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**VATICAN II**

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# CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

(Part I, Introductory Statement, 7)

A change in attitudes and in human structures frequently calls accepted values into question, especially among young people, who have grown impatient on more than one occasion, and indeed become rebels in their distress. Aware of their own influence in the life of society, they want a part in it sooner. This frequently causes parents and educators to experience greater difficulties day by day in discharging their tasks. The institutions, laws and modes of thinking and feeling as handed down from previous generations do not always seem to be well adapted to the contemporary state of affairs; hence arises an upheaval in the manner and even the norms of behavior.

Finally, these new conditions have their impact on religion. On the one hand, a more critical ability to distinguish religion from a magical view of the world and from the superstitions which still circulate purifies it and exacts day by day a more personal and explicit adherence to faith. As a result many persons are achieving a more vivid sense of God. On the other

*youth  
in a  
changing  
society*



hand, growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike former days, the denial of God or of religion, or the abandonment of them, are no longer unusual and individual occurrences. For today it is not rare for such things to be presented as requirements of scientific progress or of a certain new humanism. In numerous places these views are voiced not only in the teachings of philosophers, but on every side they influence literature, the arts, the interpretation of the humanities and of history and civil laws themselves. As a consequence, many people are shaken.

(Part I, Chapter II, 31)

*cultural  
education  
of  
youth*

Individual men, in order to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various groups to which they belong, must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resources available today to the human race. Above all the education of youth from every social background has to be undertaken, so that there can be produced not only men and women of refined talents, but those great-souled persons who are so desperately required by our times.



(Part II, Chapter I, 48)

As living members of the family, children contribute in their own way to making their parents holy. For they will respond to the kindness of their parents with sentiments of gratitude, with love and trust. They will stand by them as children should when hardships overtake their parents and old age brings its loneliness.

***children's  
response  
to  
parents***

(Part II, Chapter 1, 49)

Especially in the heart of their own families, young people should be aptly and seasonably instructed in the dignity, duty and work of married love. Trained thus in the cultivation of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to enter a marriage of their own after an honorable courtship.

***training  
for  
marriage***

(Part II, Chapter I, 52)

The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children. The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to their formation. The children, especially

***need  
for  
both  
parents***

the younger among them, need the care of their mother at home. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account.

Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life; if they marry, they can thereby establish their family in favorable moral, social and economic conditions. Parents or guardians should by prudent advice provide guidance to their young with respect to founding a family, and the young ought to listen gladly. At the same time no pressure, direct or indirect, should be put on the young to make them enter marriage or choose a specific partner.

Thus the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the foundation of society. All those, therefore, who exercise influence over communities and social groups should work effectively for the welfare of marriage and the family. Public authority should regard it as a sacred duty to recognize, protect and promote their authentic nature, to shield public morality and to fa-

*vocation  
guidance  
in the  
home*

vor the prosperity of home life. The right of parents to beget and educate their children in the bosom of the family must be safeguarded. Children too who unhappily lack the blessing of a family should be protected by prudent legislation and various undertakings and assisted by the help they need.

*children  
without  
families*

(Part II, Chapter II, 61)

Today it is more difficult to form a synthesis of the various disciplines of knowledge and the arts than it was formerly. For while the mass and the diversity of cultural factors are increasing, there is a decrease in each man's faculty of perceiving and unifying these things, so that the image of "universal man" is being lost sight of more and more. Nevertheless it remains each man's duty to preserve an understanding of the whole human person in which the values of intellect, will, conscience and fraternity are pre-eminent. These values are all rooted in God the Creator and have been wonderfully restored and elevated in Christ.

*the family  
as a  
teacher*

The family is, as it were, the primary mother and nurse of this education. There, the children, in an atmosphere of love, more easily learn the correct order of

things, while proper forms of human culture impress themselves in an almost unconscious manner upon the mind of the developing adolescent.

*use  
of  
leisure  
time*

Opportunities for the same education are to be found also in the societies of today, due especially to the increased circulation of books and to the new means of cultural and social communication which can foster a universal culture. With the more or less universal reduction of working hours, the leisure time of most men has increased. May this leisure be used properly to relax, to fortify the health of soul and body through spontaneous study and activity, through tourism which refines man's character and enriches him with understanding of others, through sports activity which helps to preserve an equilibrium of spirit even in the community, and to establish fraternal relations among men of all conditions, nations and races. Let Christians cooperate so that the cultural manifestations and collective activity characteristic of our time may be imbued with a human and a Christian spirit.

All these leisure activities however cannot bring man to a full cultural development unless there is at the same time a profound inquiry into the meaning of culture and science for the human person.



(Part II, Chapter IV, 75)

Great care must be taken with regard to civic and political formation, which is of the utmost necessity today for the population as a whole, and especially for youth, so that all citizens can play their part in the life of the political community. Those who are suited or can become suited should prepare themselves for the difficult, but at the same time, the very noble art of politics, and should seek to practice this art without regard for their own interests or for material advantages. With integrity and wisdom, they must take action against any form of injustice and tyranny, against arbitrary domination by an individual or a political party, and any intolerance. They should dedicate themselves to the service of all with sincerity and fairness, indeed, with the charity and fortitude demanded by political life.

*civic  
formation  
of  
youth*

(Part II, Chapter V, 89)

Therefore, to encourage and stimulate cooperation among men, the Church must be clearly present in the midst of the community of nations, both through her official channels and through the full and sincere collaboration of all Christians — a collaboration motivated solely by the desire to be of service to all.

*cooperation  
an aim  
of  
education*

This will come about more effectively if the faithful themselves, conscious of their responsibility as men and as Christians, will exert their influence in their own milieu to arouse a ready willingness to cooperate with the international community. Special care must be given, in both religious and civic education, to the formation of youth in this regard.

## **DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

(1)

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life

*education  
for  
maturity*

that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.

This Sacred Synod likewise declares that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God. Consequently it earnestly entreats all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right. It further exhorts the sons of the Church to give their attention with generosity to the entire field of education, having especially in mind the need of extending very soon the benefits of a suitable education and training to everyone in all parts of the world.

(4)

In fulfilling its educational role, the Church, eager to employ all suitable aids, is concerned especially about those which are her very own. Foremost among these is catechetical instruction, which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes

*formation  
of moral  
values*

*various  
means  
of  
education*



life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery and gives motivation for apostolic activity. The Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, such as the media of communication, various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.

## **DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY**

(Chapter III, 12)

Young persons exert very important influence in modern society. There has been a very great change in the circumstances of their lives, their mental attitudes, and their relationships with their own families. Frequently they move too quickly into a new social and economic status. While their social and even their political importance is growing from day to day, they seem to be unable to cope adequately with the task of assuming new responsibilities.

*youth  
to  
youth  
apostolate*

Their heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionate apostolic activity, and their natural qualities also dispose them for this activity. As the awareness of their own personality matures, impelled by a zest for life and a ready eagerness they assume their own responsibility, and wish to play their part in social and cultural life. If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and animated by obedience and love for the shepherds of the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful. They themselves must become the first and immediate apostles of youth exercising their apostolate among themselves and through themselves, taking into account the social environment in which they live.

Adults should strive to establish a friendly dialogue with the young which will permit both groups, overcoming the age barrier, to get to know each other and to share with one another the special benefits each group has. Adults should stimulate young persons first by good example to take part in the apostolate, and, if the opportunity presents itself, by offering them prudent advice and effective assistance. Young people should cultivate toward adults respect and trust, and although they are naturally attracted to

*communi-  
cation  
between  
generations*

novelties, they should duly appreciate praiseworthy traditions.

Children too, have their own apostolic activity. According to their capacities they are true living witnesses of Christ among their companions.

(Chapter VI, 30)

The training for the apostolate must start with the children's earliest education. In a special way, however, adolescents and young persons should be initiated into the apostolate and imbued with this spirit. This formation must be perfected throughout their whole life in keeping with the demands of new duties which are assumed. It is evident, therefore, that those charged with providing a Christian education are held to training for the apostolate.

In the family, parents have the task of training their children from childhood on to recognize God's love for all men. By example especially they should teach them little by little to be solicitous for the material and spiritual needs of their neighbor. The whole family and its common life, then, should be a sort of apprenticeship for the apostolate.

Children must be taught, too, that transcending the family circle, they may open their minds to the community both eccle-

*apostolic  
formation  
of  
youth*

siastical and secular. They should be taken into the local community of the parish in such a way that they will acquire an awareness of being living and active members of the People of God. Priests should keep in mind the formation for the apostolate in their catechetics, their ministry of the Word, their direction of souls, and in their other pastoral ministrations.

Schools, colleges, and other Catholic educational institutions also have the duty to foster a Catholic sense and apostolic activity in young persons. If this formation is lacking either because young people do not attend these schools or because of any other reason, all the more should parents, pastors of souls, and apostolic organizations attend to it. Teachers and educators, on the other hand, who carry on an excellent form of the apostolate of the laity by their vocation and office, should be equipped with the necessary learning and pedagogical skill to impart such education effectively.

(Exhortation, 33)

The most holy Council, then, earnestly entreats all the laity in the Lord to answer gladly, generously, and promptly the voice of Christ giving them a more pressing invitation in this hour, and the inspiration of

*response  
of  
youth*



the Holy Spirit. Younger persons should feel that this call has been directed to them especially and they should respond to it eagerly and generously. Through this holy Synod, the Lord Himself renews His invitation to all the laity to be joined more closely to Him every day, considering His interests also their own (Phil. 2:5), to associate themselves with Him in His salvific mission. Once again He sends them into every town and place where He Himself is about to come (cf. Luke 10:1) so that they may show that they are His co-workers in the various forms and modes of the one apostolate of the Church, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of our times, ever abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that their labor is not in vain in the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

## **DECREE ON THE BISHOPS' PASTORAL OFFICE IN THE CHURCH**

(Chapter II, 30)

*special  
care  
for  
youth*

In fulfilling their office as shepherd, pastors should take pains to know their own flock. Since they are the servants of all the sheep, they should encourage a full Christian life among the individual faithful

and also in families, in associations especially dedicated to the apostolate, and in the whole parish community. Therefore, they should visit homes and schools to the extent that their pastoral work demands. They should pay especial attention to adolescents and youth.

## **DECREE ON THE MEDIA OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

(Chapter I, 10)

Those who make use of the media of communications, especially the young, should take steps to accustom themselves to moderation and self-control in their regard. They should, moreover, endeavor to deepen their understanding of what they see, hear or read. They should discuss these matters with their teachers and experts, and learn to pass sound judgments on them. Parents should remember that they have a most serious duty to guard carefully lest shows, publications and other things of this sort, which may be morally harmful, enter their homes or affect their children under other circumstances.

*proper  
use  
of commu-  
nication  
media*

(Chapter 1, 12)

*responsible  
public  
authority*

The public authority, in these matters, is bound by special responsibilities in view of the common good, to which these media are ordered. The same authority has, in virtue of its office, the duty of protecting and safeguarding true and just freedom of information, a freedom that is totally necessary for the welfare of contemporary society, especially when it is a question of freedom of the press. It ought also to encourage spiritual values, culture and the fine arts and guarantee the rights of those who wish to use the media. Moreover, public authority has the duty of helping those projects which, though they are certainly most beneficial for young people, cannot otherwise be undertaken.

*protection  
of  
youth*

Lastly, the same public authority, which legitimately concerns itself with the health of the citizenry, is obliged, through the promulgation and careful enforcement of laws, to exercise a fitting and careful watch lest grave damage befall public morals and the welfare of society through the base use of these media. Such vigilance in no wise restricts the freedom of individuals or groups, especially where there is a lack of adequate precaution on the part of those who are professionally engaged in using these media.



Special care should be taken to safeguard young people from printed matter and performances which may be harmful at their age.

## **DECREE ON THE MISSION ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH**

(Chapter II, 12)

Let Christians labor and collaborate with others in rightly regulating the affairs of social and economic life. With special care, let them devote themselves to the education of children and young people by means of different kinds of schools, which should be considered not only as the most excellent means of forming and developing Christian youth, but also as a valuable public service, especially in the developing nations, working toward the uplifting of human dignity, and toward better living conditions. Furthermore, let them take part in the strivings of those peoples who, waging war on famine, ignorance, and disease, are struggling to better their way of life and to secure peace in the world. In this activity, the faithful should be eager to offer prudent aid to projects sponsored by public and private organizations, by governments, by various Christian communities, and even by non-Christian religions.

*education  
of  
mission  
youth*

## **DECREE ON PRIESTLY LIFE AND MINISTRY**

(Chapter II, 6)

*priests  
and  
youth*

Although he has obligations toward all men, a priest has the poor and the lowlier entrusted to him in a special way. The Lord Himself showed that He was united to them, and the fact that the gospel was preached to them is mentioned as a sign of Messianic activity. With special diligence, priests should look after youth as well as married people and parents. It is desirable that each of these groups join together in friendly associations and thereby help one another act more easily and adequately as Christians in a condition of life which is often demanding.

### **COUNCIL CLOSING MESSAGES**

Lastly, it is to you, young men and women of the world, that the council wishes to address its final message. For it is you who are to receive the torch from the hands of your elders and to live in the world at the period of the most gigantic transformation ever realized in its history. It is you who, receiving the best of the example of the

teaching of your parents and your teachers, are to form the society of tomorrow. You will either save yourselves or you will perish with it.

For four years the Church has been working to rejuvenate her image in order to respond the better to the design of her Founder, the great Living One, the Christ who is eternally young. At the term of this imposing re-examination of life, she now turns to you. It is for you, youth, especially for you that the Church now comes through her council to enkindle your light which illuminates the future, your future. The Church is anxious that this society that you are going to build up should respect the dignity, the liberty and the rights of individuals. These individuals are you.

The Church is particularly anxious that this society should allow free expansion to her treasure ever ancient and ever new, namely faith, and that your souls may be able to bask freely in its helpful light. She has confidence that you will find such strength and such joy that you will not be tempted, as were some of your elders, to yield to the seductions of egoistic or hedonistic philosophies or to those of despair and annihilation, and that in the face of atheism, a phenomenon of lassitude and old age, you will know how to affirm your faith in life

*the  
society  
of the  
future*

and in what gives meaning to life, that is to say, the certitude of the existence of a just and good God.

It is in the name of this God and His Son, Jesus, that we exhort you to open your hearts to the dimensions of the world, to heed the appeal of your brothers, to place your youthful energies at their service. Fight against all egoism. Refuse to give free course to the instincts of violence and hatred which beget wars and all their train of miseries. Be generous, pure, respectful and sincere, and build in enthusiasm a better world than your elders had.

The Church looks to you with confidence and with love. Rich with a long past ever living in her, and marching on toward human perfection in time and the ultimate destinies of history and of life, the Church is the real youth of the world. She possesses what constitutes the strength and the charm of youth, that is to say, the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself unreservedly, to renew one's self and to set out again for new conquests. Look upon the Church and you will find in her the face of Christ, the genuine, humble and wise Hero, the prophet of truth and love, the companion and friend of youth. It is in the name of Christ that we salute you, that we exhort and bless you.

(Translation by NC News Service)



