

Joy and Hope for the Modern World

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)

The Latin title of this Constitution is taken from the first few Latin words of the document. The words mean, in English, “joy and hope.” The following quotations are taken directly from this Constitution.

Your teacher will give your small group one quotation to study. After your group’s quotation has been identified, follow these directions, answer the questions, and write down your group’s response:

1. As a group, rewrite the quotation in your own words.
2. How do you see the Church in the world or in your diocese responding to this quotation today?
3. How is your parish responding to this quotation today?
4. What is challenging to you in this quotation? How are you responding to this quotation today?

#1

Solidarity of the Church with the Whole Human Family

The joys and the hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of people united in Christ and guided by the holy Spirit in their pilgrimage towards the Father’s kingdom, bearers of a message of salvation for all of humanity. That is why they cherish a feeling of deep solidarity with the human race and its history. (*Preface, Paragraph 1*)

(Hint for rewrite: Change “they” and “their” to “we” and “our.”)

#2

Hope and Anguish

In no other age has humanity enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic well-being; and yet a huge proportion of the people of the world is plagued by hunger and extreme need while countless numbers are totally illiterate. At no time have people had such a keen sense of freedom, only to be faced by new forms of social and psychological slavery. The world is keenly aware of its unity and of mutual interdependence in essential solidarity, but at the same time it is split into bitterly opposing camps. We have not yet seen the last of bitter political, social, and economic hostility, and racial and ideological antagonism, nor are we free from the spectre of a war of total destruction.

(Paragraph 4)

(Hint for rewrite: Give some examples of “new forms of slavery,” “bitterly opposing camps,” and “war of total destruction.”)

#3

Changes in Attitudes, Morals and Religion

A change in attitudes and structures frequently calls accepted values into question. This is true above all of young people who have grown impatient at times and, indeed, rebellious. Conscious of their own



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importance in the life of society, they aspire to play their part in it all the earlier. Consequently, it frequently happens that parents and teachers find their tasks increasingly difficult. (Paragraph 7)
(Hint for rewrite: Give some examples of ways that young people are eager to play their part in society. Ask your teacher if he or she finds teaching more difficult now than it used to be, and why or why not.)

#4

Humanity's Deeper Questionings

Nonetheless, in the face of modern developments there is a growing body of people who are asking the most fundamental of all questions or are glimpsing them with a keener insight: What is humanity? What is the meaning of suffering, evil, death, which have not been eliminated by all this progress? What is the purpose of these achievements, purchased at so high a price? What can people contribute to society? What can they expect from it? What happens after this earthly life is ended? (Paragraph 10)

(Hint for rewrite: Do these questions match questions you are asking? Include some questions of your own.)

#5

The church . . . believes that the key, the center and the purpose of the whole of human history is to be found in its Lord and Master. It also maintains that beneath all those changes there is much that is unchanging, much that has its ultimate foundation in Christ, who is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. (See Heb. 13:8) And that is why the council, relying on the inspiration of Christ, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, (See Col.1:15) proposes to speak to all people in order to unfold the mystery that is humankind and cooperate in tackling the main problems facing the world today. (Paragraph 10)

(Hint for rewrite: Give an example of what the Church should speak to the people about. Give some examples of the main problems facing the world today.)

(The excerpts on this handout are from *The Basic Sixteen Documents of Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declaration*, Austin Flannery, OP, general editor [Northport, NY: Costello Publishing Company, 1996], pages 163, 166, 168, and 172. Copyright © 1996 by Reverend Austin Flannery, OP.)

