



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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VATICAN II

AND ITS FOUR CONSTITUTIONS

A STUDY GUIDE



Introduction

On January 25, 1959, Pope Saint John XXIII announced his intention to call an ecumenical council, the 21st council in the history of the Catholic Church. His purpose was to bring about **a spiritual and pastoral renewal in the life of the Church** and to foster a deeper relationship with other Christians on the path to unity desired by Christ.

The opening of the Second Vatican Council took place on October 11, 1962, as bishops from around the world joined Pope St. John XXIII at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Pope Saint Paul VI solemnly concluded the Council December 8, 1965. Of the sixteen documents promulgated during the four years of the Council, four Constitutions stand out as foundational for understanding and bringing about the spiritual and pastoral renewal foreseen by the bishops. These documents have guided the Church during the past sixty years and will continue to shape the life of the Church in the future.

In 2025 the universal Church will celebrate a Jubilee Year – a year of renewal in faith. **The theme of the year established by Pope Francis is” Pilgrims of Hope”**. Pope Francis has asked that the preparation for the Jubilee be marked in a particular way by rediscovering the teachings of Vatican II, in particular the four Constitutions, and by prayer.

For the last several years, Pope Francis has been inviting the Church to become “synodal”, that is, to walk together on our earthly pilgrimage, listening attentively to the voice of the Holy Spirit, guiding and directing our steps. This invitation is deeply rooted in the long history of the Catholic Church and in the four Constitutions of the Second Vatican Council, a sure guide for the pilgrim Church today.

This five-part study of the Constitutions is offered to parishes and other communities to assist them in their preparation for the Jubilee year and take up Our Holy Father's invitation to become a synodal Church, a church of communion, participation and mission.

May our study of the Constitutions, accompanied by prayer, open our hearts to become ambassadors of hope in our local communities and in the world.

Monsignor Murray J. Kroetsch
Vicar General and Chancellor

OPENING PRAYER

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in your name.

With you alone to guide us,
make yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go
and how to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance
lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in you our unity
so that we may journey together
to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of you,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

*Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer **Adsumus Sancte Spiritus**, the first word of the Latin original meaning, “We stand before You, Holy Spirit,” which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636).*

SESSION 1

The Second Vatican Council: An Overview

PREPARATION

*Before the session, be sure to read and take time to reflect on the following excerpt from Pope John XXIII opening address at the Council *Gaudete Mater Ecclesia* Mother Church Rejoices.*

You may also wish to view [Voices of Vatican II: Participants Recall the Council](#) (Catholic News Service)

The Church enlightened by the light of this Council - such is *Our firm hope* - will grow in spiritual riches and, by drawing strength from them for new energies, will look forward to the future. Indeed, with timely "updates" and with a prudent order of mutual collaboration, the Church will make men, families, and peoples really turn their spirit towards heavenly things. This is how the Council becomes the subject of a singular obligation of great gratitude to the Supreme Giver of all good, celebrating with a jubilant song the glory of Christ the Lord, glorious and immortal King of the centuries and peoples.

The supreme interest of the Ecumenical Council is that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine be guarded and taught in an increasingly effective way. Doctrine, which comprises the whole man, composed of soul and body; and that, to us, pilgrims on this earth, directs us to go towards the heavenly homeland. This shows how our mortal life is to be ordered so that we fulfill our duties as citizens of earth and heaven, and thus achieve the end established by God. From the renewed, serene and calm adherence to all the teachings of the Church, in its integrity and precision, as resplendent mainly in the conciliar acts of Trent and Vatican I, the Christian and Catholic spirit of the entire world awaits to go one step further towards a doctrinal penetration and a formation of consciences that is in a more perfect correspondence with fidelity to authentic doctrine, studying it and exposing it through the forms of research and the literary formulas of modern thought. One thing is the substance of the old doctrine, of the "*depositum fidei*", and another the way to formulate its expression; and of this we must take great account - with patience, if necessary - by adhering to the norms and requirements of a teaching of a predominantly pastoral nature. (Solemn Opening of the Second Vatican Council, Address of His Holiness John XXIII)

BEGIN WITH THE OPENING PRAYER (PAGE 4)

Video Presentation

Watch the the video presentation by Dr. Peter Meehan and break for discussion as indicated.



WATCH OPENING UNTIL 09:31



DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

How would you describe the Church's attitude to the world before Vatican II?
How would you describe the Church's attitude to the world after Vatican II?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 09:31 - 15:40



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

In what ways do you see the Second Vatican Council as being connected to the developments of the Church and the world since the 19th Century?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

What changes in the church do you think were a result of Vatican II?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #4

How do you understand developments in the Church today as building on inspirations from the Second Vatican Council?

CLOSE WITH THE CONCLUDING PRAYER (PAGE 30)

SESSION 2

Sacrosanctum Concilium Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy

PREPARATION

Before the session, if possible, read the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy or be sure to read and take time to reflect on the following excerpts from the Constitution.

For the liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished," most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvellously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd. (CSL, #2)

To accomplish so great a work, Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations. He 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 under the Eucharistic species. By his power he is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who

baptizes. He is present in his word, since it is he himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for he promised: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Christ indeed always associates the Church with himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is his beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through him offers worship to the Eternal Father. (CSL, #7)

The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. (CSL, #10)

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work. (CSL, #14)

Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is the "sacrament of unity," namely, the holy people united and ordered under their bishops. Therefore liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church; they manifest it and have effects upon it; but they concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their differing rank, office, and actual participation. It is to be stressed that whenever rites, according to their specific nature, make provision for communal celebration involving the presence and active participation of the faithful, this way of celebrating them is to be preferred, so far as possible, to a celebration that is individual and quasi-private. This applies with especial force to the celebration of Mass and the administration of the sacraments, even though every Mass has of itself a public and social nature. (CSL, #26-27)

Sacred scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus, to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony. (CSL, #24)

The treasures of the bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's word. In this way a more representative portion of the holy scriptures will be read to the people in the course of a prescribed number of years. (CSL, #52)

The rites should be distinguished by a noble simplicity; they should be short, clear, and unencumbered by useless repetitions; they should be within the people's powers of comprehension, and normally should not require much explanation... the intimate connection between words and rites may be apparent in the liturgy. (CSL, #34-35)

Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites. But since the use of the mother tongue, whether in the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, or other parts of the liturgy, frequently may be of great advantage to the people, the limits of its employment may be extended. This will apply in the first place to the readings and directives, and to some of the prayers and chants, according to the regulations on this matter to be laid down separately in subsequent chapters. (CSL, #36)

BEGIN WITH THE OPENING PRAYER (PAGE 4)

Video Presentation

Watch the the video presentation by Msgr. Murray Kroetsch and break for discussion as indicated.



WATCH OPENING UNTIL 07:58



DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

In which of these ways do you experience Christ most powerfully? Why?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 07:58 - 14:02



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

How would you describe your participation at Sunday Mass?
What would help you to participate more fully, consciously and actively?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 14:02 - 23:22



DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

In what ways does your participation in the liturgy deepen your relationship with God?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #4

How does the celebration of the liturgy assist you in living your faith at home, at work, in the community?

CLOSE WITH THE CONCLUDING PRAYER (PAGE 30)

SESSION 3

Lumen Gentium Dogmatic Constitution on the Church

PREPARATION

Before the session, if possible, read the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church or be sure to read and take time to reflect on the following excerpts from the Constitution.

Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous councils. The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ. (LG, #1)

The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things.(4) To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. (LG, # 3)

This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after his Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which he erected for all ages

as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth". This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure. These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity. (LG, #8)

God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness. (LG, #9)

It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church... Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father himself is perfect. (LG, #11)

For the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation. (LG, #18)

Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing. And just as the office granted individually to Peter, the first among the apostles, is permanent and is to be transmitted to his successors, so also the apostles' office of nurturing the Church is permanent, and is to be exercised without interruption by the sacred order of bishops. Therefore, the Sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ. (LG, #20)

The individual bishops, who are placed in charge of particular churches, exercise their pastoral government over the portion of the People of God committed to their care, and not over other churches nor over the universal Church. But each of them, as a member of the episcopal college and legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's institution and command to be solicitous for the whole Church, and this solicitude, though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes greatly to the advantage of the universal Church. For it is the duty of all bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church, to instruct the faithful to love for the whole mystical body of Christ, especially for its poor and sorrowing members and for those who are suffering persecution for justice's sake, and finally to promote every activity that is of interest to the whole Church, especially that the faith may take increase and the light of full truth appear to all men. And this also is important, that by governing well their own church as a portion of the universal Church, they themselves are effectively contributing to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which is also the body of the churches. (LG, #24)

Having set forth the functions of the hierarchy, the Sacred Council gladly turns its attention to the state of those faithful called the laity. Everything that has been said above concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike. But there are certain things which pertain in a special way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their condition and mission. (LG, #30)

The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world. (LG, #31)

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature... the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven. In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.

Therefore, since they are tightly bound up in all types of temporal affairs it is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being and then continually increase according to Christ to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer. (LG, #31)

The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments. They should openly reveal to them their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence which is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church. When occasions arise, let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose. Let it always be done in truth, in courage and in prudence, with reverence and charity toward those who by reason of their sacred office represent the person of Christ. (LG, # 37)

By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with his singular graces and functions, the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church. As St. Ambrose taught, the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother. By her belief and obedience, not knowing man but overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, as the new Eve she brought forth on earth the very Son of the Father, showing an undefiled faith, not in the word of the ancient serpent, but in that of God's messenger. The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love. (LG, #63)

BEGIN WITH THE OPENING PRAYER (PAGE 4)

Video Presentation

Watch the video presentation by Dr. Brian Thornton and break for discussion as indicated.



WATCH OPENING UNTIL 07:17



DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

What is my favourite image of the Church?

What helped me to understand the mystery of the Church?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 07:17 - 11:14



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

What does your baptism mean to you?

What is required of you as a member of the People of God?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 11:14 - 16:26



DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

How do you understand the role and responsibility of the Bishop in your Diocese, and how does this affect your parish?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #4

In what ways do you exercise your role as a lay person in the Church?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 16:26 - 19:05



DISCUSSION QUESTION #5

What is Mary's role in the Church?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #6

What is Mary's role in your life?

CLOSE WITH THE CONCLUDING PRAYER (PAGE 30)

SESSION 4

Dei Verbum Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

PREPARATION

Before the session, if possible, read the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation or be sure to read and take time to reflect on the following excerpts from the Constitution.

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (see Col. 1:15, 1 Tim. 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (see Ex. 33:11; John 15:14-15) and lives among them (see Bar. 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them. By this revelation then, the deepest truth about God and the salvation of man shines out for our sake in Christ, who is both the mediator and the fullness of all revelation. (DV, #2)

God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason (see Rom. 1:20); but teaches that it is through his revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state. In his gracious goodness, God has seen to it that what he had revealed for the salvation of all nations would abide perpetually in its full integrity and be handed on to all generations. Therefore, Christ the Lord in whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (see 2 Cor. 1:20; 3:13; 4:6), commissioned the Apostles to preach to

all men that Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching, and to impart to them heavenly gifts. This Gospel had been promised in former times through the prophets, and Christ Himself had fulfilled it and promulgated it with His lips. This commission was faithfully fulfilled by the Apostles who, by their oral preaching, by example, and by observances handed on what they had received from the lips of Christ, from living with him, and from what he did, or what they had learned through the prompting of the Holy Spirit. (DV, #3)

Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (see Acts 2, 42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort. (DV, #10)

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed. (DV, #10)

Those divinely revealed realities which are contained and presented in Sacred Scripture have been committed to writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. For holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself. In composing the sacred books, God chose men and while employed by him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing everything and only those things which he wanted. (DV, #11)

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures just as she venerates the body of the Lord, since, especially in the sacred liturgy, she unceasingly receives and offers to the faithful the bread of life from the table both of God's word and of Christ's body. She has always maintained them, and continues to do so, together with sacred tradition, as the supreme rule of faith, since, as inspired by God and committed once and for all to writing, they impart the word of God himself without change, and make the voice of the Holy Spirit resound in the words of the prophets and Apostles. Therefore, like the Christian religion itself, all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and regulated by Sacred Scripture. For in the sacred books, the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force and power in the word of God is so great that it stands as the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her sons, the food of the soul, the pure and everlasting source of spiritual life. (DV, #21)

BEGIN WITH THE OPENING PRAYER (PAGE 4)

Video Presentation

Watch the video presentation by Dr. Josephine Lombardi and break for discussion as indicated.



WATCH OPENING UNTIL 05:03



DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

What ways have you come to know God in your life?
How has your conscience helped you to discern between good and evil?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 05:03 - 08:16



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

How did the prophets of the Old Testament prepare us to receive Jesus as Messiah?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2 CONTINUED

Jesus said: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father ... I am in the Father and the Father is in me.” (John 14.9-10). How has your relationship with Jesus informed your understanding of God’s love?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 08:16 - 21:24

CLOSE WITH THE CONCLUDING PRAYER (PAGE 30)

SESSION 5

Gaudium et Spes Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World

PREPARATION

Before the session, if possible, read the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World or be sure to read and take time to reflect on the following excerpts from the Constitution.

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men. United in Christ, they are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the Kingdom of their Father and they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds. (GS, #1)

Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today. (GS, #2)

To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics. (GS, #4)

According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown. But what is man? About himself he has expressed, and continues to express, many divergent and even contradictory opinions. In these he often exalts himself as the absolute measure of all things or debases himself to the point of despair. The result is doubt and anxiety. The Church certainly understands these problems. Endowed with light from God, she can offer solutions to them, so that man's true situation can be portrayed and his defects explained, while at the same time his dignity and destiny are justly acknowledged. (GS, #12)

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged. Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths. In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor. In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships. (GS, #16)

One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances. Nevertheless, brotherly dialogue among men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress, but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships. These demand a mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person. Christian revelation contributes greatly to the promotion of this communion between persons, and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man's moral and spiritual nature. (GS, #23)

Every day human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result the common good, that is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even

of the general welfare of the entire human family... This social order requires constant improvement. It must be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; in freedom it should grow every day toward a more humane balance. An improvement in attitudes and abundant changes in society will have to take place if these objectives are to be gained. (GS, #26)

The Church, at once "a visible association and a spiritual community, goes forward together with humanity and experiences the same earthly lot which the world does. She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family. (GS, #40)

With the help of the Holy Spirit, it is the task of the entire People of God, especially pastors and theologians, to hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age, and to judge them in the light of the divine word, so that revealed truth can always be more deeply penetrated, better understood and set forth to greater advantage. (GS, #44)

BEGIN WITH THE OPENING PRAYER (PAGE 4)

Video Presentation

Watch the video presentation by Fr. Mark Gatto and break for discussion as indicated.



WATCH OPENING UNTIL 06:25



DISCUSSION QUESTION #1

What are some of the joys and hopes of our world today?
What are some of the griefs and anxieties of our world today?
What do we learn from Jesus about being full and mature human beings?



CONTINUE WATCHING FROM 06:25 - 12:18



DISCUSSION QUESTION #2

What can the Church learn from the modern world?
How can the Church serve the modern world?



DISCUSSION QUESTION #3

If you were writing this document today, what new issues and problems would need to be addressed?

How can the Church be an instrument of peace and unity in our world today?

CLOSE WITH THE CONCLUDING PRAYER (PAGE 30)

CLOSING PRAYER

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

APPENDIX A *Glossary of Terms*

Aggiornamento – a word frequently used by the Second Vatican Council to define the question regarding the nature and extent of the Church’s aim of renewal. Aggiornamento means to find new ways to rethink and reformulate the fundamental affirmations of the Christian faith in order to more effectively communicate the Gospel.

Apostolate – religious or evangelistic activity or works.

Atheism – disbelief or lack of belief in the existence of God.

Christology – Christian reflection, teaching, and doctrine concerning Jesus of Nazareth.

Clergy – the body of all people ordained for religious duty in the Christian Churches.

Council Fathers – the bishops from around the world as well as the heads of the main religious orders of men who participated in the Second Vatican Council with the rights to speak and vote. These members supported the development of sixteen conciliar documents through general assemblies, voting, public sessions, and commissions focusing on specific topics of discussion and debate.

Diaconate – the office of deacon, an ordained male minister, below priest in rank who holds a ministry of service.

Divine Revelation – the disclosing of some form of truth or knowledge through communication with God.

Doctrine – the set of beliefs held and taught by the Church.

Dogmas – a set of principles laid down by the Church as incontrovertibly true.

Dogmatic Constitution – a form of legislation issued by the Pope on a subject such as the Church or the Bible. There are four dogmatic constitutions that were promulgated during the Second Vatican Council: Sacrosanctum Concilium – the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Lumen Gentium – Light of the Nations, Dei Verbum – Word of God, and, Gaudium et spes – the Church in the Modern World.

Ecumenism – the aim of promoting unity among the world’s Christian Churches.

Encyclicals – a papal letter sent to all bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

Evangelization – bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and society by the sharing of the Gospel through word and deed.

Hierarchy – the system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority.

Inerrancy – Lack of error; infallibility

Laity – the people of the faith who are not members of the clergy.

Liturgy - from the greek work, “leitourgia”, meaning participatory public worship, including all the rites, ceremonies, prayers, and sacraments of the Church. Liturgy is the opposite of private devotion.

Magisterium – the official teaching authority of the Church, constituted by the Pope and the bishops in union with him. Its authority comes from Christ, and its guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Modernism – a movement toward modifying traditional beliefs in accordance with modern ideas, especially in the Roman Catholic Church in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Nouvelle théologie – French term for “new theology” – an intellectual movement of Catholic theology that arose in the mid-20th century. It is best known for Pope John XXIII’s endorsement of its closely-associated ressourcement, which shaped the events of the Second Vatican Council.

Personal prayer – the prayer of the individual that can be inspired by liturgical or communal prayer. It is particular to each individual, and can be spoken in private or public environments.

Ressourcement – a return to authoritative sources of Christian faith, for the purpose of rediscovering their truth and meaning in order to meet the critical challenges of our time. Ressourcement is about revitalization and renewal.

Sanctification – the action of making or declaring something holy.

Sensus fidei – “Sense of the faith” – the personal capacity of the believer, within the communion of the Church, to discern the truth of the faith.

Theologians – persons who engage or are experts in theology.

Theology – the study of the nature of God and religious belief.

APPENDIX B *Resources*

The Bishop Farrell Library and Archives has a variety of additional resources to support ongoing learning about the Second Vatican Council. To access the catalog of paper and digital resources please see here: <https://hamiltondiocese.com/bishop-farrell-library/>



APPENDIX C *Online Workbook*

The entirety of the Vatican II and its Four Constitutions Study Guide and videos can be found by visiting: <https://hamiltondiocese.com/vatican-ii/>



