

Addresses to New Orleans Clergy
April 30, 2015
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**Fifty Years—*In, Of, and For* the World:
Gaudium et Spes and the Church in the Public Square**

In December we will celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council—an event in Church and world history that is unprecedented in many ways. It was the largest and longest meeting ever held—more than 2,000 people meeting over the course of four years. Moreover, the tone and texture of its documents were like nothing before and have shaped public discourse in the Church ever since.

In particular, I have been asked to address one special document—called in latin *Gaudium et Spes* and in English *The Church in the Modern World*. It was approved on the last day of the council, December 7, 1965, by a vote of 2,309 to 75. This was more than three years after the council opened; this was the longest document by a Church council in 2,000 years; and the document was not planned for in three years of committee work which preceded the council.

For me, the whole tone and message is captured in the first line of the document, from which it draws its Latin title: “The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.” With these words, the Council Fathers placed the Church squarely alongside all humanity in common concern and common cause.

Before going more into depth about *Gaudium et Spes*, I want to highlight two other documents which, among others, helped to shape its tone and content. Both were written by Pope John XXIII, who called the Council and who, after five short years as Pontiff, did not live to see its ending.

Both are encyclicals—traditionally letters from the Bishop of Rome to the Bishops of the world. The first was entitled, **MATER ET MAGISTRA, “Christianity and Social Progress”** by Pope John XXIII. It was written in 1961, one year before the opening of the Council. Its context was this: On the seventieth anniversary of Rerum Novarum, the reality of the third world had become more critical to Catholic consciousness, including both the imbalance between rich and poor nations and the harsh conditions of workers in what might be considered pre-industrial societies. After World War II, Western industrialized nations had seen a rise in economic well-being and the development of the social welfare state as “humanized versions of capitalism.”¹ Economics were now seen in the context of world markets from which the Western nations had

¹ Donal Dorr, op. cit., p. 97.

become increasingly wealthy in part due to the extravagant use of the energy and raw materials of the poorer nations.

In the document, in summary, Pope John reviewed the social teaching of Rerum Novarum, Quadragesimo Anno, and the private property position of Pius XII. He described new economic, social and political circumstances necessitating his encyclical. He confirmed previous papal teaching on the importance of both private initiative and state intervention, the demands of justice in the workplace, including a share in ownership by workers, and new demands created by the international context of the economy. He stressed the importance of small-and-moderate-size business enterprises and the social function of private property.

Pope John then called for new forms of agricultural aid, support, and practices. Acknowledging the threat to peace from economic imbalances, he urged culturally respectful, generous, private and governmental emergency and developmental aid to countries in need. He discouraged inappropriate population control; and he promoted international cooperation based upon a recognition of increasing interdependence and the demands of justice and morality. The pope concluded by stressing human dignity and a recommitment to the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Two years later on April 11, 1963, after the council had concluded its first session, Pope John issued his second social encyclical entitled **PACEM IN TERRIS, "Peace on Earth."** Breaking with precedent he addressed it to the bishops, the Church, and to "all people of good will." His encyclical appeared almost as a kind of "last will and testament" since he would die only two months later on June 3, 1963. He was succeeded as Pope by Cardinal Giovanni Batisti Montini, who took the title Pope Paul VI.

Pacem in Terris appeared amid the tensions of the cold war and after two world wars and the Korean conflict. The Berlin wall had been erected; and the Cuban missile crisis was resolved the preceding year with some papal help.² The Vietnam War was in the first critical stages of U.S. involvement. In the United States, family and community bomb shelters and school civil defense drills were part of the accepted atmosphere in which U.S. residents, like many others, feared a nuclear holocaust. Outgoing President Dwight D. Eisenhower had provided a largely unheeded warning of the growing political and economic power of the "military-industrial complex" as defense budgets spiraled upwards. A multi-billion arms trade included much of the third world.

² According to H.D. Kreilkamp, President Kennedy thanked Pope John for Vatican intervention, including a key radio message to the world's leaders on October 25, 1962, within an hour of which soviet ships moved out of the interdicted zone. Khrushchev also acknowledged Pope John's assistance. These events apparently inspired John to develop his encyclical letter. Cf. "Pope John XXIII's Vision of Peace," in Social Justice Review, Vol. 80, Nos. 9-10, September/October 1989, pp. 138-42.

To summarize briefly, this encyclical declared that peace will come only “if the order set down by God be dutifully observed” [1]. In what some have called a human rights manifesto,³ Pope John used reason and natural law to set out rights and duties of persons, public authorities, and the world community. He included economic, political and religious rights, rights to immigrate, and the mutual responsibilities of citizens. He discussed civil authority and the traditional Catholic social teaching principle of *the common good*, including the right of civil disobedience, responsibility to the poor, and protection of rights.

On the international front, the pope set forth elements essential to relations between states, including: elimination of racism, the importance of self-development, obligations to provide aid, and rights of refugees. He deplored the “enormous stocks of armaments” [109], the fears they create, and their negative impact on economic resources; and he demanded that the arms race cease. Stressing international interdependence, John saw the need for a world-wide authority for the universal common good; he explicitly supported the United Nations. While Pope John died a few months after this letter, it came out as the first drafters were meeting to write *Gaudium et Spes*.

Let’s go back to the Council now.

Pope John announced the call of the Council “on January 25, 1959, less than three months after his election.”⁴ After this began three-plus years of the work of preparatory commissions or committees who produced a number of draft texts for consideration by the Fathers of the Council. *No document concerned the Church in the Modern World*.

However, one month before the opening session of the council, on September 11, 1962, Pope John delivered a radio address in which he declared the following:

Where the underdeveloped countries are concerned, the Church presents herself as she is. She wishes to be the Church of all, and especially the Church of the poor.

In addition, on October 20, 1962, ten days after the Council began, the Council Fathers decided to deliver a message to the world which read in part:

We urgently turn our thoughts to the problems by which human beings are afflicted today. Hence, our concern goes out to the lowly, poor, and powerless. Like Christ, we would have pity on the multitude heavily burdened by hunger, misery, and lack of knowledge. ... As we undertake our work, therefore, we would emphasize whatever

3. “While it is true that human rights had been defended in previous documents, they had never received such a systemic and thorough treatment. The encyclical was heralded, not for its continuity, but as a breakthrough.” Philip S. Land, S.J., *Catholic Social Teaching*, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁴ John W. O’Malley, SJ, *What Happened at Vatican II*, (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press), 2008, p. 15.

concerns the dignity of the human person, whatever contributes to a genuine community of peoples.”⁵

Gaudium et Spes originated in a call from Cardinals Suenens, Montini, and Lercaro at the close of the first session of the council for the Church to look outward and to address the world’s needs. In his speech of December 4, 1962, Cardinal Suenens explicitly cited Pope John’s September 11th radio address. As Fr. John O’Malley, the Jesuit historian, explains:

...Suenens asserted that what the council needed was a central theme that would lend it a basic orientation. Let that theme be, as the pope put it on September 11, “the church of Christ, light to the world”... That theme has two parts, the first of which looks to the inner reality of the church and asks the question, “What do you say of yourself? The second part concerns the relationship of the church to the world outside it, and asks questions about the human person, about social justice, about evangelization of the poor, about world peace.

Suenens then framed one of the critical themes that shaped the council. Again, as O’Malley explains:

The council will thus proceed by engaging in three dialogues: a dialogue with its own membership, an ecumenical dialogue “with brothers and sisters not now visibly united with it,” and a dialogue “with the modern world.”⁶

Suenens proposed that the Council adopt this plan to better organize its work, and his proposal met with sustained applause! To propose dialogue with the world was a radical departure from the 19th century Church condemnations of most things modern.

The Church was awakening to its international character as Asian, African, and Latin American bishops joined the First World majority and brought the concerns of a worldwide faith community, although European concerns and European bishops still largely dominated the debates. The radical economic imbalances and threats to peace and humanity itself—the “joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties”—which had prompted Pope John’s two encyclicals—were very much on the minds of the authors. They shared John’s concerns.

The document was widely debated over the next three sessions of the Council and drew its content from the participants themselves rather than preparatory committees. Considered to be the most characteristic and important document of the council, it was inspired by John XXIII, called for by Cardinal Montini (Paul VI) on the day after Cardinal Suenens’ address, and contributed to by Archbishop Karol Wojtyla who became John Paul II, as well as Fathers Karl Rahner, SJ, and Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI. It was promulgated on the last working day of the council.

⁵ Ibid., p. 99.

⁶ Ibid., p. 157-58.

To summarize, in this, the most authoritative document in Catholic social teaching, part one developed teaching on human dignity, social relations, essential social needs, and the role of the Church in the world. Part two focused on four “problems of special urgency”: marriage and family life, including overpopulation, responsible parenthood, respect for life, and family stability; cultural diversity and development; and socio-economic life. It discussed fundamental imbalances between rich and poor, the requirements of justice, a sufficient share of earthly goods for all, the duties of public authorities, and the common good.

The fourth and final section of the Pastoral Constitution stressed the crisis of modern weaponry, and that peace could only be built on the basis of respect, harmony, justice, and love. It legitimated both nonviolence and conscientious objection, and rejected blind obedience to commands, wars of subjugation, and acts of war directed toward population centers. The council condemned the arms race as a human trap and devastation for the poor.

The document is rich in many ways, both in its style and the many ideas it takes from the tradition and applies to contemporary realities. I want to highlight six of them.

1. The Sanctity and Dignity of the Human Person

Everything starts here with the creation of the human person in the words of *Genesis* in the “image and likeness of God”—the foundational concept that underlies all of Catholic social thought. It involves the dignity of the human person that might be found in various secular philosophies or political theories but raised to an incredible level in the belief that the human person is capable of intimate relationship with God and made holy by the grace won by the salvation of Jesus Christ. The *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church* puts it this way, citing *Gaudium et Spes*:

A just society can become a reality only when it is based on respect of the transcendent dignity of the human person. ...“Hence, the social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person, since the order of things is to be subordinate to the order of persons, not the other way around.”⁷

This dignity and transcendence is not dependent on any accomplishment, any level of education or wealth, or membership in any group, race, or nation. Likewise, it is not taken away by any birth defect, any disease, any crime, any poverty, or membership in any suspect group. *It simply is.*

Growing out of the concept of human dignity is an important principle which the tradition calls “subsidiarity” first articulated by Pope Pius XI in *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931. *Gaudium et Spes* affirms its importance in its discussion of international cooperation at the

⁷ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2005, no. 132 citing *Gaudium et Spes*.

economic level [86c]. Subsidiarity has implications for both the importance of participation and pluralism. The *Compendium* puts it this way:

*The principle of subsidiarity protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups [families, cultural, recreational and professional associations, unions, political bodies, neighborhood groups] to fulfill their duties. This principle is imperative because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community.*⁸

Instead of being for or against “big government,” Catholic social theory has stressed through subsidiarity that larger political entities should not absorb the **effective** functions of smaller and more local ones. This was in part a reaction against the centralizing tendencies of socialism and fascism. At the same time, if smaller and more localized entities were not able to cope adequately with a problem or need, then larger entities -- the state, for example -- have a responsibility to act. In other words, subsidiarity is about the proper interaction of various levels of society, of government, of voluntary organizations, etc.—all interacting in the interest of the common good.

Ultimately, the principle of subsidiarity is rooted in human dignity, in the sense that we are most human and expressive of our humanity in making decisions and solving problems as close to those affected by them as possible. Subsidiarity implies something as well about small is beautiful, environments where persons matter, and participative decision-making.⁹ One footnote: as Pope Benedict has made clear in *Caritas in Veritate* in 2009: “...subsidiarity must remain closely linked to the principle of solidarity and vice versa, since the former without the latter gives way to social privatism...” [58]. I will discuss solidarity, an important counterbalance and complement to subsidiarity, in a few minutes.

2. Sacred and Social and the Common Good

Repeatedly the Church has emphasized that, in addition to the dignity and transcendence of the human person, that individual person is essentially *social* in nature. *Gaudium et Spes* puts it this way:

Man’s social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on each other. For the beginning, the subject, and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person, which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life. This social life is not something added on to man. Hence, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties,

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 187.

⁹ Philip S. Land, S.J., *Shaping Welfare Consensus: U.S. Bishops' Contribution* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Concern, 1988), pp. 174-177, quoting and responding to Andrew Greeley.

and through fraternal dialogue he develops all His gifts and is able to rise to his destiny.¹⁰

We all have heard of the need of babies and small children to be held and fondled, that, without such personal attention, touching, and care, even the provision of food, shelter, clothing, and other essentials still will leave a child severely impaired. A few years ago, the columnist David Brooks, after extensive time spent with doctors, scientists, and others, commented on their findings about the human person in these words:

Finally, we are not individuals who form relationships. We are social animals, deeply interpenetrated with one another, who emerge out of relationships.¹¹

In this way, the more recent work of scientists and doctors is deeply consistent with the faith tradition found in the Scriptures.

The Vatican Council goes on to expound on the common good and its universal complexion in these words:

Every day, human interdependence grows more tightly drawn and spreads by degrees over the whole world. As a result *the common good, this is, the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment*, today takes on an increasingly universal complexion and consequently involves rights and duties with respect to the whole human race. Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups, and even of the general welfare of the entire human family.¹²

The Catechism notes *three essential elements of the common good: respect for the individual, the social well-being and development of the group, and peace* which results from the stability of a just society. The common good's conceptual roots lie in Greek and Roman philosophy as the goal of political life, the good of the city (*pólis*), and the task entrusted to civic leaders.¹³ So, the primary task of all elected officials is the common good. [This is very well worth remembering before presidential and congressional elections—it is not about my group's interest, my state, my party, or the industry in which I work—but the common good!!]

3. Solidarity

We tend to associate the use of the term “solidarity” in Catholic social teaching with the work of Saint Pope John Paul II, and certainly he developed the concept most extensively. The

¹⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, no. 25.

¹¹ David Brooks, *The New Humanism*, THE TIMES-PICAYUNE, March 12, 2011, p. B-5.

¹² *Gaudium et Spes*, 1965, No. 26, citing *Mater et Magistra*, no. 65, emphasis added.

¹³ Rev. Charles E. Bouchard, OP, STD, *Catholic Healthcare and the Common Good*, HEALTH PROGRESS, May-June 1999, pp. 34-40, at 34.

term however is used in *Gaudium et Spes* in its discussion of universal interdependence [4] and international relations [90] and also in its discussion of the communal character of the human person taught by Jesus Christ, the community of believers which he establishes by his death and resurrection, and the ultimate solidarity that will be “brought to perfection” at the end of time [32]. In writing *Pacem in Terris* during the Council, Pope John XXIII called for an “active solidarity” which “cannot be divorced from the common good of the entire human family” [98].

To return to the further development of “solidarity” by Pope John Paul II, he underscores the urgency of connecting action for justice to faith in the term clearly reflecting his Polish background, the **duty of solidarity**. Solidarity is his term for the structural response demanded by gospel love. Solidarity involves fundamental economic and social changes.¹⁴ In an almost shocking assertion for those of us who memorized various lists of virtues from the pre-Vatican II catechisms, he says, “Solidarity is undoubtedly a Christian virtue.”¹⁵

Solidarity therefore must play its part in the realization of this divine plan, both on the level of individuals and on the level of national and international society. The “evil mechanisms” and “structures of sin” of which we have spoken can be overcome only through the exercise of the human and Christian solidarity to which the church calls us and which she tirelessly promotes. Only in this way can such positive energies be fully released for the benefit of development and peace.¹⁶

What is this solidarity that the pope speaks of?

When he answers this question, John Paul actually takes us back to another theme of Catholic social teaching, namely standing with the poor or the preferential option for or love of those who are poor. [Use Ed Hardin example ... JP2: “God’s beloved poor.”] The pope begins to tie that theme to action for justice in these words:

It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a “virtue,” is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all.¹⁷

¹⁴ “The principle of social solidarity suggests that alleviating poverty will require fundamental changes in social and economic structures that perpetuate glaring inequalities and cut off millions of citizens from full participation in the economic and social life of the nation. The process of change should be one that draws together all citizens, whatever their economic status, into one community.” *Economic Justice for All*, No. 187.

¹⁵ *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, No. 40.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 38.

This solidarity takes concrete form, the pontiff says, in personal decisions, in “decisions of government”[9], in economic decisions[39], in public demonstrations by the poor themselves[39], in sacrifice of all forms of economic, military, or political imperialism[39], and in a variety of other concrete actions, both personal and structural. Solidarity, we are told by the Vatican, will require developing new forms of collaboration among the poor themselves, between the poor and the rich, among and between groups of workers, and between private and public institutions.¹⁸

In summary, this first part of my presentation has attempted to sketch out the background of the document, its antecedents in the writing of Saint Pope John XXIII, and three key ideas: the sanctity and dignity of the human person; the social nature of the human person and the common good; and the virtue of solidarity. This afternoon we will turn to three other key ideas in the document and their impact on our understanding of the Church and its role in the contemporary world.

Part II

This afternoon, I want to turn to three key ideas of *Gaudium et Spes* and their influence on the Church’s understanding of our role in the modern world. The three are: Dialogue and Reconciliation; War and the ways of war; and the relationships of Church and World.

4. Dialogue and Reconciliation

If you recall from this morning, in December, 1962, Cardinal Suenens’ emphasized three kinds of dialogues important to the future of the church: dialogue among its members, dialogues with “separated brethren,” and dialogue with the world. In doing so, he set “dialogue” as a critical vehicle and even “style” for the Vatican II Church. However, he had a strong patron promoting this theme after him.

Twenty-one months later, just before the third session of the Council, while *Gaudium et Spes* was still being revised, Pope Paul VI wrote his first encyclical entitled *Ecclesiam Suam* [1964] on the nature of the Church. The encyclical gave unprecedented emphasis to the concept and practice of dialogue. Influenced by the Jewish thinker Martin Buber, the word “dialogue” occurs seventy-seven times in *Ecclesiam Suam* and, according to Fr. O’Malley, “its meaning and application occupy fully two-thirds of this long document.”¹⁹ During the fourth and last session of the Council, while *Gaudium et Spes* was still under serious debate, Pope Paul made it clear to the drafters that “he wanted dialogue to be the inspiring principle of the text, as he had laid it out in *Ecclesiam Suam*.²⁰

¹⁸ *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, *op. cit.*, No. 89, p. 53.

¹⁹ O’Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

To summarize: The Council members committed the Catholic community to dialogue not only with other Christians and people of faith but with the world itself [92], a mutual process already enfolded in the three-year development of the document itself, in its address to “the whole of humanity,” and in its charge to the Church to listen and learn from others. The authors called upon the Church to step beyond dialogue to *collaboration* with others in transforming the world, a point to which I will return shortly.

This emphasis upon dialogue and participation at Vatican II—what some have called a new “style” of being Church—has had a long track record, at least in the United States, since the closing of the Council in 1965. I want to cite three major national dialogical endeavors of the Church in the United States in its attempts to discern the demands of justice in the contemporary world.

THE CALL TO ACTION [1975-77]

The first occurred between 1975 and 1977, though its impact continued in the years following. I quote from a lengthy May 1977 statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, entitled *The Bicentennial Consultation: A Response to the Call to Action*:

1. For two years, as part of the Catholic contribution to the bicentennial, a committee of our conference sought to involve people across the nation in a reflection on justice. At the national level it conducted seven three-day hearings at which bishops and other Church leaders listened to invited experts and concerned local persons. At the local level dioceses were encouraged to join a parish program and invite Catholics to reflect on their experience and practice of justice.
2. Many bishops, scholars, and persons active in social ministry reviewed and summarized the results of this consultation. Finally, 1,350 delegates and 1,000 observers gathered last October [1976] at a conference entitled *A Call to Action* to consider their results of the hearings and discussions as reflected in working papers on humankind, personhood, nationhood, ethnicity and race, the Church, neighborhood, family, and work. The convocation met for three days and produced more than one hundred eighty recommendations.
3. We invited this process of structured public discussion in the Church so that we might listen to the needs of our own people and through their voices come to know more specifically and to share more intimately “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties” of the people of our age. ...

THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE: GOD’S PROMISE AND OUR RESPONSE, 1983 Pastoral Letter on War and Peace—United States Bishops

Initiated at their November 1980, meeting, the U.S. bishops’ conference appointed a drafting committee of five bishops chaired by Cardinal Joseph Bernardin. They wrote the

document over a several-year process of three published drafts, hearings and testimony from various experts, and wide consultation, including European bishops and the Vatican. The first draft was released on June 11, 1982 and marked “confidential” but was leaked to the press prompting widespread commentary, and delaying the second draft, and still later the third draft. Testimony was received from views as different as those of representatives of Pax Christi and the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the White House. The bishops approved this pastoral by a vote of 238-9.

The letter addressed a variety of key issues of war and peace, including affirmation of two Christian responses: the just-war approach and non-violence [73], the use of nuclear weapons against civilian populations [147], the use of first-strike weapons, conscientious objection, and nuclear deterrence policy. During the course of three years, the bishops invited and received thousands of welcome and unwelcome comments from all over the political spectrum and all over the world.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL: CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND THE U.S. ECONOMY, 1986— Pastoral Letter of the United States Bishops

Also written by a committee of bishops, chaired by Archbishop Rembert Weakland, this document originated in a resolution in 1980 to develop a letter on capitalism to complement a letter on communism issued that year. This letter occasioned another extensive *national dialogue*—through three public drafts, hearings, consultations, and wide solicitation of ideas, including *almost twenty thousand written suggestions*, before overwhelming approval by the bishops. It too was intended to shape Catholic consciences and influence policy. Starting from biblical justice and Catholic social teaching, they developed concepts of justice, duties, human rights, the common good, and moral priorities for the nation, including a priority concern for the poor and development of economic rights. They delineated responsibilities for workers and unions, owners and managers, citizens and governments, and all Christians. To concretize their discussion and in parallel with the four areas discussed in *Gaudium et Spes*, the bishops then considered four policy issues in specific detail: *employment, poverty, food and agriculture, and relations to developing nations*.

While I have focused here on some key reflections on dialogue in the context of the U.S. Church, work on reconciliation in the wake of the Council has been manifested, for example, in a number of diverse initiatives: in the continuing efforts by scholars and Church leaders under the headings of ecumenism and interfaith relations and the practical “street-level” ecumenism exercised in meeting the social and economic needs of the poor across this country and the world; in war-time reconciliation efforts undertaken by the San Egidio Community in Africa, the Balkens, and Columbia; in the peace and reconciliation work of Caritas Internationalis; and in the current initiatives of Pax Christi USA on developing anti-racism training in the United States.

5. War and the Ways of War

Gaudium et Spes recognized there were two ways of looking at war for Christians—the so-called “just war” or “justifiable war” tradition and the pacifist tradition. Both are deeply embedded in our tradition, but it was at the Council—in the wake of two devastating world wars—that the Church more fully embraced Christian nonviolence and conscientious objection. Having seen the utter destruction of cities in those wars by conventional and atomic bombs, the Council felt compelled “to undertake an evaluation of war with an entirely new attitude.” [80] It was in that context that the Council declared:

Any act of war aimed indiscriminately at the destruction of entire cities or of extensive areas along with their population is a crime against God and man himself. It merits unequivocal and unhesitating condemnation. [80]

It further denounced the arms race as “an utterly treacherous trap for humanity, and one which injures the poor to an intolerable degree.” [81] These teachings laid the foundation for the U.S. Bishops’ 1983 pastoral on the challenge of peace which I have just discussed.

In the decade that followed the peace pastoral, it seemed with the People Power revolution of 1983-86 that ended the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines and peaceful revolutions that ended communism in Eastern Europe in 1989 that the Church was coming around to a stronger endorsement of the pacifist tradition. Contemporary war is so destructive that resort to war during the past thirty years has seemed less and less defensible—as was argued by Catholic leaders in opposition to the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and United Kingdom in 2003 and as contained in Saint Pope John Paul’s opposition to both the Gulf War and the Iraq war.

In addition, while fears of nuclear war might seem less acute than at the time of the “nuclear freeze movement” in the 1980s, the feared proliferation of nuclear weapons continues to animate international concerns, as is evident in the current debate over Iran’s possible acquisition of such weapons. An article two years ago in *The Economist* called the divide between India and Pakistan “the world’s most dangerous border” with Pakistan possessing as many as 70 to 120 nuclear devices and India with a far greater current stockpile and the growing capacity to produce even more.²¹ And, keeping in mind the Council’s observation that the arms race is devastating to the world’s poor by diverting human, scientific, and financial resources from the needs of human development, how does one justify or even tolerate the current ambitious modernization of the U.S. nuclear weapons complex and the development of new generations of delivery systems whose costs will be staggering over the next ten years.

Now, in addition, there are several other aspects of modern war and war-making that challenge us on two fronts: what the tradition called *jus ad bellam* (justice in going to war) and *jus in bellam* (justice in waging war):

²¹ “The World’s Most Dangerous Border” and “A Rivalry That Threatens the World” in *The Economist*, May 21-27, 2011.

The frequency of “civil wars” as we now see in Syria and elsewhere.

The resort to violent revolution by aggrieved minorities within larger societies which may or may not be governed democratically.

The role of the poor as agents of social change, including further deliberation on the use of armed resistance to oppression and injustice.

The use of terrorism and the responses to terrorists who are embedded with their families and villages or neighborhoods in light of the impact on civilians. Does this change whether the “terrorism” is religious, ethnic, political, or connected to narcotics?

The use of “drones” and other more “automated” ways of waging war—do they make it “easier” for parties to go to war or to continue war-making because fewer of “our people” are in danger. And in what ways does the use of a drone for killing really differ from a rocket launched from a submarine or a bomb released at 30,000 feet over a target city?

This is not an exhaustive list, but it reflects the complexity of our contemporary situation under this heading and the importance of continuing the work of Vatican II to develop further our moral teaching about military policies and practices and to actively advocate for changes in both our own country and the world community.

Role of the United Nations: In part of his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* which prompted much public comment, Pope Benedict called for the reform and strengthening of the United Nations. Part of that strengthening included improvements in international protection and the ability of international entities to intervene in violent disputes within a country. Both the writings of Saint Pope John Paul II and those of Pope Benedict XVI were influenced by and have continued the development of the Council’s work in this area where *Gaudium et Spes* called for the strengthening of international agencies and international cooperation “for the solving of the critical problems of our age, the promotion of global progress, and the prevention of any kind of war.” [84]

6. Church and World

While the document on the *Church in the Modern World* has important things to say on a variety of issues touching peace and justice, its major accomplishment was both singular and complex. It first created a new stance, a new posture for the Church. As indicated in the *Vatican guidelines* for teaching priests about social teaching: “It was the first time that a document of the solemn magisterium of the church spoke so amply about the directly temporal aspects of Christian life.”²² In doing so it moved the social agenda to center stage; it made social gospel not an off-brand, but an essential part, of the good news of Jesus to which all Christians

²² *Guidelines...Formation of Priests*, *op. cit.*, No. 24.

were committed. *Gaudius et Spes* rejected the privatization of the gospel that nurtures political apathy, because, as Fr. Peter Henriot put it, “Vatican II recognized that the Church shares responsibility for secular as well as religious history.”²³ It was a new church self-understanding!

Gaudium et Spes created a stance of both responsibility and service. In the document’s words, “Christians cannot yearn for anything more ardently than to serve the people of the modern world ever more generously and effectively”[93]. In his introduction to the document in the first complete set of Council documents, Donald Campion observed:

The most distinctive note sounded in the text, many already agree, is that of the Church putting itself consciously at the service of the family of man. It may well be that in generations to come men will read this as a highly significant step toward a rethinking of conventional ecclesiological images...²⁴

The document put the Church squarely at the service of humanity. Catholicism broke out of the sanctuary, chancery, and parish to stand squarely in the heart of the **polis**; and in so doing it brought the griefs and anxieties of humanity into the heart of the church and its mission. Subsequently, in the decades that followed, synods and popes would draw out its implications for the nature of evangelization, a broadened Christology, and the “Christian virtue” of solidarity. One can hardly read the Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis without hearing echoes of this broadened Christology and Ecclesiology (but that is the topic for a different study day).

This ecclesiological foundation did more than bring the social concern of the pre-conciliar popes to the center of the church. In the process they seeded the church's own gradual transformation, planted its own freedom from enslaving ties to the powerful and privileged in many countries, and cultivated a widespread and **passionate commitment** to the poor—again a theme we hear frequently from Pope Francis. That concern of Vatican II prophesied a new harvest of martyrs in the following decades whose blood would be spilled for Christ found especially in the *anawim* of Asia, Africa, and Central and South America. As Fr. Bryan Hehir put it:

It was the dynamic of the council that made the decisive move toward a total ecclesiology that includes both the Church looking to the Church and the Church looking to the World. That's the distinctive shift. Look at Gaudium et Spes as both an event in itself and a process. I would argue with [Fr. Karl] Rahner that Gaudium et Spes is perhaps the single most significant document of Vatican II, a document for which they had no plan, a document which was called a “Pastoral Constitution.” But try and think about what has happened in the life of the Church in Latin America, in South Africa, in

²³. Peter Henriot, S.J., et al., op. cit., p. 17.

²⁴. Donald R. Campion, S.J., “The Church Today,” in The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966), Walter M. Abbott, S.J., Editor, p. 183-98, at 185.

East Asia, in the United States, and in Europe and you get the social edge of ministry. I argue you can't explain that in random fashion. The background is Gaudium et Spes and the theological reflection that has flowed from it. That's the ecclesiological foundation [for social ministry].²⁵

Conclusion

In conclusion, where does the Vatican Council in *Gaudium et Spes* lead the Church and its members in these days? I would offer five brief ideas:

First, to a profound commitment to the dignity and sanctity of the human person.

Second, to a realization that the human person is both *sacred and social*, and that human dignity and the common good are interwoven and inseparable.

Third, to a profound commitment to solidarity across all human divisions—national, racial, ethnic, gender, and class—that commits us to action for justice and peace with a preferential lens and love for those who are poor and vulnerable.

Fourth, to dialogue and reconciliation within our own ranks, with other believers, and with persons of good will that includes listening to and learning about divergent views and visions all around us.

Fifth, to a stance of what is called the “servant Church,” which seeks the best *from* the world to be used *for* the world and all its peoples, understanding that the Church has a firm commitment to the working out of both secular and sacred history, one that requires the Church and its members to engage in concerted action in the world in collaboration with many others.

That’s an enormous agenda for us poor mortals, even with the abundant grace of the Lord Jesus and his Spirit. When we look at Syrian civil war, worldwide poverty and inequality, assaults on human life from start to finish, and the bitter tone of our last election season, we can easily despair and dismiss the Council for undue optimism in the face of “the signs of the times.”

It is then critically important for us as Church leaders and preachers of the Word to remember the Gospel—that building the Reign of God is about planting small seeds from which great harvests grow and trusting the power of God to turn crucifixion into Easter. My favorite description of such hope came from the Czech poet Vaclav Havel, hero in the struggle against communism in his homeland and later president of the Czech Republic. In 1986, while his country was still in the grip of communism, he had this to say about hope in a visit to liberty hall in Philadelphia:

²⁵ J. Bryan Hehir, *Catholic Social Teaching as a Framework*, unpublished address to Province Days, New Orleans Province of the Society of Jesus, at Spring Hill College, Mobile, AL, June 2, 1988, p. 4.

Either we have hope within us or we don't; it is a dimension of the soul, and it's not essentially dependent on some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation. Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart ...

Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy that things are going well, or willingness to invest in enterprises that are obviously headed for early success, but rather, an ability to work for something because it is good, not just because it stands a chance to succeed.

Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out ... It is this hope, above all, which gives us the strength to live and continually try new things, even in conditions that seem as hopeless as ours do, here and now.

Vaclav Havel, 1986