



Jubilee Year- Exploring Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution of the Church)

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Pope Francis declared December 24, 2024, until January 2, 2026, a *Jubilee Year*. He framed this period as a moment of grace. An invitation to begin again. He said not to just see hope merely as a habit or a character trait, but a strength to be asked for, a gift of God that spurs Christians to start again on the journey of life. As part of this Jubilee, Pope Francis extended a personal invitation to all Christians to particularly study the four major Documents of Vatican II and to understand their enduring significance today.

This past October was the 62nd Anniversary of the opening of the *Second Vatican Council*. I think we can agree that our world has become much more secularized since 1964, when the Council released its Documents.

It is my hope to provide some snippets of the richness rooted in the Second Vatican Two Documents. What follows is a summary of *Lumen Gentium*. It holds a central place among all the other documents.

Lumen Gentium underwent more revisions than any other document, in the end the vote was 2,151 to 5 for approval.

Brief Summary

Chapter One: *The Mystery of the Church*.

- The primary role of the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in order that all might have an opportunity to receive Christ.
 - Jesus' act of love was not so he could be just ones Savior. It was an act of love by which you are called to be in union with Christ.

- It is in the Spirit that those who are lost might find eternal life.
- Unity is established through love.
- The depth of God's love cannot be fully understood by humanity, it can be understood much better by coming to know its foundation – Jesus Christ.
- Through Baptism we all make up this *Body of Christ*. Connectedness to this Body must lead to a profound concern for all.
- What separates one from Christ can be overcome through the gifts of patience and love. If one remains faithful to this, one will succeed in walking with another toward Christ.

Chapter Two: *The People of God*.

- In the unity of belief, the truth of faith is plainly seen and becomes clear to unbelievers.
 - Unity is so important in the plan of God that He became one of us in Jesus, so we might realize better the divine beauty of oneness.
 - The Church is necessary for salvation according to Scripture and Tradition, for it is in the Church that we are to encounter Jesus.
 - Encountering Jesus and you will live for others.
 - Those who seek Jesus in other Christian denominations are linked to us through Scripture, prayer, love, and in the Sacrament of Baptism.
 - There are still others who have a God-connection with us.
 - One who persists in evil and desires to foster despair ultimately cuts off any relationship to God.
 - The key law of membership is simple: to love as Christ loved.
 - The Catholic Church remains the sign of unity and is a sacrament of salvation for all.
 - God saves us not as individuals but as the People of God.

Chapter Three: *The Church is Hierarchal*.

- Christ entrusted the apostles with the mission of leading, assigning Peter as the head.

- Their successors, the bishops, are entrusted with the same mission until the end of the world.
- The bishop's highest priorities are to lead the people towards order, harmony, and unity.
- It is in the fullness of the priesthood that a bishop is spiritually named as one who will take the place of Christ for us.
- The episcopal consecration empowers a bishop to sanctify, teach, and lead.
- Bishops must lead bound together in relationship to all bishops and in a more special way with the pope.
- The bishops serve as a sign of unity in their own diocese.
- Preaching the Gospel is their number one priority.
- They are to also ensure that the People of God have access to the Sacraments, especially to the Eucharist.
- The bishop is responsible for the souls of those given to him by Christ.
- To assist the bishop in carrying out the mission of the Church, God established two levels of ministry to help in the cause – priest and deacon.
- The priest becomes the representative of the bishop, and as such, works in conjunction with the bishop. The priest effort is pastoral in nature. They are to look after the spiritual needs of their parishioners.
- The deacon is ordained to the ministry of service. Through sacramental grace they are committed to serving in the ministry of word, liturgy, and charity.
- The hierarchy of the Catholic Church is firmly established in Scripture and Tradition.

Chapter Four: *The Laity*.

- The laity is most responsible for bringing holy order to the world.
 - A lay person is to evangelize others primarily by how they live their everyday lives.
 - Life is meant to be a vocation whereby each person seeks out the will of God in his or her everyday work.

- A lay person, just like the ordained and religious, has an obligation to develop their faith so they can gain the spiritual necessities to fend off that which is evil.
- One's life is to be about love and the love the laity is to aim for is to express mercy, humility, and patience.
- The personal gifts each of us receive determines in a real way the path we are to take. These gifts are to be accepted as holy and a treasured gift from God.

Chapter Five: *The Call to Holiness.*

- Holiness is only possible through the grace of God.
 - The people who make up Church are never as holy as God would like them to be.
 - The Church's vision needs to be reunification, justice based on human dignity, and a preference for love to be given to the poor and marginalized.
 - The key to holiness rests in love – love of God.
 - This call to holiness is from Jesus himself.
 - It is the Holy Spirit who moves us closer to God's holiness.

Chapter Six: *Religious Orders.*

- The vast majority of those called to live out holiness in religious orders must practice poverty, chastity, and obedience.
 - These vows allow a community to be set free from certain obstacles that can get in the way of them specifically worshipping God.
 - Religious orders must cooperate with the bishop, in serving in ministries needed in the diocese.
 - The calling to religious life is to be praised for its rightful place, and those in religious life are significantly useful to society.
 - They are to be an inspiration to the world.

Chapter Seven: *Mystical Body.*

- We are to live for the One who died for us if there is to be hope for us.
 - Be wide-awake to the realization that heaven is but a breath away.
 - The promise from Jesus is that we are to become like God.

- We are in a special way connected to all those who have attained Jesus' promise.
- Those in heaven are the ultimate witnesses of faith and love.
- Our union in the *Mystical Body of Christ* is never more real than when we participate in the Sacred Liturgy/the Mass. Celebrating the Eucharist closely unites us to the Church in heaven.
- We are together in communion with those in heaven and we worship God together, through Christ, in the Spirit.
- The final destiny of human beings and the world is revealed through saints.

Chapter Eight: *Our Lady*.

- God's plan included providing a Savior who entered this world through a dual choice: God chose Mary and Mary chose God.
 - The Church honors Mary because she is the mother of Jesus.
 - Mary is part of God's plan for salvation.
 - As the Mother of God and as the Mother of the Redeemer, she maintains a place of honor in both the earthly Church and in the heavenly.
 - Mary's relationship is distinct from all other humankind, because she was born sinless.
 - Mary was completely human and by nature of her humanity she required salvation through her Son.
 - Mary's role was not forced on her; she was completely free to say yes or no.
 - Mary participated with Jesus in restoring grace to the world by her loving cooperation with God and as such played an integral part in God's plan to save the world.
 - Mary was present and devoted to Jesus as his mother and supported him in his ministry from Cana to Calvary. After his death she remained present in prayer and faith.
 - Devotion to Mary is out of love and respect to God and His plan. It does not and is not intended to diminish the truth that Christ alone is our mediator.

- Mary is a great helper to us as we seek the road to holiness. She was human and as such was forced to face temptation. She did not cave in to temptation but endured in all things. She is the model of virtue.
- By meditating on Mary one can grow to be more like Jesus.
- To know Mary is to know Jesus better.
- Gross exaggerations of Mary do not dignify her.

Lumen Gentium is a challenge for all people to become the best we can become. The best is possible when we engage God, when we become united in Jesus, and are fed together by him, in both Word and Body. The Church is founded by Jesus and as such was, is, and always will be *Lumen Gentium* – *Light of the Nations*, for through Christ and his Church we will achieve perfection one day in the glory of God's presence.