

The Truth about Vatican II

Part 2 – Divine Revelation and Ecumenism

Dei Verbum - The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation

Promulgated by the Second Vatican Council (Nov 18, 1965 by Paul VI)
Not a favorite with the Modernist “Jesus Seminar” crowd

Dei Verbum

Preface and Six Chapters:

- Revelation Itself
- Handing on Divine Revelation
- Sacred Scripture, Its Inspiration and Divine Interpretation
- The Old Testament
- The New Testament
- Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

Revelation Itself

The Christian Dispensation “as the new and definitive covenant will never pass away and we now await no further new public revelation before the glorious manifestation of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (4)
“God, the beginning and end of all things, can be known with certainty from created reality by the light of human reason but teaches that it is through his revelation that those religious truths which are by their nature accessible to human reason can be known by all men with ease, with solid certitude and with no trace of error, even in this present state of the human race.” (6)

Handing On Divine Revelation

Christ commissioned Apostles to preach the Gospel
Initially oral preaching, then under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “Apostles and Apostolic men...committed the message of salvation to writing” (7)
Apostles left bishops as successors “handing over to them the authority to teach in their own place.” (7)
Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down (8)
Both of them (Scripture and Tradition) flow from the same divine wellspring (9)
The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted to the living teaching office of the Church (Magisterium). This teaching office is not above the Word of God but serves it... (10)

Sacred Scripture, Its Inspiration and Divine Interpretation

Since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching solidly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put into sacred writings for the sake of salvation (11)
Interpreters of Scripture should investigate what the author originally intended and God wants manifested to us by means of their words. (12)

Literary forms, customary styles of feeling, speaking, narrating along with patterns employed in everyday speech are important

When interpreting, attention must be given to:

- a) Content and unity of Scripture
- b) Living Tradition of the Church
- c) Harmony among elements of the Faith

The Old Testament

The plan of salvation ...is found as the true Word of God in the books of the Old Testament; these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. (14)

The principal purpose to which the plan of the Old Covenant was directed was to prepare for the coming of Christ

Now the books of the Old Testament, though they also contain some things which are incomplete or temporary, nevertheless show us true divine pedagogy. (15)

God, the inspirer and author of both Testaments, wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old and the Old be made manifest in the New. (16)

The New Testament

The Gospels have a special preeminence

The Church has always and everywhere held and continues to hold that the four Gospels are of apostolic origin. For what the apostles preached...afterward they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit handed on to us in writing: the foundation of faith, namely, the fourfold Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. (18)

Holy mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held and continues to hold that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day he was taken up into heaven.

They told us the honest truth about Jesus from their memories or eyewitnesses

Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church

Easy access to the Sacred Scriptures should be provided for all of the faithful

Catholic exegetes should continue to study the sacred Scriptures under the guidance of the Magisterium using the Church Fathers and the liturgy

The study of Scripture is the foundation or soul of theology

All of the faithful, especially the clergy, should learn by the frequent reading of Scripture the "excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Phil 3:8) "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ" – St Jerome

Prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture

Bishops should ensure that translations are available for the faithful under their pastoral care

Unitatis Redintegratio - Decree on Ecumenism

Introduction

Catholic Principles on Ecumenism

The Practice of Ecumenism

Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See – the Eastern Churches

Separated Churches and ecclesial communities in the West

Introduction and Catholic Principles on Ecumenism

The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the primary concerns of the Second Vatican Council

“Ecumenical” refers to this movement towards unity

The document follows the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) and concentrates on the ways and means to support these efforts

The Church is God’s only flock (2)

Men of both sides were to be blamed for separations of communities

Children growing up in these communities cannot be blamed for the sin of separation

The Catholic Church embraces them as brothers, with respect and affection.

Those who believe in Christ and are baptized are in an imperfect communion with the church. (3)

All who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ’s body and have a right to be called Christian and so correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church

Some and even very many elements and endowments can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: Scriptures, life of grace, faith, hope, and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Him, belong by right to the Church

Though deficient, other churches and communities have not been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation

The Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church. It is only through Christ’s Catholic Church which is “the all-embracing means of salvation” that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation (3)

All the Catholic faithful should take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism

Catholics should avoid expressions, judgments, and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren; “dialogue” between competent experts is to be encouraged

The unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose

Individual reconciliation to the Church is not in opposition to ecumenical action

Primary duties of Catholics must be renewal – live faithfully to teachings and institutions

Unity in essentials must be preserved, but let all...enjoy a proper freedom in their various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in their different liturgical rites and even in their theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. (4)

The Practice of Ecumenism

The attainment of union is the concern of the *whole* Church, faithful and shepherds alike (5)

Continual reformation is essential; if there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated – to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself – these can and should be set right at the opportune moment
Change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement (8)

Worship in common is not to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity. Local bishop to decide if not forbidden by Pope or bishops conferences (by law)

Sacred theology...must be taught with due regard for the ecumenical point of view; Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely for understanding of separated brethren

However, “nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded

Churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Roman Apostolic See – Eastern Churches

Eastern Churches possess true sacraments, most especially through apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist.

Therefore worship in common, given suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority, is not only possible but to be encouraged

All Catholics should acknowledge richness of Eastern spiritual traditions especially monastic life

Far from being an obstacle to the Church’s unity, a certain diversity of customs and observances only adds to her splendor

Churches of the East, while remembering the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to the disciplines proper to them (16) This is one of the essential prerequisites for any restoration of unity

What has been said about lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine...East and West have followed different methods and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God’s truth...in such cases these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting (17)

Separated Churches and ecclesial communities in the West

Difficult to dialogue with since, on account of different origins and different teachings, groups vary considerably with each other – not just with Catholics (19)

Love and reverence for Sacred Scripture makes for common bond, despite lack of acknowledgment of magisterial role in interpretation

Baptism, faith in Christ, hearing Word of God provide common foundation

Despite different interpretations of Scripture on moral conduct, it might be a good starting point for dialogue

Council exhorts the faithful to “refrain from superficiality and imprudent zeal, which can hinder real progress toward unity. Their ecumenical action must be fully and sincerely Catholic, that is to say, faithful to the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the church in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed...” (24)

Orientalium Ecclesiarum - Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite

Preamble
Individual Churches or Rites
Preservation of the Spiritual Heritage of the Eastern Churches
Eastern Rite Patriarchs
The Discipline of the Sacraments
Divine Worship
Relations with the Brethren of the Separated Churches
Conclusion

Preamble and Individual Churches or Rites

The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches (1)

Each individual church or rite should retain its traditions...and it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place. (2)

These individual churches...are...entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff...they are consequently of equal dignity

Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the individual churches and to this end there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it

Finally, each and every Catholic, as also the baptized of every non-Catholic church or denomination who enters into the fullness of the Catholic communion, must retain his own rite wherever he is, must cherish it and observe it to the best of his ability (4)

Preservation of the Spiritual Heritage of the Eastern Churches

All members of the Eastern rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement (6)

Those who by reason of their office or apostolic ministries are in frequent communication with the Eastern churches or their faithful should be instructed...in the knowledge and veneration of the rites, discipline, doctrine, history and character of the members of the Eastern rites

Eastern Rite Patriarchs

Eastern Patriarch – the bishop to whom belongs jurisdiction over all bishops, not excepting metropolitans, clergy and people of his own territory or rite, in accordance with canon law and without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff (7)

All patriarchates are equal in respect of patriarchal dignity without, however, prejudice to the legitimately established precedence of honor. (8)

The patriarchs should be accorded special honor, seeing that each is set over his patriarchate as father and head.

The patriarchs with their synods are the highest authority for all business of the patriarchate...without prejudice to the right of the Roman Pontiff to intervene in individual cases (9)

The Council desires that new patriarchates should be erected where there is need, to be established by an ecumenical council or by the Roman Pontiff (11)

The Discipline of the Sacraments

The Council approves of the ancient discipline of the sacraments in the Oriental Churches

Priests validly confirm using chrism blessed by a patriarch or a bishop.

All eastern rite priests can confirm validly on all the faithful even those of Latin rite; licitly, depends on the law

Faculties for hearing confessions duly and without restrictions given to priests of any rite by their own hierarchs will extend to the territory of other rites unless disallowed by hierarch

Office of the permanent diaconate should be restored

Canonical "form" for the celebration of marriages between Eastern Catholics and baptized Eastern non-Catholics is of obligation only for liceity (18)

Divine Worship

It belongs only to an ecumenical council or to the Apostolic See to determine, transfer or suppress feast days common to all the Eastern Churches

But individual church's feast days can be decided by patriarchs or archiepiscopal synods as well

Until all of the churches can agree on a fixed date for Easter, patriarchs can decide with unanimous consent to celebrate on a fixed Sunday. (20)

It is left to authority of patriarchs and synods or Supreme authority with council of hierarchs to regulate vernacular language for liturgical functions. Translations first approved by the Vatican. (23)

Relations with the Brethren of the Separated Churches

Eastern Catholics should support ecumenism, especially with Eastern non-Catholics through prayer, example of their lives, religious fidelity to ancient Eastern traditions, by a greater knowledge of each other, by collaboration, and by a brotherly regard for objects and feelings

Eastern Christians only need to state the creed to be formally joined to the Catholic Church

Common participation in worship which harms the unity of the Church or involves formal acceptance of error, scandal, indifferentism, etc is forbidden by divine law. (26)

Individual cases can be judged differently.

Eastern Christians separated in good faith, if they ask of their own accord and have the right dispositions, may be admitted to the Sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Anointing of the Sick

Catholics can also ask for sacraments from non-Catholic ministers whose churches possess valid sacraments as often as necessity or a genuine spiritual benefit recommends such a course of action and access to a Catholic priest is physically or morally impossible.

Nostra Aetate - Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

Nostra Aetate

All people have the same origin and end – God

All men seek answers to common questions (e.g. what is the meaning or aim of life?)

Recognition of Supreme Being result of searching; man has a profound, religious sense.

Hinduism – contemplate divine mystery and express it through myths and philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from anguish of human condition through ascetical practices or meditation

Buddhism – realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men in a devout and confident spirit may be able to attain liberation or attain supreme illumination by own efforts or assistance

Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of Truth which enlightens all men.

Nostra Aetate

Church esteems the Moslems

Highlights complementary teachings: belief in one God, venerate the Blessed Mother, day of judgment, value moral life and worship through prayer, almsgiving, fasting

Council urges all to forget the past (hostilities) and to work for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom

Turning to the Jews, the Council emphasizes that the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs. All of the apostles, most of early disciples sprang from the Jewish people. Jews in large numbers did not accept the Gospel, nevertheless God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their fathers; he does not repent of the gifts he makes or of the calls he issues

Nostra Aetate

What happened in his (Jesus') passion cannot be charged against all Jews without distinction then alive or against the Jews of today. Although the church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this follows from the Holy Scriptures. (4)

The church decries hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time by anyone.

As the church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent his passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation.

The Church reproves as foreign to the mind of Christ any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion.

Dignitatis Humanae - The Declaration on Religious Freedom

Dignitatis Humanae

We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men. (1)

On their part, all then are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it. (1)

Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with *immunity from coercion in civil society*. Therefore, it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.

This Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom...no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, *within due limits*.

Dignitatis Humanae

The right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person...this right...is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed, and thus is to become a civil right. (2)

All men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. The exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.

Injury, therefore, is done to the human person and to the very order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society, *provided just public order is observed*. (3)

Dignitatis Humanae

Parents have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. The use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly, or indirectly. (5)

Government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law...is never violated, whether overtly or covertly, for religious reasons.

Society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion (7)

Not a few can be found who seem inclined to use the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. (8)

Dignitatis Humanae

It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free, no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will. This doctrine is contained in the Word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church. (10)

God calls men to serve him in spirit and in truth; hence they are bound in conscience but they stand under no compulsion. (11)

The Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accord with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law. (13)

Post Conciliar Documents on Ecumenism

Ecclesiam Suam - Paths of the Church - Paul VI (1964)

Ut Unum Sint - On Commitment to Ecumenism - John Paul II (1995)

Oriente Lumen - The Light of the East - John Paul II (1995)

Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion - Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1992)

Dominus Iesus – On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church – Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (2000)