

Vatican Council II

Lumen Gentium

Light to the Nations

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

- “To defend the true tradition of the Church today means to defend the Council . . . We must remain faithful to the today of the Church, not the yesterday or tomorrow. And this today of the Church is the documents of Vatican II, without reservations that amputate them and without arbitrariness that distorts them . . . I see no future for a position that, out of principle, stubbornly renounces Vatican II. In fact, in itself it is an illogical position. The point of departure for this tendency is, in fact, the strictest fidelity to the teaching particularly of Pius IX and Pius X and, still more fundamentally, of Vatican I and its definitions of papal primacy. But why only the popes up to Pius XII and not beyond? Is perhaps obedience to the Holy See divisible according to years or according to the nearness of a teaching to one’s own already-established convictions?”
- Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

Self Reflection

- *Lumen Gentium* is a document about the nature of the Church.
- What constitutes the Christian Church?
- Who are its members and what are their roles?
- What is its mission?

De Ecclesia

- Unlike the document on the liturgy, the original document on the Church underwent major revisions before it was debated, and ultimately accepted, at the council.
- *Lumen Gentium* influenced most of the other documents of the council (see Hahnenberg p. 46).
- It dealt with the essence of the Church.

What Struck You?

- Before we begin exploring the document, I'd like to hear from you:
 - What jumped out at you?
 - What confused you?
 - What impressed you?
 - Anything else about the document?

Language and Symbols

- Original draft used the language of “the Church militant” and continued Trent and Vatican I’s emphasis on the hierarchy and the primacy of the pope.
- New draft emphasized the Church as mystery and focused on the People of God and collegiality.
- It also focused on Biblical references and language rather than the legalistic terms used by previous councils.

Collegiality as Middle Ground

- Much of the historical debate regarding the respective role of the pope and the bishops centered on the opposing ideas of papal primacy and conciliarism.
- Conciliarism holds that an ecumenical council of bishops is superior to the pope.
- Conciliarism was condemned at Vatican I.
- Collegiality recognizes pope and bishops as members of the “apostolic college” who make decisions concerning the Church in dialogue together (See *LG* 20,21).

What Constitutes the Church of Christ?

- First draft followed Trent and declared that “only the Catholic Roman has the right to be called the church.”
- Second draft said the church of Christ “is the Catholic Church.”
- Final draft had a significant change— “This church, constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church . . . Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines” (*LG 8*).

Christ is Bigger Than the Catholic Church

- “The church has many reasons for knowing that it is joined to the baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the faith in its entirety” (*LG 15*).
- “Those who have not yet accepted the Gospel are related to God in various ways. There is, first, that people to whom the covenants and promises were made, and from whom Christ was born in the flesh” (16).
- “But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are the Moslems” (16).

The People of God

- The people of God includes all the baptized.
- While there are different roles for individuals within the people of God, all have equal dignity and worth.
- The ordained are not meant to rule the laity, but to form, guide, and serve them.
- The laity are called to witness Christ in all their activities, thus evangelizing where the clergy cannot.

Priest, Prophet, King

- All the baptized share in Christ's threefold ministry.
- Priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are different, but both important.
- The prophetic office is shared as well, especially through the "sense of the faithful."
- The kingly office requires that all be ready to use their gifts for "the renewal and building up of the church" (12).

The Sense of the Faithful

“The whole body of the faithful who have received an anointing which comes from the holy one (see 1 Jn 2:20 and 27) cannot be mistaken in belief. It shows this characteristic through the entire people’s supernatural sense of the faith, when ‘from the bishops to the last of the faithful,’ it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals” (*LG* 12).

Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church

International Theological Commission

The council clearly taught that the faithful are not merely passive recipients of what the hierarchy teaches and theologians explain; rather, they are living and active subjects within the Church. In this context, it underscored the vital role played by all believers in the articulation and development of the faith: 'the Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit' (67).

The Laity

- “It is the special vocation of the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will” (31).
- “The laity, however, are given this special vocation: to make the church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where it is only through them that it can become the salt of the earth. Thus, all lay people, through the gifts they have received, are at once the witnesses and the living instruments of the mission of the church itself” (33).

Marriage as a Special Vocation

“The state of life that is sanctified by a special sacrament, namely married and family life, has a special value in this prophetic office In it the married partners have their own proper vocation: they must be witnesses of their faith and love of Christ to each other and their children Therefore, even when occupied with temporal affairs, the laity can and must be involved in the precious work of evangelizing the world” (35).

The Universal Call to Holiness

- “The practice of those counsels [by all, ‘each in their own state of life’] which are usually called evangelical . . . provides in the world, as it should, a striking example of [the Church’s] holiness” (39).
- “The forms and tasks of life are many but there is one holiness, which is cultivated by all who are led by God’s Spirit” (41).
- “Therefore all the faithful are invited and obliged to try to achieve holiness and perfection of their own state of life” (42).

The Hierarchy

- Collegiality major focus.
- Clarification in the understanding of holy orders:
- Three distinct degrees, each ordained to a different purpose and with different charisms.
- The concept of infallible teaching expanded to include the bishops acting collegially (25).
- Opened door to permanent diaconate.

Mary

- Much debate over whether to have separate document on Mary.
- Very close vote.
- Included in the document on the Church to emphasize the People of God, among whom Mary was the first believer.