

In The School of Mary

(Papal documents condensed by Deacon William Wagner)

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Pope Paul VI

Lumen Gentium, Light of the Nations, November 21, 1964.

CONDENSER'S INTRODUCTION

I thought that it might be helpful at this point in time that we give consideration to some of the most important documents in the modern day Catholic Church, the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1963 – 1965). We are living the life of the Church of the Second Vatican Council. Many times references are made to the effect that this or that situation is “the result of Vatican II.” Those statements would many times place the Council in a negative light. Yet, the truth of the matter is that the Second Vatican Council set the Church on a path to be able to deal with a world looking to science and technology to solve its problems; and this to a great extent, without God. Practical atheism along with relativism presents the modern-day Catholic with great and new challenges. The Council set about attempting to awaken us to those challenges by preparing us as individuals to witness to a dynamic Faith that can speak to the world we live in today.

My experience over the years tells me that not many have taken (or had) the opportunity to read, much less study, these documents. Hopefully, these condensations will contribute to a more confident Catholic population, prepared to confront our materialistic culture with a more vibrant and enlightened faith.

INTRODUCTION

1. Christ is the Light of nations. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument, 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. There is an urgency to this work that presses the Church so that all men, joined more closely by social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.

CHAPTER I

The Mystery of the Church

[Personal Note: This section is almost entirely made up of quotations from scripture. To cite the quotations as one flows into another, would take up a great amount of space and so citations will be, for the most part, not used.]

2. The Eternal Father created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered

helps to salvation, in view of Christ the Redeemer. He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. From the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place in the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era the Church was constituted and made manifest by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion when all the just from Adam to the last of the elect will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.

3. The Son, sent by the Father, was in him before the foundation of the world. In the Son, the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons (*and daughters*) (*cf. Eph 1:4-5, 10*). Christ inaugurated the kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By his obedience he brought about redemption. The Church, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus. As often as the sacrifice of the cross is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on. In the sacrament of the Eucharist the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is expressed and brought about. All men (*and women*) are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world.

4. When the work of the Son was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on Pentecost to continually sanctify the Church. Thus all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father. He is the Spirit of Life. The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (*cf. 1 Cor 3:16*). In them he prays on their behalf and bears witness that they are adopted sons (*and daughters*) (*cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15-16, 26*). He guides the Church in the way of all truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). He directs it with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns it with his fruits. He uninterruptedly renews and leads the Church to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus the Lord, "Come!" (*cf. RV 22:17*). The Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

5. The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation. The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News, the coming of the kingdom of God, for centuries promised in the Scriptures. Thus in one instance, the Word of the Lord is compared to a seed that is sown in a field. By its own power it sprouts and grows until harvest time. In another, the miracles of Jesus confirm that the kingdom has already arrived on earth. Before all things, however, the kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ, Son of God and Son of Man.

When Jesus had arisen, he appeared as the one constituted as Lord, Christ and eternal priest. He poured out on his disciples the Spirit promised by the Father. From this source the Church received the mission to proclaim and to spread the Kingdom among all peoples and to be its initial budding forth. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom united in glory with its King.

6. In the Old Testament the revelation of the kingdom is often conveyed by means of metaphors. In the same way the inner nature of the Church is now made known to us in different images, images that received preparatory shaping in the books of the prophets. Hence in one instance, the Church is a

sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ. Then, it is a flock, although ruled by human shepherds, nevertheless continuously being led and nourished by Christ himself, the good shepherd and the prince of the shepherds, who gave his life for the sheep.

Again, the Church is a piece of land in which the ancient olive tree grows whose roots were the prophets. Like a choice vineyard, it has been planted by the heavenly husbandman. The true vine is Christ who gives life to us, who through the Church, remain in Christ without whom we can do nothing.

Often the Church has also been called the building of God. The Lord himself compared himself to the stone that the builders rejected that became the cornerstone. On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles. This edifice has many names to describe it, as for example, the house of God and especially the holy temple. This temple is praised by the Holy Fathers and compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we on earth are built into it. In Revelations the Apostle John contemplates this holy city coming down from heaven as a bride adorned for her husband.

The Church, "that Jerusalem which is above," is also called "our mother". She is the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb whom Christ "loved and for whom he delivered himself up" and whom he unites to himself by an unbreakable covenant ceaselessly nourishing her and whom, finally, he fills with heavenly gifts for all eternity. This Church, while on earth, journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord, like an exile seeking *those things that are above*.

7. The Son of God redeemed man and made of him a new creation. By communicating his Spirit, Christ made his brothers of all nations mystically members of his own body. Through Baptism then we are formed in the likeness of Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that in this sacred rite a oneness with Christ's death and resurrection is brought about. In it we were buried with him into death and we shall be so in the likeness of his resurrection as well. By really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into communion with him and with one another. In this way all of us are made members of his Body while severally members of one another.

The members of the human body, though they are many, form one body. So also are the faithful in Christ. There is only one Spirit who gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church. The grace of apostle is given special place among these gifts and the Spirit himself subjected to this authority even those who were endowed with charisms. This same Spirit gives the body unity through an inner joining of its members, producing and urging love among the believers.

In Colossians Paul tells us that Christ is the image of the invisible God and in him all things came into being, and that he is the head of the body which is the Church, that he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the first place. Additionally in various places, he tells us that all are to be molded in the likeness of Christ, until Christ be formed in us. For this reason we are taken up into the mysteries of his life until we reign together with him. On earth as pilgrims in a strange land, we are being made one with his sufferings that with him we might be glorified.

From him (Christ), “the whole body” attains a growth that is of God. He continually distributes in his body, the Church, gifts of ministries in which we serve each other unto salvation so that, carrying out the truth in love, we might grow unto him who is our head.

In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in him (Christ), he has shared with us his Spirit who gives life, unifies and moves through the whole body. This he does in a similar way that the soul, the principal of life in the body, fulfills in the human body.

Christ loves the Church as his bride, the model of a man loving his wife as his body. The Church, indeed, is subject to its head. He fills that Church, which is his body and its fullness, with his divine gifts so that it might reach all the fullness of God.

8. Christ, the one Mediator, established and sustains his holy Church here on earth as an entity with visible delineation through which he communicates truth and grace to all. This society, structured with hierarchical organs, and the Mystical Body of Christ are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things. Rather, they form one complex reality that coalesces from a divine and human element as does, in a comparable way, the mystery of the Incarnate Word. In a similar manner, the visible, social structure of the Church serves the Spirit of Christ.

This is the one Church of Christ, which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, erected for all ages as “*the pillar and mainstay of the truth.*” (1 Tm 3:15) This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church that is governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.

The Church, although it needs human resources to carry out its mission, is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example, humility and self-sacrifice. Similarly, the Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering. It does all it can to relieve their need and in them it strives to serve Christ himself. Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled, came to expiate the sins of the people. The Church, embracing sinners in its bosom, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, follows the way of penance and renewal. “Like a stranger in a foreign land, the Church presses forward amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God.” It continues on, announcing the cross and death of the Lord until he comes.

CHAPTER II

On the People of God

9. It pleased God to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness. He chose Israel as a people unto himself, setting up a covenant and making known in its history both himself and his will. Thus he made Israel holy unto himself. All these things were done as a preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant to be ratified in Christ and to be given fuller revelation through the Word of God himself made flesh. Christ instituted this New Covenant, the New Testament in his Blood calling together a people, both Jew and Gentile, making them

one in the Spirit, the New People of God. Those who believe in Christ are reborn from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God. They are reborn not from flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit being established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people.” (1 Pt 2:9f)

The messianic people has Christ for its head, delivered up for our sins, risen for our justification and now reigning in glory in heaven. The state of this people is one of dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in his temple. Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us. Its end is the kingdom of God, begun by God himself on earth and to be brought to perfection by him at the end of time, when Christ our life shall appear. The messianic people, not actually including all men and at times looking like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, it is used by him as an instrument for the redemption of all, having been sent forth into the world as *the light of the world and the salt of the earth*.

Israel, as an exile in the desert, was already called the Church of God. (2 Esdr 13:1) So likewise the new Israel, in search of a future and abiding city, is called the Church of Christ. He has bought it for himself with his blood and has filled it with his Spirit, providing it with those means befitting it as a visible union. God gathered as one all those, who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation, and he established them as the Church, the visible sacrament of this saving unity. Destined to extend to all regions of the earth, the Church is strengthened by the power of God’s grace so that in the weakness of the flesh she may not waver from perfect fidelity.

10. 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 their works they may offer spiritual sacrifices. Therefore all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated; each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.

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. They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation. The Holy Spirit endows them with special strength to spread and defend the faith. Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the

fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God and offer themselves along with it. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the People of God brought about by this most august sacrament.

Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon for their sins from the mercy of God and are at the same time reconciled with the Church, which by charity, example and prayer seeks their conversion. By the sacred Anointing of the Sick and the prayer of her priests the whole Church commends the sick to the suffering and glorified Lord. She exhorts them to contribute to the welfare of the whole people of God by associating themselves freely with the passion and death of Christ.

Those of the faithful who are consecrated by Holy Orders are appointed to feed the Church in Christ's name.

Finally, spouses help each other attain to holiness in their marriages and in the rearing of their children. From Christian marriage comes the family who by the grace of the Holy Spirit, received in baptism, are made children of God, thus perpetuating the People of God through the centuries. The family is the domestic church. In it parents should, by word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children. All the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father himself is perfect.

12. The holy People of God share also in Christ's prophetic office. It spreads abroad a living witness to him by means of a life of faith and charity. The entire body of the faithful, "from the bishops down to the last of the lay faithful," anointed as they are by the Holy One, when they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals, cannot err. This discernment is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority. Through it, the People of God adhere unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints.

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the People of God and enriches it with virtues, but he also allots his gifts to everyone according as he wills. He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices that contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church. These charisms are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after while judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church. They are to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.

13. All men are called to belong to the new People of God. This people, while remaining one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and exist in all ages so that the decree of God's will may be fulfilled. All God's children, scattered as they are, will finally be gathered together as one. For this purpose God sent the Spirit of his Son as Lord and Life-giver. He is the wellspring of their unity in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

Though there are many nations there is but one people of God. All the faithful, scattered throughout the world, are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit. Since the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, the Church, the People of God, in forming that kingdom takes nothing away from the temporal welfare of any people. Taking them to itself, the Church purifies, strengthens, elevates and ennoble them. The characteristic of universality that adorns the People of God is a gift from the Lord himself. By reason of it, the Catholic Church strives with due effect to bring all humanity back to its source in Christ.

In virtue of this catholicity, each individual part contributes to the good of the whole Church. Not only is the People of God made up of different peoples, but in its inner structure also it is composed of various ranks. This diversity arises either by reason of their duties or by reason of their condition and state of life. Moreover, within the Church particular churches hold a rightful place. These churches retain their own traditions without in any way opposing the primacy of the Chair of Peter that presides over the whole assembly of charity. Between all the parts of the Church there remains a bond of close communion, sharing spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal resources. The members of the People of God are called to share these goods in common. (1 Pt 4:10) All are called to be part of this catholic unity of the People of God. The Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, are called by God's grace to salvation.

14. This sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in his body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. He himself affirmed the necessity of faith and Baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through Baptism, as through a door, men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore *knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ*, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. They are fully incorporated into the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops.

The bonds that visibly bind men to the Church are the profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. The Church's children should remember that their exalted status is not of their own merits but by the special grace of Christ. Should they fail to correspond to that grace not only shall they not be saved but they will the more severely be judged.

Catechumens who seek by explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church are by that very intention joined to her. Mother Church embraces them as her own.

15. The Church recognizes that those, already baptized, though they do not profess the faith in its entirety, are honored with name of Christian. They are consecrated by Baptism, in which they are united with Christ. They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits. In some way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit. Some, indeed, he has strengthened to the extent of the shedding of their blood.

In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united. Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may come about.

16. Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the People of God. Here we must recall the people to whom the testament and the promise were first given and from whom Christ was born. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts he makes. The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. Amongst these are the Mohammedans, professing to hold the faith of Abraham and, along with us, adore the one and merciful God. Nor is God distant from those who, in shadows and images, seek the unknown God. Additionally, those also can attain salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church and yet sincerely seek God.

Divine Providence does not deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as preparation for the Gospel.

Some there are who, living and dying in this world without God, are exposed to final despair. To promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of all of these, the Church, mindful of the command of the Lord: "Preach the Gospel to every creature," fosters the missions with care and attention.

17. As the Son was sent by the Father, so he too sent the apostles, saying: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations. (cf Mt 21: 18f) The Church has received this solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth from the apostles and must carry it out. Wherefore she makes the words of the Apostle her own: "Woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16), and continues unceasingly to send heralds of the Gospel. The Church is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part that God's plan may be fully realized, whereby he has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world. By the proclamation of the Gospel she prepares her hearers to receive and make progress the faith. She disposes them for Baptism, snatches them from error and incorporates them into full maturity in Christ.

Through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is cleansed, raised up and perfected unto the glory of God. The obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his state. Although all the faithful can baptize, the priest alone can complete the building up of the body in the Eucharistic sacrifice. The Church both prays and labors in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ all honor and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the universe.

CHAPTER III

On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church and in Particular on the Episcopate

18. For the constant growth of the People of God, Christ instituted in his Church a variety of ministries that work for the good of the whole body. These ministers serve their brethren so that all who are of the People of God may arrive at salvation.

This sacred Council, following closely the First Vatican Council, teaches that Jesus Christ established his holy Church, having sent forth the apostles as the Father had sent him. He willed that their successors, the bishops, be shepherds in his Church even to the consummation of the world. In order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, he placed Peter over the other apostles. He instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion.

This Council again proposes to be firmly believed by the whole faithful all the teachings about the institution, the perpetuity, meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium. At the same time this Council declares and proclaims the doctrine concerning bishops, the successors of the apostles, who with the Successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible head of the Church, govern the house of the living God.

19. The Lord Jesus appointed twelve apostles and formed them in the manner of a college, over which he placed Peter. He sent them first to the children of Israel and then to all nations. Thus his Church spread and under his guidance continues all days even to the consummation of the world. In this mission the apostles were confirmed on the day of Pentecost in accordance with the Lord's promise. By preaching the gospel and guided by the Holy Spirit, the apostles gathered into one the Universal Church, established upon the themselves and built on Peter, Christ Jesus himself being the supreme cornerstone.

20. That divine mission, entrusted by Christ to the apostles, will last until the end of the world since the Gospel they are to teach is for all time the source of all life for the Church. For this reason the apostles, appointed as rulers in this society, took care to appoint successors. They not only had helpers in their ministry but they also passed on to their immediate cooperators the duty of confirming and finishing the work begun by them that they attend to the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit placed them to shepherd the Church of God. They therefore appointed such men, giving them the order that, when they should have died, other approved men would take up their ministry. Among those various ministries, the chief place belongs to the office of those appointed to the episcopate by a succession running from the beginning. St. Irenaeus testifies that through those who were appointed bishops by the apostles, and through their successors down to his own time, the apostolic tradition was manifested and preserved. Bishops, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God. As the office of Peter is permanent, so also is the apostle's office of nurturing the Church. Thus, the sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have succeeded the apostles as shepherds of the Church.

21. In the bishops, for whom priests are assistants, our Lord Jesus Christ is present in the midst of those who believe. Through their excellent service he is preaching the Word of God to all nations, constantly administering the sacraments of faith to those who believe. By their paternal functioning Christ incorporates new members in his body by a heavenly regeneration and, finally, by their wisdom and prudence he directs and guides the people of the New Testament toward eternal happiness. These pastors, chosen to shepherd the Lord's flock of the elect, are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

The apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit and they passed on this spiritual gift by the impositions of hands. The Sacred Council teaches that by episcopal consecration the fullness of the Sacrament of Orders is conferred. Episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing, which of its nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college. From the tradition in the practice of both the Church of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character so impressed that bishops sustain the roles of Christ himself as teacher, shepherd and high priest, and that they act in his person. It is the Bishops themselves who admit newly elected members into the episcopal body by means of the Sacrament of Orders.

22. As in the Gospel, the Lord so disposing, St. Peter and the other apostles constitute one apostolic college, so in a similar way the Roman Pontiff, the Successor of Peter, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are joined together. The very ancient practice whereby bishops in all parts of the world were in communion with one another and with the Bishop of Rome, and also the councils assembled together in which more profound issues were settled in common, both of these factors are already an indication of the collegiate character of the episcopal order. The ecumenical councils held in the course of centuries are also manifest proof of that same character. It is intimated also in the practice of summoning several bishops to take part in the elevation of the newly elected to the ministry of the high priesthood. Hence, one is constituted a member of the episcopal body by sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the body.

22. *(The following passages of the text are critical. I am imposing little or no abbreviation upon the text. The italics of certain phrases are mine in order to call specific attention to them.)*

But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the Successor of Peter, as its head. The Pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. *In virtue of his office, as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church*, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. He is always free to exercise this power.

The order of bishops, which succeeds to the college of apostles and gives this apostolic body continued existence, is also the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, provided *we understand this body together with its head the Roman Pontiff and never without this head*. This power can be exercised only with the consent of the Roman Pontiff. For our Lord placed Simon alone as the rock and bearer of the keys of the Church (*cf. Mt 16:18-19*), and made him shepherd of the whole flock (*cf. Jn 21:15 ff*). It is evident, however, that the power of binding and loosing, which was given to Peter (*Mt 16:19*), was granted also to the college of apostles, joined with their head (*Mt 18:18; 28:16-20*). This college ...insofar as it is assembled under one head, expresses the unity of the flock of Christ. In it, the bishops, *faithfully recognizing the primacy and preeminence of their head*, exercise their own authority for the good of their own faithful, and indeed of the whole Church.

The supreme power in the universal Church, which this college enjoys, is exercised in a solemn way in an ecumenical council. *A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted by the Successor of Peter*, and it is the prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them and to confirm them. This same collegiate power can be exercised together with the Pope by the bishops living in all parts of the world, provided that the head of the college calls them to collegiate action, or at least approves of or freely accepts the united action of the scattered bishops, so that it is thereby made a collegiate act.

The Roman Pontiff, as the Successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle of unity both of bishops and the faithful. The individual bishops are the visible principle of unity in their particular churches from which comes into being the one and only Catholic Church. The individual bishops represent each his own church, but all together and with the Pope represent the entire Church in the bond of peace, love and unity.

23. The individual bishops, in charge of particular churches, exercise their pastoral government over the portion of the People of God committed to their care. Each of them as a member of the episcopal college is also obliged by Christ's command to be solicitous for the whole Church. It is the duty of all bishops to promote and safeguard the unity of faith, to instruct the faithful in a love for the whole Mystical Body of Christ, especially for its poor and sorrowing, and finally to promote every activity that is of interest to the whole Church. By governing well their own church they themselves are effectively contributing to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body.

The task of proclaiming the Gospel everywhere pertains to the body of pastors. Christ gave his command to them in common thereby imposing upon them a common duty. The individual bishops are obliged to enter into a community of work among themselves and with the Successor of Peter, upon whom was imposed in a special way the great duty of spreading the Christian name. With all their energy they must supply to the missions both workers for the harvest and also spiritual and material aid, arousing the ardent cooperation of the faithful. Finally, the bishops should gladly extend their fraternal aid to other churches, especially to neighboring and more needy dioceses in accordance with the venerable example of antiquity.

By divine Providence various churches, established in various places, have in the course of time coalesced into several groups, organically united, which, while preserving the unity of the universal Church, enjoy their own discipline, their own liturgical usage, and their own theological and spiritual heritage. Some of these churches, having begotten others as daughter churches, are connected down to our own time by a close bond of charity in their sacramental life and in their mutual respect for their rights and duties. This variety of local churches is splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church.

24. Bishops, as successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord the mission to teach all nations and to preach the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain to salvation. To fulfill this mission, Christ the Lord promised the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and on Pentecost sent the Spirit from heaven to be witnesses to him before the nations even to the ends of the earth. That duty is a true service, called

“*diakonia*” or ministry. The canonical mission of bishops can come about by legitimate customs, not revoked by the supreme authority of the Church, or by laws made or recognized by that authority, or directly through the Successor of Peter himself. If the latter denies apostolic communion, such bishops cannot assume any office.

25. For Bishops preaching is a first priority. Bishops are preachers of the faith. They are authentic teachers, endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach the faith to the people committed to them. They must believe and put into practice that faith and illustrate it by the light of the Holy Spirit.

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.

Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly whenever, even though dispersed through the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with the Successor of Peter, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held. This is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church, whose definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith.

This infallibility with which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to be endowed in defining doctrine of faith and morals extends as far as the deposit of revelation extends, which must be religiously guarded and faithfully expounded. And this is the infallibility which the Roman Pontiff, the head of the college of bishops, enjoys in virtue of his office, when as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful, who confirms his brethren in their faith (*cf. Lk 22:32*), by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals. And therefore his definitions, of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church, are justly styled irreformable, since they are pronounced with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to him in Blessed Peter, and therefore they need no approval of others, nor do they allow an appeal to any other judgment.

For then the Roman Pontiff is not pronouncing judgment as a private person, but as the supreme teacher of the universal Church, in whom the charism of infallibility of the Church itself is individually present, he is expounding or defending a doctrine of Catholic faith. The infallibility promised to the Church resides also in the body of bishops, when that body exercises the supreme magisterium with the Successor of Peter.

When either the Roman Pontiff or the body of bishops together with him defines a judgment, they pronounce it in accordance with revelation itself, which all are obliged to abide by and be in conformity with, that is, the revelation, which as written or orally handed down, is transmitted in its entirety. The Roman Pontiff and the bishops, in view of their office and the importance of the matter, by fitting means diligently strive to inquire properly into that revelation and to give apt expression to its contents.

26. A bishop, marked with the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, is “the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,” especially in the Eucharist. This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful, which are themselves called churches in the New Testament. In them the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of the Gospel and the mystery of the Lord’s Supper. In these communities, though frequently small and poor, Christ is present, and in virtue of his presence there is brought together the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. For “the partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ makes us be transformed into that which we consume.”

Every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the bishop, to whom is committed the office of offering the worship of Christian religion to the divine majesty. Bishops, by praying and laboring for the people, make outpourings in many ways from the fullness of Christ’s holiness. By the ministry of the word they communicate God’s power to those who believe unto salvation. Through the Sacraments they sanctify the faithful. They direct the conferring of Baptism, by which a sharing in the kingly priesthood of Christ is granted. They are the original ministers of Confirmation, dispensers of sacred Orders and the moderators of penitential discipline, and they earnestly exhort their people to carry out with reverence their part in the liturgy, and especially in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. By the example of their way of life they must be an influence for good to those over whom they preside, refraining from all evil, so that together with the flock, committed to their care, they may arrive at eternal life.

Bishops, as vicars and ambassadors of Christ, govern the particular churches entrusted to them, remembering that he who is greater should become as the lesser. This power that they personally exercise in Christ’s name is proper, ordinary, and immediate, ultimately regulated by the supreme authority of the Church. In virtue of this power, bishops have the sacred right and the duty before the Lord to make laws for their subjects, to pass judgment on them and to moderate everything pertaining to the ordering of worship and the apostolate.

The pastoral office or the habitual and daily care of their sheep is entrusted to them completely, and they are not to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiffs, for they exercise an authority that is proper to them.

A bishop, sent by the Father to govern his family, must keep before his eyes the example of the good shepherd. Being taken from among men, and himself beset with weakness, let him not refuse to listen to his subjects, whom he cherishes as his true sons and exhorts to cooperate with him. As having one day to render an account for their souls, he takes care of them by his prayer, preaching and all the works of charity. Like Paul the Apostle, he is debtor to all men. Let him therefore be ready to preach the Gospel to all and to urge his faithful to apostolic and missionary activity. But the faithful must cling to their bishop

as the Church does to Christ, and Christ to the Father, so that all may be of one mind in unity and abound to the glory of God.

Christ has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of his consecration and his mission. They have handed on to different individuals in the Church various degrees of participation in this ministry. Priests, although they do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, nevertheless are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high priest, they are true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator, on their level of ministry, they announce the divine Word to all. They exercise their sacred function especially in the Eucharistic worship, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, the only sacrifice of the New Testament, namely that of Christ offering himself once for all as a spotless victim to the Father. For the sick and the sinners, they exercise the ministry of alleviation and reconciliation and they present the needs and the prayers of the faithful to God the Father. Within the limits of their authority priests, functioning as Christ the shepherd and head, gather God's family together and lead them in the Spirit to God the Father.

In the midst of the flock, priests adore God in spirit and truth, believing what they have read and meditated upon in the law of God, teaching what they have believed, and putting into practice in their own lives what they have taught. Priests, prudent cooperators with the episcopal order, and called to serve the People of God, constitute one priesthood with their bishop. Associated with their bishop in a spirit of trust and generosity, they make him present in a certain sense in the individual local congregations. They sanctify and govern under the bishop's authority that part of the Lord's flock entrusted to them. They make the universal Church visible in their own locality. Intent on the welfare of God's children, they must strive to lend their effort to the pastoral work of the whole diocese, even of the entire Church. Let priests sincerely look upon the bishop as their father and reverently obey him, and let the bishop regard his priests as co-workers, as sons and friends, even as Christ referred to his disciples. All priests, diocesan and religious, fit into this body of bishops and priests, and serve the good of the whole Church. In virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, all priests are bound together in intimate brotherhood.

Let them, as fathers in Christ, take care of the faithful whom they have begotten by Baptism and their teaching. Let them so lead and serve their local community that it may worthily be called the Church of God. By their daily life, let them show the face of a truly sacerdotal and pastoral ministry to the faithful and the infidel, to Catholics and non-Catholics. As good shepherds they are to go after those also who, though baptized in the Catholic Church, have fallen away from the use of the sacraments or even from the faith itself. Priests by combined effort, under the leadership of the bishops and the Supreme Pontiff, will strive to wipe out every kind of division, so that the whole human race may be united in the family of God.

At the lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed "not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service." Strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and priests, they serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the Word, and of charity to the People of

God. It is their duty, assigned to them by competent authority, to administer Baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, to officiate at funeral and burial services.

Since these duties are so very necessary to the life of the Church, the diaconate can in the future (*at this writing it already has been*) be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy. It is left to the competent territorial bodies of bishops, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, to decide where it is opportune for such deacons to be established for the care of souls. With the consent of the Roman Pontiff, this diaconate can be conferred upon men of more mature age, even upon those living in the married state. It may also be conferred upon suitable young men, for whom the law of celibacy must remain intact.

CHAPTER IV The Laity

Everything that previously has been said concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike. There are certain things that pertain in a special way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their condition and mission. Due to the special circumstance of our time the foundations of this doctrine must be more thoroughly examined. Pastors know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church. They understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking. For we must all practice the truth in love, and so grow up in all things in him who is head, Christ. For from him the whole body, according to the functioning in due measure of each part, derives its increase to the building up of itself in love.

The term "laity" means all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those in the religious life. These faithful are by Baptism made one body with Christ. 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 world.

What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature. But the laity, by their very vocation, seeks the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, in all the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life. They are called by God to 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. It is their special task to order and to throw light upon these affairs in such a way that they may come into being according to the praise of the Creator and the Redeemer.

By divine institution, holy Church is ordered with a wonderful diversity. The People of God is one: "one Lord, one faith, one Baptism," sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in

Christ... There is in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex. For you are all 'one' in Christ Jesus"

Therefore in the Church everyone does not proceed by the same path. Nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God. And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, pastors and dispensers of mysteries on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to their dignity. Pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need. Pastors of the Church should minister to one another and to the other faithful. These in their turn should lend their joint assistance to their pastors and teachers. Thus in their diversity all bear witness to the wonderful unity in the body of Christ.

From divine choice the laity has Christ for their brother, who though he is the Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve. They also have for their brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ feed the family of God. St. Augustine put this very beautifully: "For you I am a bishop; but with you I am a Christian. The former is a duty; the latter a grace. The former is a danger; the latter, salvation."

The lay apostolate is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their Baptism and Confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate. By the sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished. The laity is called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. Thus every layman is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself.

Besides this apostolate, the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Further, they have the capacity to assume from the hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions. Upon all the laity, therefore, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation to all men of each epoch. Consequently, may every opportunity be given them so that they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church!

Besides intimately linking them to his life and his mission, Jesus also gives the laity a sharing in his priestly function of offering spiritual worship for the glory of God and the salvation of men. They, anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called so that more abundant fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. All their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, the hardships of life, if patiently borne, become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2:5). Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. As those, who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

Christ, the great prophet, who proclaimed the kingdom of his Father, continually fulfills his prophetic office. He does this not only through the hierarchy who teach in his name and with his authority, but also through the laity whom he made his witnesses and to whom he gave an understanding of the faith (*sensus fidei*) so that the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life. They conduct themselves as children of the promise and with patience await the glory that is to come. Let them not

hide this hope. But even in the program of their secular life, let them express it by a continual conversion and by wrestling “against the world-rulers of this darkness.” (*Eph 6:12*)

The laity goes forth as powerful proclaimers of a faith in things to be hoped for and they courageously join to their profession of faith a life springing from faith. This evangelization, this announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world. Sanctified by a special sacrament, where Christianity pervades the entirety of family life and gradually transforms it, one will find there both the practice of and an excellent school of the lay apostolate. In such a home, husbands and wives find their proper vocation. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the kingdom of God and at the same time the hope of a blessed life to come.

Consequently, even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform a work of great value for the evangelization of the world. It remains for each of them to cooperate in the external spread and the dynamic growth of the kingdom of Christ in the world. Therefore, let the laity devotedly strive to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth and let them insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom.

36. Christ becoming obedient even unto death and because of this, exalted by the Father in the glory of his kingdom, has communicated this royal power to his disciples that they might be constituted in royal freedom by true penance and a holy life and that they might conquer the reign of sin in themselves. The Lord wishes to spread his kingdom also by means of the laity, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace. Clearly then a great promise and a great trust are committed to the disciples: “All things are yours, and you are Christ's and Christ is God's.” (*1 Cor 3:23*)

The faithful, therefore, must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation. They must assist each other to live holier lives. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ in justice, charity and peace. The laity has the primary role in the fulfillment of this duty. By their competence, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort so that created goods may be perfected by human labor and may the goods of this world be more equitably distributed among all men. May the laity in their own way be conducive to universal progress in human and Christian freedom! In this manner, through the Church's members, Christ will progressively illumine all human society with his saving light.

Moreover, let the laity also by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, favoring the practice of virtue rather than hindering it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values. They will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God. The faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of human society. Let them strive to reconcile the two, guided by a Christian conscience. Even in secular business there is no human activity that can be withdrawn from God's dominion. In our own time it is most urgent that this distinction

and also this harmony should shine forth more clearly than ever in the lives of the faithful. While it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, yet that ominous doctrine that attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion and that attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens is rightly to be rejected.

37. The laity has the right to receive in abundance the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the Word of God and of the sacraments. They should openly reveal their needs and desires with that freedom and confidence that is fitting for children of God and brothers in Christ. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability permitted and sometimes even obligated to express their opinion on those things that concern the good of the Church. 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. The laity should promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church. Let them follow the example of Christ, who by his obedience, even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God. Nor should they omit to pray for those placed over them.

Let the spiritual shepherds promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them assign duties in the service of the Church with freedom for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects proposed by the laity. Let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city. A great many wonderful things are to be hoped for from this familiar dialogue between the laity and their spiritual leaders. The latter, aided by the experience of the laity can more clearly come to decisions regarding both spiritual and temporal matters. In this way, the whole Church, strengthened by each of its members, may more effectively fulfill its mission for the life of the world.

Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and as a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits. They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers, ...those whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed. In a word, *Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body* (St. John Chrysostom).

Chapter IV The Universal Call to Holiness

39. The Church is believed to be indefectibly holy. Indeed, Christ, the Son of God, loved the Church as his bride, delivering himself up for her. He did this to sanctify her. He united her to himself as his own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. In the Church everyone is called to holiness, according to the saying of the Apostle, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thes 4:3; Eph 1:4) This holiness is unceasingly manifested in the fruits of grace that the Spirit produces in the faithful. It is expressed in individuals who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection

of charity. In a special way this holiness appears in the practice of the “evangelical” counsels. This practice of the counsels, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, undertaken by many Christians, must give in the world an outstanding witness and example of this same holiness.

40. The Lord Jesus, the divine teacher and model of all perfection, preached holiness of life to all of the disciples. He himself is the author of this holiness of life: “Be you therefore perfect even as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) Indeed, he sent the Holy Spirit upon all men to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their mind and all their strength (cf Mk 12:30) and that they might love each other as Christ loves them. (Jn 13:34; 15:12) The followers of Christ are called by God according to his own purpose and grace. In the baptism of faith they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature and they are really made holy. They are warned by the Apostle to live “as becomes saints” (Eph 5:3) and put on “as God’s chosen ones, a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.” (Col 3:12) Since we all offend in many ways, we must daily pray: “Forgive us our debts.” (Mt 6:12)

All the faithful of Christ, of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and by this holiness a more human manner of living in this earthly society. In order that the faithful reach this perfection, they must follow in his footsteps and conform themselves to his image, seeking the will of the Father in all things. They must devote themselves to the glory of God and the service of their neighbor. In this way, the holiness of the People of God will grow into an abundant harvest of good, as is admirably shown by the life of so many saints in Church history.

41. The classes and duties of life are many, but holiness is one – cultivated by all who are moved by the Spirit of God and worship God the Father in spirit and truth. These people follow the poor Christ, the humble and cross-bearing Christ in order to be worthy of being sharers in his glory.

The shepherds of Christ’s flock must holily and eagerly, carry out their ministry in imitation of the eternal high priest. They ought to fulfill this duty in such a way that it will be the principal means also of their own sanctification. Bishops are granted the ability of exercising the perfect duty of pastoral charity by the grace of the sacrament of Orders. By this same sacramental grace they are given the courage necessary to lay down their lives for their sheep and the ability to promote greater holiness in the Church by their daily example.

Priests, as well, resemble bishops to a certain degree in their participation in the sacrament of Orders. They should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor by the exercise of their office through Christ, the unique mediator. They should preserve the bond of priestly communion and present to all men a living witness to God. All this they should do in emulation of those priests, who down through the centuries left an outstanding example of the holiness of humble and hidden service. By their very office of praying and offering sacrifice for the People of God, they should rise to greater holiness. They should rise to this holiness in their apostolic labors, keeping in mind what they are doing and imitating what they are handling. They should ever nourish themselves through an abundance of contemplation, doing all this for the comfort of the entire Church. All priests, and especially “diocesan priests,” should

keep before their minds their faithful loyalty toward and their generous cooperation with their bishop as the greatest value in their growth in holiness.

Ministers of lesser rank are also sharers in the mission and grace of the supreme priest. In the first place among these ministers are deacons, the dispensers of Christ's mysteries and servants of the Church. Keeping free of every vice, they stand before men as personifications of goodness and the friends of God (1 Tim 3:8-10). Clerics are called by the Lord and, being set aside to prepare themselves for the various ministerial offices, are bound to bring their hearts and minds into accord with this special election. They will accomplish this by their constancy in prayer, their burning love, and by their unremitting recollection of what is true, just and good. All this they will do for the glory and honor of God. There are also laymen, chosen by God and called by the bishop, who spend themselves in apostolic labors, working in the Lord's field.

Married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path to holiness by faithful love. They sustain one another in grace throughout their lives, at the same time imbuing their offspring with Christian doctrine and the evangelical virtues.

Chapter V The Universal Call to Holiness in the Church

Through faithful love Christian couples offer all men the example of generous love. They build up the brotherhood of charity and stand as witnesses in the fruitfulness of holy mother Church. They are a sign and a participation in that very love with which Christ loved his bride. A like example is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church. Finally, those who engage in labor –and frequently it is of a heavy nature– should better themselves by their human labors. They should raise all of society to a better mode of existence. Indeed, they should imitate in lively charity and joyous hope, the very Christ who plied his hands with carpenter's tools. In their daily work they should climb to the heights of holiness and apostolic activity.

May all who are weighed down with poverty and sickness, as well as those who suffer persecution for justice sake, know that they are united with the suffering Christ, who called them blessed in the Gospel. Finally, all Christ's faithful, whatever their condition or circumstances of life, will daily increase in holiness by receiving all things with faith from the heavenly Father's hand as his divine will.

42. God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in him." (1 Jn 4:16) The most necessary gift is love. So that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each must willingly hear the Word of God and must complete by his own actions what God has begun. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues. Charity, indeed, rules over all the means of attaining holiness and gives life to these same means. It is the love of God and neighbor that point out the true disciple of Christ.

From the earliest times, Christians have been called upon to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men especially to persecutors. The Church considers martyrdom as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love. Though few are presented such an opportunity, nevertheless all must be prepared to confess Christ before men, even during persecutions never lacking to the Church in following the way of the cross.

Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel. An eminent position is held among these by virginity or the celibate state. This is a precious gift of grace given by the Father to certain souls whereby they devote themselves to God alone with an undivided heart.

Among the counsels proposed by the Gospel, virginity or the celibate state hold an eminent position. This is a precious gift of grace given to certain souls whereby they devote themselves to God with an undivided heart. The Church has always held perfect continence in particular honor, which, for the love of God, is an incentive to charity and a source of fecundity in the world.

The Church continually keeps before it the warning of the Apostle Paul, exhorting the faithful to experience what Christ had known within himself. This was the same Christ Jesus, who emptied himself, becoming obedient to death. Mother Church rejoices at finding within her bosom men and women who very closely follow their Savior, who debased himself to our comprehension. There are some who renounce their own wills and take upon themselves the state of poverty. Still further, some subject themselves to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.

Therefore, all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for holiness and perfection in their own proper state. Indeed, they have an obligation to so strive. Let neither the use of things nor attachment to riches hinder them in search of perfect love. Let them not come to terms with this world, for this world as we see it, is passing away. (cf. 1 Cor 7:31ff)

CHAPTER VI Religious

43. The evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience are based upon the words and examples of the Lord. The counsels are a divine gift, received by Church from its Lord and safeguarded with the help of his grace. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Church authority has the duty, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to build stable forms of living upon them. Thus, it has come about that, as if on a tree in the field of Lord, various forms of solidarity and community life, as well as various religious families have branched out from this divinely given seed. These religious families give their members the support of a more firm stability in their way of life. Strengthened by obedience, they further offer their members the support of fraternal association in the militia of Christ. These religious are able to fulfill and observe their profession and so make progress on the road of Charity. The religious state is not an intermediate one between the clerical and lay. Rather, the faithful of Christ are called by God from both these states of life each in one's own way to be of advantage to the salvific mission of the Church.

44. Christ's faithful choose to bind themselves to the three counsels (*poverty, chastity, and obedience*) either by vows or by other sacred bonds. By such bonds, a person is totally dedicated to God, and ordained to the honor and service of God under a new and special title. Already through Baptism a person dies to sin and is consecrated to God. By profession of the evangelical counsels, the person is more intimately consecrated to divine service. This consecration will be the more perfect the more the indissoluble bond of Christ's union and his bride, the Church, is represented by this firm and stable bond.

The spiritual life of these people should be devoted to the welfare of the whole Church, vigorously implanting the kingdom of Christ in souls. This duty is to be undertaken to the extent of their capacities in keeping with their vocation. For this reason the Church preserves the special character of her religious institutes. The profession of the evangelical counsels ought to attract all the members of the Church to an effective fulfillment of their duties in their Christian vocation. The purpose of the religious state is to free its members from earthly cares and to more fully manifest to all the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below. It not only witnesses to a new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ but it also foretells the future resurrection and glory of the heavenly kingdom. Christ proposed this life to his disciples. The religious state clearly manifests that the kingdom of God is raised above all earthly concerns. Finally, it demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit working in the Church and that the state of the professed, evangelical counsels undeniably belongs to its life and holiness

45. It is the duty of the hierarchy to regulate the practice of the evangelical counsels. Their importance rests in that they foster the perfection of love of God and love of neighbor. Their profession is strengthened by vows while the hierarchy accepts the rules of governance presented by outstanding individuals, with proper modifications. It also aids with vigilant authority these institutes established for the building up of Christ's body.

Any institute of perfection may be removed from the jurisdiction of local ordinaries by the Supreme Pontiff and subjected to himself alone. This is done in virtue of his primacy over the entire Church to more fully provide for the Lord's entire flock. Similarly, institutes may be left to the charge of proper patriarchal authority while the members of these institutes must show reverence and obedience to bishops according to the sacred canons. The bishops are due respect because of their pastoral authority and the need for unity and harmony in the apostolate.

The Church raises religious profession to the dignity of a canonical state, manifesting this with a liturgical setting as a state consecrated to God. The Church accepts the vows of the newly professed, begging God's grace for them by its public prayer. It commends them to God and accompanies their self-offering with the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

46. Religious should be most mindful that the Church presents Christ to the world through them. All should take note that the profession of the evangelical counsels does not detract from a genuine development but by its very nature is most beneficial to the development of the human person. Indeed,

the counsels, voluntarily undertaken, contribute a great deal to the purification of the heart and spiritual liberty. They continually stir up the fervor of charity by molding the Christian to that type of chaste and detached life that Christ the Lord chose for himself, one that his Mother embraced as well. Let no one think that religious have become strangers and useless citizens of this earthly city by their consecration. In a very profound sense these same religious are united with them in the heart of Christ. In this way the building up of the earthly city may have its foundation in the Lord and tend towards him.

47. Therefore, this sacred synod encourages and praises the men and women who adorn the bride of Christ by their unswerving faithfulness in their chosen consecration and render generous services of all kinds to mankind. Let all see to it that they persevere and ever grow in that vocation God has given them for the increased holiness of the Church.

CHAPTER VII

The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church and Its Union with the Church in Heaven

48. The Church will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven at the time of the restoration of all things. (*cf. Acts 3:21*) At that time the human race, as well as the entire world, will be perfectly reestablished in Christ.

Christ, having been lifted up from the earth, has drawn all to himself (*cf. Jn 12:32*). Rising from the dead, he sent his life-giving Spirit upon his disciples and through him established his body, the Church, as the universal sacrament of salvation. Sitting at the right hand of the Father, he is continually active in the world. He leads men to the Church that through it he might join them to himself and make them partakers of his glorious life by nourishing them with his own Body and Blood.

(I have resisted the Pauline scripture quotes because they are so numerous as to have made the condensation unwieldy.)

The promised restoration that we are awaiting has already begun in Christ, being carried forward in the mission of the Holy Spirit within the Church. It is through her that we learn the meaning of life through our faith, while we perform with hope the work committed to us by the Father, thus working out our salvation.

The final age of the world has come upon us and the renovation of the world is already anticipated in some kind of a real way. However, until there are a new heavens and a new earth, the pilgrim Church has the appearance of this world that is passing. She dwells among creatures, who groan and travail in pain and await the revelation of the sons of God.

Joined with Christ in the Church and signed with the Holy Spirit, we are called and are sons of God. While we are in the body, we are exiled from the Lord and having the first-fruits of the Spirit we groan within ourselves and we desire to be with Christ. We are urged to live more for him, who died for us and rose again. We put on the armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Since, however, we know neither the day nor the hour, we must be constantly vigilant so that we might merit entering into the marriage feast with him and to be numbered among the blessed and not be

ordered to go into eternal fire like the wicked and slothful servant. For before we reign with Christ in glory, all of us will be made manifest before the tribunal of Christ, so that each might receive what he has won according to his works. At the end of the world they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life, but those who have done evil unto resurrection of judgment. Reckoning, then, that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy of comparison with the glory to come, we look for the blessed hope and the coming of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

49. Until the Lord comes in his majesty, and all the angels with him, all things are subject to him. Some of his disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are being purified, and others are in glory beholding clearly God himself, as he is. All in various ways and degrees are in communion in the same charity of God and neighbor. For all, who are in Christ having his Spirit, form one Church, united in him. Therefore, the union of wayfarers with the brethren who have gone to sleep in the peace of Christ is, according to the perpetual faith of the Church, strengthened by communication of spiritual goods.

By reason of the fact that those in heaven are more closely united with Christ, they establish the whole Church more firmly in holiness. For after they have been received into their heavenly home and are present to the Lord, through him and with him and in him they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us. Thus, by their interest our weakness is greatly strengthened.

50. The pilgrim Church from the very first ages cultivated with great piety the memory of the dead that they might be loosed from their sins, offering suffrages for them. The Church has always believed that the apostles and Christ's martyrs who had given the supreme witness of faith by shedding their blood were joined with us in Christ. She has always venerated them with special devotion together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the holy angels and saints, and has implored their intercession.

When we look at the lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ, we are inspired with a new reason for seeking the city that is to come and at the same time we are shown a most safe path by which we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ. In the lives of those who are more perfectly transformed into the image of Christ, God manifests his presence and his face to men. By having so great a cloud of witnesses over us, he speaks to us in them and gives us a sign of his kingdom.

We cherish the memory of those in heaven still more in order that the union of the whole Church may be strengthened in the Spirit. Our union with the saints joins us to Christ, from whom as from its fountain issues the very life of the people of God. It is supremely fitting that we love those friends and coheirs of Jesus Christ. We also render thanks to God for them and suppliantly invoke them, their power, and their help in obtaining benefits from God through his Son, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and Savior. Every genuine testimony of love shown to those in heaven terminates in Christ, and through him, in God who is wonderful in his saints.

Our union with the Church in heaven is effected especially in the sacred liturgy. Gathered into one Church with one song of praise, we magnify God. While celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice, we are united to the heavenly Church in communion with and venerating the memory of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, of Blessed Joseph and the blessed apostles and martyrs, and of all the saints.

51. This sacred Council accepts the venerable faith of our ancestors regarding this vital fellowship with our brethren who are in heavenly glory or who, having died, are still being purified. Let them (*the Bishops*) teach the faithful that the authentic cult of the saints consists not so much in multiplying external acts, but in the greater intensity of our love, whereby we seek from the saints “example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession. Let them teach the faithful that our communion with those in heaven in no way weakens, but more thoroughly enriches, the special worship we give alone to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit.

For all of us, who are sons of God and constitute one family in Christ, are corresponding with the intimate vocation of the Church and partaking in foretaste the liturgy of consummate glory. For when Christ shall appear and the glorious resurrection of the dead will take place, the whole Church of the saints in the supreme happiness of charity will adore God and the “Lamb who was slain.” She will proclaim with one voice: “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb, blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

CHAPTER VIII

The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God in the Mystery of Christ and the Church

I. Introduction

52. “When the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman... that we might receive the adoption of sons.” (Gal 4:4-5) This divine mystery of salvation is revealed to us and continues in the Church. Joined to Christ the head and in the unity of fellowship with all his saints, the faithful must in the first place reverence the memory “of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ...”

53. The Virgin Mary, who at the message of the angel received the Word of God in her heart and in her body and gave Life to the world, is acknowledged as truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer. Redeemed by the merits of her Son and united to him by an indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the dignity of being the Mother of the Son of God. She is also the beloved daughter of the Father and temple of the Holy Spirit. Because of this gift of grace she far surpasses all other creatures. At the same time, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is also one with all those who are to be saved.

Mary is “the mother of the members of Christ ...having cooperated by charity that the faithful might be formed in the Church. Therefore, she is hailed as a preeminent and singular member of the Church who honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.

54. In expounding the doctrine on the Church, this Holy Synod intends to describe both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Mystical Body, and the duties of redeemed mankind toward the Mother of God, mother of Christ and mother of men. It does not intend to

give a complete doctrine on Mary, nor decide those questions that the work of theologians has not yet fully clarified. Those opinions may be lawfully retained that are propounded in Catholic schools concerning her, who occupies a place in the Church that is the highest after Christ and yet very close to us.

II. The Role of the Blessed Mother in the Economy of Salvation

55. The books of the Old Testament describe the history of salvation, in which the coming of Christ was slowly prepared. These documents bring the figure of the woman, Mother of the Redeemer, into a gradually clearer light. She is prophetically foreshadowed in the promise of victory, given to our first parents after their fall into sin. (cf Gen 3:15) Likewise she is the Virgin who shall conceive and bear a son to be called Emmanuel. (cf Is 7:14; Mi 5:2-3; Mt 1:22-23) She stands out among the poor and humble of the Lord, who hope for and receive salvation from him. With this exalted Daughter of Sion, the times are fulfilled when the Son of God takes a human nature from her.

56. The Father of mercies willed that the Incarnation should be preceded by her acceptance so that as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life. That is true in an outstanding fashion of the mother of Jesus, who gave to the world him who is Life itself. Therefore the usage prevailed among the Fathers so that they called the mother of God entirely holy and free from all stain of sin. Adorned from the first instant of her conception with an entirely unique holiness, the Virgin of Nazareth is greeted by the angel as “full of grace” and to the heavenly messenger she replies, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word.” Thus Mary, consenting to the divine Word, becomes the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator.

II. The Role of the Blessed Mother in the Economy of Salvation

56. Impeded by no sin, Mary, the handmaid, devoted herself totally to the person and work of her Son, by the grace of Almighty God, serving the mystery of redemption. Rightly, the Fathers of the Church saw her as freely cooperating with God in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. As St. Irenaeus said, “She, being obedient, became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.” Hence the early Fathers asserted, “The knot of Eve’s disobedience was untied by Mary’s obedience; what the virgin Eve bound through her unbelief, the Virgin Mary loosened by her faith.” Comparing Mary with Eve, they called Mary “the Mother of living;” ...or they would say, “Death through Eve, life through Mary.”

57. This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is manifested from the time of Christ’s virginal conception up to his death. It is shown in Mary’s visit with Elizabeth, who she greeted Mary as blessed because of her belief in the promise of salvation. This union is further demonstrated at the birth of Jesus when the Mother of God joyfully showed her firstborn Son to the shepherds and Magi. It was the same when she presented him to the Lord in the temple and Simeon declared that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a sword would pierce the mother’s soul. Then the child Jesus

was lost and found in the temple, taken up with “his Father’s business,” while Mary pondered these things in her heart.

58. In the public life of Jesus, Mary made significant appearances. This is so from the marriage feast of Cana where she initiated the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah. In the course of her Son’s preaching she received from him the words that declared blessed those who kept the Word of God as she was faithfully doing. Mary advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, perseveringly united with her Son unto the cross. With a maternal heart, she joined herself to his sacrifice, lovingly consenting to the immolation of this victim. Finally, she was given by that same Christ Jesus, dying on the cross, as a mother to his disciple with the words, “Woman, behold thy son.”

59. We see the apostles before the day of Pentecost, “persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren,” Mary imploring the gift of the Spirit. At length, the Immaculate Virgin, on the completion of her earthly sojourn, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory and exalted there as queen of the universe.

III. On the Blessed Virgin and the Church

60. As we know from the Apostle Paul, there is but one Mediator (*cf 1 Tm 2:5-6*). The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ but rather shows his power. All the salvific influence of the Blessed Virgin flows from the superabundance of the merits of Christ and rests on his mediation. Neither does it impede the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.

61. Predestined from eternity to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others, the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior. Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace.

62. The maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent that she gave in faith at the annunciation and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son. Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix and Mediatrix. This is to be so understood that it neither takes away nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator. The unique mediation of the Redeemer, nonetheless, does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation that is but a sharing in this one source. The Church does not hesitate to profess this role of Mary. It knows it through un failing experience of it and commends it to the hearts of the faithful.

63. By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, by which she is united with her Son, 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, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and

mother. The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren (*cf Rom 8:29*) in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love.

64. The Church, contemplating Mary's hidden sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will by receiving the Word of God in faith, herself becomes a mother.

By her preaching the Church brings forth to a new and immortal life the sons, conceive of the Holy Spirit, who are born to her in baptism. She herself is a virgin. Imitating the mother of her Lord, by the power of the Spirit, she keeps with virgin purity an entire faith, a firm hope and a sincere charity.

65. In the Most holy Virgin, the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she is without spot or wrinkle. The followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness and so they turn their eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. Contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation. Mary, who unites in herself the greatest teachings of the faith, as she is proclaimed and venerated, calls the faithful to her Son and to the love of the Father. Seeking after the glory of Christ, the Church becomes more like her exalted type, seeking to do the will of God in all things. Hence the Church justly looks to Mary also in her apostolic work that through the Church Christ may be born and increase in the hearts of the faithful as well.

IV. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church

66. Placed by the grace of God as God's Mother next to her son, Mary intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church. From earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God. After the Synod of Ephesus the cult of the People of God toward Mary wonderfully increased in veneration and love according to her own prophetic words. (*cf Lk 1:48*) This cult, as it always existed, is singular, differing essentially from the cult of adoration that is offered to the incarnate Word, as well to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The various forms of piety toward the Mother of God that the Church has approved, brings it about that the Son, through whom all things have their being and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell, is rightly known, loved and glorified.

67. This Holy Synod teaches this Catholic doctrine and admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered. The practices of piety, recommended by the Magisterium toward her in the course of centuries, and those decrees that have been given regarding the cult of images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints should be religiously observed.

The Church exhorts theologians and preachers to abstain zealously both from all gross exaggerations as well as from petty narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God. Under the guidance of the Magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin that always look to Christ. Let them assiduously keep away from whatever could lead separated brethren or any others into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church. Let the faithful remember that true

devotion consists and proceeds from true faith by which we are led to know the excellence of the Mother of God. We are thus moved to a filial love toward our mother and to the imitation of her virtues.

V. Mary the Sign of Created Hope and solace to the Wandering People of God

68. As the Mother of Jesus, glorified in heaven, she is the image and beginning of the Church perfected in the world to come. So too on earth she shines forth until the day of the Lord as a sign of sure hope and solace to the People of God.

69. It gives great joy and comfort to this Holy Synod that even among the separated brethren due honor is given to the Mother of our Lord and Savior, especially the Orientals. The entire body of the faithful pours forth urgent supplications to the Mother of God and Mother of men that she intercedes before her Son in the fellowship of all the saints.

Each and all these items which are set forth in this dogmatic Constitution have met the approval of the council Fathers. We, by the apostolic power given us by Christ, together with the venerable Fathers in the Holy Spirit, approve decree and establish it and command that what has thus been decided in the Council be promulgated for the glory of God.

Given in Rome at St. Peter's

On November 21, 1964