

St. Therese Catholic Church

Vatican II - *Lumen Gentium*

The Dogmatic Constitution on the
Church

Fr. Leonard Andrie

Brendan McInerny

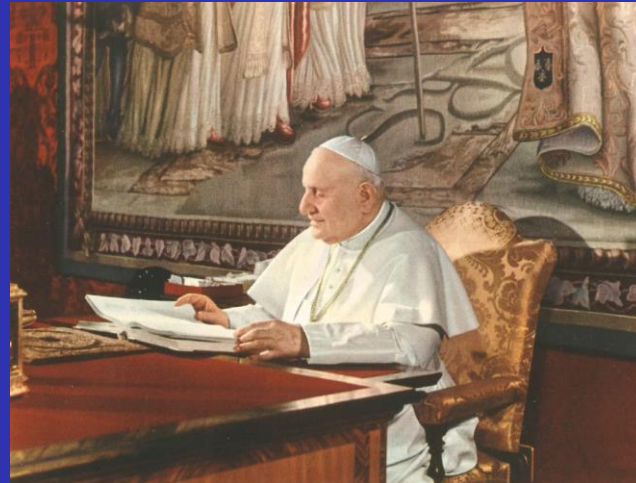
October 18, 2022



St. Therese Parish

Vatican II

- Dates for the Vatican II Course:
 - November 15, 29
 - December 6





Lumen Gentium: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

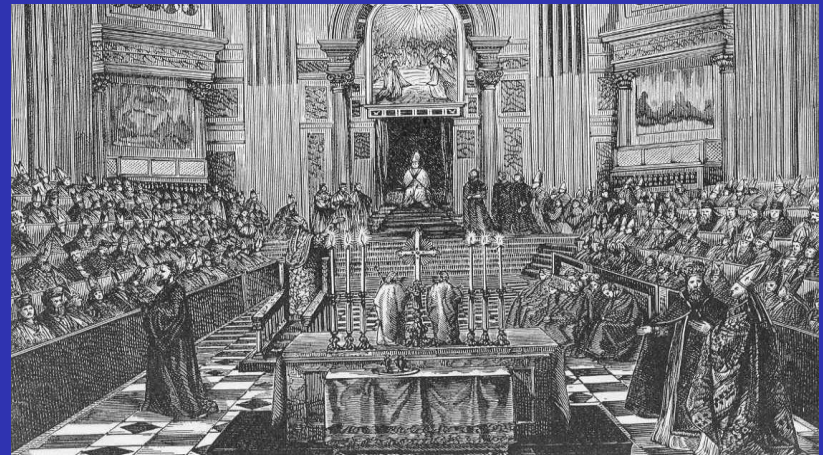
- Promulgated on November 21st, 1964 in the Third Session
- Many consider it the hallmark or crown jewel document of Vatican II
- Decree on Ecumenism also promulgated same day



St. Therese Parish

Why write a constitution on the Church?

- Unfinished business of Vatican I
 - A dogmatic constitution on Catholic Faith (*Dei Filius*); can know God by reason and faith/reason are complementary
 - Another defining the authority of the Pope and the dogma of Papal Infallibility (*Pastor Aeternus*)
- Halted in 1870 due to Franco-Prussian War and Italian Unification





What happened after Vatican I?

- Without complete teaching on the bishops, the pope was functionally the *sole* authority rather than *supreme* authority
- Bishops had few means of initiative outside their dioceses
 - No structures for working together
- Curia (Vatican bureaucracy) became dominant administrative body in the Church
- **A top-down model:** Pope to bishop to priest to laity
 - Diaconate existed only as temporary stepping stone to priesthood



St. Therese Parish

Writing *Lumen Gentium*

- Preparatory schema largely fit the papal-centric form of the Church
- Council Fathers rejected schema and started fresh
 - To articulate a vision of and for the whole Church
 - Hierarchy and Laity
 - As Institution and as Mystery



St. Therese Parish

Contents of *Lumen Gentium*

- Ch. 1: Mystery of the Church
- Ch. 2: People of God
- Ch. 3: Church as Hierarchical
- Ch. 4: The Laity
- Ch. 5: Universal Call to Holiness
- Ch. 6: Religious
- Ch. 7: The Pilgrim Church
- Ch. 8: Our Lady



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mystery of Church

- *LG* opens with extended summary of the history of salvation and *mystery* of Church within it.
- The Church as both the means *and goal* of God's saving work.
- The Church is the "sacrament" of Christ "a sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race."
 - The Church is the place where we find communion with the Lord and a foretaste of that perfect union we will experience in heaven (Britton, 97).



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mystery of Church

- The Church is foreshadowed in the people of Israel
- It is established by the Son and revealed at Pentecost
- The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, realized in the Eucharist
- While a Mystery, the Church possesses a visible structure
 - Like Jesus's humanity revealing His divinity
 - **Sacrament**: Outward sign (people, structures) inward reality (Holy Spirit - soul of the Church) instituted by Christ (divine origin).
- “The Church is the Kingdom of Christ already present in mystery.” (LG 3)



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mystery of Church

- The Church thus described “*subsists in*” the Catholic Church governed by the Pope and the bishops in communion with him (LG 8).
- “Subsists” replaced “is” in draft.
- One of the most controversial claims of *LG*



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mystery of Church

- Misread as denial of uniqueness, affirmation of “Branch Theory”
 - **Branch Theory**: The Church is a mysterious entity existing in various branches of Christianity
- However, the Catholic Church is *not* denying that she possesses fullness of grace and truth.



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

Subsist = *subsistere*, “to stand firm”

The Church Christ founded “*stands firm*”/exists/lives as the Catholic Church.

But, *Her* grace is also found (but does not *stand firm*) outside her visible bounds. In other words, there are elements of truth (God’s Word, authentic worship, acts of charity, etc.), but there are also elements of error (doctrine, liturgy, morality, etc.).



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

- “Catholic” means “universal” or “keeping with the whole.” Where Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church (CCC 830).
- The Church has received the “full means of salvation” from Jesus Christ (CCC 831)
 - Correct and complete confession of faith
 - Full sacramental life
 - Ordained ministry to apostolic succession
- The Church is sent out to the whole human race (CCC 831)



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

Roots: Patriarchs
(Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)

Tree Trunk: Jesus Christ

Catholic Church: branches of the
tree

Fruit in shade: those invisibly
united to the Catholic Church
(imperfect communion)





St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

Cruise Ship: full means of salvation (e.g., lifeboats, food, games, exercise rooms, cabins, etc.)

Boats in wake: non-Catholic Christians pulled along in wake of ship

Further back are non-Christians pulled along in the wake of the ship



Word of God: fall in love with Christ – Scripture is from the Catholic Church and belongs to her



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

- Thus, the Church is Catholic in a two-fold sense:
 - Extensive universality: she is meant to bring Jesus Christ to all people (geography) and to all times (temporal)
 - Intensive universality: the Church possesses the full means of salvation (all graces) from Jesus Christ. Every grace is distributed through the Church.
 - Medicine: the Church possesses and dispenses *all* the medicine from Christ’s redemption.



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: “subsists in”

- Positive development for Christian unity without sacrificing Truth
- Follows from fundamentals of sacramental theology - grace of baptism is effective no matter the minister of the sacrament
 - All baptized *are* real members of the Church, but in state of imperfect communion if they remain outside her visible structure.
- Corresponds to our experience (lots in common, but differences)



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: People of God

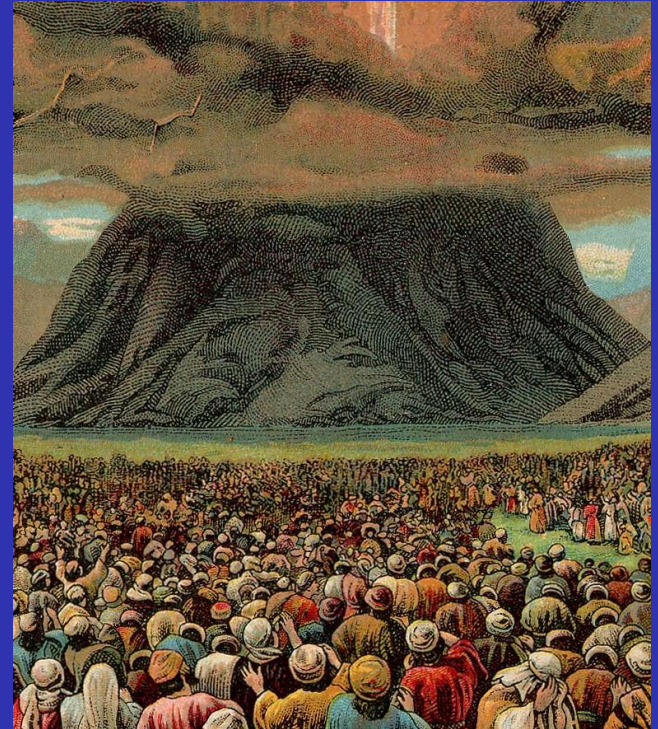
- Following Mystery of Church, *LG* develops a new image of the Church as People of God
- Not a name for laity, but for entire Church
- The community of men and women from all nations, gathered into Christ's Body, sharing in Christ's mission of salvation and sanctification.



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: People of God

- Foreshadowed in Old Testament:
- “Now if you obey me completely and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, though all the earth is mine. You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.”
- Exodus 19:5-6





Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: People of God

Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from men, made the new people “a kingdom and priests to God the Father.”

The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are those of the Christian man they may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: The Hierarchy

- Balance of Papacy and College of Bishops
- Bishops exercise authority individually in their dioceses and within the college of Bishops, together with the Bishop of Rome.
 - The college of bishops is not a standing, juridical group (like a senate)
 - The permanent communion of bishops with one another
- The Pope, as head of the college of Bishops and supreme pastor of the Church, can exercise his supreme and full power freely.
 - He is not dependent upon the College if he wishes to act.



St. Therese Parish

Reforms of *Lumen Gentium*: Episcopal Collegiality

- Synod of Bishops, permanent, rotating body of bishops from throughout Church who advise Pope on important issues
- Confirmation/establishment of national bishops conferences with authority of Church governance in respective territory
 - Particularly in liturgical matters



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Laity

- People of God image led to new focus on laity
- Popular lay movements prior to Council
 - Catholic Action
 - Catholic Worker
- Emergence of Christian Democratic political parties after WWII



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Laity

- Laity share in Christ's status as Priest, Prophet, and King
- No confusion of common priesthood of all and the priesthood of Holy Orders
 - They differ from one another in essence and not only in degree (LG 10).
- Point is to affirm fullness of laity's share in the Life in Christ
 - Priests are not nearer to God, more holy than laity because of ordination (except for Fr. Andrie).
- Laity have their own distinct role in mission of the Church
 - Sanctification of the *world*



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Laity

The “world” thus becomes the place and the means for the lay faithful to fulfill their Christian vocation, because the world is destined to glorify God the Father in Christ...[The lay faithful] are not called to abandon the position that they have in the world...On the contrary, he entrusts a vocation to them that properly concerns their situation in the world.

- Pope St. John Paul II,
Christifideles Laici



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Universal Call to Holiness

- Following chapter on laity, *LG* outlines the demand that *all* Christians are to pursue a life of holiness
- One holiness in the many “forms and tasks of life” (*LG* 40)
 - Perfection of charity
 - Following the evangelical counsels:
 - Chastity, Poverty, and Obedience



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Universal Call to Holiness

- Study the holy men and women of the twentieth and twenty-first century, especially the laity *not* in religious orders!
- **Examples:** St. Gianna Berreta Molla, Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati, Bl. Franz Jaegerstaetter, Ven. Edel Quinn, Ven. Matt Talbot, Servant of God Nicholas Black Elk, Servant of God Dorothy Day





St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mary, Mother of God

- Minority desire for a separate document on Mary
 - With dogmatic pronouncements on “Medatrix” and “Co-Redemptrix”
- Majority place Mary within the context of the Church
 - Mary in Salvation History rather than Marian titles and dogmas
 - Changed perspective allows greater ecumenical reach



Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mary, Mother of God

No creature could ever be counted along with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer; but just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways...and as the one goodness of God is radiated in different ways among his creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in one source.

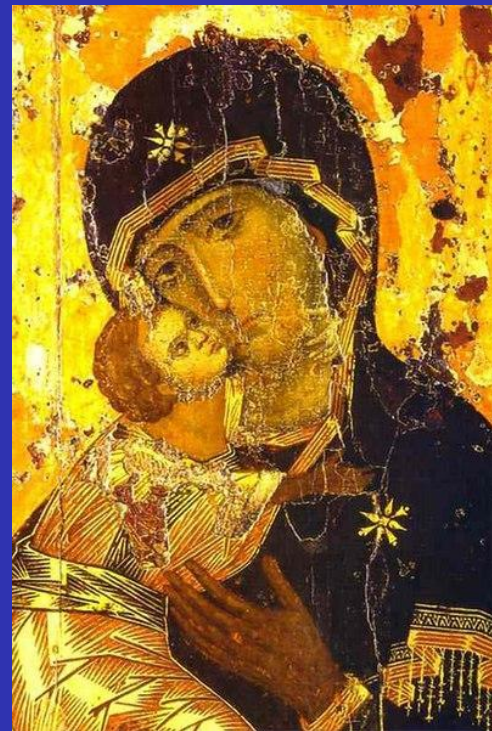
~LG 62



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Lumen Gentium*: Mary, Mother of God

- As Mother of God, Mary uniquely shares and cooperates with Christ's work of mediation and redemption
 - In both her earthly and heavenly life
- Serves as the Exemplar of Christian holiness and the Model of the Church itself (e.g., perfect humility, obedience, trust, etc.).





St. Therese Parish

From *Lumen Gentium* to *Unitatis Redintegratio*

- Decree on Ecumenism (Restoration of Unity) promulgated same day as *Lumen Gentium*
- Work of Christian unification follows from *LG*:
 - Fullness of truth and grace within the Catholic Church
 - Imperfectly present in other Christian churches and denominations



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

- How are non-Catholic Christians and non-Christians related to the Church?
 - Protestants: Those who are baptized who are honored by the name of Christian, but do not profess the faith in its entirety or who have not preserved communion under the successor of Peter. They are put in a certain, although imperfect, communion with the Catholic Church (CCC 838)
 - Orthodox: Communion is so profound that it lacks little that would permit a common celebration of the Eucharist (CCC 838)



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

- Ecumenical Movement is gift of God's providence
 - Movement for Christian unity
 - Began outside Catholic Church among Protestants and Orthodox
 - World Council of Churches (1948)
 - Pope St. John XXIII establishes Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity in 1958



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

- Divisions among followers of Christ is a scandal; *“I pray that they will all be one”* (Jn 17:21).
- Separations from Church caused by “men of both sides”
- “Separated brethren” are not culpable for heresy or schism of past



St. Therese Parish

Teachings of *Unitatis Redintegratio*

- Church's Approach to Ecumenism
 - Primary route through life of Christian perfection
 - Dialogue among theologians
 - Official dialogue of representatives of Christian bodies



St. Therese Parish

Ecumenical Successes

- 1965 - Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I lift excommunications of 1054
- 1984 - Common Christological statement (with Oriental Orthodox)
- 1994 - Common Christological Declaration (with Assyrian Church of the East)
- 1999 - Joint Declaration on Justification (with Lutheran World Federation)
- 2007 - Ravenna Declaration on primacy of Pope (with Eastern Orthodox)



St. Therese Parish

Next Time

- November 15
- Chapter 5 – Divine Revelation
- Pages 127-139

