

Gaudium et Spes

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

Second Vatican Council, 1965

Part One

(Due to this document's length, **Part Two** is listed separately.)

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Preface

Solidarity of the Church with the Whole Human Family

1. The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father's kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history.

The Council Addresses All of Humanity

2. Now that the Second Vatican council has studied the mystery of the church more deeply, it addresses not only the daughters and sons of the church and all who call upon the name of Christ, but the whole of humanity as well, and it wishes to set down how it understands the presence and function of the church in the world of today.

The world which the council has in mind is the world of women and men, the entire human family seen in its total environment. It is the world as the theatre of human history, bearing the marks of its travail, its triumphs and failures. It is the world which Christians believe has been created and is sustained by the love of its maker, has fallen into the slavery of sin but has been freed by Christ, who was crucified and rose again in order to break the stranglehold of the evil one, so that it might be fashioned anew according to God's design and brought to its fulfillment.

An Offer of Service to Humankind

3. Though proud of its discoveries and its power, humanity is often concerned about current developments in the world, about humanity's place and role in the universe, about the meaning of individual and collective endeavor and finally about the destiny of nature and of humanity. And so the council, as witness and guide to the faith of all of God's people, gathered together by Christ, can find no more eloquent expression of this people's solidarity, respect and love for the whole human family, of which it forms part, than to enter into dialogue with it about all these various problems, throwing the light of the Gospel on them and supplying humanity with the saving resources which the church has received from its founder under the promptings of the holy Spirit. It is the human person that is to be saved, human society which must be renewed. It is the human person, therefore, which is the key to this discussion, each individual human person in her or his totality, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.

This is the reason why this holy synod, in proclaiming humanity's noble destiny and affirming that there exists in it a divine seed, offers the human race the sincere cooperation of the church in fostering a sense of sisterhood and brotherhood to correspond to their destiny. The church is not motivated by earthly ambition but is interested in one thing only - to carry on the work of Christ under the guidance of the holy Spirit, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth,[2] to save and not to judge, to serve and not to be served.[3]

Introduction

THE CONDITION OF HUMANITY IN THE WORLD TODAY

Hope and Anguish

4. In every age, the church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, it should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which

people ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live. An outline of some of the more important features of the modern world forms the subject of the following paragraphs..

Ours is a new age of history with profound and rapid changes spreading gradually to all corners of the earth. They are the products of people's intelligence and creative activity, but they recoil upon them, upon their judgments and desires, both individual and collective, upon their ways of thinking and acting in regard to people and things. We are entitled then to speak of a real social and cultural transformation whose repercussions are felt at the religious level also.

A transformation of this kind brings with it the serious problems associated with any crisis of growth. Increase in power is not always accompanied by control of that power for the benefit of humanity. In probing the recesses of their own minds, people often seem more uncertain than ever of themselves: in the gradual and precise unfolding of the laws of social living, they are uncertain about how to plot its course.

In no other age has humanity enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic well-being; and yet a huge proportion of the people of the world is plagued by hunger and extreme need while countless numbers are totally illiterate. At no time have people had such a keen sense of freedom, only to be faced by new forms of social and psychological slavery. The world is keenly aware of its unity and of mutual interdependence in essential solidarity, but at the same time it is split into bitterly opposing camps. We have not yet seen the last of bitter political, social, and economic hostility, and racial and ideological antagonism, nor are we free from the spectre of a war of total destruction. If there is a growing exchange of ideas, there is still widespread disagreement in competing ideologies about the meaning of the words which express our key concepts. There is lastly a painstaking search for a better material world, without a parallel spiritual advancement.

Small wonder then, that many of our contemporaries are prevented by this complex situation from recognizing permanent values and duly applying them to recent discoveries. As a result, they hover between hope and anxiety and wonder uneasily about the present course of events. It is a situation that challenges and even obliges people to respond.

Deep-seated Changes

5. The spiritual uneasiness of today and the changing structure of life are part of a broader upheaval, whose symptoms are the increasing part played on the intellectual level by the mathematical, natural and human sciences and on the practical level by their repercussions on technology. The scientific mentality has brought about a change in the cultural sphere and on habits of thought, and the progress of technology is now reshaping the face of the earth and has its sights set on the conquest of space.

The human mind is, in a certain sense, increasing its mastery over time - over the past through the insights of history, over the future by foresight and planning. Advances in biology, psychology, and the social sciences not only lead humanity to greater self-awareness, but provide it with the technical means of molding the lives of whole societies as well. At the same time, the human race is giving more and more thought to the forecasting and control of its own population growth.

The accelerated pace of history is such that one can scarcely keep abreast of it. The destiny of the human race is viewed as a complete whole, no longer, as it were, in the particular histories of various peoples: now it merges into a complete whole. And so humankind substitutes a dynamic and more evolutionary concept of nature for a static one, and the result is an immense series of new problems calling for a new endeavor of analysis and synthesis.

Changes in the Social Order

6. As a result, the traditional structure of local communities - family, clan, tribe, village, various groupings and social relationships - is subjected to ever more sweeping changes. Industrialization is on the increase and has raised some nations to a position of affluence, while it radically transfigures ideas and social practices hallowed by centuries. Urbanization too is on the increase, both on account of the expanding number of city dwellers and the spread of an urban way of life into rural settings. New and more effective mass media are contributing to the spread of knowledge and the speedy diffusion far and wide of habits of thought and feeling, setting off chain reactions in their wake. Nor should one underestimate the effect of emigration on those who, for whatever reason, are led to undertake a new way of life. On the whole, the bonds uniting human beings multiply unceasingly, and socialization creates yet other bonds, without, however, a corresponding personal development, and truly personal relationships (personalization). It is above all in countries with advanced standards of economic and social progress that this evolution is apparent, but it also affects developing nations, who are eager to share in the benefits of industrialization and urbanization. Peoples like these, especially where ancient traditions are still strong, are at the same time conscious of the need to exercise their freedom in a more mature and personal way.

Changes in Attitudes, Morals and Religion

7. A change in attitudes and structures frequently calls accepted values into question. This is true above all of young people who have grown impatient at times and, indeed, rebellious. Conscious of their own importance in the life of society, they aspire to play their part in it all the earlier. Consequently, it frequently happens that parents and teachers find their tasks increasingly difficult.

Traditional institutions, laws and modes of thought and emotion do not always appear to be in harmony with today's world. This has given rise to a serious disruption of patterns and even of norms of behavior.

As regards religion, there is a completely new atmosphere that conditions its practice. On the one hand people are taking a hard look at all magical world-views and prevailing superstitions and are demanding a more personal and active commitment of faith, so that not a few have achieved a lively sense of the divine. On the other hand, greater numbers are falling away from the practice of religion. In the past it was the exception to repudiate God and religion to the point of abandoning them, and then only in individual cases; but nowadays it seems a matter of course to reject them as incompatible with scientific progress and a new kind of humanism. In many places it is not only in philosophical terms that such trends are expressed, there are signs of them in literature, art, the humanities, the interpretation of history and even civil law: all of which is very disturbing to many people.

Imbalances in the World of Today

8. Such rapid and uneven change, coupled with an increasingly keener awareness of existing inequalities make for the creation and aggravation of differences and imbalances.

On the personal level, there often arises an imbalance between a modern practical outlook and a theoretical way of thinking which fails to master and synthesize the sum total of its ideas. Another imbalance occurs between concern for practical effectiveness and the demands of moral conscience; yet another occurs between life in society and the individual's need for reflection and contemplation. A final imbalance takes the form of conflict between the specialization of human activity and a global view of reality.

On the family level there are tensions arising out of demographic, economic and social pressures, out of conflicts between the generations, and out of new social relationships between the sexes.

On the level of race and social class we find tensions between the affluent and the underdeveloped nations; we find them between international bodies set up in the interests of peace and the desire to spread ideologies along with national or bloc expansionism. In the midst of it all stands humanity, at once the author and the victim of mutual distrust, animosity, conflict and woe.

Broader Aspirations of Humankind

9. Meanwhile there is a growing conviction that humanity is able and has the duty to strengthen its mastery over nature and that there is need to establish a political, social, and economic order at the service of humanity, to assert and develop the dignity proper to individuals and to societies.

Great numbers of people are acutely conscious of being deprived of the world's goods through injustice and unfair distribution and are vehemently demanding their share of them. Developing nations, such as the recently independent states, are anxious to share in the political and economic benefits of modern civilization and to play their part freely in the world, but they are hampered by their economic dependence on the rapidly expanding richer nations and the ever widening gap between them. The hungry nations cry out to their affluent neighbors; women claim parity with men in fact as well as of right, where they have not already obtained it; labourers and agricultural workers insist not just on the necessities of life but also on the opportunity to develop by their labor their personal talents and to play their due role in organizing economic, social, political, and cultural life. Now for the first time in history people are not afraid to think that cultural benefits are for all and should be available to everybody.

These claims are but the sign of a deeper and more widespread aspiration. Women and men as individuals and as members of society crave a life that is full, autonomous, and worthy of their nature as human beings; they long to harness for their own welfare the immense resources of the modern world. Among nations there is a growing movement to set up a worldwide community.

In the light of the foregoing factors there appears the dichotomy of a world that is at once powerful and weak, capable of doing what is noble and what is base, disposed to freedom and slavery, progress and decline, amity and hatred. People are becoming conscious that the forces they have unleashed are in their own hands and that it is up to themselves to control them or be enslaved by them. Here lies the modern dilemma.

Humanity's Deeper Questionings

10. The dichotomy affecting the modern world is, in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is rooted in humanity itself. It is the meeting point of many conflicting forces. As created beings, people are subject to many limitations, but they feel unlimited in their desires and their sense of being destined for a higher life. They feel the pull of many attractions and are compelled to choose between them and reject some among them. Worse still, feeble and sinful as they are, they often do the very thing they hate and do not do what they want.[4] And so they feel themselves divided, and the result is a host of discords in social life. Many, it is true, fail to see the dramatic nature of this state of affairs in all its clarity for their vision is in fact blurred by materialism, or they are prevented from even thinking about it by the wretchedness of their plight. Others delude themselves that they have found peace in a world-view now fashionable. There are still others whose hopes are set on a genuine and total emancipation of humankind through human effort alone and look forward to some future earthly paradise where all the desires of their hearts will be fulfilled. Nor is it unusual to find people who, having lost faith in life, extol the kind of foolhardiness which would empty life of all significance in itself and invest it with a meaning of their own devising. Nonetheless, in the face of modern developments there is a growing body of people who are asking the most fundamental of all questions or are glimpsing them with a keener insight: What is humanity? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? What is the purpose of these achievements, purchased at so high a price? What can people contribute to society? What can they expect from it? What happens after this earthly life is ended?

The church believes that Christ, who died and was raised for the sake of all,[5] can show people the way and strengthen them through the Spirit so that they become worthy of their destiny: nor is there given any other name under heaven by which they can be saved.[6] The church likewise believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history is to be found in its Lord and Master. It also maintains that beneath all those changes there is much that is unchanging, much that has its ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.[7] And that is why the council, relying on the inspiration of Christ, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,[8] proposes to speak to all people in order to unfold the mystery that is humankind and cooperate in tackling the main problems facing the world today.

Part One:

THE CHURCH AND THE HUMAN VOCATION

Responding to the Promptings of the Spirit

11. The people of God believes that it is led by the Spirit of the Lord who fills the whole world. Impelled by that faith, they try to discern the true signs of God's presence and purpose in the events, the needs and the desires which it shares with the rest of humanity today. For faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human.

The council intends first of all to assess by that light those values which are most highly prized today and to relate them to their divine source. For such values are very good, in so far as they stem from the God-given character of the human person. Frequently, however, thanks to the corruption of the human heart, they are disordered and need to be purified.

What does the church think of humanity? What measures are to be recommended for building up society today? What is the ultimate meaning of human activity in the universe? These questions call for answers. From the answers it will be increasingly clear that the people of God, and the human race of which it forms part, are of service to each other; and the mission of the church will show itself to be supremely human by the very fact of being religious.

Chapter I

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Women and Men in the Image of God

12. Believers and unbelievers agree almost unanimously that all things on earth should be ordained to humanity as to their center and summit.

But what is humanity? People have put forward, and continue to put forward, many views about humanity, views that are divergent and even contradictory. Sometimes they either set it up as the absolute measure of all things, or debase it to the point of despair. Hence humanity's doubt and anguish. The church is keenly sensitive to these difficulties. Enlightened by divine revelation it can offer a solution

to them by which the true state of humanity may be described, its weakness explained in such a way that at the same time its dignity and vocation may be perceived in their true light. For sacred scripture teaches that women and men were created "in the image of God," able to know and love their creator, and set by him over all earthly creatures[1] that they might rule them, and make use of them, while glorifying God.[2] "What are women and men that you are mindful of them, their sons and daughters that you care for them? You have made them little less than angels, and crown them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet" (Ps 8:5-8).

But God did not create men and women as solitary beings. From the beginning "male and female God created them" (Gen 1:27). This partnership of man and woman constitutes the first form of communion between people. For by their innermost nature men and women are social beings; and if they do not enter into relationships with others they can neither live nor develop their gifts.

So God, as we read again in the Bible, saw "all the things that he had made, and they were very good" (Gen 1:31).

Sin

13. Although set by God in a state of righteousness, men and women, enticed by the evil one, abused their freedom at the very start of history. They raised themselves up against God, and tried to attain their goal apart from him. Although they had known God, they did not glorify him as God, but their senseless hearts were darkened, and they served the creature rather than the creator.[3] What revelation makes known to us is confirmed by our own experience. For when people look into their own hearts they find that they are drawn towards what is wrong and are sunk in many evils which cannot have come from their good creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as their source, men and women have also upset the relationship which should link them to their final destiny;

and at the same time they have broken the right order that should exist within themselves as well as between them and other people and all creatures.

They are therefore divided interiorly. As a result, the entire life of women and men, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness. People find that they are unable of themselves to overcome the assaults of evil successfully, so that everyone feels as if in chains. But the Lord himself came to free and strengthen humanity, renewing it inwardly and casting out the "prince of this world"(Jn 12:31), who held it in the bondage of sin.[4] For sin diminished humanity, preventing it from attaining its fulfillment.

Both the high calling and the deep misery which people experience find their final explanation in the light of this revelation.

Humanity's Essential Nature

14. The human person, though made of body and soul, is a unity. In itself, in its very bodily condition, it synthesizes the elements of the material world, which through it are thus brought to their highest perfection and are enabled to raise their voice in spontaneous praise of the creator.[5] For this reason human beings may not despise their bodily life. They are, rather, to regard their bodies as good and to hold them in honor since God has created them and will raise them up on the last day. Nevertheless humanity has been wounded by sin. People find by experience that their bodies are in revolt. Their very dignity therefore requires that they should glorify God in their bodies,[6] and not allow them to serve the evil inclinations of their hearts.

Women and men are not mistaken when they regard themselves as superior to merely bodily creatures and as more than mere particles of nature or nameless units in human society. For by their power to know themselves in the depths of their being they rise above the entire universe of mere objects.[6a] When they are drawn to think about their real selves they turn to those deep recesses of their being where God who probes the heart[7] awaits them, and where they themselves decide their own destiny in the sight of God. So when they recognize in themselves a spiritual and immortal soul, this is not an illusion, a product of their imagination, to be explained solely in terms of physical or social causes. On the contrary, they have grasped the profound truth of the matter.

Dignity of the Intellect, of Truth, and of Wisdom

15. Men and women, sharing in the fight of the divine mind, rightly affirm that by their intellect they surpass the world of mere things. By diligent use of their talents through the ages they have indeed made progress in the empirical sciences, in technology, and in the liberal arts. In our time, their attempts to search out the secrets of the material universe and to bring it under their control have been extremely successful. Yet they have always looked for, and found truths of a higher order. For their intellect is not confined to the range of what can be observed by the senses. They can, with genuine certainty, reach to realities known only to the mind, even though, as a result of sin, their vision has been clouded and their powers weakened.

Humanity's intellectual nature finds at last its perfection, as it needs to, in wisdom, which gently draws the human mind to look for and to love what is true and good. Endowed with wisdom, women and men are led through visible realities to those which are invisible.

Our age, more than any of the past, needs such wisdom if all humanity's discoveries are to be ennobled through human effort. Indeed the future of the world is in danger unless wiser people are forthcoming. It should also be pointed out that many nations which are poorer as far as material goods are concerned, yet richer in wisdom, can be of the greatest advantage to others.

It is by the gift of the holy Spirit that humanity, through faith, comes to contemplate and savor the mystery of God's design.[8]

Dignity of Moral Conscience

16. Deep within their consciences men and women discover a law which they have not laid upon themselves and which they must obey. Its voice, ever calling them to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells them inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For they have in their hearts a law inscribed by God. Their dignity rests in observing this law, and by it they will be judged.[9] Their conscience is people's most secret core, and their sanctuary. There they are alone with God whose voice echoes in their depths.[10] By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbor.[11] Through loyalty to conscience, Christians are joined to others in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships. Hence, the more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and endeavor to conform to the objective standards of moral conduct. Yet it often happens that conscience goes astray through ignorance which it is unable to avoid, without thereby losing its dignity. This cannot be said of the person who takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is gradually almost blinded through the habit of committing sin.

The Excellence of Freedom

17. It is, however, only in freedom that people can turn themselves towards what is good. The people of our time prize freedom very highly and strive eagerly for it. In this they are right. Yet they often cherish it improperly, as if it gave them leave to do anything they like, even when it is evil. But genuine freedom is an exceptional sign of the image of God in humanity. For God willed that men and women should "be left free to make their own decisions"[12] so that they might of their own accord seek their creator and freely attain their full and blessed perfection by cleaving to God. Their dignity therefore requires them to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by their own blind impulses or by external constraint. People gain such dignity when, freeing themselves of all slavery to the passions, they press forward towards their goal by freely choosing what is good, and, by their diligence and skill, effectively secure for themselves the means suited to this end. Since human freedom has been weakened by sin it is only by the help of God's grace that people can properly orientate their actions towards God. Before the judgment seat of God everybody will have to give an account of their life, according as they have done either good or evil.[13]

The Mystery of Death

18. It is when faced with death that the enigma of the human condition is most evident. People are tormented not only by pain and by the gradual diminution of their bodily powers but also, and even more, by the dread of forever ceasing to be. But a deep instinct leads them rightly to shrink from and to reject the utter ruin and total loss of their personality. Because they bear in themselves the seed of eternity, which cannot be reduced to mere matter, they rebel against death. All the helps made available by technology, however useful they may be, cannot set their anguished minds at rest. They may prolong their life-span; but this does not satisfy their heartfelt longing, one that can never be stifled, for an after-life.

While the imagination is at a loss before the mystery of death, the church, taught by divine revelation, declares that God has created people in view of a blessed destiny that lies beyond the boundaries of earthly misery. Moreover, the Christian faith teaches that bodily death, from which people would have been immune had humanity not sinned,[14] will be overcome when that wholeness which they lost through their own fault will be given once again to them by the almighty and merciful Savior. For God has called men and women, and still calls them, to attach themselves with all their being to him in sharing for ever a life that is divine and free from all decay. Christ won this victory when he rose to life, for by his death he freed women and men from death.[15] Faith therefore, with its solidly based teaching, provides thoughtful people with an answer to their anxious queries about their future lot. At the same time it makes them capable of being united in Christ with their loved ones who have already died, and gives hope that they have found true life with God.

Kinds of Atheism and Its Causes

19. Human dignity rests above all on the fact that humanity is called to communion with God. The invitation to converse with God is addressed to men and women as soon as they are born. For if people exist it is because God has created them through love, and

through love continues to keep them in existence. They cannot live fully in the truth unless they freely acknowledge that love and entrust themselves to their creator. Many, however, of our contemporaries

either do not at all perceive, or else explicitly reject, this intimate and vital relationship with God. Atheism must therefore be regarded as one of the most serious problems of our time, and one that deserves more thorough treatment.

The word atheism is used to signify things that differ considerably from one another. Some people expressly deny the existence of God. Others maintain that people cannot make any assertion whatsoever about God. Still others admit only such methods of investigation as would make it seem quite meaningless to ask questions about God. Many, trespassing beyond the boundaries of the positive sciences, either contend that everything can be explained by the reasoning process used in such sciences, or, on the contrary, hold that there is no such thing as absolute truth. With others it is their exaggerated idea of humanity that causes their faith to languish; they are more prone, it would seem, to affirm humanity than to deny God. Yet others have such a faulty notion of God that when they disown this product of their imagination their denial has no reference to the God of the Gospels. There are also those who never enquire about God; religion never seems to trouble or interest them at all, nor do they see why they should bother about it. Not infrequently atheism is born from a violent protest against the evil in the world, or from the fact that certain human ideals are wrongfully invested with such an absolute character as to be taken for God. Modern civilization itself, though not of its very nature but because it is too engrossed in the concerns of this world, can often make it harder to approach God.

Without doubt those who wilfully try to drive God from their heart and to avoid all questions about religion, not following the dictates of their conscience, are not free from blame. But believers themselves

often share some responsibility for this situation. For, in general, atheism is not present in people's minds from the beginning. It springs from various causes, among which must be included a critical reaction against religions and, in some places, against the Christian religion in particular. Believers can thus have more than a little to do with the rise of atheism. To the extent that they are careless about their instruction in the faith, or present its teaching falsely, or even fail in their religious, moral, or social life, they must be said to conceal rather than to reveal the true nature of God and of religion.

Systematic Atheism

20. Modern atheism often takes a systematic form. There are a number of reasons for this, among them an insistence on human autonomy so great as to put obstacles in the way of any degree of dependence on God. For those who profess atheism of this kind freedom means that humanity constitutes its own end and is the sole maker, in total control, of its own history. They claim that this outlook cannot be reconciled with the assertion of a Lord who is author and end of all things, or that at least it makes such an affirmation altogether unnecessary. The sense of power which modern technical progress produces in people may encourage this outlook.

One form of modern atheism which should not be ignored is that which looks to people's economic and social emancipation for their liberation. It holds that religion, of its very nature, frustrates such emancipation by investing people's hopes in a future life, thus both deceiving them and discouraging them from working for a better form of life on earth. That is why those who hold such views, wherever they gain control of the state, violently attack religion, and in order to spread atheism, especially in the education of young people, make use of all the means by which the civil authority can bring pressure to bear on its subjects.

The Attitude of the Church Towards Atheism

21. The church, faithful to its obligations both to God and humanity, cannot cease, as in the past,[16] to deplore, sadly yet with the utmost firmness, those harmful teachings and ways of acting which are in conflict with reason and with common human experience, and which cast humanity down from the noble state to which it is born. It tries nevertheless to seek out the secret motives which lead the atheistic mind to deny God. Well knowing how important are the problems raised by atheism, and urged by its love for everyone, it considers that these motives deserve an earnest and more thorough scrutiny.

The church holds that to acknowledge God is in no way to diminish human dignity, since such dignity is grounded and brought to perfection in God. Women and men have in fact been placed in the world by God, who created them as intelligent and free beings; but over and above this they are called as daughters and sons to intimacy with God and to share in his happiness. It further teaches that hope in a life to come does not take away from the importance of the duties of this life on earth but rather adds to it by giving new motives for fulfilling those duties. When, on the other hand, people are deprived of this divine support and without hope of eternal life their dignity is deeply impaired, as may so often be seen today. The problems of life and death, of guilt and of suffering, remain unsolved, so that people are frequently thrown into despair.

Meanwhile, everybody remains a question to themselves, one that is dimly perceived and left unanswered. For there are times, especially in the major events of life, when nobody can altogether escape from such self-questioning. God alone, who calls people to deeper thought and to more humble probing, can fully and with complete certainty supply an answer to this questioning.

Atheism must be countered both by properly presenting true teaching and by the full and complete life of the church and of its members. For it is the function of the church to render God the Father and his incarnate Son present and as it were visible, while ceaselessly renewing and purifying itself' under the guidance of the holy Spirit.[17] This is brought about chiefly by the witness of a living and mature faith, one namely that is so well formed that it can see difficulties clearly and overcome them. Many martyrs have borne, and continue to bear, a splendid witness to this faith. This faith should show its fruitfulness by penetrating the entire life, even the worldly activities, of those who believe, and by urging them to be loving and just, especially towards those in need. Lastly, what does most to show God's presence clearly is the familial love of the faithful who, being all of one mind and spirit, work together for the faith of the Gospel[18] and present themselves as a sign of unity.

Although the church altogether rejects atheism, it nevertheless sincerely proclaims that all men and women, those who believe as well as those who do not, should help to establish right order in this world where all live together. This certainly cannot be done without a dialogue that is sincere and prudent. The church therefore deplores the discrimination between believers and unbelievers which some civil authorities unjustly practice, in defiance of the fundamental rights of the human person. It demands effective freedom for the faithful to be allowed to build up God's temple in this world also. It courteously invites atheists to weigh the merits of the Gospel of Christ with an open mind.

For the church knows full well that its message is in harmony with the most secret desires of the human heart, since it champions the dignity of humanity's calling, giving hope once more to those who already despair of their higher destiny. Its message, far from diminishing humanity helps people to develop themselves by bestowing fight, life, and freedom. Apart from this message nothing is able to satisfy the human heart: "You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rest in you." [19]

Christ the New Man

22. In reality it is only in the mystery of the Word made flesh that the mystery of humanity truly becomes clear. For Adam, the first man, was a type of him who was to come,[20] Christ the Lord. Christ the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals humanity to itself and brings to light its very high calling. It is no wonder, then, that all the truths mentioned so far should find in him their source and their most perfect embodiment.

He who is the "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15),[21] is himself the perfect man who has restored in the children of Adam that likeness to God which had been disfigured ever since the first sin. Human nature, by the very fact that it was assumed, not absorbed, in him, has been raised in us also to a dignity beyond compare.[22] For, by his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each individual. He worked with human hands, he thought with a human mind. He acted with a human will[23] and with a human heart he loved. Born of the Virgin Mary, he has truly been made one of us, like to us in all things except sin.[24]

As an innocent lamb he merited life for us by his blood which he freely shed. In him God reconciled us to himself and to one another,[25] freeing us from the bondage of the devil and of sin, so that each one of us could say with the apostle: the Son of God "loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). By suffering for us he not only gave us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps,[26] but he also opened up a way. If we follow this path, life and death are made holy and acquire a new meaning.

Conformed to the image of the Son who is the firstborn of many brothers and sisters,[27] Christians receive the "first fruits of the Spirit" (Rom 8:23) by which they are able to fulfil the new law of love.[28] By this Spirit, who is the "pledge of our inheritance" (Eph 1:14), the entire person is inwardly renewed, even to the "redemption of the body" (Rom 8:23). "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit who dwells in you" (Rom 8:11).[29] The Christian is certainly bound both by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but, as one who has been made a partner in the paschal mystery, and as one who has been configured to the death of Christ, will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection.[30]

All this holds true not only for Christians but also for all people of good will in whose hearts grace is active invisibly.[31] For since Christ died for everyone,[32] and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery.

Such is the nature and the greatness of the mystery of humankind as enlightened for the faithful by the Christian revelation. It is therefore through Christ, and in Christ, that light is thrown on the mystery of suffering and death which, apart from his Gospel,

overwhelms us. Christ has risen again, destroying death by his death, and has given life abundantly to us^[33] so that, becoming sons in the Son, we may cry out in the Spirit: Abba, Father!^[34]

Chapter II:

THE HUMAN COMMUNITY

The Council's Intention

23. One of the most striking features of today's world, and one due in no small measure to modern technical progress, is the very great increase in mutual interdependence between people. Genuine sororal and fraternal dialogue is not advanced by progress of this sort, however, but takes place at a deeper level in a community of persons which calls for mutual respect for each one's full spiritual dignity. Christian revelation greatly fosters the establishment of such communion and at the same time promotes deeper understanding of the laws of social living which the creator has inscribed in people's spiritual and moral nature.

Some recent pronouncements of the churches teaching authority have dealt at length with christian teaching on human society.^[1] The council, therefore, proposes to repeat only a few of the more important truths and to outline the basis of these truths in the light of revelation. Later, it will deal with some of their implications which have special importance for our day.

Communitarian Nature of the Human Vocation: God's Design

24. God, who has a parent's care for all of us, desired that all men and women should form one family and deal with each other as brothers and sisters. All, in fact, are destined to the very same end, namely God himself, since they have been created in the likeness of God, who "made from one every nation of humankind who live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). Love of God and of one's neighbor, then, is the first and greatest commandment. Scripture teaches us that love of God cannot be separated from love of one's neighbor: "Any other commandment [is] summed up in this sentence: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself...,' therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom 13:9- 10; see 1 Jn 4:20). It goes without saying that this is a matter of the utmost importance to people who are coming to rely more and more on each other and to a world which is becoming more unified every day.

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus, when praying to the Father "that they may all be one ... even as we are one" (Jn 17:21-22), has opened up new horizons closed to human reason by indicating that there is a certain similarity between the union existing among the divine persons and the union of God's children in truth and love. It follows, then, that if human beings are the only creatures on earth that God has wanted for their own sake, they can fully discover their true selves Only in sincere self-giving.^[2]

Person and Society: Interdependence

25. The fact that human beings are social by nature indicates that the betterment of the person and the improvement of society depend on each other. Insofar as humanity by its very nature stands completely in need of life in society,^[3] it is and it ought to be the beginning, the subject and the object of every social organization. Life in society is not something accessory to humanity: through their dealings with others, through mutual service, and through fraternal and sororal dialogue, men and women develop all their talents and become able to rise to their destiny.

Among the social ties necessary for humanity's development, some correspond more immediately to our innermost nature - the family, for instance, and the political community; others are freely chosen. Nowadays, for various reasons, mutual relationships and interdependence increase from day to day and give rise to a variety of associations and organizations, both public and private. Socialization, as it is called, is not without its dangers, but it brings with it many advantages for the strengthening and betterment of human qualities and for the protection of human rights. ^[4]

On the one hand, in fulfilling their calling, including their religious calling, men and women are greatly helped by life in society, on the other hand, however, it cannot be denied that they are often turned away from the good and towards evil by the social environment in which they live and in which they have been immersed since their birth. Without doubt frequent upheavals in the social order are in part the result of economic, political, and social tensions. But at a deeper level they come from selfishness and pride, two things which contaminate the atmosphere of society as well. As it is, human beings are prone to evil, but whenever they are confronted with an environment where the effects of sin are to be found, they are exposed to further inducements to sin, which can be overcome only by unremitting effort with the help of grace.

The Common Good

26. Because of the increasingly close interdependence which is gradually extending to the entire world, we are today witnessing an extension of the role of the common good, which is the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily. The resulting rights and obligations are consequently the concern of the entire human race. Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every other group, and even those of the human family as a whole.[5]

At the same time, however, there is a growing awareness of the sublime dignity of human persons, who stand above all things and whose rights and duties are universal and inviolable. They ought, therefore, to have ready access to all that is necessary for living a genuinely human life: for example, food, clothing, housing, the right freely to choose their state of life and set up a family, the right to education, work, to their good name, to respect, to proper knowledge, the right to act according to the dictates of conscience and to safeguard their privacy, and rightful freedom, including freedom of religion.

The social order and its development must constantly yield to the good of the person, since the order of things must be subordinate to the order of persons and not the other way around, as the Lord suggested when he said that the Sabbath was made for men and women and not men and women for the Sabbath. [6] 26 The social order requires constant improvement: it must be founded in truth, built on justice, and enlivened by love: it should grow in freedom towards a more humane equilibrium.[7] If these objectives are to be attained there will first have to be a renewal of attitudes and far-reaching social changes.

The Spirit of God, who, with wonderful providence, directs the course of time and renews the face of the earth, assists at this development. The ferment of the Gospel has aroused and continues to arouse in human hearts an unquenchable thirst for human dignity.

Respect for the Human Person

27. Coming to topics which are practical and of some urgency, the council lays stress on respect for the human person: everybody should look upon his or her neighbor (without any exception) as another self, bearing in mind especially their neighbor's life and the means needed for a dignified way of life,[8] lest they follow the example of the rich man who ignored Lazarus, who was poor.[9]

Today, there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every individual, without exception, and to take positive steps to help a neighbor whom we encounter, whether that neighbor be an elderly person abandoned by everyone, a foreign worker who suffers the injustice of being despised, a refugee, an illegitimate child wrongly suffering for a sin of which the child is innocent, or a starving human being who awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers or sisters, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

The varieties of crime are numerous: all offenses against life itself, such as murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and willful suicide; all violations of the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture, undue psychological pressures; all offenses against human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children, degrading working conditions where people are treated as mere tools for profit rather than free and responsible persons: all these and the like are criminal: they poison civilization; and they debase the perpetrators more than the victims and militate against the honor of the creator.

Respect and Love for Enemies

28. Those also have a claim on our respect and charity who think and act differently from us in social, political, and religious matters. In fact, the more deeply, through courtesy and love, we come to understand their ways of thinking the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them.

Love and courtesy of this kind should not, of course, make us indifferent to truth and goodness. Love, in fact, impels the followers of Christ to proclaim to everyone the truth which saves. But we must distinguish between the error (which must always be rejected) and the people in error, who never lose their dignity as persons even though they flounder amid false or inadequate religious ideas.[10] God, who alone is the judge and the searcher of hearts, forbids us to pass judgment on the inner guilt of others.[11]

The teaching of Christ even demands that we forgive injury,[12] and the precept of love, which is the commandment of the New Law, includes all our enemies: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you" (Mt 5:43-44).

Essential Equality of All: Social Justice

29. All women and men are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all and it must be accorded ever greater recognition.

Undoubtedly not all people are alike as regards physical capacity and intellectual and moral powers. But any kind of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. It is deeply to be deplored that these basic personal rights are not yet being respected everywhere, as is the case with women who are denied the chance freely to choose a husband, or a state of life, or to have access to the same educational and cultural benefits as are available to men.

Furthermore, while there are just differences between people, their equal dignity as persons demands that we strive for fairer and more humane conditions. Excessive economic and social disparity between individuals and peoples of the one human race is a source of scandal and militates against social justice, equity, human dignity, as well as social and international peace.

It is for public and private organizations to be at the service of the dignity and destiny of humanity; let them spare no effort to banish every vestige of social and political slavery and to safeguard basic human rights under every political system. And even if it takes a considerable time to arrive at the desired goal, these organizations should gradually align themselves with spiritual realities, which are the most sublime of all.

Need to Transcend an Individualistic Morality

30. The pace of change is so far-reaching and rapid nowadays that it is imperative that no one, out of indifference to the course of events or because of inertia, would indulge in a merely individualistic morality. The best way to fulfil one's obligations of justice and love is to contribute to the common good according to one's means and the needs of others, and also to promote and help public and private organizations devoted to bettering the conditions of life. There are people who profess noble sentiments and who in practice, however, are carelessly indifferent to the needs of society. There are many in various countries who make light of social laws and directives and are not ashamed to resort to fraud and cheating to avoid paying just taxes and fulfilling other social obligations. There are others who neglect the norms of social conduct, such as those regulating public hygiene and speed limits, forgetting that they are endangering their own lives and the lives of others by their carelessness.

All must consider it their sacred duty to count social obligations among their chief duties today and observe them as such. For the more closely the world comes together, the more widely do people's obligations transcend particular groups and extend to the whole world. This will be realized only if individuals and groups practise moral and social virtues and foster them in social living. Then, under the necessary help of divine grace, there will arise a generation of new women and men, the molders of a new humanity.

Responsibility and Participation

31. To help individuals to carry out more carefully their obligations in conscience towards themselves and towards the various groups to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the employment of the immense resources available today to the human race. Above all, we must undertake the training of youth from all social backgrounds if we are to produce the kind of men and women so urgently needed today, men and women who not only are highly cultured but are generous in spirit as well.

But this sense of responsibility will not be achieved unless people are so circumstanced that they are aware of their dignity and are capable of responding to their calling in the service of God and of humanity. For freedom is often crippled by extreme destitution, just as it can wither in an ivory-tower isolation brought on by overindulgence in the good things of life. It can, however, be strengthened by accepting the inevitable constraints of social life, by undertaking the manifold demands of human relationships, and by service to the community at large.

All should therefore be encouraged to play their part in communal enterprises. One must pay tribute to those nations whose systems permit the largest possible number of the citizens to take part in public life in a climate of genuine freedom. At the same time one must bear in mind the concrete circumstances of each nation and the need for strong public authority. However, if all citizens are to be persuaded to take part in the activities of the various groups which make up the social body, such groups must offer sufficient motivation to attract them and dispose them to serve their fellow men and women. One is right in thinking that the future of humanity rests with people who are capable of providing the generations to come with reasons for living and for hope.

The Word Made Flesh and Human Solidarity

32. Just as God did not create people to live as individuals but to come together in the formation of social unity, so he "willed to make women and men holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness." [13] From the beginning of the history of salvation, God chose certain people as members of a given community, not as individuals, and revealed his plan to them, calling them "his people" (Ex 3:7-12) and making a covenant on Mount Sinai with them. [14]

This communitarian character is perfected and fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ, for the Word made flesh willed to take his place in human society. He was present at the wedding feast at Cana, he visited the house of Zacchaeus, he sat down with publicans and sinners. In revealing the Father's love and humanity's sublime calling, he made use of the most ordinary things of social life and illustrated his words with expressions and imagery from everyday life. He sanctified those human ties, above all family ties, which are the basis of social structures. He willingly observed the laws of his country and chose to lead the life of an ordinary craftsman of his time and place.

In his preaching he clearly described an obligation on the part of the daughters and sons of God to treat each other as sisters and brothers. In his prayer he asked that all his followers should be one. As the redeemer of all of humanity he delivered himself up to death for the sake of all: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15.13). His command to the apostles was to preach the Gospel to all nations in order that the human race would become the family of God, in which love would be the fullness of the law.

As the firstborn of many, and by the gift of his Spirit, he established, after his death and resurrection, a new communion of sisters and brothers among all who received him in faith and love; this is the communion of his own body, the church, in which all as members one of the other would render mutual service in the measure of the different gifts bestowed on each.

This solidarity must be constantly increased until that day when it will be brought to fulfillment; on that day humanity, saved by grace, will offer perfect glory to God as the family beloved of God and of Christ their brother.

Chapter III

HUMANITY'S ACTIVITY IN THE UNIVERSE

The Problem

33. Humanity has always tried to develop its life by its own effort and ingenuity. Nowadays, it has extended and continues to extend its mastery over nearly all spheres of nature with the help of science and technology. Thanks, above all, to an increase in all kinds of interchange between nations the human family is gradually coming to recognize itself and constitute itself as one single community world-wide. As a result, it now produces by its own enterprise many things which in former times it expected would come largely from heavenly powers.

In the face of this immense enterprise now involving the whole human race people face many worrying questions. What is the meaning and value of this feverish activity? How ought all of these things be used? To what goal is all this individual and collective enterprise heading? The church is guardian of the deposit of God's word and draws religious and moral principles from it, but it does not always have a ready answer to every question. Still, it is eager to associate the light of revelation with the experience of humanity in trying to clarify the course upon which it has recently entered.

Value of Human Activity

34. Individual and collective activity, that monumental effort of humanity through the centuries to improve living conditions, in itself presents no problem to believers, it corresponds to the plan of God. Men and women were created in God's image and were commanded to conquer the earth with all it contains and to rule the world in justice and holiness: [1] they were to acknowledge God as maker of all things and refer themselves and the totality of creation to him, so that with all things subject to God, the divine name would be glorified through all the earth. [2]

This holds good also for our daily work. When men and women provide for themselves and their families in such a way as to be of service to the community as well, they can rightly look upon their work as a prolongation of the work of the creator, a service to other men and women, and their personal contribution to the fulfillment in history of the divine plan. [3]

Far from thinking that what human enterprise and ability have achieved is opposed to God's power as if the rational creature is a rival to the creator, Christians are convinced that the achievements of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the fulfilment of his mysterious design. The more the power of men and women increases the greater is their responsibility as individuals and as members of the community. There is no question, then, of the Christian message inhibiting them from building up the world or making them disinterested in the good of others: on the contrary it makes it a matter of stricter obligation.[4]

Regulation of Human Activity

35. Human activity is for the benefit of human beings, proceeding from them as it does. When they work, not only do they transform matter and society, they also perfect themselves. They learn, develop their faculties, emerging from and transcending themselves. Rightly understood, this kind of growth is more precious than any kind of wealth that can be amassed. People are of greater value for what they are than for what they have.[5] Technical progress is of less value than advances towards greater justice, wider kinship and a more humane social environment. Technical progress may supply the material for human advance but it is powerless to achieve it.

Here then is the norm for human activity - to harmonize with the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God's will and design, and to enable people as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfil their total vocation.

Rightful Autonomy of Earthly Affairs

36. Many of our contemporaries seem to fear that a close association between human activity and religion will endanger the autonomy of humanity, of organizations and of science. If by the autonomy of earthly affairs is meant the gradual discovery, utilization and ordering of the laws and values of matter and society, then the demand for autonomy is perfectly in order: it is at once the claim of humankind today and the desire of the creator. By the very nature of creation, material being is endowed with its own stability, truth and excellence, its own order and laws. These, as the methods proper to every science and technique must be respected. Consequently, methodical research in all branches of knowledge, provided it is carried out in a truly scientific manner and does not override moral laws, can never conflict with the faith, because the things of the world and the things of faith derive from the same God.[6] The humble and persevering investigators of the secrets of nature are being led, as it were, by the hand of God, even unawares, for it is God, the conservator of all things, who made them what they are. We cannot but deplore certain attitudes, not unknown among Christians, deriving from a shortsighted view of the rightful autonomy of science; they have occasioned conflict and controversy and have misled many into opposing faith and science.[7]

However, if by the term "the autonomy of earthly affairs" is meant that material being does not depend on God and that humanity can use it as if it had no relation to its creator, then the falsity of such a claim will be obvious to anyone who believes in God. Without a creator there can be no creature. In any case, believers, no matter what their religion, have always recognized the voice and the revelation of God in the language of creatures. Besides, once God is forgotten, the creature itself is left in darkness.

Human Activity Infected by Sin

37. Sacred scripture teaches humankind what has also been confirmed by centuries of experience, namely, that the great advantages of human progress bring with them grave temptations: the hierarchy of values has been disordered, good and evil intermingle, and every person and group are interested only in their own affairs, not in those of others. So it is that the earth has not yet become the scene of true amity; rather, humanity's growing power now threatens to put an end to the human race itself.

The whole of human history has been the story of our combat with the powers of evil stretching as our Lord tells us,[8] from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding themselves in the battlefield, men and women have to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to themselves, and aided by God's grace, that they succeed in achieving their own inner integrity. Hence the church of Christ, trusting in the design of the creator and accepting that progress can contribute to humanity's true happiness, still feels called upon to echo the words of the apostle: "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rom 12:2). "World" here means a spirit of vanity and malice whereby human activity from being ordered to the service of God and humanity is reduced to being an instrument of sin.

To the question of how this unhappy situation can be overcome, Christians reply that all these human activities, which are daily endangered by pride and inordinate self love, must be purified and perfected by the cross and resurrection of Christ. Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature by the holy Spirit, a person can, and indeed must, love the things which God has created: it is from God that they have been received, and it is as coming from God's hand that they are seen and revered. Thanks are owed to the divine benefactor for all these things, they are used and enjoyed in a spirit of poverty and freedom: thus a person is brought to a true possession of the world, as having nothing yet possessing everything:[9] "All are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 2:22-23).

Human Activity: Its Fulfillment in the Paschal Mystery

38. The Word of God, through whom all things were made, became man and dwelt among us,[10] a perfect man, he entered world history, taking that history into himself and recapitulating it.[11] He reveals to us that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8) and at the same time teaches that the fundamental law of human perfection, and consequently of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love. He assures those who trust in the charity of God that the way of love is open to all and that the effort to establish a universal communion will not be in vain.

This love is not something reserved for important matters, but must be exercised above all in the ordinary circumstances of daily life. Christ's example in dying for us sinners[12] teaches us that we must carry the cross, which the flesh and the world inflict on the shoulders of any who seek after peace and justice. Constituted Lord by his resurrection and given all authority in heaven and on earth,[13] Christ is now at work in human hearts by the power of his Spirit; not only does he arouse in them a desire for the world to come but he quickens, purifies, and strengthens the generous aspirations of humanity to make life more humane and conquer the earth for this purpose. The gifts of the Spirit are manifold: some are called to testify openly to humanity's yearning for its heavenly home and to keep the awareness of it vividly before people's minds; others are called to dedicate themselves to the service of people on earth and in this way to prepare the way for the kingdom of heaven. But the Spirit makes all of them free, ready to put aside love of self and assume earthly resources into human life, stretching out towards that future day when humanity itself will become an offering accepted by God.[14]

Christ left to his followers a pledge of this hope and food for the journey in the sacrament of faith, in which natural elements, the fruits of human cultivation, are changed into his glorified Body and Blood, as a supper of brotherly and sisterly communion and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

39. We do not know the moment of the consummation of the earth and of humanity[15] nor the way the universe will be transformed. The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away[16] and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells,[17] whose happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in human hearts.[18] Then death will have been conquered, the daughters and sons of God will be raised in Christ and what was sown in weakness and dishonor will become incorruptible;[19] charity and its works will remain[20] and all of creation, which God made for humanity, will be set free from its bondage to decay.[21]

We have been warned, of course, that it profits us nothing if we gain the whole world and lose or forfeit ourselves.[22] Far from diminishing our concern to develop this earth, the expectation of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is to come. That is why, although we must be careful to distinguish earthly progress dearly from the increase of the kingdom of Christ, such progress is of vital concern to the kingdom of God, insofar as it can contribute to the better ordering of human society.[23]

When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise - human dignity, sisterly and brotherly communion, and freedom - according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom "of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." [24] Here on earth the kingdom is mysteriously present; when the Lord comes it will enter into its perfection.

Chapter IV

ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

Mutual Relationship of Church and World

40. All we have said up to now about the dignity of the human person, the community of men and women, and the deep significance of human activity, provides a basis for discussing the relationship between the church and the world and the dialogue between them.[1] The council now intends to consider the presence of the church in the world, and its life and activity there, in the light of what it has already declared about the mystery of the church.

Proceeding from the love of the eternal Father,[2] the church was founded by Christ in time and gathered into one by the holy Spirit.[3] It has a saving and eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the next life. But it is now present here on earth and is composed of women and men; they, the members of the earthly city, are called to form the family of the children of God even in this present history of humankind and to increase it continually until the Lord comes. Made one in view of heavenly benefits and enriched by them, this family has been "constituted and organized as a society in the present world"[4] by Christ and "provided with means adapted

to its visible and social union."[5] Thus the church, at once "a visible organization and a spiritual community,"[6] travels the same journey as all of humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: it is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ[7] and transformation into the family of God.

That the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another is a fact open only to the eyes of faith; moreover, it will remain the mystery of human history, which will be harassed by sin until the perfect revelation of the splendor of the children of God. In pursuing its own salvific purpose not only does the church communicate divine life to humanity but in a certain sense it casts the reflected light of that divine life over all the earth, notably in the way it heals and elevates the dignity of the human person, in the way it consolidates society, and endows people's daily activity with a deeper sense and meaning. The church, then, believes that through each of its members and its community as a whole it can help to make the human family and its history still more human.

Furthermore, the Catholic Church deeply appreciates what other Christian churches and ecclesial communities have contributed and are contributing cooperatively to the realization of this aim. Similarly, it is convinced that there is a great variety of help that it can receive from the world in preparing the ground for the gospel both from individuals and from society as a whole, by their talents and activity. The council will now outline some general principles for the proper fostering of mutual exchange and help in matters which are in some way common to the church and the world.

What the Church Offers to Individuals

41. Contemporary women and men are in process of developing their personality and of increasingly discovering and affirming their rights. The church is entrusted with the task of manifesting to them the mystery of God, who is their final destiny; in doing so it discloses to them the meaning of their own existence, the innermost truth about themselves. The church knows well that God alone, whom it serves, can satisfy the deepest cravings of the human heart, for it can never be fully content with the world and what it has to offer. The church also realizes that men and women are continually being aroused by the Spirit of God and that they will never be utterly indifferent to religion -- a fact confirmed by the experience of past ages and by a variety of evidence today. For people will always be keen to know, if only in a general way, what is the meaning of their life, their activity, their death. The very presence of the church recalls these problems to their minds. The most perfect answer to these questions is to be found in God alone, who created women and men in his own image and redeemed them from sin; and this answer is given in the revelation in Christ his Son who became man. To follow Christ the perfect human is to become more human oneself.

By this faith the church can keep the dignity of human nature out of the reach of changing opinions which, for example, either devalue the human body or glorify it. There is no human law so well fitted to safe guard the personal dignity and human freedom as is the gospel which Christ entrusted to the church; for the gospel announces and proclaims the freedom of the daughters and sons of God, it rejects all bondage resulting from sin,[8] it scrupulously respects the dignity of conscience and its freedom of choice, it never ceases to encourage the employment of human talents in the service of God and humanity, and, finally, it commends everyone to the charity of all.[9] This is nothing other than the basic law of the Christian dispensation. The fact that it is the same God who is at once saviour and creator, Lord of human history and of the history of salvation, does not mean that this divine order deprives creation, and humanity in particular, of their rightful autonomy; on the contrary, it restores and strengthens its dignity.

In virtue of the gospel entrusted to it, the church proclaims human rights; it acknowledges and holds in high esteem the dynamic approach of today which is fostering these rights all over the world. But this approach needs to be animated by the spirit of the gospel and preserved from all traces of false autonomy. For there is a temptation to feel that our personal rights are fully maintained only when we are free from every restriction of divine law. But this is the way leading to the extinction of human dignity, not its preservation.

What the Church Offers to Society

42. The union of the human family is greatly consolidated and perfected by the unity which Christ established among the sons and daughters of God.[10]

Christ did not bequeath to the church a mission in the political, economic, or social order: the purpose he assigned to it was religious.[11] But this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction, and vigor to establish and consolidate the human community according to the law of God. In fact, the church is able, indeed it is obliged, if times and circumstances require it, to initiate action for the benefit of everyone, especially of those in need, such as works of mercy and the like.

The church, moreover, acknowledges the good to be found in the social dynamism of today, especially in progress towards unity, healthy socialization, and civil and economic cooperation. The encouragement of unity is in harmony with the deepest nature of the church's mission, for it is "a sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race." [12] It shows to the world that social and exterior union comes from a union of hearts and minds, from the faith and love by which

its own indissoluble unity has been founded in the holy Spirit. The impact which the church can have on modern society is due to an effective living of faith and love, not to any external power exercised by purely human means.

By its nature and mission the church is universal in that it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system. Hence, it can be a very close bond between the various communities of people and nations, provided they trust the church and guarantee it true freedom to carry out its mission. With this in view the church calls upon its members and upon all people to put aside, in the family spirit of the children of God, all conflict between nations and races and to build up the internal strength of just human associations.

Whatever truth, goodness, and justice is to be found in past or present human institutions is held in high esteem by the council. In addition, the council declares that the church wants to help and foster these institutions insofar as this depends on it and is compatible with its mission. The church desires nothing more ardently than that it should develop in freedom in the service of all, under any regime which recognizes the basic rights of the person and the family, and the requirements of the common good.

What the Church Offers to Human Activity Through its Members

43. The council exhorts Christians, as citizens of both cities, to perform their duties faithfully in the spirit of the gospel. It is a mistake to think that, because we have here no lasting city, but seek the city which is to come, [13] we are entitled to evade our earthly responsibilities; this is to forget that because of our faith we are all the more bound to fulfil these responsibilities according to each one's vocation.[14] But it is no less mistaken to think that we may immerse ourselves in earthly activities as if these latter were utterly foreign to religion, and religion were nothing more than the fulfilment of acts of worship and the observance of a few moral obligations. One of the gravest errors of our time is the dichotomy between the faith which many profess and their day-to-day conduct. As far back as the Old Testament the prophets vehemently denounced this scandal,[15] and in the New Testament Christ himself even more forcibly threatened it with severe punishment.[16] Let there, then, be no such pernicious opposition between professional and social activity on the one hand and religious life on the other. Christians who shirk their temporal duties shirk their duties towards his neighbor, neglect God himself, and endanger their eternal salvation. Let Christians follow the example of Christ who worked as a craftsman; let them be proud of the opportunity to carry out their earthly activity in such a way as to integrate human, domestic, professional, scientific and technical enterprises with religious values, under whose supreme direction all things are ordered to the glory of God.

It is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong. When therefore, as citizens of the world, they are engaged in any activity either individually or collectively, they will not be satisfied with meeting the minimum legal requirements but will strive to become truly proficient in that sphere. They will gladly cooperate with others working towards the same objectives. Let them be aware of what their faith demands of them in these matters and derive strength from it; let them not hesitate to take the initiative at the opportune moment and put their findings into effect. It is their task to cultivate a properly informed conscience and to impress the divine law on the affairs of the earthly city. For guidance and spiritual strength let them turn to the clergy; but let them realize that their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem, even every grave problem, that arises; this is not the role of the clergy: it is rather the task of lay people to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with careful attention to the teaching authority of the church.[17]

Very often their Christian vision will suggest a certain solution in some given situation. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that some of the faithful, with no less sincerity, will see the problem quite differently. Now if one or other of the proposed solutions is readily perceived by many to be closely connected with the message of the gospel, they ought to remember that in those cases no one is permitted to identify the authority of the church exclusively with his or her own opinion. Let them, then, try to guide each other by sincere dialogue in a spirit of mutual charity and with a genuine concern for the common good above all.

The laity are called to participate actively in the entire life of the church; not only are they to animate the world with the spirit of Christianity, they are to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the human community.

The task of directing the church of God has been entrusted to bishops and they, with their priests, are to preach the message of Christ in such a way that the light of the gospel will shine on all activities of the faithful. Let all pastors of souls bear in mind that by their daily behavior and concerns] they are presenting the face of the church to the world and that people judge from that the power and truth of the Christian message. By their words and example and in union with religious and with the faithful, let them show that the church with all its gifts is, by its presence alone, an inexhaustible source of all those virtues of which the modern world stands most in need. Let them prepare themselves by careful study to meet to enter into dialogue with the world and with people of all shades of opinion: let them have in their hearts above all these words of the council: "Since the human race today is tending more and more towards civil, economic and social unity, it is all the more necessary that priests should unite their efforts and combine their resources under the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff and thus eliminate division and dissension in every shape or form, so that all humanity may be led into the unity of the family of God." [19]

By the power of the holy Spirit the church is the faithful spouse of the Lord and will never fail to be a sign of salvation in the world; but it is by no means unaware that down through the centuries there have been among its members,[20] both clerical and lay, some who were disloyal to the Spirit of God. Today as well, the church is not blind to the discrepancy between the message it proclaims and the human weakness of those to whom the gospel has been entrusted. Whatever is history's judgment on these shortcomings, we cannot ignore them and we must combat them assiduously, lest they hinder the spread of the gospel. The church also realizes how much it needs the maturing influence of centuries of past experience in order to work out its relationship to the world. Guided by the holy Spirit the church ceaselessly exhorts her children "to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the church." [21]

What the Church Receives from the Modern World

44. Just as it is in the world's interest to acknowledge the church as a social reality and a driving force in history, so too the church is not unaware how much it has profited from the history and development of humankind. It profits from the experience of past ages, from the progress of the sciences, and from the riches hidden in various cultures, through which greater light is thrown on human nature and new avenues to truth are opened up. The church learned early in its history to express the Christian message in the concepts and languages of different peoples and tried to clarify it in the light of the wisdom of their philosophers: it was an attempt to adapt the gospel to the understanding of all and the requirements of the learned, insofar as this could be done. Indeed, this kind of adaptation and preaching of the revealed word must ever be the law of all evangelization. In this way it is possible to create in every country the possibility of expressing the message of Christ in suitable terms and to foster vital contact and exchange between the church and different cultures.[22] Nowadays when things change so rapidly and thought patterns differ so widely, the church needs to step up this exchange by calling upon the help of people who are living in the world, who are expert in its organizations and its forms of training, and who understand its mentality, in the case of believers and non believers alike. With the help of the holy Spirit, it is the task of the whole people of God, particularly of its pastors and theologians, to listen to and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of God's word, in order that the revealed truth may be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and more suitably presented.

The church has a visible social structure, which is a sign of its unity in Christ: as such it can be enriched, and it is being enriched, by the evolution of social life, not as if something were missing in the constitution which Christ gave the church, but in order to understand this constitution more deeply, express it better, and adapt it more successfully to our times. The church acknowledges gratefully that, both as a whole and in its individual sons and daughters, it has been helped in various ways by people of all classes and conditions. Whoever contributes to the development of the human community on the level of family, culture, economic and social life, and national and international politics, according to the plan of God, is also contributing in no small way to the community of the church insofar as it depends on things outside itself. The church itself also recognizes that it has benefited and is still benefiting from the opposition of its enemies and persecutors.[23]

Christ: Alpha and Omega

45. Whether it aids the world or whether it benefits from it, the church has but one sole purpose - that the kingdom of God may come and the salvation of the human race may be accomplished. Every benefit the people of God can confer on humanity during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the church's being "the universal sacrament of salvation,"[24] at once manifesting and actualizing the mystery of God's love for humanity.

The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as a perfect man he could save all women and men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the center of humanity, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfillment of all aspirations.[25] It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead. Animated and drawn together in his Spirit we press onwards on our journey towards the consummation of history which fully corresponds to the plan of his love: "to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:10).

The Lord himself said: "See, I am coming soon, my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Apoc 22:12-13).

Endnotes to Part One

Part One: Preface

1. Although it consists of two parts, the Pastoral Constitution "The Church the World Today" constitutes an organic unity. The Constitution is called "pastoral" because, while resting on doctrinal principles, it sets out the relation of the church to the world and to

the people of today. In Part I, therefore, the pastoral emphasis is not overlooked, nor is the doctrinal emphasis overlooked in Part II. In Part I the church develops its teaching on humanity, the world it inhabits, and its relationship to women and men. Part II treats at length of various aspects of life and human society today and in particular deals with those questions and problem which seem to have a greater urgency in our day. The result is that in Part II the subject matter which is viewed in the light of doctrinal principles consists of elements, some of which are permanent and some of which are contingent. The Constitution is to be interpreted according to the general norms of theological interpretation, while taking into account, especially in Part II, the changing circumstances which the subject matter, by its very nature, involves.

1a. With the exception of Part I chap.1 (translated by the late Ambrose McNicholl, O.P., University of St Thomas, Rome), the Constitution was translated by Paul Lennon, O.Carm. It was revised for this edition by AF.

2. See Jn 18:37.

3. See Jn 3:17; Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45.

4. See Rom 7:14 ff.

5. See 2 Cor 5:15.

6. See Acts 4:12.

7. See Heb 13:8.

8. See Col 1:15.

Part One: Chapter I

1. See Gen 1:26; Wis 2:23.

2. See Ecclus 17:3-10.

3. See Rom 1:21-25.

4. See Jn 8:34.

5. See Dan 3:57-90.

6. See 1 Cor 6:13-20.

6a. The Latin text (*Interioritate enim sua universitatem rerum excedit: ad haec profunda redit, quando convertitur ad cor ...*) here shows most closely its dependence on the French draft prepared under the direction of Abbe P. Hauptmann. I have had to render the French *interioritate* and the semi-biblical *revertitur ad cor* by paraphrasing. Similarly, in (15), with regard to the words *ut humaniora fiant* as applied to what humanity has discovered. [Translator].

7. See 1 Kg 16:7; Jer 17:10.

8. See Eccl 17:7-8.

9. See Rom 2:14-16.

10. See Pius XII, radio message on rightly forming the Christian conscience in youth, 23 March 1952: AAS 44 (1952), p. 271.

11. See Mt 22:37-40; Gal 5:14.

12. See Eccl 15:14.

13. See 2 Cor 5:10.

14. See Wis 1:13; 2:23-24; Rom 5:21; 6:23; Jas 1:15.

15. See 1 Cor 15:56-57.

16. See Pius XI, Encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, 19 March 1937: AAS 29 (1937), pp. 65-106; Pius XII, Encyclical *Ad Apostolorum Principes*, 29 June 1958: AAS 50 (1958), pp. 601-14; John XXIII Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961: AAS 53 (1961), pp. 451-3; Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 651-3.

16a. Grammatically the text could read: by ceaselessly renewing and purifying herself. But this would imply that the church makes God present only when she renews herself. The text, in trying to be short, mixes two ideas, that of the presence of God in the world through the church, and that of a presence made more visible and striking through a renewal of Christian life. [Translator].

17. See Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 1, n. 8.

18. See Phil 1:27,

19. St Augustine, *Confessions* 1, 1: PL 32, 661.

20. See Rom 5:14. See Tertullian, *De carnis resurrectione*, 6: "For in all the form which was moulded in the clay, Christ was in his thoughts as the man who was to be." PL 2, 802 (848), CSEL, 47, p.33, lines 12-13.

21. See 2 Cor 4:4.

22. See council of Constantinople II, can. 7: "Neither was God the Word changed into the nature of flesh, nor his flesh changed into the nature of the word." Denz. 219 (428); see also council Constantinople III: "For as his all-holy and immaculate ensouled flesh was not destroyed (theotesia ouk anerethle) by being deified, but persisted in its own state and sphere." Denz. 291 (556), see council Chalcedon: "Recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation." Denz. 291 (302).

23. See council of Constantinople III: "So also his human was not destroyed by being deified, but was rather preserved." Denz. 291 (556).

24. See Heb 4:15.

25. See 2 Cor 5:18-19; Col 1:20-22.

26. See I @t 2:21; Mt 16:24; Lk 14:27.
27. See Rom 8:29; Col 1:18.
28. See Rom 8:1-11.
29. See 2 Cor 4:14.
30. See Phfl 3:10, Rom 8:17.
31. See Vatican Council II Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, n. 16.
32. See Rom 8:32.
33. See Byzantine Easter Liturgy.
34. See Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6; see also 1 Jn 3:1.

Part One: Chapter II

1. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961: AAS 53 (1961), pp. 401-64, and Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 257-304; Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, 6 August 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 609-59.
2. See Lk 17:33.
3. See St Thomas Aquinas, *I Ethic.*, Lect. 1.
4. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra* 15 May 1961: AAS 53 (1961), p. 418. See also Pius XI, Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*, 15 May 1931: AAS 23 (1931), p. 222 ff.
5. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*: AAS 53 (1961), p. 417.
6. Mk 2:27.
7. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), p. 266.
8. See Jas 2:15-16.
9. See Lk 16:19-31.
10. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 299 and 300.
11. See Lk 6:37-38- Mt 7:1-2; Rom 2:1-11,14:10-12
12. See Mt 5:43-47.
13. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch 2, n. 9.
14. See Ex 24:1-8.

Part One: Chapter III

1. See Gen 1:26-27; 9:2-3; Wis 9:2-3.
2. See Ps 8:7 and 10.
3. See John X, Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963), p. 297.
4. See Message to all men and women, issued by the Fathers at the beginning of Vatican Council II, October 1962: AAS 54 (1962), p. 823.
5. See Paul VI, Allocution to the Diplomatic Corps, 7 January 1965 AAS 57 (1965), p. 232.
6. See Vatican Council 1, Dogmatic Constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, ch. 3: Denz. 1785-1786 (3004-3005).
7. See Pius Pas@ *Vita e opera di Galileo Galilei*, 2 vol., Vatican City, 1964.
8. See Mt 24:13; 13:24-30 and 36-43.
9. See 2 Cor 6:10.
10. See Jn 1:3 and 14.
11. See Eph 1:10.
12. See Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8-10.
13. See Acts 2:36; Mt 28:18.
14. See Rom 15:16.
15. See. Acts 1:7.
16. See I Cor 7:31; St Irenaeus *Advenus Haereses*, V, 36, 1: PG 7, 1222
17. See 2 Cor 5:2; 2 Nt 3:13.
18. See 1 Cor 2:9; Apoc 21:4-5.
19. See I Cor 15:42 and 53.
20. See I Cor 13:8; 3:14.
21. See Rom 8:19-21.
22. See Lk 9:25.
23. See Pius XL Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*: AAS 23 (1931), p. 207.
24. Preface for the Feast of Christ the King.

Part One: Chapter IV

1. Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, III: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 637-659.

2. See Tit 3:4: 'philantropia.'
 3. See Eph 1:3,5-6,13-14,23.
 4. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 1, n. 8.
 5. *Ibid.*, ch. 2, n. 9.
 6. *Ibid.*, ch. 1, n. 8.
 7. *Ibid.*, ch. 4,38.
 8. See Rom 8:14-17,
 9. See Mt 22:39.
 10. See Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 2, n. 9.
 11. See Pius XII, Allocution to Historians and Artists, 9 March 1956: AAS 4 (1956), p. 212.
 12. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch.1, n. 1.
 13. See Heb 13:14.
 14. See 2 Th 3:6-13; Eph 4:28.
 15. See Is 58:1-12.
 16. See Mt 23:3-33; Mk 7:10-13.
 17. See John XXIII, Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, IV: AAS 53 (1961), pp, 456-7: see 1: AAS Loc. cit., pp. 407,410-411.
 18. Vatican council II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 3, n. 28.
 19. *Ibid.*, n. 28.
 20. See St Ambrose, *De virginitate*, ch.VIII, n. 48: PL 16, 278.
 21. Vatican Council II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 2, n. 15.
 22. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 2, n. 13.
 23. Justin, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* ch. 110: PG 6, 729: ed. Otto, 1897, pp. 391-393: ". . . for the more such persecutions are inflicted upon us, the greater the number of others who will become devout believers in the name of Jesus." See Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, ch. 50, 13: *Corpus Christ. ser. lat.* 1, P. 171: "We become even more numerous when you mow us down, for the blood of Christians is a seed!" See Vatican council II Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 2 n. 9.
 24. Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, ch. 7, n. 48.
 25. See Paul VI, Allocution, Feb. 1965.
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