PASTORAL CONSTITUTION
ON THE CHURCH IN THE
MODERN WORLD
GAUDIUM ET SPES
PROMULGATED BY
HIS HOLINESS, POPE PAUL VI
ON DECEMBER 7, 1965

Please note: The notes included in this document also offers a commentary explanation for each chapter. However, it is recommended a full reading of the document and genuine attempt to interpret the message be done in order to fully appreciate the intention of GAUDIUM ET SPES
Preface:
1. The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ….. That is why this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds.

2. Hence this Second Vatican Council, having probed more profoundly into the mystery of the Church, now addresses itself without hesitation, not only to the sons of the Church and to all who invoke the name of Christ, but to the whole of humanity. For the council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives of the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today.

4. To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.

**What does the Church see as its task?**
The Church (she) states she is closely linked with human kind and history of the world. The Church seeks a genuine attempt to address concerns it sees in the global society. The Church sees concerns in groups around the world straying far from the initial goals laid down by Jesus Christ and God’s eternal message of Love and Respect. The Church also seeks to demonstrate the relevance of its presence and actions in the world today.

**What were the ‘perennial [on going/continuing] questions’ that people were asking?**
The Church sees humankind asking the following questions:
1. How can these world events be seen in light of the messages of the Gospels.
2. Questions about making sense of this life and of the life to come (Heaven).
3. Questions about relationships with one another.
4. Questions about understanding what is going on in the world in relation to dramatic events, the impact they have and wanting these situations to change.
CHAPTER I
THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

12. According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their centre and crown.

But what is man? About himself he has expressed, and continues to express, many divergent and even contradictory opinions. In these he often exalts himself as the absolute measure of all things or debases himself to the point of despair. The result is doubt and anxiety. The Church certainly understands these problems. Endowed with light from God, she can offer solutions to them, so that man's true situation can be portrayed and his defects explained, while at the same time his dignity and destiny are justly acknowledged.

For Sacred Scripture teaches that man was created "to the image of God," is capable of knowing and loving his Creator, and was appointed by Him as master of all earthly creatures(1) that he might subdue them and use them to God's glory.(2) "What is man that you should care for him? You have made him little less than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. You have given him rule over the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet" (Ps. 8:5-7).

But God did not create man as a solitary, for from the beginning "male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Their companionship produces the primary form of interpersonal communion. For by his innermost nature man is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential.

Gaudium et Spes recalls that humans are made in the image of God. It then goes on to say that humans are made to be in community….that humans are 'social beings.'

What does the document say are the consequences of not relating to people?
The Church states she accepts humankind as the centre of the world. As God's greatest creation, humans are the jewel in the creation's crown.

The Church acknowledges that even though humans were created in God's image, they are far from perfection. Humans are as varied and as contradictory as can be. Humans at their best can be incredibly “good” but also at their worst, can be absolutely “horrible”.

The Church takes the position that humans are obligated to help each other; assist each other when in need. The Church reminds the global community that humans are social beings and cannot exist without each other. Humankind needs each other to survive and thrive.
CHAPTER II
THE COMMUNITY OF MANKIND

23. One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances. Nevertheless brotherly dialogue among men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress, but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships. These demand a mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person.

Since rather recent documents of the Church's teaching authority have dealt at considerable length with Christian doctrine about human society,(1) this council is merely going to call to mind some of the more basic truths, treating their foundations under the light of revelation. Then it will dwell more at length on certain of their implications having special significance for our day.

24. God, Who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. For having been created in the image of God, Who "from one man has created the whole human race and made them live all over the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26), all men are called to one and the same goal, namely God Himself.

For this reason, love for God and neighbour is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbour: "If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.... Love therefore is the fulfilment of the Law" (Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1 John 4:20). To men growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance.

The document cites Scripture to demonstrate the way humans should live together.

In using the Bible references in Gaudium et Spes, the Church attempts to link its intentions to God’s message in the Gospel. The Church believes she is acting as an instrument of God to morally and spiritually guide humankind back onto a righteous path and improve the global situations of genuine social concern.

The Church’s motivation is morally sound and integrally untacked.

The Church believes as Jesus Christ came to Earth to save us from ourselves, if we act with genuine concern for each other, respect for all and demonstrate our caring for each other in our daily actions, the world will become a better place.
CHAPTER III
MAN'S ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

33. Through his labours and his native endowments man has ceaselessly striven to better his life. Today, however, especially with the help of science and technology, he has extended his mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continues to do so. Thanks to increased opportunities for many kinds of social contact among nations, a human family is gradually recognizing that it comprises a single world community and is making itself so. Hence many benefits once looked for, especially from heavenly powers, man has now enterprisingly procured for himself.

This paragraph notes that the world is now becoming a single world community. What are some of the things we do today that promote our sense of ourselves as a single global family? (They are NOT mentioned in the excerpt)

The Church acknowledges the world has become a smaller place with assistance from information technology boom, better communications across the globe and more social contact among nations a sense of a Human Family is gradually being recognised in today’s society.

The Church believes with this increased sense being able to globally acquire wealth, information and power the benefits once sourced through God & prayer, humankind now tries to acquire itself. The Church believes even though humankind has come a long way with industrial and social improvement, the global society is in desperate need to return to God's love and guidance for survival. Because of the social unrest, break down of human rights, the Church believes humankind is in crisis.

CHAPTER IV
THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

40. Everything we have said about the dignity of the human person, and about the human community and the profound meaning of human activity, lays the foundation for the relationship between the Church and the world, and provides the basis for dialogue between them. In this chapter… we must now consider this same Church inasmuch as she exists in the world, living and acting with it.

Coming forth from the eternal Father's love, founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit, the Church has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world. But she is already present in this world, and is composed of men, that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race, and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns.

The part of the document stresses that the Church is an important part in the world. This claim challenged the view which was dominant before Vatican II that the Church was above or outside the world. Putting the Church back into the world was a dramatic shift in thinking.

PART II
SOME PROBLEMS OF SPECIAL URGENCY

CRC Unit in Common. A Call to Justice. Gaudium et Spes
46. This council has set forth the dignity of the human person, and the work which men have been destined to undertake throughout the world both as individuals and as members of society. There are a number of particularly urgent needs characterizing the present age, needs which go to the roots of the human race. To a consideration of these in the light of the Gospel and of human experience, the council would now direct the attention of all.

Of the many subjects arousing universal concern today, it may be helpful to concentrate on these: marriage and the family, human progress, life in its economic, social and political dimensions, the bonds between the family of nations, and peace.

The issues the Church identifies are: Marriage; family; human progress; life in its economic, social and political dimensions; the bonds between nations and world peace.

She believes these areas of concern have reached immediate urgency.

69. God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others.

On the other hand, the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one's family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If one is in extreme necessity, he has the right to procure for himself what he needs out of the riches of others.

Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism [saying] of the Fathers, "Feed the man dying of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him," and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves.

Paragraph 69 states strongly that the goods of the world belong to all people and should be shared equitably. Humankind owes it to each other to work amicably together to not only sustain life but to prosper.

88. Christians should cooperate willingly and wholeheartedly in establishing an international order that includes a genuine respect for all freedoms and amicable brotherhood between all. This is all the more pressing since the greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ Himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples.

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Those Christians are to be praised and supported, therefore, who volunteer their services to help other men and nations. Indeed, it is the duty of the whole People of God, following the word and example of the bishops, to alleviate as far as they are able the sufferings of the modern age. They should do this too, as was the ancient custom in the Church, out of the substance of their goods, and not only out of what is superfluous.

Finally, it is very much to be desired that Catholics, in order to fulfill their role properly in the international community, will seek to cooperate actively and in a positive manner both with their separated brothers who together with them profess the Gospel of charity and with all men thirsting for true peace.

The council, considering the immensity of the hardships which still afflict the greater part of mankind today, regards it as most opportune that an organism of the universal Church be set up in order that both the justice and love of Christ toward the poor might be developed everywhere. The role of such an organism would be to stimulate the Catholic community to promote progress in needy regions and international social justice.

This document had an enormous effect on the way the Church operated and saw itself in the world. It genuinely sought to awaken human society to embrace the message of Jesus Christ. Through global awareness, charity groups and local action groups the Church sought to bring the intention of Gaudium et Spes into the daily lives of every person on Earth. An organisation in Australia which has taken up the call to social justice that Gaudium et Spes called for is called Caritas.