

## Vatican II: Joy and Hope

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### Opening Prayer

*You are the One  
from whom on different paths  
all of us have come,  
and to whom on different paths  
all of us will return.*

*Make strong in our hearts what unites us;  
build bridges across that which divides us.  
Enable us to hear your voice, follow your will  
and pursue your purpose,  
and unite us in all we do to serve you. Amen.*



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The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* opens with the following message:

The **joys and the hopes (Gaudium et Spes)**, the grief and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially of those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts . . . 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 bonds. (1)

This is where the document gets its name.

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### **Changes in the social order:**

- change in traditional community structures
- industrialization and urbanization on the increase
- mass media's contribution to the spread of knowledge
- extended immigration and emigration changing patterns of how we relate

### **Changes in attitude, morals, religion:**

- values in question
- changing approaches to religion and spirituality

### **Imbalance in the world of today:**

- headlong development of the world
- keener awareness of existing inequalities
- family tensions
- demands of conscience
- tension in social classes
- disagreement between international bodies

### **Broader aspiration of humankind:**

- need to establish political, social and economic order at the service of people
- widening gap between rich and poor
- equality of women with men
- dignified life style
- cultural benefits

The world is capable of doing what is noble and brave.

### **Humankind's deeper questions:**

- division in the world – reflection of division in humankind
- deeper questions being asked: who are we? meaning of suffering?
- contributions and expectations to/from society?
- end of life?

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### **Principles of Catholic Social Teaching**

Though not specifically labeled as such, *Gaudium et Spes* lays out the seven principles of Catholic Social Teaching:

1. Life and dignity of the human person: all human life is sacred
2. Call to Family, Community and Participation: societal organization affects human dignity
3. Rights and Responsibilities: corresponding to rights are duties and responsibilities
4. Option for the Poor and Vulnerable: their needs are to be put first (Mt. 25:31-46)
5. The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers: right to productive work, decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property and to economic initiative
6. Solidarity: loving our neighbor has global dimensions
7. Care of the environment: a responsibility of our faith

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### Discussion Questions

The first three questions are focused on the document itself, and the last on local/personal implementation.

1. What main features of the modern world did the Constitution highlight?
2. How is the work of the Church redefined?
3. What is the role of the laity in regard to the world?
4. Which of the changes brought about by Vatican II challenge you the most?
5. What specific action can you take to further the vision of Vatican II?
6. How do you think your parish could work in areas of justice and peace in your community?
7. In what ways could different churches and religions in your neighborhood cooperate in social ministries?
8. What do you think Pope Francis envisions his mission to be as he visits various countries of the world?
9. Can anyone make a case for calling another council—Vatican III?

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### Closing Prayer

Leader Gracious and Holy God, we join together in prayer for all who seek to promote the vision and spirit of Vatican II anywhere. May we be anointed by your Spirit to share in divine creativity in solving the challenges of carrying out Vatican II's empowerment of the baptized.

R. Send forth your Spirit!

L. May we benefit from the diversity of gifts you have bestowed on all your people and work toward recognizing and using those gifts fully.

R. Send forth your Spirit!

L. May we be open to your grace and steadfast in your love.

R. Send forth your Spirit!

L. May we always remember all those who have gone before us, both blazing prophets and quiet souls, who have labored for freedom, truth and dignity for all people.

R. Send forth your Spirit!

L. May we be strengthened by the solidarity of this communal prayer to remember that in the grace and power of the God who binds us all together we can do more as one than any of us alone.

R. Send forth your Spirit! Amen!