

Lumen Gentium Part I: Mystery & Communion/Session I

REQUIRED PRE-READING

How Vatican II Changed the Church

On January 25, 1959, Pope St. John XXIII announced to the world that he intended to convene an ecumenical council. As he traveled back to the Vatican from St. Paul Outside the Walls Cathedral in Rome, he was greeted along the way by crowds who applauded and cried out: *Long live the ecumenical council!* The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, simply known as Vatican II, began on Oct. 11, 1962 and officially ended on December 8, 1965. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Pope St. John Paul II referred to Vatican II as “the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century” and felt that “more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as a sure compass with which to orient ourselves in the vast ocean of the third millennium.”

What reforms did Vatican II promote to renew the life of the Church both internally and externally? The answers can be found in the teachings of the sixteen documents promulgated by the Church Fathers and lived out by the faithful since the close of Vatican II. Pope Benedict XVI has said that the documents of Vatican II, “have not lost their timelessness; their teachings have shown themselves to be pertinent to the new needs of the Church and the present globalized society.”

The following are some of the major changes and/or developments brought on by Vatican II.

Liturgy: The Council’s first call was a renewal of Sacred Liturgy, i.e., the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Liturgy of the Hours, sacraments, and the liturgical year. The Church Fathers emphasized the need for active participation of priest and people united in Christ; and of prayer that was dialogical in nature, incorporated liturgical customs, and spoken in the language (or vernacular) of the community, not solely in Latin.

Sacred Scripture and Divine Revelation: The Council expanded the Scripture within the context of Mass which included both Old and New Testaments in the Sunday and weekday Lectionaries of the Church. Scripture study which was once relegated to priests and religious was now urgently promoted for the laity.

Ecclesiology/Church Hierarchy: All the Church—pope, bishops, priests, religious, *and laity*—are equal members through Baptism. All share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles of Christ. All are called to holiness no matter what vocation or occupation they embrace in life.

Baptismal Catechumenate: The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)* was restored and today is the normative process of formation for unbaptized persons who seek to become members of the Church. The Church also recognized as valid those who were baptized with the Trinitarian formula and water in other ecclesial communities.

The Holy Order of (Permanent) Diaconate: The Order of Deacon traces its roots to the early Church with references in the Acts of the Apostles. The Council defined the role of the deacon as it relates to the character of Holy Orders. The Council described the liturgical and ministerial duties associated with the Permanent Diaconate.

Authority: Authority, in light of the Gospel is not dictatorial or dominating but a *service of love* in imitation of Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for all.

Collegiality: The Fathers encouraged shared ministry and authority between the pope and bishops, bishop and priests, pastor and parishioners, and superior and members of religious orders and congregations.

Ecumenism and Interfaith Relations: Vatican II called for the recognition of the Holy Spirit in the communities of our separated Christian brothers and sisters and in other world religions. Ecumenical efforts foster unity among all Christians and greater communication and dialogue with and respect for other religions.

Religious Liberty: The Council recognized the right of every individual to join the religion of one’s choice and opposed the use of force, physical or otherwise, imposing one’s religious beliefs and practices upon others.

The Church in the World: According to Catholic belief, the world and its inhabitants are *essentially good* as they are created by God. Believers never lose hope in the restoration of all things, a restoration that has begun with the coming of Christ and will reach its fulfillment and perfection when Christ comes again in power and glory at the end of time.

COURSE OUTLINE: Foundations of the Church

I. INTRODUCTION & PRE READING DISCUSSION

- a. Course overview and format
- b. Protocols
 - i. Mandatory attendance, no texting, no use of electronic devices, etc.
- c. Short video and group discussion

DISCUSSION

As a Catholic, how has Vatican II affected your life?

II. THE NECESSITY OF THE CHURCH

- a. Why do we need a Church at all?
 - i. The Church is God's plan for saving all of humanity in Jesus Christ.
 - ii. The Church is a community of believers.
- b. Three key moments in salvation history to consider:
 - i. Humanity before the Fall – Adam and Eve in the Garden
 1. Original Holiness = a right relationship with God
 2. Original Justice = right relationship with each other and the world
 3. No sin, suffering or death
 - ii. The Fall of Man
 1. Original Sin = free choice to disobey God, a sin of human nature
 2. Sin, suffering and death enter the human experience and passed on to all descendents of Adam

DISCUSSION

Based on this lecture, how would you respond to someone who claims that the Church is merely a human institution?

- iii. Redemption in Jesus Christ
 1. God becomes Man = an invitation to participate in Christ's inner life
 2. Why did God become Man?
 - a. To reconcile us with God
 - b. To know God's love for us
 - c. To be our model of holiness
 - d. To share in the very life of God
 3. The Paschal Mystery = the only remedy to Original Sin, which is granted to us through Baptism (provided to us by the Church)
- c. The Church as the "New Body" of Humanity
 - i. Adam was the original head of the body of humanity, and is the source of Original Sin
 - ii. Christ is the new head (the "New Adam") of the body of humanity, and is the remedy of Original Sin
 - iii. A plan born in the Father's heart: *"The eternal Father, in accordance with the utterly gratuitous and mysterious design of his wisdom and goodness, created the whole universe and chose to raise up men to share in his own divine life," to which he calls all men in his Son. "The Father . . . determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ." This "family of God" is gradually formed and takes shape during the stages of human history, in keeping with the Father's plan. In fact, "already present in figure at the beginning of the*

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world, this Church was prepared in marvelous fashion in the history of the people of Israel and the old Alliance. Established in this last age of the world and made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time.” (CCC #759)

- d. Baptism within the Church
 - i. The Church offers us a greater life than life in the Garden of Eden

III. THE CHURCH AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

- a. The Call of Abraham
 - i. Abraham is called by God to form a new nation, a community of people
- b. The Covenant on Mt. Sinai
 - i. God calls on all of the people of Israel to assemble together under a Covenant with Him and frees them from slavery
 - ii. In Hebrew, “church” means “to gather together,” specifically to gather or assemble to receive the Word of God
- c. The Promise of the Future Kingdom
 - i. Earthly kings of Israel are meant to point to the Kingship of God
- d. The Teaching of the Prophets - Waiting for a new Covenant with God

DISCUSSION

Fr. Shenosky describes the life in the Church through Baptism as being greater than the life of paradise in the Garden of Eden. Why is this true? How does the secular world today try to convince us to seek a kind of earthly paradise rather than the greater life offered in the Church?

IV. THE FOUNDING OF THE CHURCH BY JESUS

- a. *Lumen Gentium II.9 – “Step by step He taught and prepared this people, making known in its history both Himself and the decree of His will and making it holy unto Himself. All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God Himself made flesh.”*
- b. Covent Community of the Old Testament vs. Church of the New Testament
 - i. Limited to a single nation (Israel) vs. universal (Catholic)
- c. Key Stages in the Foundation of the Church
 - i. Incarnation
 - ii. Choosing the Twelve Apostles
 - iii. Selecting Peter
 - iv. Sending the Seventy-Two Disciples
 - v. Preaching the Kingdom of God
 - vi. Institution of the Holy Eucharist
 - vii. The Cross of Christ
 - viii. Pentecost
- d. The Church on Earth awaits perfection, which will be achieved through the second coming of Christ
- e. *“Even today the Church gives me Jesus. That says it all. What would I know about him, what connection would there be between him and me without the Church?” Henri Cardinal de Lubac, S.J.*

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DISCUSSION

How do you teach the importance and necessity of the Church to young children?

V. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH FR. SHENOSKY

DISCUSSION

How has learning about the foundation of the Church deepened your understanding of necessity of the Church?