

THE VATICAN II COUNCIL – PART IV – LUMEN GENTIUM: THE LIGHT OF NATIONS

I. Lumen Gentium, the first document on the church in herself published by an ecumenical council, is in many ways the central document of the Vatican II Council. For it describes the central idea of what the Catholic Church is, and thus provides the baseline for the other documents.

A. At the opening of the Council, there was a call for a document on the Catholic Church in herself.

1. The Vatican I Council had intended to address this topic in 1870, but the Council had to adjourn prematurely due to the invasion of the Papal States by Italian forces.
2. In 1943, Pope Pius XII published *Mystici Corporis* (The Mystical Body), which described his insights into the Church, building upon St. Paul's image of the Church as the body of Christ, see, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:12-27, Eph. 5:29. He argued that the term "mystical body" is helpful, for the church is not like any other institution. Her members are more independent and free than those of a biological or mechanical body, but also more united than a corporate body, such as a government or a partnership. He emphasized the unity of all of humanity under the truth, sacraments and guidance provided by the Church; and he also began an outreach to other Christians and even people of other faiths, describing them as related to the Church.
3. In his Christmas 1961 address Humanae Salutis, Blessed John XXIII described the need for the Council to present the Church's gifts for the world.
4. After a discussion with Blessed John XXIII, the Archbishop of Brussels Cardinal Leon Suenens proposed that the council have two sessions. One session would present the Church teachings to the world and the other session would deal with internal reform. Central to both of them would be the idea of the Church. After he wrote to other bishops about this idea, the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, who would become Pope Paul VI, circulated a letter in which he agreed with the basic insights of Cardinal Suenens, but thought that there should be three sessions. The first would deal with what the Church is, the second with what she does, and the third with issues of the world at large. See Kenneth Whitehead, The Renewed Church 16-20.
5. In August of 1964, Pope Paul VI published his first encyclical letter Ecclesiam Suam (His Church), in which he called for the faithful to reflect more on the Church as their mother and teacher, and called for more dialogue with non-Catholics and the world at large.

B. The Preparatory Commission on Doctrine drafted a lengthy document entitled De Ecclesia (On the Church). The Council would call for revisions of that document, which then became Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.

1. The initial document had eleven chapters, entitled: (1) The Nature of the Church Militant; (2) The Members of the Church Militant and Its Necessity for Salvation; (3) The Episcopacy as the Highest Sacrament of Orders; the Priesthood; (4) Resident Bishops; (5) The States of Evangelical Perfection; (6) The Laity; (7) The Magisterium of the Church; (8) Authority and Obedience in the Church; (9) The Relationship Between the Church and State; (10) The Necessity of Proclaiming the Gospel to the Nations of the World; and (11) Ecumenism. The intention, which the Council would continue to maintain, was not so much to present new doctrine as to gather together the doctrine that had been promulgated and understood, as developed over time.

2. As the chapters imply, there was a traditional focus on the idea of the “church militant,” i.e. the Church in the world (as complemented by the church triumphant in heaven and the church suffering on earth) and on the role of bishops and their teaching and guidance. One the other hand, the fact that there was a chapter on the laity, and then a final chapter on ecumenism, indicated an attempt to reach out to the world.

3. At the First Session of the Council, this document was considered after the documents on revelation, the liturgy, and Christian Unity. Its reception was more critical than that of Sancrosanctum Concilium on the liturgy, more not as critical as the reception of the documents De Fontibus on revelation or De Ecclesia Unitate on unity had been.

4. Some of the cardinals, such as Achille Lehmann of Lille, France (who had been very critical of the text on revelation) were overall supportive, but wanted significant changes. Some of the cardinals, such as Cardinal Ernest Ruffini of Palermo were basically satisfied by the text. But a number of cardinals, backed up by theologians such as the Jesuit Father Karl Rahner, rejected the text as fundamentally flawed. Thus, for example, Cardinal Joseph Ritter of Saint Louis was opposed; and Cardinal Emile-Joseph De Smelt of Brugge, Belgium gave one of the most famous and critical (in both senses) speeches of the Council denouncing the text for triumphalism, clericalism, and juridicism. Cardinal Joseph Frings of Cologne (whose peritus was Fr. Joseph Ratzinger) offered a more subtle criticism, that the conservative text paradoxically did not take enough account of the patristic understanding of the Church, instead focusing only on the theology of the last few centuries.

5. Cardinal Suenens then spoke on December 4 and proposed a course that Pope John had hinted at when he gave a radio address on September 11, 1962 entitled “the Church of Christ, light of the world.” Building upon that theme, Cardinal Suenens said that the document on the Church should be drafted to give all of the rest of the Council a central focus. Similar to the letter he had distributed earlier,

he argued that the Council should focus first upon the Church in herself and then address the issues of the outside world; and he also said that there should be three dialogues, the Church and her members among themselves, the Church and other Christians, and between the Church and the world. That speech received a great deal of support, including that of Cardinal Montini; and it would set the stage for both Lumen Gentium, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, and Gaudium et Spes, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

6. Given that the debate only began on December 1 and the First Session was scheduled to conclude on December 8, Pope John XXIII sent a note saying that there would not be an immediate vote on the document. He also appointed a Coordinating Commission to bring together all of the documents of the Council.

C. The Coordinating Commission and the newly composed Conciliar Commission on Doctrine guided the draft of what would become Lumen Gentium.

1. The Coordinating Commission had seven members, including Cardinals Leinhardt and Suenens, as well as Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York. Cardinal Amelto Cocogliani, the Vatican Secretary of State (and younger brother of the Prefect on Liturgy) was the president of the Commission.

2. Cardinal Suenens was the representative for the Coordinating Commission with regard to the document on the Church. On behalf of the Coordinating Commission, he sent a directive that called for revisions, including reducing the number of chapters from 11 to 4, with some material to be dealt with by other documents. The Doctrinal Commission then appointed a sub commission to make the changes. That sub commission worked relatively fast, with the first two chapters written by March 5, 1963.

3. When the Second Session opened on September 29, 1963, the Doctrinal Commission and the Coordinating Commission presented to the Council a four chapter document entitled Lumen Gentium. The chapters were entitled: (1) The Mystery of the Church; (2) The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church and the Episcopacy in Particular; (3) The People of God and the Laity in Particular; and (4) The Call to Holiness. The chapters on religious life, evangelization, church and state relations and ecumenism had been assigned to other documents, while the chapters on the magisterium and governance became mostly a part of the chapter on the hierarchy. The Commission gave greater emphasis to the universal call to holiness also called for a discussion on devotion to Mary.

D. This document would then become the main subject of debate at the Second Session and the most debated document of the Council.

1. Chapter 2, on the hierarchy, became the greatest subject of debate, on three major grounds, the collegiality of the bishops, the restoration of the permanent diaconate, and the question of episcopal ordination as a separate sacrament.

2. Regarding collegiality, a central focus was on the idea of emphasizing that there is a college of bishops who assist each other, and the notion that the Pope guides the bishops as head, but not diminishing their dignity, either individually or as a group. The balance in emphasizing the authority of each bishop in his diocese or other area, clarifying the cooperation of the college as a whole, and the unique authority of the Pope was at times difficult. Pope Paul VI intervened several times on this matter, and included an explanatory footnote at the end of the document to avoid misunderstandings that could diminish the role of the Papacy.

3. Likewise, the new draft emphasized that the ordination of a bishop is its own sacrament, and thus confers the fullness of priesthood. That notion was the traditional one, but had been questioned. The Council of Trent and Church teachings had emphasized the importance and authority of bishops, but whether the episcopacy was a separate sacrament had never been defined so clearly.

4. The voting was in favor of the emphasizing collegiality, although on some matters there were over 100 dissents out of 2500.

5. The new text also authorized the restoration of the permanent diaconate in the Latin rite. The permanent diaconate, while used in some cases use (e.g., with St. Francis of Assisi) had been very rare in the Latin rite since the beginning of the Middle Ages. This issue led to a great deal of discussion, both with regard to the diaconate itself and with regard to the vow of celibacy. In the second session, the voting was 2120-525 in favor of the call to restore the permanent diaconate. In the Third Session, i.e., in 1964, the final vote on the permanent diaconate had 702 dissents out of 2245. Allowing married men to become permanent deacons was approved with 629 dissents. The Council voted down allowing permanent deacons to marry by a vote of 881-1364.

6. The Council also voted to have two separate chapters on the People of God and the Laity, with the chapter on the People of God coming before that of the hierarchy. The idea was to emphasize our common goal together first.

7. The closest vote of the Council came on October 29, 1963, when the Council fathers voted 1114 – 1074 to include a chapter on Mary in the document on the Church, rather than to have a separate document on Mary. The idea was to emphasize Mary's role within the Church. It was also an ecumenical effort to show how Mary is among the People of God. This approach contrasted with the Coordinating Commission's initial decision to write a separate schema specifically on Marian devotion.

E. During the Third Session in 1964, there were votes on each section and then on each chapter and finally on the entire document. By the time the document had reached that stage, each section and the entire document received overwhelming approval, with only 5 dissenting votes.

II. Lumen Gentium is organized into eight chapters, which gather together the Church's teachings regarding her own nature as a whole and our participation in her mission and gifts.

A. The first chapter, called The Mystery of the Church, describes what the Church is by reference to her founding, her mission, and several images that help our understanding of her.

1. The document begins by describing Jesus as the light of the nations, and the Church as showing forth this light as a "sacrament," a visible sign of His invisible presence.

2. The chapter then focuses on the Trinitarian foundation of the Church. The Father calls all people together; to achieve this goal, He created the nation of Israel and then fulfilled her history by establishing the Church. The Son established the Church in His time on earth, and is continuing to unite her people through the Eucharist. The Holy Spirit was sent forth at Pentecost and ever gives the People of God truth and communion.

3. Section 5 then describes the founding of the Church by Christ during His public ministry on earth so that His kingdom may be present among us. This section uses the term kingdom or king 10 times, focusing heavily on that image.

4. Section 6 then draws a number of analogies for the Church, i.e., as the sheepfold of God, the field or farm of God, the building or Temple of God, the new Jerusalem on earth, and the bride of Christ.

5. Section 7 then describes how God unites and sanctifies His people through the sacraments, through the Holy Spirit, and through the joining together of the different gifts and callings we have received.

6. The first chapter culminates in section 8, which reaffirms that the Church of Christ "subsists in" the Catholic Church and that she and she alone is fully one, holy, catholic and apostolic. It does grant, however, that many elements of salvation exist outside of her formal boundaries. In the midst of asserting her unique dignity and role in salvation, the chapter describes the church as a struggling pilgrim in this world, seeking in humility and suffering to call all peoples to the greater realm.

B. Chapter 2 then focuses on the People of God as a whole.

1. The lengthy section 9 describes the creation of the Chosen People of old as God's prefigurement of the Church today, who as the new Israel, may seem like a small portion of the world, but in fact the only source of final peace and salvation.

2. Sections 10-13 then describe how all of the People of God share in the priestly, prophetic and royal mission of Jesus Christ.

a. Section 10 focuses on Baptism and the Eucharist and central to the priestly call to bring holiness to the world. It describes the distinction between priests and the laity, but also their common goal.

b. Section 11 then goes through each of the sacraments and describes how each one of them makes the People of God both holy themselves and called to promote holiness in the world. Among other things, it refers to the Catholic family as a “domestic church” where the faith is first lived and proclaimed.

c. Section 12 then describes the prophetic office of the People of God. It discusses the unity between the “sensus fidelium” the sense of the faithful and the Magisterium, portraying the Magisterium and giving guidance to the people of God, and the people as giving insight to the teachings. It also describes how the people, with their many and varied gifts, often seemingly ordinary, build up the Church to make her show forth the Holy Spirit.

d. Section 13 then discusses the royal role of the People of God, who both unite all nations together into one faith, but also bring out the unique goodness of each land. They thus make the Church truly catholic, which means in the original Greek universal.

3. Sections 14-16 then balance two truths: (1) that salvation is available only through the Church; and (2) that those outside the Church can be saved.

a. Section 14 begins with the first truth, saying that Jesus, the only mediator of salvation, made the Church necessary for this mission. It then says that people are fully united to the Church who accept her full structure, teaching and sacraments, including the leadership of the Pope and the bishops. It adds, however, that external membership is not enough; one must persevere in charity to be saved.

b. Section 15 then describes how other Christians are “joined to the Church” by the common faith in Christ, belief in the Scriptures, Baptism and often other sacraments, as well as the presence of the Holy Spirit. It says, however, that Jesus wished that all of His people be gathered

together in His Church both for their sakes and for the Church's witness to the truth.

c. Section 16 then describes how other people can be connected to the Church and enjoy progress toward salvation. It begins with Jews, and then proceeds to Muslims and other monotheists, and then even comes to others who believe in many gods or no God. However, at the end, it does warn of the dangers of sin and deceit, and thus calls for all people to promote the cleansing power of the Gospel.

4. Section 17 then picks up on this theme of promoting the Gospel and says that we must continue always to invite everyone into this people of God for their salvation, for the redemption of every land, and for the glory of God.

C. Chapter 3, which had been the heavily debated chapter 2 of the second draft presented in 1963, describes the hierarchy, with particular focus on the bishops. There is a balancing between describing the role of each bishop, the role of the bishops together and the role of the Pope. The clearest change that the chapter brought about was the restoration of the permanent diaconate.

1. Section 18 begins by restating, as an infallible dogma, that Jesus Christ Himself instituted the role of the bishops as the successors to the Apostles and the Papacy to continue the leadership of St. Peter, uniting the Church throughout the world. Sections 19 and 20 then elaborate on that teaching, describing how Jesus Himself appointed the Apostles as the first leaders of His Church and how they in turn received the authority to hand on their office to others, both in fullness (i.e. bishops) and to assistants (i.e. priests and deacons.)

2. Sections 21-24 then discuss the unity of the bishops throughout the world under the guidance of the Pope.

a. Section 21 describes the bishops and priests as bringing Christ's presence into the world. It describes the episcopacy as the fullness of priesthood, the highest level of Holy Orders. The Council is thus resolving the issue of whether episcopacy is a separate sacrament, affirming that it is.

b. Section 22 then reflects on the role of the Pope, the Successor to St. Peter. This section points out that it is the Pope who unites the bishops, maintain the collegiality that is at its essence. It says clearly that no council of bishops can define a doctrine, except with the consent of the Pope, and that their authority flows from Him.

c. Section 23 goes back to the bishops primarily, although again emphasizing the Pope as their head, saying that each bishop must care for his flock and unify them, but that they also must cooperate together to promote the faith and the apostolates of the Church throughout the world. It also seeks to emphasize that the 22 Eastern Rite churches who are in union with the Catholic Church bring out this unity even better by bringing their ancient cultures into the Church.

d. Section 24 concludes this call to unity by describing the office of bishop as central to the mission and service of the Church.

3. Section 25 then deals with the critical issue of the Magisterium, the teaching authority of the bishops and the Pope.

a. It describes the office of preaching the Gospel and being “heralds of the faith” as having “pride of place” in the role of the bishops.

b. The section then critically describes the fact that when the bishops in union with the Pope, or even the Pope himself, proclaims a teaching the faithful should adhere to it and give it “religious obedience of mind and will.” Such is the case even if the teaching is not infallible. The document says that a teaching can become a doctrine either by the formality and emphasis of its proclamation or by the repeated nature of the teaching in a formal fashion.

c. The section then describes how the bishops gathered together in union with the Pope, or the Pope himself *ex cathedra*, can define a teaching as infallible, and thus to be held with complete certainty as the truths revealed by God. Such infallible doctrines are called dogmas. The bishops in union with the Pope can define such a dogma either by their consistent teaching together throughout time and space, or when gathered together in an ecumenical council, as Vatican II was.

4. Section 26 then focuses on the sanctifying role of bishops, especially with regard to the celebration of the Eucharist. The document emphasizes their role in making sure that the Mass is well celebrated. The section also discusses the bishops’ role in promoting preaching and all of the sacraments.

5. Section 27 then focuses on the governing role of bishops. It points out that this role is inherent in the office given to any bishop who is in charge of an area, most

commonly diocesan bishops. (There are also other sorts of bishops, such as auxiliary bishops, titular bishops and retired bishops.) It describes the bishops as having authority from Christ, exercised in union with the Pope, but not merely as his vicar. It describes the Pope's role as in fact more defending the independence of the bishops than limiting them. The bishop is to act as a wise father or shepherd, guiding his people, caring for them, and listening to their concerns.

6. Section 28 then describes the role of priests as co-workers with the bishop. The central role of a priest is to be an image of Christ. The section focuses heavily on the celebration of the Eucharist and the other sacraments, as well as teaching and guidance. It calls for priests to see themselves also in a college together with the bishop as their leader, father and friend. It also describes the universal brotherhood of priests and the fatherly role of priests.

7. Section 29 then describes the diaconate as at the service of bishops and priests in the liturgy, in proclaiming the word and in charity. It authorizes local bishops' conferences (e.g., the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) to work with the Pope to re-establish a permanent diaconate. The permanent diaconate would be open to married men, but single or widowed deacons could not then marry.

8. Pope Paul VI included in the document a lengthy footnote that re-emphasized the fact that the collegiality of bishops does not diminish the primacy of the Pope who guides them and acts continually as their head. This footnote does not contradict anything in the letter, but was meant to avoid misunderstandings that would diminish the role of the Pope. See *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II* (1996) 51-52.

D. Chapter 4 focuses on the Laity, which means everyone who is not a priest or in religious life.

1. The chapter begins by emphasizing that the priestly, prophetic and royal mission of the People of God belong to the laity as much as to the clergy and religious.

2. Section 31 describes how the laity are meant to bring the kingdom of God into the secular world and be witnesses of the Gospel to all people.

3. Section 32 celebrates the fact that the laity can have such a vast variety of gifts for the Church and for the world, unifying all of them under Jesus Christ.

4. Section 33 calls for a greater role for the laity in the apostolates of the Church. It emphasizes that the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist are not meant only for one's own holiness, but also for the sake of sanctifying the world.

5. Sections 34 – 36 then phrase this calling in terms of the priestly, prophetic and royal callings of the faithful.

a. Section 34 describes how it is that all prayers and good works, in the family, in the Church, and in the world can be “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.”

b. Section 35 calls for the laity to participate in the prophetic office of Christ within families and by participating in the evangelizing of the world. The idea is that missionary work is not only for the rare few, but for all of the faithful. There is a particular focus on the Christian family as bringing the faith to the world. The final paragraph of this section adds that the laity can be allowed to perform some roles usually performed by clergy if there is a lack of clerics.

c. Section 36 then calls upon the laity to bring the kingdom of God more into the world by lives of service and holiness. It emphasizes that even in secular fields, the faith is meant to bring out their goodness in full and remedy structures of sin in the world. This section recognizes that there is a dignity to the secular and especially political realms, but rejects any notion that they should be governed “without reference to religion.”

6. Section 37 then describes the cooperation between the laity and the pastors of the Church. It says that the laity should tell pastors about needs and desires, as well as ideas about how the Church should conduct her affairs. The laity should also be ready to accept the governing decisions of the hierarchy. Pastors should listen to the laity and encourage them to use their creativity for the apostolates and to make this world a better place.

7. Section 38 concludes this chapter with a calling for all of the faithful to be witnesses to the world and sanctify it as the holiness of the soul does for the body.

E. Building on the documents commentary on the call of the laity, chapter 5 then discusses the universal call to holiness. While this point was always there in the Catholic tradition, it often did not receive the emphasis it should, with people often thinking that only the select few are really called to holiness.

1. Section 39 launches the chapter by saying that all people are called to holiness whatever their calling in life. It does say that people called to live in full the evangelical counsels (i.e. poverty, celibacy and obedience) do give “a striking witness and example of that holiness.”

2. Section 40 then cites numerous passages from the New Testament that call for all people to be perfect and holy, which is fulfilled in the call to love. The section associates that call to holiness with our status as sons and daughters of God, especially given in baptism, our call to be saints, our call to live out the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and our call to reconciliation and repentance.

3. Section 41 describes how the call to holiness is lived out through the different states of life.

a. It calls for bishops to achieve holiness precisely through their ministry of self-sacrificing love, prayer, teaching and guidance. Likewise, it calls for priests to grow through their ministry, their brotherhood of the presbyterate, through holy lives, through their prayers, and through dealing with hardships. Deacons and others with Church offices should see such offices as a source of holiness and call to greater virtue, both for themselves and as an example to others.

b. The section then focuses on the family as a source of holiness, showing forth the love of Christ and His Church to the world. It says that widows and single people can use their freedom to make the world a better place. And it concludes that the ill and those weighed down by hardship bring the suffering Christ to the world.

4. Section 42 then describes the means of attaining this holiness.

a. It describes Christian love and works of charity as central.

b. However, it also focuses on the fact that, to be charitable, the soul must be fed by the word of God, by the sacraments, by prayer and by mutual service.

c. The section then describes how the martyrs are prime examples of holiness and how those who live the evangelical counsels of poverty, obedience and celibacy also show forth holiness. Thus, the Council is emphasizing that all people are called to holiness, but also restating the particular glory of religious and consecrated single life.

d. The section concludes with a reflection upon how sacrifice and self-control are needed for any authentic life of holiness.

F. Chapter 6 then turns to Religious Life, i.e., the life of religious brothers and sisters in religious orders. Although there is a separate document on religious life, namely *Perfectae Caritatis*, as there are with bishops, priests, and the laity, the Council fathers wished to address the religious in the document on the Church.

1. Men and women in religious orders take vows of prayer, obedience to superiors, and celibacy, as well as vows of poverty. Religious life takes different forms according to the different spiritualities of the various orders, such as Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian (Jesuit), Salesian, or Carmelite, and the rules governing each order.

- The religious orders usually have houses that have some number of brothers or sisters and provinces that cover a certain region (e.g., the Eastern third of the United States). The entire order is united under a final superior, usually in Rome.

- A religious order brother or sister could be active, contemplative, or semi-contemplative. The terms are somewhat of a misnomer because all of the brothers and sisters are both active and contemplative; but there is a difference in emphasis. An “active” brother or sister, such as the Jesuits or the teaching orders, would usually have some apostolate in the world, such as teaching, missionary work, or work with the poor or elderly; even here, however, the prayer life is the basis for the apostolate. A “contemplative” brother or sister, called a monk or nun, does not go out into the world. Rather they usually spend about seven hours a day in prayer, doing some work such as farming or writing to support the order and discipline the spirit. There are also semi-contemplative religious brothers and sisters, such as the Missionaries of Charity, who are between those two models.

2. Section 43 begins the chapter with a reflection on religious life, calling it a glorious tree planted in the vineyard of the Lord, which has since branched out in numerous directions reflecting the glory of God in many varied ways. It also refers to the religious orders as families of God, mutually supporting each other on the path to holiness.

3. Section 44 presents as central to religious life the evangelical counsels that give religious brothers and sisters a particular ability to be witnesses of Christ in the world.

a. It begins by reflecting upon the evangelical counsels as building upon baptism and giving a greater freedom to signify the mystical union of Christ and His Church. The counsels are thus both for the good of the religious themselves and the whole Church.

b. The evangelical counsels help religious brothers and sisters give this glorious witness in several ways. First, they can live more like they will in the greater kingdom, even while on earth. Second, they are more free to serve others as Christ did in His ministry on earth. Furthermore, they are more able to draw down the power of heaven to earth.

4. Section 45 then covers the governance of religious orders. It points out that religious orders, while not a part of the hierarchy, are connected to the Church through the governance of the bishops and the Popes. It then describes three ways in which this connection is maintained. First, orders can be governed by the bishop or bishops of their area. Second, they can be of “pontifical rite,” i.e., governed by the Vatican itself, although even then operating in union with the bishops of the areas in which they reside. Or, for the Eastern rites, they can be under the patriarch of their Eastern Church.

5. Section 46 describes the fact that religious show forth Christ to the world in the various ways that are central to their calling, such as teaching, healing, missionary work, and works of charity. The evangelical counsels make them more human and thus more like Christ. And even the contemplative orders are connected to the world, making it more like the kingdom of heaven.

6. Section 47 then concludes with a ringing call for all in religious life to carry out their vocations with ever greater fervor for the Church and for the glory of God.

G. Chapter 7, entitled The Pilgrim Church, then focuses on the Church on Earth struggling to join the saints in heaven. The phrase “the church militant” is still valid, but here the emphasis is more on the image of a pilgrimage.

1. The lengthy section 48 describes the paradox of a Church, who at the same time brings forth the glorious presence of Christ to earth, but also suffers and struggles in this world. She, like each of the faithful, is a pilgrim people who advances toward salvation in the midst of suffering.

a. The first two paragraphs describes how Christ established His Church on earth and sent the Holy Spirit to bring His presence with us continually to the end of time. The presence of Christ gives all of this world meaning.

b. The third paragraph describes the Church as a pilgrim, both having this glorious life within her, but also suffering with the world. Part of the symbolism of a pilgrimage is that it is an image of our earthy life toward heaven. See Catechism of the Catholic Church 2691.

c. The fourth paragraph then draws the conclusion from this image and from numerous Scriptural passages that we must be ever alert on our journey, ever courageous, ever willing to suffer, and ever longing for the greater kingdom.

2. Section 49 describes the three states of the Church, those on earth, those in heaven and those in purgatory. There is a great emphasis on the fact that we are all in one Church together, helping each other in our progress to the fulfillment of all things. There is a sense of the “exchange of goods,” in which we help each other in our prayers and efforts.

3. Section 50 then reflects at length on the reasons for the communion of the living and dead.

a. It begins with a brief affirmation of prayers for those in purgatory. There has been some criticism that there was not enough of an emphasis on this subject. See Kenneth Whitehead, *The Church Renewed* 115.

b. It then comments on the fact that the first saints to be honored as such were usually martyrs, along with Mary and the angels. But as time went on others were added to the ranks of those recognized as saints. We certainly learn from and are inspired by their example. But also they accompany us as our friends and companions, urging us onto victory.

c. The section ends by recalling that the liturgy is the greatest means of uniting us with the ranks of the faithful who have gone ahead, for in the liturgy heaven and earth are joined together.

4. Section 51 then strikes a balancing note. It warns against excesses in devotions that would be either superstitious or focus primarily on externals. But it affirms the great value of this communion of the saints and prayers for the souls in purgatory as anticipating here and now the glory that will be fulfilled at the culmination of the world.

5. There was a great debate about this chapter, with some bishops criticizing the lack of much reference to the traditional “Four Last Things,” i.e., judgment, death, heaven and hell. In response, there were some references added to section 48 that reaffirm that we will all be judged and that salvation is not guaranteed. See Whitehead at 114-117.

H. *Lumen Gentium* then concludes with a chapter on devotion to Mary. There is a great effort to explain Marian devotion in a positive sense to the world.

1. While the Council decided to make this chapter a part of the overall constitution, not a separate document, it is unique insofar as it is in turn organized into five parts. After the introduction, they focus on the role of Mary in salvation, the role of Mary in the Church, the devotion to Mary, and Mary as a sign of hope.

2. The introduction, consisting of sections 52-54, focuses on the fact that we are adopted sons and daughters of God and that Mary is both the Mother of God and also, through Him our mother as well. The Council intends to explain this idea to the world.

3. Part II, consisting of sections 55-59, uses many Scriptural references to describe Mary’s role in salvation history.

a. Section 55 speaks of the prophecies of a glorious woman to come, especially the promise of the woman whose offspring would crush the serpent, see Gen. 3:15, and Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin who would bear a son to rule the nations.

b. Section 56 reflects upon Mary as the new Eve. Like Eve she is created without original sin and has free will to decide whether to cooperate with God’s will. Her free choice to obey God begins the unraveling of the curse of original sin.

c. Section 57 describes her becoming the Mother of God and first bringing Him to the world, including to Elizabeth, the shepherds, the magi, and the Temple.

d. Section 58 then describes her presence at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry and then again at the Cross, and the fact that she perfectly fulfills Jesus’ call to holiness.

e. Section 59 then describes how Mary was again with the Church at Pentecost and, now assumed body and soul into heaven, is the woman

clothed with the sun described in Revelation, who reigns as Queen next to her Son.

4. Part III, consisting of sections 60-65, describes how Mary and the Church work together.

a. It begins by clarifying that Jesus is the one ultimate mediator between God and man, and that the role God chose to give Mary comes from His love for us, not any requirement of salvation itself.

b. Section 61 describes how Mary is rightfully called the Mother of God by being the Mother of Jesus Christ, true God and true man. Section 62 then describes how it makes sense to believe that Mary's role of bringing Christ to us would not end with her earthly life, but continues always. This role does not diminish the centrality of Christ, any more than the fact that we all play a role in bringing Christ to others diminishing the fact that salvation is through Him alone. The section describes Mary as our "advocate, helper, benefactrix and mediatrix." There was some discussion on declaring that Mary is the mediatrix of all graces and/or co-redemptrix, but the Council fathers decided to leave that issue for future discussion; and its status remains so to this day.

c. Sections 63 and 64 then describes Mary as like the Church insofar as she is both virgin and mother. As the Mother of God, Mary brought Christ into the world, and as our Mother guides us still. Likewise, the Church brings Christ forth into the world and guides us to be sons and daughters of God. Mary is ever virgin, fully open to the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her. The Church is also guided by the Holy Spirit to had on the faith pure and free to all generations.

d. Section 65 does say that there is a difference insofar as Mary is now perfectly in heaven and has never been sullied by sin. By contrast, the people of God struggle on earth with difficulties and weighed down. But we look to Mary and become more pure and holy as she is always.

5. Part IV, consisting of sections 66 and 67, both affirms Marian devotions and cautions against erroneous exaggerations. Section 66 affirms the great history of Marian devotion, particularly emphasized at the Council of Ephesus, which taught definitively that Mary is the Mother of God. Section 67 affirms the continuing importance of this devotion, while at the same time warning against excesses that

would detract from the true faith, or devotions that are primarily external or overly showy.

6. The chapter and the entire document, then ends with a reflection on Mary as uniting all the faithful together.

a. Section 68 describes Mary as at the same time shining forth as a model of what we all hope to become, and yet also with us here on earth.

b. Section 69 then describes the hope that Mary will unite, not only all Catholics, but also all Christians and all people seeking God even now on earth and one day in everlasting glory.

7. The Council decided not to add any new Marian title. However, on November 18, 1963, Pope Paul VI gave the closing address for the Second Session of the Council. In that address, he commended the Council for the chapter on Mary and added, “we proclaim the Most Holy Mary as the Mother of the Church, that is to say, of all the People of God, of the faithful as well as the pastors, who call her their most loving Mother.” At this reference to Mary as the Mother of the Church, there was long and sustained applause. See Whitehead at 126.

8. Pope John Paul II picked up on this precedent and concluded all of his encyclical letters with a reflection on Mary. Pope Benedict XVI and now Pope Francis have continued this tradition.