

Vatican II – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 8: Saturday 1st June 2013

Feedback from Group Work: Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)

Group 7 Feedback:

Preface - paragraphs 1-10

Three points from Background and Preface

Point 1

In the second paragraph of the *Background* to this Constitution it explains why the document is so unique. This is the first time ever that a Council of the Church has addressed itself to the **whole of humankind** without insisting that all the readers be baptised or give their allegiance to Rome!

Point 2

The group picked up a number of contradictions in the Preface.

One of these contradictions is that it talks about the Church being so harmonious, but later talks about people abandoning religion.

Point 3

In some ways the document is very avant garde – it talks about eschatology, justice and peace, the Cold War, Space – they even mention women!

On the other hand when you look at it now, 50 years later, there is a turning from spiritual things to things like counselling and therapy taking place instead of confession, for example, a move to mysticism and contemplation. And yet the group felt the Holy Spirit was at work, but perhaps in a different guise.

It led the group to wonder - are we going forward? People are leaving the church, but then there is a lot of peer pressure - where have all the teenagers gone?

Group 6 Feedback:

Part One: The Church and Humankind's Vocation - Chapter One -The Dignity of the Human Person – paragraphs 11-22

Three main points from Chapter One

Point 1

The emphasis is on **original goodness**. This is in contrast to the past where the emphasis was on hell, damnation and sin. It adopts a very positive view of humanity.

We are created to be social beings. It talks about the unity of body and soul (as opposed to the view of the soul being good and the body being bad). We are therefore *obliged* to love our own body – but the group would change the word *obliged* to something more positive. There is though recognition of the reality that many people do not love their own body.

It emphasises that we take love with us when we die – love never ends.

Point 2

There is openness to new developments – many good things come from developments in art, science, technology, etc.

It also speaks about wise men **and women** coming forth, even from continents other than Europe - undeveloped parts of the world. In these ways it widens the wisdom input that we can draw from.

It speaks about authentic freedom which involves an informed conscience and attentive listening. It is a freedom **for** rather than a freedom **from**.

Point 3

It speaks about conscience and again takes a positive view.

We detect a law within ourselves – we haven't just made it up ourselves – we detect something within ourselves – this is to do with God being present in the deepest part of our lives.

When we live this, we discover our true dignity – we discover how God is the divine guide within us.

We do though have freedom of choice and can choose or reject God.

Group 5 Feedback:

Part One: The Church and Humankind's Vocation - Chapter Two - The Community of Humankind – paragraphs 23-32

Three main points from Chapter 2

Point 1

Paragraph 25: "... to fully discover ourselves, (we) must donate ourselves to one another in love... the advance of society depends on individual persons progressing first."

Without working on ourselves first, we wouldn't be able to give ourselves to others. The progress of the human person and society therefore go hand in hand.

We progress by cooperating with God.

The conscientious practice of the virtues of love, joy, peace, patience is essential to our own growth.

So, to fully discover ourselves we must give ourselves to one another, we must live in love. Love must be initiated, responded to and sustained.

Point 2

Paragraph 28: "We should also have respect and love for those who think differently than we do in social, political, or even religious matters."

God alone is the searcher of the human heart and we should not make judgements about the internal guilt of anyone.

There are challenges in relation to this:

- This hasn't been practised by the Church in recent times - e.g. the silencing of some theologians who are not in full agreement with the establishment.
- We wonder if the Church practices what it was originally preaching – have attitudes adjusted within the Church?

Three main points from Chapter 2

Point 3

Paragraph 26: "This fundamental human dignity is universal and unchanging, based as it is on our created nature. It leads us to say that everyone must have food, clothing and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely; the right to found a family; the right to education, employment, a good reputation, respect, and appropriate information; the right to follow one's own conscience; the right to the protection of privacy and to rightful freedom, even in matters of religion."

This presents a challenge. It clearly says that discrimination of every kind is to be overcome and eradicated. What about the Church?

We regret that so many human rights (especially the rights of women) are not being honoured around the world.

Group 4 Feedback:

Part One: The Church and Humankind's Vocation - Chapter Three - Human Activity throughout the World - paragraphs 33-39

Three main points from Chapter Three

Point 1 –paragraph 33- “Little by little the worldwide human family is realising that it is indeed just that: a family united by common concerns.”

This is so evidently not the case in many parts of the world, as we see and hear, very instantly, from modern technology.

Modern technology is not always helping – it is not always being used to benefit human beings.

Point 2 – relates to paragraph 34

The advances in society that make for a better world: these are not in opposition to God's desires, but signs of God's grace.

Science and religion can be compatible.

Humans make up challenges continually to reach further, but this isn't always for the benefit of all.

Human nature always wants to fix things, but not all things are fixable. Faith can help us to trust when life seems unfixable – it helps us to deal with unsolvable problems – it helps us to see the relevance of faith in life.

Point 3 –paragraph 35- “A person is more precious for what she or he is than for what he or she has.”

The Catholic Church is noted for its teaching on social justice and being the biggest education provider in the world.

But it is equally noted for its riches and trappings and this doesn't go down well with a lot of society.

Group 3 Feedback:

Part One: The Church and Humankind's Vocation - Chapter Four – The Role of the Church in the Modern World - paragraphs 40-45

Three main points from Chapter 4

Point 1 – *relates to paragraph 43 (page 158)*

It is important to take the message of love into our everyday lives, and to live out the teachings of Christ in our everyday relationships.

There should be no split between faith and our everyday lives.

Point 2 – *relates to paragraph 44 (page 159)*

The church is enriched by the modern world as well as the world being enriched by the church.

It was welcomed and rather unexpected that this section indicated the openness of the Church to new developments in science and the arts which can enhance and confirm human dignity.

Point 3 – *relates to paragraph 44 (page 160)*

The Church aims to be a visual sign of unity on all levels – social, family, economic, materials, international, cultural, psychological - working for the benefit of the whole human race.

Group 2 Feedback:

Part Two: Some Problems of Special Urgency - Chapter One - Fostering the Nobility of Marriage and Family Life – paragraphs 47-52

Question	Group Response
Name three principles about marriage and family life which you can draw from these paragraphs.	<i>Principle 1</i> Marriage is a bedrock of human society and a partnership of love, with respect, in good times and bad times.
	<i>Principle 2</i> Marriage is orientated towards the creation of children, but not exclusively.
	<i>Principle 3</i> With regard to family planning, parents should be enlightened primarily by their conscience, Divine law and guided by the Church. Sexual love should be instant as a reaction to circumstances. However, the Church's view on birth control does not make that possible (cf. the rigidity of the 'rhythm method' as opposed to spontaneous love making).

Part Two: Some Problems of Special Urgency - Chapter Three - Socio-Economic Life – paragraphs 63-72

Question	Group answer
a. How can the human family provide for the needs of everyone on earth?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect the dignity of the human person.• Mutual independence amongst nations.
b. How can those with more means assist those with less?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not to be captivated by our economic lives.• Share resources.

Group 1 Feedback:

Part Two: Some Problems of Special Urgency - Chapter Four - The Life of the Political Community – paragraphs 73-76

Question	Group answer
<p>a. How can Christians play a role in government, even when the government is acting immorally, in the sight of the Church?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As members of the Church we are influenced by Gospel values. We have to take responsibility to seek the common good, take leadership and encourage those in leadership to stand up for issues of truth and justice. • Encourage people in our community to take positions of influence in public life. • We need to be aware of all the doors that are open to us in our communities, nationally and internationally, often led by the Church, to influence for a better world. In the past we have had initiatives such as 'Live Aid and 'Make Poverty History' – there are things akin to this that are opening up for us to get involved with today.
<p>b. How can this tension be handled in order to provide Christians with maximum influence, while honouring the many religious or non-religious people in any given nation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gospel values influence us, but we need to be continually open to dialogue with and listening to others. • At times we have to live with the tension of that dialogue.

Part Two: Some Problems of Special Urgency - Chapter Five - Fostering Peace and the Promotion of a Community of Nations – paragraphs 77-90

Question	Group answer
a. Create a set of norms for a Catholic or Christian to follow regarding the questions of war and peace.	<p>We need to start with ourselves and take on board the words of the Constitution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– We have to be peaceful people.– We have to recognise that peace is the fruit of love and justice.– We should bear this fruit in our communities – thereby sharing the inner spirit and the talents of peace.– When we attempt to do this as individuals, it gives us more energy to allow this to permeate into our communities and indeed our commitment to the whole issue of peace locally, nationally and internationally.– We have to recognise the evil of weapons of mass destruction: we need to stand alongside organisations such as CND, etc, who want to rid the world of these.

At the end of the feedback, Fr Mike reflected on the sharing.

He emphasised that the Constitution seeks to make God more accessible to humans (both female and male) – it brings God from the sky to amongst us. In this way it was reclaiming the implications of the Incarnation. It was no longer a 'pie in the sky' God, but a God who was with us and for us.