

REQUIRED PRE-READING

10 Ways Vatican II Shapes the Church Today

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WASHINGTON—The Catholic Church marks the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council by St. Pope John XXIII on October 11. The Council ran from 1962-1965, producing 16 documents over the course of four sessions. Over 2,000 bishops from around the world participated. The Council introduced major reforms and stands among the most significant religious events of the 20th Century.

1. *Vatican II presented a renewed vision of what it means to be the Church.* The Council document, *Lumen Gentium*, on the nature of the Church called the Church a light for the world and the source of salvation. The document, *Gaudium et Spes*, on the Church in the modern world said the Church shares the joys and sufferings of the world. Both documents refer to the Church as the People of God, reflecting a new appreciation of lay people that surfaced repeatedly at the Council.

2. *It called the Eucharist the source and summit of the faith.* The Council's document on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, describes Holy Communion as the main source of God's grace for Catholics. In the Eucharist, Catholics encounter the person of Christ. In this way, it is truly the foundation of the Church.

3. *It reformed the liturgy.* The changes to the Mass, perhaps the most well-known conciliar reform, promoted "full and active participation," which led to the Mass being translated into the vernacular, or local language, and celebrated as a dialogue between the celebrant and the congregation.

4. *It said every Catholic is called to holiness and to be a missionary.* The document on missionary activity, *Ad Gentes*, expanded the view of how the Church evangelizes. Missionaries were no longer sent just to remote areas of the world to spread the Good News; now all Catholics play a role in evangelizing through their lives.

5. *It emphasized the importance of the family.* According to *Lumen Gentium*, the family is the "Domestic Church." While the faith of the Church flourishes in parishes, dioceses and nations around the world, before all else is the family. It is the family that provides a strong foundation for each believer.

Lumen Gentium Part I: Mystery and Communion/Session III

6. *It reshaped the Church's relationship with other Christians and other religions.* At Vatican II, the Church adopted a spirit of respect and dialogue toward other faith traditions. Ensuing dialogues have built bridges of understanding and strengthened relationships with Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, Protestants and others.

7. *It promoted collaboration.* The document, *Christus Dominus*, promoted “collegiality,” or collaboration within the Church. Bishops, priests, religious and lay people all work together in a way that didn’t in the past. Bishops collaborate through episcopal conferences like the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and state-level Catholic Conferences. The Council also encouraged “subsidiarity,” by which authority is divided up and decisions are made at the appropriate level.

8. *It updated the Church...* John XXIII saw Vatican II as a chance for renewal in the face of the “signs of the times” and said he called the Council to open a window and let in fresh air. This resulted in reforms that made the Church more accessible to the modern world, such as Mass in the vernacular and dialogue with other believers, and the openness of the Council was reflected in the presence men and women religious, lay people and even non-Catholics among its official observers.

9...*but it also returned the Church to its roots.* Vatican II also reformed the Church through a back-to-basics approach. This meant renewed appreciation for Scripture, the Church Fathers and the restoration of ancient traditions such as the permanent diaconate and the multi-step process for adults joining the Church.

10. *Then-Father Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) played a significant behind-the-scenes role.* The bishops at Vatican II were assisted by brilliant theologians. These assistants, or *periti*, included Joseph Ratzinger, who assisted Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne, Germany. Father Ratzinger was involved in drafting speeches, shaping documents and defining the overall trajectory of the Council.

More information on Evangelization is available online: [Evangelization | USCCB](#)

COURSE OUTLINE: The Church and Ecumenism

I. INTRODUCTION

- a. Introductory remarks followed by short video and group discussion
- b. Recap discussion

DISCUSSION

Please share your thoughts from last week on the discussion questions. *How do you foster a relationship with God in your students? How do you encourage family Mass participation?*

II. THE FOUR MARKS OF THE CHURCH

- a. One
 - i. One source = the source of the Church's Oneness is the Oneness of God in the Trinity
 - ii. One soul = the Church is animated by the Holy Spirit
 - iii. One founder = Jesus Christ
 - iv. How we are One = Invisible and Visible Bonds of Communion with the Church
 1. Invisible = Life of Grace
 2. Visible = Profession of One Faith, Common Celebration of Sacraments, and Apostolic Succession
- b. Holy
 - i. Holy because of the presence of Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Saints
 - ii. The Holiness of the Church on earth is real but imperfect
- c. Catholic
 - i. Universal = found all over the world
 - ii. Fullness of Salvation = Contains all elements set down by Christ for His Church
- d. Apostolic
 - i. Built on the foundation of the Apostles
 - ii. Keeps and hands on faithfully the deposit of faith given to the Apostles
 - iii. Taught, sanctified, and governed by the successors to the Apostles

DISCUSSION

Fr. Shenosky explains that the Holiness of the Church on earth is real but imperfect. What does this mean to you? How does this fact affect both your personal faith and the way you hand the faith down to the next generation?

III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE CHURCH

- a. *"All people are called to belong to the new people of God. [...] All men are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God which in promoting universal peace presages it. And there belong to or are related to it in various ways, the Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, for all men are called by the grace of God to salvation."* (*Lumen Gentium* II.13)
- b. Catholics in Relation to the Church (*Lumen Gentium* II.14)

Lumen Gentium Part I: Mystery and Communion/Session III

- i. Visibly bonded with the Church through the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion
- ii. Invisibly bonded through a life of grace
- c. Other Christians in Relation to the Church (*Lumen Gentium* II.15)
 - i. There is a real though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church due to elements of sanctification and truth outside the Church = we are all baptized in Christ, honor Sacred Scripture, belief in the Trinity, etc.

DISCUSSION

How can we as Catholics better relate to other Christians in our community based on the precepts set out in *Lumen Gentium* 15?

- d. Non-Christians in Relation to the Church (*Lumen Gentium* II.16)
 - i. Refers to all those who *“sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.(19*) Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel.”*
 - ii. The Catholic Church and the Jewish faith maintain a special relationship
 - 1. Revealed faith
 - 2. Expectation of the Messiah
 - 3. Our elder brothers in the faith
 - iii. The Catholic Church and the Muslim faith maintain a relationship founded in our common father, Abraham

IV. THE CHURCH'S ECUMENICAL COMMITMENT

- a. Vatican II acknowledged that there are elements of truth and holiness in other religious traditions and committed the Church to the furthering of the ecumenical movement in order to work towards Christian unity.
- b. Spiritual Ecumenism = praying for Christian unity
- c. Ecumenical Dialogue = better understanding of how each Christian community sees the Christian faith
- d. True Ecumenism = honest sharing of beliefs in an atmosphere of mutual respect in order to foster
- e. Interreligious Dialogue = aimed at the unity of humanity and promotion of world peace

V. “OUTSIDE THE CHURCH THERE IS NO SALVATION”

- a. The Church is the universal sacrament of salvation (*Lumen Gentium* VII.48)
- b. The Church is Christ’s instrument for the salvation of all (*Lumen Gentium* II.9)
- c. All are called to belong to the people of God (*Lumen Gentium* II.13)
- d. Christ affirmed the necessity for faith and baptism = faith and baptism are found in the Church, therefore Christ affirms the necessity for the Church
- e. God offers to all the possibility of being made partakers or sharers in the Paschal mystery = anyone who is saved, no matter what religion they profess, is saved by Jesus Christ in his Paschal mystery
- f. The Church presumes the innocence of those who have not the Gospel or been turned away by poor examples of Christianity

DISCUSSION

How must we live out the Church's ecumenical commitment while still maintaining and promoting the necessity for the Church? For example, what role does ecumenism play in our Catholic schools?

What does it mean to be a good ambassador for the Church? How does our personal faith life affect the salvation of others?

VI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS WITH FR. SHENOSKY

- a. An emphasis on community can be helpful in diverse settings.
- b. Pray with your students = they learn by example
- c. The sins of the people of the Church, both clergy and laity, call us to great humility and to a life of grace
- d. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue always strives to focus on unity and what we hold in common rather than what divides us

DISCUSSION

What is the difference between knowing Christ and having heard about Christ? How can we better teach knowledge of Christ to our students?

Given the presence of scandals and problems experienced in the Church's life throughout her history, how can Catholics profess that the Church is holy?