

## Introduction to VATICAN II for High School

**THE NICENE CREED** at Sunday Mass was drawn up by the First General Council of the Bishops of the Church.

It was named from the village of Nicea, just across the water from Gallipoli. The year was A.D. 325, a little over ten years after the three hundred years of on-and-off persecutions of the Church by the cruel pagan Roman Empire.

Church councils are named from the places where they meet. Their doctrine and discipline only count if approved by the Pope, even if he is not present in person. Try to imagine the problems before modern transport, and internet, satellites, telephones and radios.

The Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15, is not usually numbered in the general councils, though it abolished most Old Testament religious discipline for Christians, and specially for the Gentile converts.

General Councils followed Nicea thick and fast: Constantinople in 381, which added greater detail on the Holy Spirit to the Nicene Creed; and Ephesus in 431 declared Mary "Mother of God"; and Chalcedon in 451 defined the Divine and human natures in Christ.

General councils are called "ecumenical councils", but not in the modern sense of bishops or Christian groups separated from the Pope, but the opposite, of bishops from all over the world who are in union with the Bishop of Rome, the Pope. In the case of Vatican II, however, there were observers from both Eastern Orthodox Churches and Protestant groups.

### VATICAN I, 1869-1870

The first Vatican Council, among other things, defined papal infallibility, and the ability of human reason to prove the existence of God. It was adjourned when Rome was invaded at the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, and was never reconvened.

### VATICAN II, 1962-1965

**THE FIRST TWENTY** general councils were summoned to deal with heresies. But Blessed Pope John XXIII wanted the Second Vatican Council to be a pastoral council, to enliven the apostolic effectiveness of the Church after World War II.

It is said that he hoped for a second Pentecost:

1. every Catholic become fervent;
2. Separated Brethren won back to the true Church;
3. the whole world convert to Christ and His Church.

The documents of Vatican II are distinguished for their easy reading and their avoidance of anathemas (condemnations). Its style is clear, confident, and assertive (though never aggressive), like that found in the *Roman Catechism* for parish priests (1566, from the Council of Trent), and today's *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (1992/2000).

Nevertheless, Pope John said in his opening speech, 11th October, 1962, that, "The greatest concern of the Second Vatican Council is that the Sacred Deposit of Christian Doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously." See Abbott edition of the *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 713. Pope John Paul II alludes to this on p. 2 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

This "greatest concern" is as yet unfulfilled, for the faith is now less efficaciously guarded and less efficaciously taught than before Vatican II. Much needs "fixing up", such as Godly marriages, priestly vocations, and Religious Orders.

In 1985, twenty years after Vatican II, the state of the Church was reviewed by an Extraordinary Synod of Bishops (one from each country), convened by Pope

John Paul II. Its *Final Report* (FR) said there was "a defective understanding and application of the Second Vatican Council." This text *defectuosus intellectu et applicatione* was mistranslated in the St Paul Edition p. 19, which said, "an incomplete understanding and lack of application", suggesting that all that was needed was more-of-the-same.

The Bishops also said, "Everywhere in the world today the transmission to the young of the faith and moral values deriving from the Gospel is in peril. The knowledge of the faith and the acceptance of the moral order are often reduced to a minimum." (FR p. 31.)

It was this Extraordinary Synod which proposed the writing of a *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (p. 33), and asserted that the basic idea of Vatican II was "*communio*", the communion of saints and holy rites which unite the world to God (p. 35).

### THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II

Its major work and documents were about:

- The *Liturgy*: Active Participation in the Paschal Mystery and in answering the responses at Mass.
- The *Church* herself, and all her members are like Christ Himself as Priest, Prophet and King.
- Hence the *Laity* and their apostolate in the family, at work and in society.
- Divine *Revelation*, God's message to the world through His prophets, then His Son, and continued in the Church.
- The *Church in the Modern World*, the Catholic world-view, the "vision without which the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18 KJV).
- *Ecumenism* in the modern sense of dialogue with non-Catholic Christians (Separated Brethren) and recognition of valid Baptism.
- Plus documents on Missions, Bishops, separated Eastern Churches, Priests, Seminaries, Religious Life, Laity, Non-Christians, Religious Liberty, Education, Mass Media.

### CHURCH TEACHING

The teaching on Church teaching is in *Dei Verbum* (DV), "Word of God", the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965.

Note that references are in a two-letter code and a margin number, (latter can embrace several paragraphs): look up the texts quoted below, and check their context as extended study.

Revelation means God speaking to man, unveiling secrets in Christ Who is the Incarnate Word of God, (DV §2):

→ Deposit of Faith entrusted to the Apostles (DV §§7-10);

→ Tradition (word of God handed down authoritatively)

→ Bible (written and inspired word of God)

→ Magisterium (Church guarantee on God's Word) DV §10

The Magisterium today includes the 16 documents of Vatican II, plus the follow-up by other doctrinal & disciplinary documents from Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI. Particularly important are:

- The Code of Canon Law (1983), which expresses very well the lay apostolate in the Church and in the world, and describes the Mass and Sacraments simply and clearly;
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1992/1994), with its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition in 2000 including a very helpful Glossary.
- Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2005) with 598 Questions/Answers in 32,000 words.

The Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition helps at a simpler level: 50 Q&As in 1150 words, Bible texts & pictures.

## THE CHURCH

Vatican II's core document is the Church teaching on the Church herself, found in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964. Its opening Latin words are *Lumen Gentium*, LG, Light of the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:47; Isaiah 42:6).

It continues: "The Church, in Christ, is in the nature of a sacrament — a sign and instrument — i.e. of communion [*communio*] with God and of unity among all men." LG § 1.

The Church is a miraculous and mysterious reality, the Kingdom of God, also the Bride of Christ (and called "she"); an assembly of people called forth by God; the People of God, the Mystical Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

LG is divided into 8 chapters, some of which are expanded in the lesser documents of Vatican II:

1. The Mystery of the Church.
2. The People of God.
3. The Church is Hierarchical (Pope, Bishops, Priests, Deacons).
4. The Laity.
5. The Call to Holiness.
6. Religious, i.e. brothers, nuns, religious order priests.
7. The Pilgrim Church.
8. Our Lady.

## THE ONE TRUE CHURCH and salvation

"This is the sole Church of Christ which in the Creed we profess to be one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care..." and "this Church subsists [continues to exist]... in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him". (LG §8.)

"They could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse to enter it, or to remain in it." (LG § 14.)

"Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved." (LG § 14.)

## THE LITURGY AND THE MASS

"The Liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ..." and "the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God..." SC §§7,10 (SC = *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963)

"Christ... is present in the Sacrifice of the Mass not only in the person of His minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests. Who formerly offered Himself on the Cross,' but especially in the Eucharistic species... He is present in His Word since it is He Himself Who speaks when the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Lastly, He is present when the Church prays and sings, for He has promised 'where two or three are gathered...'" (SC §7). The four underlinings are the four-fold *presences* of Christ in theological rather than a chronological order.

## PRIESTS and Common Priesthood of Laity

"Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another, each in its proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ." (LG§10.)

"In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing in his name and by his power. But the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ; they have therefore in the Church and in the world, their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God..." AA §2 (AA = *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 1965, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity).

## CHANGES in the MASS from VATICAN II

1. some revision/simplification needed in the rite of the Mass;
2. new Lectionary with Sunday readings over several years;
3. homily on Sundays and holydays;
4. Prayer of the Faithful after homily;
5. active participation expressed via acclamations [e.g. Amen, Alleluia], responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, actions, gestures, bodily attitude and silence;
6. vernacular for Bible Readings, Prayer of Faithful, but the laity should be able to say or sing the Latin of their parts;
7. better for communion Hosts to be consecrated at that Mass;
8. priests to teach insistently that the faithful take their part in the entire Liturgy of the Word and Eucharistic Liturgy;
9. sometimes concelebration with several priests at once;
10. specified occasions for Communion under both Kinds.

See SC §§30, 35, 36,50-58 etc.

## Not decreed by Vatican II, but later allowed

Priest facing people over altar; additional Eucharistic Prayers (not just the Roman Canon); Holy Communion standing up, on the hand, from lay ministers; little kneeling (abolition of altar rails and kneelers).

## MISSION AND VISION

"Therefore, the world which the Council has in mind is the whole human family seen in the context of everything which envelopes it: it is the world as the theatre of human history, bearing the marks of its travail, its triumphs and failures, the world, which in the Christian vision has been created and sustained by the love of its maker, which has been freed from the slavery of sin 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 fulfilment." GS §2 (GS = *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).

## MARRIAGE

"The well-being of the individual person and of both human and Christian society is closely bound up with the healthy state of conjugal [=married] and family life." GS §47.

"... Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and educate their children... Among the married couples who thus fulfil their God-given mission, special mention should be made of those who after prudent reflection and common decision courageously undertake the proper upbringing of a large number of children." GS §50.

## COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE SEXES

"In the entire educational program they [school teachers] should, together with the parents, make full allowance for the difference of sex and for the particular role which Providence has appointed to each sex in the family and in society." GE §8 (GE = *Gravissimum Educationis*, Declaration on Christian Education, 1965.)

## CONSECRATED CELIBACY

"Students [for the priesthood] should have a proper knowledge of the duties and dignity of Christian marriage, which represents the love which exists between Christ and the Church (cf. Ephesians 5:32). They should recognize the greater excellence of virginity consecrated to Christ, however, so that they may offer themselves to the Lord with fully deliberate and generous choice, and a complete surrender of body and soul." OT § 10 (OT=*Optatam Totius*, Decree on the Training of Priests, 1965.)

## NAVIGATING THE DOCUMENTS

The *Documents of Vatican II* have an index, but the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* has elaborate Indices: to Bible texts; to Council documents (not just Vatican II); to Papal documents; other Church documents; Liturgy; Church writers; an alphabetical index; and in its 2<sup>nd</sup> edition A.D. 2000, a Glossary.