Receiving Vatican II

History

- This was the 20th Ecumenical Council since the first in Nicea in 325 AD.
- John XXIII convened Vatican II (1962-1965) (a) to look at the sources of faith and (b) to re-express it for the modern world.
- He presented it as an 'aggiornamento', 'renewal' or 'letting in the light of day'.
- The emphasis was on 'internal reform' to present a better view to the world, with particular attention to Christian Unity.
- Vatican II brought together some 2,500 bishops.
- 'For the first time the world Church began to exist as such' (Rahner)
- Vatican I (1869-70) defined the role of the Pope but not of the rest of the Church.
- The Council was realigned at the outset by its members, rejecting the agenda set by the Vatican

1. Sacrosanctum Concilium on The Liturgy (1963)

Background

- Liturgy means 'work of the people' yet the Mass had become largely a private devotion of the priest at which the people were silent spectators with their own devotions.
- The Tridentine Mass had remained virtually unchanged for 400 years.
- Pius X encouraged frequent communion and people began using missals. In the 1950s Holy Week was restored and dialogue Mass was introduced but the liturgy itself remained unchanged.
- The far-reaching changes of this document came out of the liturgical movement of the previous 100 years.

Key Ideas

- The liturgy is central to the Church's whole life & mission: through it we are caught up the Paschal Mystery, God's saving plan in Christ; God speaks to his people; Christ proclaims his Gospel.
- Changes based on the nature of the liturgy are to be made to bring about full, active and conscious participation (n.14); adapting what can be changed.
- Liturgical formation of both clergy and people is of great importance

Principles

- Primacy of Scripture:
- 'Teaching' nature of worship: simplicity, without duplication; symbols to be easily understood.
- Communal nature of worship (not private): no rigid conformity but cultural adaptation.
- Vernacular when of help to the people to be approved by local authority or language group.

Reflection

- Liturgy should not to be separated from the worship of our lives. Priesthood of all believers (LG) and linking of faith & life (GS) came later in the Council.
- Little use made of new freedom to highlight the mystery of Christ's presence in the Minister, in the Eucharist, in the Word and in the Community.
- Celebration depends on growth of real community, which is a fruit of the liturgy but communities must want it.

2. Lumen Gentium **on The Church (1964)**

Background

- The counter-reformation resulted in a juridical concept of Church – a perfect society, the only institution with religious truth in a world of falsehood.
- The laity realised they were not just 'participants in the apostolate of the hierarchy' but there was no recognition yet that they were exercising their own lay apostolate.
- Chenu, Congar, de Lubac & Rahner had great influence with their emphasis on Patristics and Bible + Pius XII's *Mystici Corporis* .
- The Liturgical, Biblical, Catechetical and Pastoral movements became a unitary movement of the Spirit in the Church.
- For the first time the Church examines its internal relations. It leaves behind the anti-protestant and anti-modernist style.
- This was the central document of the Council: a charter for reform. Most other documents expand what is contained here.
- The final text was a third, very different version, reflecting dramatic changes in thinking during the Council.

Key Ideas

1. The Mystery of the Church

- She is in Christ a sacrament of our union with God and with all humanity.
- She owes her existence to Jesus Christ, sent by the Father as Redeemer, and to the Spirit sent to sanctify her, lead her into all truth and make her one.
- The Church is a visible structure, a community of faith, hope & love, with a mission to proclaim the kingdom.
- The Church <u>subsists</u> in the Catholic Church although many elements of sanctification and truth are found outside it.

2. The People of God

- God sanctifies by setting up a people who serve him in holiness with Christ as their head.
- This pilgrim people is on a journey and has constantly to renew itself.
- All God's people anointed in the Spirit share in Christ's role of:
  - **priest:** celebrating the sacraments, witnessing by a holy life.
  - **prophet:** the faithful as a whole are 'incapable of failing in belief'
  - **king:** bringing all in heaven and earth under Christ as head.
- The Church is joined to all the Baptised with whom it seeks unity. (→ Ecumenism)
- All who seek God in sincerity of heart are responding to grace and can attain everlasting salvation. (→ Other Faiths)

3. The Hierarchy

- The Pope & the bishops together form one Apostolic College (as Peter & the apostles).
- They solemnly exercise their power over the whole Church in an Ecumenical Council.
- The role & infallibility of the Pope – as at Vatican I – is reaffirmed. (25 & note at the end which was not approved by the Council)
- Bishops lead local churches, gathered around the Eucharist, not as delegates of the Pope but in their own right.
- Bishops exercise their ministry with priests & deacons (to be restored).

4. The Laity

- All Christ's faithful, incorporated into Christ by Baptism seek the Kingdom of God in the world.

- The apostolate of the laity (theirs by right) is a sharing in Christ's mission of salvation.
- All are to witness to the resurrection and a sign of the living God.

5. The Universal Call to Holiness

- Everyone in the Church is called to holiness, to the fullness of the Christian life and a more human way of living in faith, hope and love.

6. Religious

- Some are called to religious life and consecrate themselves to God in poverty, chastity & obedience.
- Their life is a gift to the whole Church.

7. Eschatological Character of the Pilgrim Church

- The pilgrim Church on earth awaits Christ's coming in glory in communion with the saints in heaven, helped by their example and intercession.

8. Mary

- The Church venerates the memory of Mary, mother of God, its model in faith & love.
- We have one Mediator, Christ. Mary who cooperated in the work of salvation is the type of the Church, a model of holiness and Christian life.
- She is a sign of sure hope & comfort for the pilgrim people of God.

Reflection

- The Church is the whole people of God. We are joined with Christians not in full communion (and with all who sincerely seek God). This emphasis on unity is a crucial development.
- The Church is led by the bishops. The function of all authority is service not domination. Teaching authority is in the Episcopal college: Bishops should tell the Curia what to do, not vice versa.
- The role of women in the Church is not addressed.
- LG opens up the issues of authority in the Church and the role of priests.
- Although adopting a positive Biblical tone LG is still assertive and lacks the sense of searching of GS.
- Many countries began to apply the new teachings to their particular context: eg CELAM and the National Pastoral Congress (Liverpool 1980). Rome sought to prevent these becoming Councils.
- 'Church' and 'Kingdom' need clarification.
  'Christ first of all proclaims a Kingdom; everything else is relative.' (EN Paul VI)
  Gospels mention 'Kingdom' 115 times, 'Church' twice.
- No mention of subsidiarity (CST)
- There has followed a power struggle between The Vatican & Bishops.
  Instead of the decentralisation implicit in Vatican II, Synods of Bishops and National Conferences have had their authority minimised.

3. **Dei Verbum** on Revelation (1965)

Background

- Catholics had been strongly discouraged from reading the Bible in their own language. To avoid Protestant translations it was always to be accompanied by official interpretation.
- Protestants insisted on 'scripture alone'; Catholics insisted on 'scripture & tradition'.
- Revelation came to be seen as broader than a set of propositions: "God reveals himself rather than ideas about himself" (Rahner). Human experience is where God does this revealing.

- The Church also came to approve of modern biblical criticism and encouraged the reading of the Bible. In 1956 the Ecole Biblique published the Jerusalem Bible, recognising Biblical scholarship & different literary styles.

Key Ideas

- Revelation is a personal encounter. God invites us into loving partnership through deeds and words. Our response in faith is a free self-commitment to God.
- God's whole revelation is summed up in Jesus Christ who entrusted his Gospel to his Apostles whose successors are the Bishops.
- Though revelation is complete, our understanding of it continues to develop through experience and authority. We encounter God more fully in scripture, in life and in prayer.
- The authentic interpretation of revelation is the task of the Church's teaching function.
- Tradition, scripture and teaching function are so joined together that one cannot stand without the others.

Reflection

- + Bible scholars and biblical criticism have greatly enriched the faith.
- + Groups now read, study and pray the Bible. (cf. especially Basic Christian Communities).
- + The whole style of Catholic theology is now much more profoundly biblical.
- + There is widespread ecumenical cooperation over translation.
- + Literalist fundamentalism is carefully avoided.
- - DV has no coherent theory of inspiration.
- - Great tensions exist over the extent of the *magisterium.*

4. **Gaudium et Spes** on The Church in the World of Today (1965)

Background

- At the end of the first session Cardinal Suenens proposed the Council should have something to say to the modern world.
- Without an original text from the preparatory commission it was drafted during the council.
- This is Vat II's longest & most complex document, set in the context of scripture rather than Natural Law. It presents a Church no longer in opposition to modernity but committed to dialogue with the modern world.
- Meanwhile, Pope John had produced *Pacem in Terris* (1963) linking human rights, under-development and disarmament; and Pope Paul addressed the UN (1965) with a plea for overseas aid and an end to war.

Interpreting "the world"

1. **Augustinian Model** stresses that the world has rejected Christ and needs to be saved;
2. **Incarnational Model** stresses that God loves the world and sent His Son into the world for humankind to love. (This is also the interpretation of Eastern Patristics).

Both interpretations are valid. The majority of the bishops were initially distrustful toward "the world" but gradually became more open and optimistic.

Main Ideas

- "The joys & hopes, the sorrows & anxieties of people today, especially of the poor and afflicted, are also the joys & hopes, sorrows & anxieties of the disciples of Christ."
- The Church has the duty to examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel. (Discernment)
- There is recognition of God's Spirit working in society and history.

- We are neighbours of every person without exception. (Solidarity)
  "As long as you did it to the least of my brethren you did it to me" (Matt 25:40).
- The human race is caught up in fundamental and rapid change challenging traditional values.
- There are imbalances between generations, nations, races, classes, rich & poor.
- The task of the Church is to stand as the sign & safeguard of the transcendent dignity & freedom of the human person…showing love for the world by a willingness to dialogue.

Problems of Special Urgency (informed by this vision and principles)

1. Marriage & The family → Responsible parenthood (cf. Special Commission)
   Mutual love and raising children are equal aims of marriage.
2. The Development of Culture → Benefits of culture to be extended to everyone
   The Church does not journey alone but with the culture in which it lives.
3. Economic & Social Life → The earth's goods are for the benefit of all.
4. Political Community → Loyalty not just to one's own country but to the entire human family.
5. Peace → We have a duty to work through international consent for the abolition of war.
   Formation of International Justice & Peace organisation

Reflection

- + The Church achieves more with the balm of mercy than with the arm of severity. (John XXIII)
- + GS speaks from the confidence of the triumph of Christ not that of the institution.
- + Here is Inspiration for Theologies of Liberation (*Latin American, Asian, Black, Feminist*…)
- + Applied to regional context (CELAM, FABC, AMECEA…Regional Synods…)
- + Concerns taken up in encyclicals – *Populorum Progressio(1967) & Humanae Vitae(1968)*.
- - GS still speaks from a European and 1st World perspective with the optimism of the 1960s.
- - *World, Church & Kingdom* are presented in a rather confused way.
- - GS is necessarily time-bound: the world has evolved and the document needs updating.
- - New "urgent problems" are the environment & the role of women.

Aspects of the theological vision of GS important for us today (James Hanvey SJ)

- Christ-centred humanism – refusing to read humanity, society, history or culture in another way;
- Catholic Enlightenment or modernity (especially freedom) – integrating "secular" Enlightment into the Incarnation and its hope into the dynamic of salvation history;
- Not paying lip-service to the values of dignity, justice, transparency, truth & compassion; but a Church that lives these and so manifests the genuine freedom that faith confers.
- A Church that understands its own poverty and the beauty of the humility in which Christ calls it to serve the world.

Themes in other Documents

1. No one should ever be forced to act against their conscience in private or in public.
   Jesus *invited* followers and never *compelled*. *(Religious Freedom)*
2. The Church claims freedom to act but must not do so against the spirit of the Gospel.
   (Religious Freedom)
3. It is contrary to the teaching of the Church to discriminate against, show hatred towards or harass anyone on the basis of colour, race, class or religion; rather the faithful should live in peace with everyone. *(Other Faiths)*

Spirit of Vatican II (John O'Malley SJ)

1. From vertical style → horizontal	*cooperation, partnership, collaboration.*
2. From controlling → serving	*ruler & king* equated with *servant.*
3. Further change in the future	*development, progress, evolution.*
4. From exclusion → inclusion	*sisters & brothers, men & women of good will.*
5. From *passive acceptance* →	*active participation & engagement.*