypt beneath Pope Paul is the body of Saint Peter, the first Pope, and also the bodies of the last two Popes: Pius XII and John XXIII.

