



YEAR OF FAITH 2012
2013

LIVING
OUR
Relationship
WITH
JESUS CHRIST



"For since Christ died for all, and since all men 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."
(GS 22)

Vatican II | *What Difference Does it Make?*

GAUDIUM ET SPES

DOCUMENT: *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*

G*audium et Spes* was the last and longest document promulgated at Vatican II as well as one of the most important. That it was deemed a *Constitution* indicates that the Council Fathers considered it among the great documents of the Council (along with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Dei Verbum*). The document embodies the vision of Pope John XXIII for a "pastoral" council, i.e., a council directed toward inviting dialogue between the Church and the world rather than confronting heretical thinking.

The document is divided into two parts. The first part of the document articulates a contemporary understanding of who the human person is in light of the contemporary world and in light of the saving mystery of Christ and his Church. The second part of the document addresses five major issues: a) Marriage and Family in the Modern World, b) The Proper Development of Culture, c) Economic and Social Life, d) The Political Community, and e) Fostering of Peace and Establishing a Community of Nations.

One of the most significant aspects of *Gaudium et Spes* is the orientation of the church toward the world. No longer does the Church see itself set over and against the world; rather, the followers of Christ in the Church are to engage the world in ways that help to reintroduce the mystery

of Christ to the world. This perspective signals a new era in church history. The document ushered in a new relationship between the Church and the world. In this way the document demonstrates its "pastoral" sense. In other words, *Gaudium et Spes* invites all humanity to consider the saving mission of Christ and the Church in the world.

Gaudium et Spes also helped to foster the sense of the Church as a global church. When the Council began, two-thirds of the bishops in attendance were from Italy and France. Fifty years later, the bishops represent Catholics from the whole human family.

Among the important concepts in *Gaudium et Spes* are dialogue and solidarity. The concept of dialogue points to the idea of engaging the world as it is in deep conversation, recognizing the common humanity of all people. Following from dialogue, the concept of solidarity reflects the unity of all people.

The core insights of *Gaudium et Spes* continue to draw the Church toward unity with all humanity in Christ. The Year of Faith challenges us to renew our efforts at proclaiming this Good News in all we say and do.

Sister Mary McCormick, OSU

Reflection Questions

1. What can an individual do to reintroduce the mystery of Christ to the world?
2. What are the elements of life common to all humanity? How can those be starting points for conversation among people who differ from us in their perspectives and attitudes?
3. *Gaudium et Spes* identified 5 issues that were in need of insight, reform and human collaboration. To what extent are these issues still a challenge to society?

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