

*Address
Promulgating
Five
Documents*

POPE PAUL VI

October 28, 1965

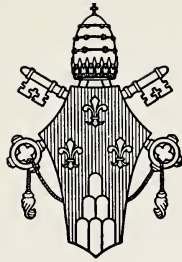
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Address delivered by
POPE PAUL VI
at meeting of Vatican Council II
promulgating five documents.

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You have just heard, venerable brothers and very dear sons, the words of the Apostle dealing with the work of Christ Our Lord, who from the heights of heaven continues His work in the Church, a work which is not merely one of the preservation of what He Himself accomplished during His temporal life on earth, but also one of building up, that is to say of progress and of growth.

This He proclaimed Himself in a well-known incident in the Gospel when He described Himself as the artisan of the organic and consistent development of the edifice founded by Himself on the rock which He had chosen and made capable of holding up such a great weight: "I will

build my Church.”¹ In fact, in the passage to the Ephesians which has just been read for our meditation, St. Paul expresses himself thus: “And he himself gave some men as apostles, and some as prophets, others again as evangelists, and others as pastors and teachers, in order to perfect the saints for a work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the deep knowledge of the Son of God, to perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ.”²

This reality, divine in its source and human in its historic and experimental nature, can still be attained with our spiritual senses today, provided they are open to such a prodigy. We can make our own the messianic words spoken by Jesus: “Today is this scripture accomplished in your ears.”³

What, in fact, is taking place here today in this basilica? You already know that in the course of this holy Council, which is a guide and synthesis of the holy Church of God, after careful examination and with the assistance of unceasing prayer, there will be promulgated four decrees touching on the life on the Church itself, namely, on the pastoral ministry of bishops, the religious life, priestly formation, and Christian education. To these solemn laws will be added a declaration which is no less solemn on the relationships between the Catholic Church and those who profess other religions.

There is no need for us to explain to you the content of these documents — with which you are all already acquainted — nor to stress the importance and the repercussions which they will have throughout the world and for the future, nor the consequences which we hope will be salutary for souls and for the life of the Church of tomorrow, because each one of you has already been able to appreci-

¹ *Matt.* 16, 18.

² *Eph.* 4, 11-13.

³ *Luke* 4, 21.

ate the admirable aspects of these acts. We shall say only that it will be extremely profitable for our ministry if we wish, even after their promulgation, to consider anew and with calm these decisions which the Church — in the highest and most responsible exercise of its authority and certainly under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — draws from the bosom of its interior wisdom, sets before itself as conquests of its loving and laborious concern and determines for itself as a new obligation which does not place upon it a new burden but which rather supports it, elevates it and confers upon it that fullness, that certainty and that joy to which we can give no other name than that of life.

The Church lives and here is the proof: here we have its breath, its song. The Church lives!

Is it not for this, venerable brothers, that you have come in answer to the convocation of this Ecumenical Council? To feel the life of the Church or, still more appropriately, to make it live more intensely, to discover, not the years of its old age, but rather the youthful energy of its lasting vitality, to establish a new relationship between time which passes — and which today carries everything along with it in the changes which it provokes and presents—and the work of Christ, the Church.

There is no question of proceeding to a historical reconstitution, nor to a reduction to the metamorphoses of profane culture, of the nature of the Church, which is always the same and faithful to itself as Christ wanted it and as authentic tradition perfects it. The question is rather to make the Church more capable of developing its mission of good in the renewed conditions of human society. This is why you have come, and these concluding acts of the Council are providing you with an experience of this: The Church lives. The Church is thinking, the Church is speaking, the Church is growing, the Church is building itself up.

We must enjoy this astonishing phenomenon. We must experience its messianic aspect. It is from Christ that the Church comes and to Christ that it goes, and here are its steps, that is to say, the acts whereby it perfects itself and strengthens, develops, renews and sanctifies itself. If we look at it carefully, all this effort at perfecting the Church is nothing but an expression of love for Christ Our Lord, that Christ who arouses within the Church the exigency to feel itself faithful, to keep itself authentic and coherent, living and fruitful, the Christ who calls it and guides it toward Himself, its divine spouse. This movement has its cause precisely in the apostolic character of the Church: that function with which Christ endowed His mystical and social Body and which brings into evidence and effectiveness an apostolic and pastoral hierarchy, which draws its words, its grace and its power from the Lord Himself, preserves, perpetuates, transmits, exercises and develops them, thus rendering the People of God internally living and holy and externally visible, that is to say, social and historical.

We are engaged in celebrating one of the fullest and most significant moments of this apostolicity. We must feel ourselves clothed with it, certainly not in order to attribute the merit of it to our persons, but in order to make the glory of these acts redound toward Christ, for it is in His name and in the power of the Holy Spirit which He infuses into us that we accomplish what we are doing so that, as the humble ministers and mediators that we are, we may cause to descend upon the great family of God and the Holy Church the constructive growth prepared for its building-up, which is a constant reality.

It is a pleasure for us that this is taking place on the feast of the Holy Apostles Simon and Jude, those Apostles to whom the Lord did the honor of consecrating one of the words which we have just heard in the reading of the Gospel. This is not a word which promises happiness and satisfaction in the apostolic mission but which announces

rather the difficulties and the sufferings of those who live it.

We are also pleased that this should be happening on the anniversary day of the election of our venerated predecessor, Pope John XXIII, to whose inspiration is due the convocation of the Council.

Lastly, we are happy to have around us, concelebrating at this apostolic altar, bishops who are dear to us and who represent countries where liberty — to which the Gospel has a supreme right — is restricted, if not refused, and where certain of their number are witnesses of the sufferings which Christ foretold to His Apostles. To these bishops, to the Churches whose passion they recall, to the countries which their presence makes us love all the more, we send the expression of our solidarity, our charity, and our prayers for better days.

We likewise address an affectionate greeting to our brothers the bishops who are assisting us and who come from nations where peace is troubled by so many tears, by blood and by ruins, and where there is the threat of new sufferings. We pray that order and justice, concord and veritable peace may be happily restored in their countries.

In the same way, to all of you, very dear brothers in Christ, apostles and shepherds in His name, heralds of the Gospel and builders of His Church, who are assisting at this concelebration or taking part in it, there is added the assurance of our charity and an invitation to persevere with us with a single heart and soul, encouraged by the new conciliar decrees, to build up the Church of God.

May the Lord deign — the Lord who is mystically present in our midst and who before long will be sacramentally present — to grant strength and holiness to our apostolic and pastoral charge, for the welfare and happiness of the universal community of the clergy, of Religious and of the faithful, as a new manifestation of charity, for this is

in fact the goal set by Christ for the hierarchical ministry.

May our Christian brethren still separated from the full communion of the Catholic Church wish to contemplate this new manifestation of its renovated face. May such contemplation come also from the followers of other religions and, among them, those whom one same relationship in Abraham unites, especially the Israelites, objects certainly not of reprobation or distrust, but of respect, love and hope.

The Church is progressing in fact in the firmness of truth and faith, in the development of justice and charity. Such is the very life of the Church.