

The Word on Fire

VATICAN II
COLLECTION

Declarations and Decrees

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Foreword by
Bishop Robert Barron
with commentary by the postconciliar popes

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“[The Second Vatican Council] has invested its teachings with the authority of the supreme ordinary magisterium, which ordinary magisterium is so obviously authentic that it must be accepted with docility and sincerity by all the faithful, according to the mind of the Council as expressed in the nature and aims of the individual documents.”

— *Pope St. Paul VI*

“With the passing of the years, *the Council documents have lost nothing of their value or brilliance*. They need to be read correctly, to be widely known and taken to heart as important and normative texts of the Magisterium, within the Church’s Tradition. . . . I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council *as the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*: there we find a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the century now beginning.”

— *Pope St. John Paul II*

“The Second Vatican Council Documents, to which we must return, freeing them from a mass of publications which instead of making them known have often concealed them, are a compass in our time too that permits the Barque of the Church to put out into the deep in the midst of storms or on calm and peaceful waves, to sail safely and to reach her destination.”

— *Pope Benedict XVI*

“Vatican II was a Council on faith, inasmuch as it asked us to restore the primacy of God in Christ to the center of our lives, both as a Church and as individuals. The Church never takes faith for granted, but knows that this gift of God needs to be nourished and reinforced so that it can continue to guide her pilgrim way. The Second Vatican Council enabled the light of faith to illumine our human experience from within, accompanying the men and women of our time on their journey.”

— *Pope Francis*

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Foreword

Bishop Robert Barron

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), a gathering of Catholic bishops from around the world under the headship of Pope St. John XXIII and then Pope St. Paul VI, was one of the most significant cultural and ecclesiastical events of the twentieth century. Though practically everyone acknowledges its importance, Catholics have been debating its precise meaning and application for the past sixty years. As I write these words, a fresh controversy has broken out, this time prompted by “traditionalists” who claim that Vatican II has betrayed authentic Catholicism and produced disastrous consequences in the life of the Church. In the years that I was coming of age, the 1970s and 1980s, the argument was, largely, between advocates of a “hermeneutic of continuity” reading versus a “hermeneutic of rupture” interpretation of the council—which is to say, between those who appreciated Vatican II as a legitimate development of the teaching that preceded it, and those who saw the council as a real break with that tradition and a signal that something altogether new was emerging in the life of the Church.

To understand this rather complex set of positions and counter-positions, it is advisable to look, however briefly, at the council and its immediate aftermath. The great and saintly pope who summoned this gathering of bishops saw the purpose of the council as fundamentally missionary. The Church of the early 1960s did not face major doctrinal questions, but many priests, bishops, scholars, and pastoral practitioners did indeed think that the Church's regnant neo-scholastic theology, a rather dry, superficial version of the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, was inadequate to the missionary task in the modern world. Thus, what the overwhelming majority of the theological experts and bishops at Vatican II opted for was an updating of the Church, but paradoxically, precisely through a recovery of the more lyrical language of the early Church Fathers and of the Scriptures. This change, they felt, would facilitate the process of bringing the light of Christ to the men and women of our time. It is noteworthy that unlike almost all of the conciliar texts that came before, the documents of Vatican II are not pithy statements of belief or anathemas of heresies, but rather lengthy, meditative theological essays designed to persuade rather than to define or condemn. That this approach won the day at Vatican II is evident in the vote counts for the conciliar documents, almost all of which were passed with only a handful of negative votes out of over two thousand cast.

To be sure, there was a small group of vocal dissenters to the documents, bishops and theologians who preferred to stay within the confines of the standard neo-scholastic approach, but it is fair to say that they were clearly defeated at the council. Now, the victorious party, within five years of the close of Vatican II, split into two camps, one more liberal and the other more conservative. The former, represented by such figures as Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, Hans Küng, and Gregory Baum, saw the documents of Vatican II as a first step in the direction of a more radical reform of the Church. They argued that the council was much more than the written texts that it produced; that it had, in fact, unleashed a spirit that should be allowed to blow through the Church, affecting

its doctrines, practices, and institutional structures. The latter group, represented by, among others, Joseph Ratzinger, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karol Wojtyła, reacted against this liberal reading. In a famous essay from the early seventies, Ratzinger decried the desire to perpetuate an amorphous “spirit of the council.” In point of fact, he argued, the Church always turns with a kind of relief from a council, since such gatherings always represent a certain throwing of the Church into suspense. While the theologians and bishops gather to deliberate and discuss, as indeed they must from time to time, the Church is not focused on its basic work of worshipping God, evangelizing, and caring for the poor. Once the council has completed its task and resolved whatever difficulties needed resolving, the Church returns with renewed enthusiasm and clarity to its mission. Therefore, the perpetuation of the spirit of Vatican II would be tantamount, Ratzinger concluded, to condemning the Church to a permanent state of indecision.

These two camps, corresponding more or less to the hermeneutic of rupture and hermeneutic of continuity approaches referenced above, have battled for the past roughly fifty years, but the latter school came to the fore due to the fact that two of its most distinguished representatives, Wojtyła and Ratzinger, both were elected to the office of Peter. Their papacies, expressed in numerous homilies, talks, encyclicals, and formal statements, stabilized the interpretation of Vatican II. The radical traditionalists of the present moment represent an energetic comeback of the neo-scholastics who lost the day at Vatican II. They reject both the hermeneutic of continuity and the hermeneutic of rupture, preferring to see the entire Vatican II project as misbegotten from the beginning.

With the book you are reading, I am nailing my colors to the mast. I and *Word on Fire* stand firmly with Vatican II and hence against the radical traditionalists. And we stand firmly with the Wojtyła-Ratzinger interpretation of the council, and hence against the progressives. We are convinced that, even as many voices have argued about the council since the documents appeared in the mid-1960s, vanishingly few Catholics have actually *read* the texts

themselves. This series is designed to address that problem. This second volume includes the three “declarations” and nine “decrees” of the council. The four “constitutions” of the council—which is to say, the principal essays that most fully articulate its purpose and ethos—can be found in the first volume. But both volumes also feature a range of commentaries and explications of these marvelous documents, most drawn from the popes and bishops who provide a magisterial interpretation.

Many years ago, I heard a speaker remark that far too many people in the Church seem to want either Vatican I or Vatican III! That traditionalists and progressives still dominate much of the conversation today proves that his observation still has validity. I believe that the documents of Vatican II are still widely unread, and if they are read, often misunderstood. The needful thing, I am convinced, is a robust and enthusiastic reappropriation of the texts of Vatican II. I hope that this book represents a contribution to that project.



Opening Address to the Council

Pope St. John XXIII

Today, Venerable Brethren, is a day of joy for Mother Church: through God's most kindly providence the longed-for day has dawned for the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, here at St. Peter's shrine. And Mary, God's Virgin Mother, on this feast day of her noble motherhood, gives it her gracious protection.

THE CHURCH IN COUNCIL

A positive proof of the Catholic Church's vitality is furnished by every single council held in the long course of the centuries—by the twenty ecumenical councils as well as by the many thousands of memorable regional and provincial ones emblazoned on the scroll of history.

And now the Church must once more reaffirm that teaching authority of hers which never fails, but will endure until the end of time. For that was Our reason for calling this most authoritative assembly, and We address you now as the humble successor, the latest

born, of this Prince of Apostles. The present Council is a special, worldwide manifestation by the Church of her teaching office, exercised in taking account of the errors, needs and opportunities of our day.

A History of Triumph . . .

We address you, therefore, as Christ's vicar, and We naturally begin this General Council by setting it in its historical context. The voice of the past is both spirited and heartening. We remember with joy those early popes and their more recent successors to whom we owe so much. Their hallowed, momentous words come down to us through the councils held in both the East and the West, from the fourth century to the Middle Ages, and right down to modern times. Their uninterrupted witness, so zealously given, proclaims the triumph of Christ's Church, that divine and human society which derives from its divine Redeemer its title, its gifts of grace, its whole dynamic force.

. . . And of Adversity

Here is cause indeed for spiritual joy. And yet this history has its darker side too, a fact, which cannot be glossed over. These nineteen hundred years have reaped their harvest of sorrow and bitterness. The aged Simeon's prophecy to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, proves true in every age: "Behold, this child is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be contradicted."¹ Jesus, too, when grown to manhood, made it quite clear that men in times to come would oppose Him. We remember those mysterious words of His: "He who hears you, hears me."² St. Luke, who records these words, also quotes Him later as saying: "He who is not with me is against me; and he who does not gather with me scatters."³

To Be with Christ or Against Him

Certain it is that the critical issues, the thorny problems that wait upon men's solution, have remained the same for almost twenty centuries. And why? Because the whole of history and of life hinges

on the person of Jesus Christ. *Either* men anchor themselves on Him and His Church, and thus enjoy the blessings of light and joy, right order and peace; *or* they live their lives apart from Him; many positively oppose Him, and deliberately exclude themselves from the Church. The result can only be confusion in their lives, bitterness in their relations with one another, and the savage threat of war.

A Pastoral Function

But the function of every ecumenical council has always been to make a solemn proclamation of the union that exists between Christ and His Church; to diffuse the light of truth; to give right guidance to men both as individuals and as members of a family and a society; to evoke and strengthen their spiritual resources; and to set their minds continually on those higher values which are genuine and unfailing.

No study of human history during these twenty centuries of Christendom can fail to take note of the evidence of this extraordinary teaching authority of the Church as voiced in her general councils. The documents are there, whole volumes of them; a sacred heritage housed in the Roman archives and in the most famous libraries of the world.

THE DECISION TO HOLD THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

A Sudden Inspiration

As regards the immediate cause for this great event, which gathers you here together at Our bidding, it is sufficient for Us to put on record once more something which, though trifling in itself, made a deep impression on Us personally. The decision to hold an ecumenical council came to Us in the first instance in a sudden flash of inspiration. We communicated this decision, without elaboration, to the Sacred College of Cardinals on that memorable January 25, 1959, the feast of St. Paul's Conversion, in his patriarchal basilica in the Ostien Way.⁴ The response was immediate. It was as though some ray of supernatural light had entered the minds of all present:

it was reflected in their faces; it shone from their eyes. At once the world was swept by a wave of enthusiasm, and men everywhere began to wait eagerly for the celebration of this Council.

Arduous Preparation

For three years the arduous work of preparation continued. It consisted in making a detailed and accurate analysis of the prevailing condition of the faith, the religious practice, and the vitality of the Christian, and particularly the Catholic, body.

We are convinced that the time spent in preparing for this Ecumenical Council was in itself an initial token of grace, a gift from heaven.

Hope for Spiritual Enrichment

For We have every confidence that the Church, in the light of this Council, will gain in spiritual riches. New sources of energy will be opened to her, enabling her to face the future without fear. By introducing timely changes and a prudent system of mutual cooperation, We intend that the Church shall really succeed in bringing men, families and nations to the appreciation of supernatural values.

Thus the celebration of this Council becomes a compelling motive for whole-hearted thanksgiving to God, the giver of every good gift, and for exultantly proclaiming the glory of Christ the Lord, the triumphant and immortal King of ages and peoples.

THE TIMING OF THIS COUNCIL

And now, venerable brethren, there is another point that We would have you consider. Quite apart from the spiritual joy we all feel at this solemn moment of history, the very circumstances in which this Council is opening are supremely propitious. May We go on record as expressing this conviction openly before you now in full assembly.

Pessimistic Voices

In the daily exercise of Our pastoral office, it sometimes happens that We hear certain opinions which disturb Us—opinions expressed by people who, though fired with a commendable zeal for religion, are lacking in sufficient prudence and judgment in their evaluation of events. They can see nothing but calamity and disaster in the present state of the world. They say over and over that this modern age of ours, in comparison with past ages, is definitely deteriorating. One would think from their attitude that history, that great teacher of life, had taught them nothing. They seem to imagine that in the days of the earlier councils everything was as it should be so far as doctrine and morality and the Church's rightful liberty were concerned.

We feel that We must disagree with these prophets of doom, who are always forecasting worse disasters, as though the end of the world were at hand.

A Basis for Optimism

Present indications are that the human family is on the threshold of a new era. We must recognize here the hand of God, who, as the years roll by, is ever directing men's efforts, whether they realize it or not, towards the fulfillment of the inscrutable designs of His providence, wisely arranging everything, even adverse human fortune, for the Church's good.

Civil Intervention Eliminated

As a simple example of what We mean, consider the extremely critical problems which exist today in the political and economic spheres. Men are so worried by these things that they give scant thought to those religious concerns, which are the province of the Church's teaching authority. All this is evil, and we are right to condemn it. But this new state of affairs has at least one undeniable advantage: it has eliminated the innumerable obstacles erected by worldly men to impede the Church's freedom of action. We have only to take a cursory glance through the annals of the Church to realize that

even those ecumenical councils which are recorded there in letters of gold, were celebrated in the midst of serious difficulties and most distressing circumstances, through the unwarranted intervention of the civil authority. Such intervention was sometimes dictated by a sincere intention on the part of the secular princes to protect the Church's interests, but more often than not their motives were purely political and selfish, and the resultant situation was fraught with spiritual disadvantage and danger.

Earnest Prayer for Absent Bishops

We must indeed confess to you Our deep sorrow over the fact that so many bishops are missing today from your midst. They suffer imprisonment and every kind of disability because of their faith in Christ. The thought of these dear brothers of Ours impels Us to pray for them with great earnestness. Yet We are not without hope; and We have the immense consolation of knowing that the Church, freed at last from the worldly fetters that trammelled her in past ages, can through you raise her majestic and solemn voice from this Vatican Basilica, as from a second Apostolic Cenacle.

THE COUNCIL'S PRINCIPAL DUTY: THE DEFENSE AND ADVANCEMENT OF TRUTH

The major interest of the Ecumenical Council is this: that the sacred heritage of Christian truth be safeguarded and expounded with greater efficacy.

That doctrine embraces the whole man, body and soul. It bids us live as pilgrims here on earth, as we journey onwards towards our heavenly homeland.

Man's Twofold Obligation

It demonstrates how we must conduct this mortal life of ours. If we are to achieve God's purpose in our regard we have a twofold obligation: as citizens of earth, and as citizens of heaven. That is to say, all men without exception, both individually and in society,

have a life-long obligation to strive after heavenly values through the right use of the things of this earth. These temporal goods must be used in such a way as not to jeopardize eternal happiness.

Seeking the Kingdom of God

True enough, Christ our Lord said: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice,”⁵ and this word “first” indicates what the primary direction of all our thoughts and energies must be. Nevertheless, we must not forget the rest of Our Lord’s injunction: “and all these things shall be given you besides.”⁶ Thus the traditional as well as the contemporary Christian approach to life is to strive with all zeal for evangelical perfection, and at the same time to contribute toward the material good of humanity. It is from the living example and the charitable enterprise of such Christians as these that all that is highest and noblest in human society takes its strength and growth.

Contributing to Society

If this doctrine is to make its impact on the various spheres of human activity—in private, family, and social life—then it is absolutely vital that the Church shall never for an instant lose sight of that sacred patrimony of truth inherited from the Fathers. But it is equally necessary for her to keep up to date with the changing conditions of this modern world, and of modern living, for these have opened up entirely new avenues for the Catholic apostolate.

Beyond Science

The Church has never been stinting in her admiration for the results of man’s inventive genius and scientific progress, which have so revolutionized modern living. But neither has she been backward in assessing these new developments at their true value. While keeping a watchful eye on these things, she has constantly exhorted men to look beyond such visible phenomena—to God, the source of all wisdom and beauty. Her constant fear has been that man, who was commanded to “subject the earth and rule it,”⁷ should in the process forget that other serious command: “The Lord thy God shalt thou

worship, and Him only shalt thou serve.”⁸ Real progress must not be impeded by a passing infatuation for transient things.

BRINGING HOME THE CHURCH'S TEACHING TO THE MODERN WORLD

From what We have said, the doctrinal role of this present Council is sufficiently clear.

Transmitting the Truth Fearlessly

This twenty-first Ecumenical Council can draw upon the most effective and valued assistance of experts in every branch of sacred science, in the practical sphere of the apostolate, and in administration. Its intention is to give to the world the whole of that doctrine which, notwithstanding every difficulty and contradiction, has become the common heritage of mankind—to transmit it in all its purity, undiluted, undistorted.

It is a treasure of incalculable worth, not indeed coveted by all, but available to all men of good will.

And our duty is not just to guard this treasure, as though it were some museum-piece and we the curators, but earnestly and fearlessly to dedicate ourselves to the work that needs to be done in this modern age of ours, pursuing the path which the Church has followed for almost twenty centuries.

Nor are we here primarily to discuss certain fundamentals of Catholic doctrine, or to restate in greater detail the traditional teaching of the Fathers and of early and more recent theologians. We presume that these things are sufficiently well known and familiar to you all.

A Fresh Approach

There was no need to call a council merely to hold discussions of that nature. What is needed at the present time is a new enthusiasm, a new joy and serenity of mind in the unreserved acceptance by all of the entire Christian faith, without forfeiting that accuracy and

precision in its presentation which characterized the proceedings of the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council. What is needed, and what everyone imbued with a truly Christian, Catholic, and apostolic spirit craves today, is that this doctrine shall be more widely known, more deeply understood, and more penetrating in its effects on men's moral lives. What is needed is that this certain and immutable doctrine, to which the faithful owe obedience, be studied afresh and reformulated in contemporary terms. For this deposit of faith, or truths which are contained in our time-honored teaching is one thing; the manner in which these truths are set forth (with their meaning preserved intact) is something else.

This, then, is what will require our careful, and perhaps too our patient, consideration. We must work out ways and means of expounding these truths in a manner more consistent with a predominantly pastoral view of the Church's teaching office.

THE RIGHT WAY TO SUPPRESS ERROR

In these days, which mark the beginning of this Second Vatican Council, it is more obvious than ever before that the Lord's truth is indeed eternal. Human ideologies change. Successive generations give rise to varying errors, and these often vanish as quickly as they came, like mist before the sun.

The Church has always opposed these errors, and often condemned them with the utmost severity. Today, however, Christ's Bride prefers the balm of mercy to the arm of severity. She believes that, present needs are best served by explaining more fully the purport of her doctrines, rather than by publishing condemnations.

Contemporary Repudiation of Godlessness

Not that the need to repudiate and guard against erroneous teaching and dangerous ideologies is less today than formerly. But all such error is so manifestly contrary to rightness and goodness, and produces such fatal results, that our contemporaries show every inclination to condemn it of their own accord—especially that way of life which

repudiates God and His law, and which places excessive confidence in technical progress and an exclusively material prosperity. It is more and more widely understood that personal dignity and true self-realization are of vital importance and worth every effort to achieve. More important still, experience has at long last taught men that physical violence, armed might, and political domination are no help at all in providing a happy solution to the serious problems which affect them.

A Loving Mother

The great desire, therefore, of the Catholic Church in raising aloft at this Council the torch of truth, is to show herself to the world as the loving mother of all mankind; gentle, patient, and full of tenderness and sympathy for her separated children. To the human race oppressed by so many difficulties, she says what Peter once said to the poor man who begged an alms: “Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, that I give thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk.”⁹ In other words it is not corruptible wealth, nor the promise of earthly happiness, that the Church offers the world today, but the gifts of divine grace which, since they raise men up to the dignity of being sons of God, are powerful assistance and support for the living of a more fully human life. She unseals the fountains of her life-giving doctrine, so that men, illumined by the light of Christ, will understand their true nature and dignity and purpose. Everywhere, through her children, she extends the frontiers of Christian love, the most powerful means of eradicating the seeds of discord, the most effective means of promoting concord, peace with justice, and universal brotherhood.

PROMOTING UNITY OF THE CHRISTIAN AND HUMAN FAMILY

The Church’s anxiety to promote and defend truth springs from her conviction that without the assistance of the whole of revealed doctrine man is quite incapable of attaining to that complete and

steadfast unanimity which is associated with genuine peace and eternal salvation. For such is God's plan. He "wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."¹⁰

Unhappily, however, the entire Christian family has not as yet fully and perfectly attained to this visible unity in the truth. But the Catholic Church considers it her duty to work actively for the fulfillment of that great mystery of unity for which Christ prayed so earnestly to His heavenly Father on the eve of His great sacrifice. The knowledge that she is so intimately associated with that prayer is for her an occasion of ineffable peace and joy. And why should she not rejoice sincerely when she sees Christ's prayer extending its salvific and ever increasing efficacy even over those who are not of her fold?

Reflection of That Unity Sought By Christ

Indeed, if we consider well the unity for which Christ prayed on behalf of His Church, it would seem to shine, as it were, with a threefold ray of supernatural, saving light. There is first of all that unity of Catholics among themselves which must always be kept steadfast and exemplary. There is also a unity of prayer and ardent longing prompting Christians separated from this Apostolic See to aspire to union with us. And finally there is a unity, which consists in the esteem and respect shown for the Catholic Church by members of various non-Christian religions.

Universality and Unity

It is therefore an overwhelming source of grief to us to know that, although Christ's blood has redeemed every man that is born into this world, there is still a great part of the human race that does not share in those sources of supernatural grace, which exist in the Catholic Church. And yet the Church sheds her light everywhere. The power that is hers by reason of her supernatural unity redounds to the advantage of the whole family of men. She amply justifies those magnificent words of St. Cyprian: "The Church, radiant with the light of her Lord, sheds her rays over all the world, and that light of hers remains one, though everywhere diffused; her corporate

unity is not divided. She spreads her luxuriant branches over all the earth; she sends out her fair-flowing streams ever farther afield. But the head is one; the source is one. She is the one mother of countless generations. And we are her children, born of her, fed with her milk, animated with her breath.”¹¹

Blazing a Trail

Such, venerable brethren, is the aim of the Second Vatican Council. It musters the Church’s best energies and studies with all earnestness how to have the message of salvation more readily welcomed by men. By that very fact it blazes a trail that leads toward that unity of the human race, which is so necessary if this earthly realm of ours is to conform to the realm of heaven, “whose king is truth, whose law is love, whose duration is eternity.”¹²

CONCLUSION

Thus, venerable brethren in the episcopate, “our heart is wide open to you.”¹³ Here we are assembled in this Vatican Basilica at a turning-point in the history of the Church; here at this meeting-place of earth and heaven, by St. Peter’s tomb and the tomb of so many of Our predecessors, whose ashes in this solemn hour seem to thrill in mystic exultation.

A Radiant Dawn

For with the opening of this Council a new day is dawning on the Church, bathing her in radiant splendor. It is yet the dawn, but the sun in its rising has already set our hearts aglow. All around is the fragrance of holiness and joy. Yet there are stars to be seen in this temple, enhancing its magnificence with their brightness. You are those stars, as witness the Apostle John;¹⁴ the churches you represent are golden candlesticks shining round the tomb of the Prince of Apostles.¹⁵ With you We see other dignitaries come to Rome from the five continents to represent their various nations. Their attitude is one of respect and warm-hearted expectation.

Saints, Faithful, and Council Fathers

Hence, it is true to say that the citizens of earth and heaven are united in the celebration of this Council. The role of the saints in heaven is to supervise our labors; the role of the faithful on earth, to offer concerted prayer to God; your role, to show prompt obedience to the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit and to do your utmost to answer the needs and expectations of every nation on earth. To do this you will need serenity of mind, a spirit of brotherly concord, moderation in your proposals, dignity in discussion, and wisdom in deliberation.

God grant that your zeal and your labors may abundantly fulfill these aspirations. The eyes of the world are upon you; and all its hopes.

Prayer for Divine Assistance

Almighty God, we have no confidence in our own strength; all our trust is in you. Graciously look down on these Pastors of your Church. Aid their counsels and their legislation with the light of your divine grace. Be pleased to hear the prayers we offer you, united in faith, in voice, in mind.

Mary, help of Christians, help of bishops; recently in your church at Loreto, where We venerated the mystery of the Incarnation,¹⁶ you gave us a special token of your love. Prosper now this work of ours, and by your kindly aid bring it to a happy, successful conclusion. And do you, with St. Joseph your spouse, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, intercede for us before the throne of God.

To Jesus Christ, our most loving Redeemer, the immortal King of all peoples and all ages, be love, power, and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

—October 11, 1962

NOTES

1 Luke 2:34
2 Ibid. 10:16.
3 Ibid. 11:23.
4 See *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII* (Washington, DC: TPS Press, 1964), 20–23.
5 Matt. 6:33.
6 Ibid.
7 Gen. 1:28.
8 Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8.
9 Acts 3:6.
10 1 Tim. 2:4.
11 *De Catholicae Ecclesiae Unitate*, 5.
12 St. Augustine, Ep. 138, 3.
13 2 Cor. 6:11.
14 Rev. 1:20.
15 Ibid.
16 See *TPS*, VIII. 273–8.



DECLARATIONS

GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS

Declaration on Christian Education



SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED *by* HIS HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
on OCTOBER 28, 1965

GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS

Declaration on Christian Education

INTRODUCTION

The Sacred Ecumenical Council has considered with care how extremely important education is in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age.¹

Indeed, the circumstances of our time have made it easier and at once more urgent to educate young people and, what is more, to continue the education of adults. Men are more aware of their own dignity and position; more and more they want to take an active part in social and especially in economic and political life.² Enjoying more leisure, as they sometimes do, men find that the remarkable development of technology and scientific investigation and the new means of communication offer them an opportunity of attaining more easily their cultural and spiritual inheritance and of fulfilling one another in the closer ties between groups and even between peoples.

Consequently, attempts are being made everywhere to promote more education. The rights of men to an education, particularly the primary rights of children and parents, are being proclaimed and recognized in public documents.³ As the number of pupils rapidly increases, schools are multiplied and expanded far and wide and other educational institutions are established. New experiments are

conducted in methods of education and teaching. Mighty attempts are being made to obtain education for all, even though vast numbers of children and young people are still deprived of even rudimentary training and so many others lack a suitable education in which truth and love are developed together.

To fulfill the mandate she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling.⁴ Therefore she has a role in the progress and development of education. Hence this sacred synod declares certain fundamental principles of Christian education especially in schools. These principles will have to be developed at greater length by a special post-conciliar commission and applied by episcopal conferences to varying local situations.



**Pope
Benedict XVI**

Caritas in Veritate
30–31

Authentic Development

Gravissimum Educationis Introduction

The correlation between [the multiple elements of integral human development] requires a commitment to *foster the interaction of the different levels of human knowledge* in order to promote the authentic development of peoples. Often it is thought that development, or the socio-economic measures that go with it, merely require to be implemented through joint action. This joint action, however, needs to be given direction, because “all social action involves a doctrine.” In view of the complexity of the issues, it is obvious that the various disciplines have to work together through an orderly interdisciplinary exchange. Charity does not exclude knowledge,

but rather requires, promotes, and animates it from within. Knowledge is never purely the work of the intellect. It can certainly be reduced to calculation and experiment, but if it aspires to be wisdom capable of directing man in the light of his first beginnings and his final ends, it must be “seasoned” with the “salt” of charity. Deeds without knowledge are blind, and knowledge without love is sterile. Indeed, “the individual who is animated by true charity labors skillfully to discover the causes of misery, to find the means to combat it, to overcome it resolutely.” Faced with the phenomena that lie before us, charity in truth requires first of all that we know and understand, acknowledging and respecting the specific competence of every level of knowledge. Charity is not an added extra, like an appendix to work already concluded in each of the various disciplines: it engages them in dialogue from the very beginning. The demands of love do not contradict those of reason. Human knowledge is insufficient and the conclusions of science cannot indicate by themselves the path toward integral human development. There is always a need to push further ahead: this is what is required by charity in truth. Going beyond, however, never means prescinding from the conclusions of reason, nor contradicting its results. Intelligence and love are not in separate compartments: *love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love.*

This means that moral evaluation and scientific research must go hand in hand, and that charity must animate them in a harmonious interdisciplinary whole, marked by unity and distinction. The Church’s social doctrine, which has “*an important interdisciplinary dimension,*” can exercise, in this perspective, a function of extraordinary effectiveness. It allows faith, theology, metaphysics, and science to come together in a collaborative effort in the service of humanity. It is here above

all that the Church's social doctrine displays its dimension of wisdom. Paul VI had seen clearly that among the causes of underdevelopment there is a lack of wisdom and reflection, a lack of thinking capable of formulating a guiding synthesis, for which "a clear vision of all economic, social, cultural, and spiritual aspects" is required. The excessive segmentation of knowledge, the rejection of metaphysics by the human sciences, the difficulties encountered by dialogue between science and theology are damaging not only to the development of knowledge, but also to the development of peoples, because these things make it harder to see the integral good of man in its various dimensions. The "broadening [of] our concept of reason and its application" is indispensable if we are to succeed in adequately weighing all the elements involved in the question of development and in the solution of socio-economic problems.

1. The Meaning of the Universal Right to an Education

All men of every race, condition, and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education⁵ that is in keeping with their ultimate goal,⁶ their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

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 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.⁷

An Education for Love

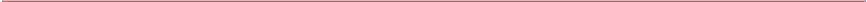
Gravissimum Educationis 11 | Bishop Barron

In paragraph 280 of chapter seven in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis broaches the sensitive topic of education in the area of sexuality, a theme strongly emphasized at Vatican II. Quoting the first paragraph of *Gravissimum Educationis*, he clearly indicates that in our instruction of children on this score, we should be willing to use the findings of “psychology

and the arts and science of teaching,” but that these are never enough. Very much in line with the Thomistic conviction that grace builds on nature, Francis insists that the use of these insights must be supplemented by a proper training in the virtues surrounding sexual expression, especially “an education for love, for mutual self-giving.”

The pope knows how thoroughly commodified and objectified sex has become in our culture, just one

<p>more means of attaining pleasure, one more 'contact sport.' But he also knows that the great biblical and theological tradition teaches that sex, like all things human, needs to be brought under the</p>	<p>discipline of love—which is to say, willing the good of the other. And so the Church and the family must stand athwart the regnant culture and propose a more persuasive type of education in sexuality.</p>
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2. Christian Education

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature⁸ so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced to the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (see John 4:23), especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22–24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (see Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (see 1 Pet. 3:15) but also how to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society.⁹ Wherefore this sacred synod recalls to pastors of souls their most serious obligation to see to it that all the faithful, but especially the youth who are the hope of the Church, enjoy this Christian education.¹⁰

3. The Authors of Education

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore

must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.¹¹ This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellow men and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.¹²

The family which has the primary duty of imparting education needs the help of the whole community. In addition, therefore, to the rights of parents and others to whom the parents entrust a share in the work of education, certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society, whose role is to direct what is required for the common temporal good. Its function is to promote the education of youth in many ways, namely: to protect the duties and rights of parents and others who share in education and to give them aid; according to the principle of subsidiarity, when the endeavors of parents and other societies are lacking, to carry out the work of education in accordance with the wishes of the parents; and, moreover, as the common good demands, to build schools and institutions.¹³

Finally, in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life.¹⁴ The Church is bound as a mother to give to

these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society, and the building of a world that is more human.¹⁵

4. Various Aids to Christian Education

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,¹⁶ which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery¹⁷ 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,¹⁸ various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.



**Pope
St. John Paul II**

*Catechesi
Tradendae* 20

The Aim of Catechesis

Gravissimum Educationis 4

The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.

Catechesis aims therefore at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the

light of God's word, so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that word. Changed by the working of grace into a new creature, the Christian thus sets himself to follow Christ and learns more and more within the Church to think like Him, to judge like Him, to act in conformity with His commandments, and to hope as He invites us to.

To put it more precisely: within the whole process of evangelization, the aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian, having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know His "mystery," the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him, the requirements and promises contained in His Gospel message, and the paths that He has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow Him.

It is true that being a Christian means saying "yes" to Jesus Christ, but let us remember that this "yes" has two levels: It consists in surrendering to the word of God and relying on it, but it also means, at a later stage, endeavoring to know better—and better the profound meaning of this word.

5. The Importance of Schools

Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance.¹⁹ It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a center whose work and progress must be shared together by

families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community.

Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.

6. The Duties and Rights of Parents

Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.²⁰

In addition it is the task of the state to see to it that all citizens are able to come to a suitable share in culture and are properly prepared to exercise their civic duties and rights. Therefore the state must protect the right of children to an adequate school education, check on the ability of teachers and the excellence of their training, look after the health of the pupils, and in general, promote the whole school project. But it must always keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity so that there is no kind of school monopoly, for this is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens, and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many societies.²¹

Therefore this sacred synod exhorts the faithful to assist to their utmost in finding suitable methods of education and programs of study and in forming teachers who can give youth a true education. Through the associations of parents in particular they should further with their assistance all the work of the school but especially the moral education it must impart.²²

7. Moral and Religious Education in All Schools

Feeling very keenly the weighty responsibility of diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children, the Church must be present with her own special affection and help for the great number who are being trained in schools that are not Catholic. This is possible by the witness of the lives of those who teach and direct them, by the apostolic action of their fellow-students,²³ but especially by the ministry of priests and laymen who give them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow.

The Church reminds parents of the duty that is theirs to arrange and even demand that their children be able to enjoy these aids and advance in their Christian formation to a degree that is abreast of their development in secular subjects. Therefore the Church esteems highly those civil authorities and societies which, bearing in mind the pluralism of contemporary society and respecting religious freedom, assist families so that the education of their children can be imparted in all schools according to the individual moral and religious principles of the families.²⁴

8. Catholic Schools

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life, and man is illumined by faith.²⁵ So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary

apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

Since, therefore, the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circumstances the utmost importance. Consequently this sacred synod proclaims anew what has already been taught in several documents of the magisterium,²⁶ namely: the right of the Church freely to establish and to conduct schools of every type and level. And the council calls to mind that the exercise of a right of this kind contributes in the highest degree to the protection of freedom of conscience, the rights of parents, as well as to the betterment of culture itself.

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs.²⁷ They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society. Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship, and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. The work of these teachers, this sacred synod declares, is in the real sense of the word an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our times and at once a true service offered to society. The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these

schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.²⁸



**Pope
St. John Paul II**

*Message to the
National Catholic
Educational
Association of the
United States*

The Goal of Catholic Education

Gravissimum Educationis 8

With profound conviction I ratify and reaffirm the words that Paul VI spoke originally to the Bishops of your country: “Brethren, we know the difficulties involved in preserving Catholic schools, and the uncertainties of the future, and yet we rely on the help of God and on your own zealous collaboration and untiring efforts, so that Catholic schools can continue, despite grave obstacles, to fulfill their providential role at the service of genuine Catholic education, and at the service of your country.” Yes, the Catholic school must remain a privileged means of Catholic education in America. As an instrument of the apostolate it is worthy of the greatest sacrifices.

But no Catholic school can be effective without dedicated Catholic teachers, convinced of the great ideal of Catholic education. The Church needs men and women who are intent on teaching by word and example—intent on helping to permeate the whole educational milieu with the spirit of Christ. This is a great vocation, and the Lord himself will reward all who serve in it as educators in the cause of the word of God.

In order that the Catholic school and the Catholic teachers may truly make their irreplaceable

contribution to the Church and to the world, the goal of Catholic education itself must be crystal clear. Beloved sons and daughters of the Catholic Church, brothers and sisters in the faith: Catholic education is above all a question of communicating Christ, of helping to form Christ in the lives of others.

9. Different Types of Catholic Schools

To this concept of a Catholic school all schools that are in any way dependent on the Church must conform as far as possible, though the Catholic school is to take on different forms in keeping with local circumstances.²⁹ Thus the Church considers very dear to her heart those Catholic schools, found especially in the areas of the new churches, which are attended also by students who are not Catholics.

Attention should be paid to the needs of today in establishing and directing Catholic schools. Therefore, though primary and secondary schools, the foundation of education, must still be fostered, great importance is to be attached to those which are required in a particular way by contemporary conditions, such as: professional³⁰ and technical schools, centers for educating adults and promoting social welfare, or for the disabled in need of special care, and also schools for preparing teachers for religious instruction and other types of education.

This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith.

10. Catholic Colleges and Universities

The Church is concerned also with schools of a higher level, especially colleges and universities. In those schools dependent on



**Pope
St. Paul VI**

Letter to Director-
General of
UNESCO

Literacy and Educating Adults

Gravissimum Educationis 9

The educational action of the Church is aimed, through literacy work, at the molding of the individual as a whole and at his human and social advancement, seeking thus to integrate individual men and women, deliberately and in a responsible manner, into the society to which they belong. In this way they will be able to enjoy their right to participate in the culture of their people, and will also become aware of their own mission in society.

Those in position of responsibility in the Catholic world, in collaboration also with their brothers of other religions or those who share other convictions, have already made a valuable contribution to the success of this noble campaign, through a great number of undertakings as varied as they are original. In connection with this, the ninth International Literacy Day, they will not fail to redouble their efforts, with renewed dedication, to secure the recognition of literacy as a basic precondition for all genuine human development and all economic and social progress. May we also be allowed to insist on one aspect of these efforts, which is perhaps a special one but is of growing importance, namely literacy programs for migrant workers.

Large numbers of workers are being forced, for economic reasons, to leave their countries for

long periods of time. Urgent measures are required to enable them in the first place to participate fully in the culture of their own home country, and then to integrate with social and professional activities in the host country. A genuine literacy campaign will frequently be necessary to achieve both of these aims, since otherwise migrant workers are likely to find themselves helpless and at the mercy of all kinds of exploitation. We know how many generous spirits have already set to work in this field, but much still remains to be done.

her she intends that by their very constitution individual subjects be pursued according to their own principles, method, and liberty of scientific inquiry, in such a way that an ever deeper understanding in these fields may be obtained and that, as questions that are new and current are raised and investigations carefully made according to the example of the doctors of the Church and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas,³¹ there may be a deeper realization of the harmony of faith and science. Thus there is accomplished a public, enduring, and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture and the students of these institutions are molded into men truly outstanding in their training, ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world.³²

In Catholic universities where there is no faculty of sacred theology there should be established an institute or chair of sacred theology in which there should be lectures suited to lay students. Since science advances by means of the investigations peculiar to higher scientific studies, special attention should be given in Catholic universities and colleges to institutes that serve primarily the development of scientific research.

The sacred synod heartily recommends that Catholic colleges and universities be conveniently located in different parts of the world, but in such a way that they are outstanding not for their numbers but for their pursuit of knowledge. Matriculation should

be readily available to students of real promise, even though they be of slender means, especially to students from the newly emerging nations.

Since the destiny of society and of the Church itself is intimately linked with the progress of young people pursuing higher studies,³³ the pastors of the Church are to expend their energies not only on the spiritual life of students who attend Catholic universities, but, solicitous for the spiritual formation of all their children, they must see to it, after consultations between bishops, that even at universities that are not Catholic there should be associations and university centers under Catholic auspices in which priests, religious, and laity, carefully selected and prepared, should give abiding spiritual and intellectual assistance to the youth of the university. Whether in Catholic universities or others, young people of greater ability who seem suited for teaching or research should be specially helped and encouraged to undertake a teaching career.



**Pope
St. John Paul II**

Ex Corde Ecclesiae
4–7

Commitment to the Cause of Truth

Gravissimum Educationis 10

It is the honor and responsibility of a Catholic University to consecrate itself without reserve *to the cause of truth*. This is its way of serving at one and the same time both the dignity of man and the good of the Church, which has “an intimate conviction that truth is (its) real ally . . . and that knowledge and reason are sure ministers to faith.” Without in any way neglecting the acquisition of useful knowledge, a Catholic University is distinguished by its free search for the whole truth about nature, man, and God. The present age is in urgent need of this kind of disinterested service, namely of *proclaiming*

the meaning of truth, that fundamental value without which freedom, justice, and human dignity are extinguished. By means of a kind of universal humanism a Catholic University is completely dedicated to the research of all aspects of truth in their essential connection with the supreme Truth, who is God. It does this without fear but rather with enthusiasm, dedicating itself to every path of knowledge, aware of being preceded by him who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life,” the *Logos*, whose Spirit of intelligence and love enables the human person with his or her own intelligence to find the ultimate reality of which he is the source and end and who alone is capable of giving fully that Wisdom without which the future of the world would be in danger.

It is in the context of the impartial search for truth that the relationship between faith and reason is brought to light and meaning. The invitation of Saint Augustine, “*Intellege ut credas; crede ut intellegas*,” is relevant to Catholic Universities that are called to explore courageously the riches of Revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, renewed even more marvelously, after sin, in Christ, and called to shine forth in the light of the Spirit.

Through the encounter which it establishes between the unfathomable richness of the salvific message of the Gospel and the variety and immensity of the fields of knowledge in which that richness is incarnated by it, a Catholic University enables the Church to institute an incomparably fertile dialogue with people of every culture. Man’s life is given dignity by culture, and, while he finds his fullness in Christ, there can be no doubt that the Gospel which reaches and renews him in every dimension is also fruitful for the culture in which he lives.

In the world today, characterized by such rapid developments in science and technology, the tasks of a Catholic University assume an ever greater importance and urgency. Scientific and technological discoveries create an enormous economic and industrial growth, but they also inescapably require the correspondingly necessary *search for meaning* in order to guarantee that the new discoveries be used for the authentic good of individuals and of human society as a whole. If it is the responsibility of every University to search for such meaning, a Catholic University is called in a particular way to respond to this need: its Christian inspiration enables it to include the moral, spiritual, and religious dimension in its research, and to evaluate the attainments of science and technology in the perspective of the totality of the human person.



**Pope
Francis**

Veritatis Gaudium
2.70.2–2.71.1

The Unity of the Disciplines

Gravissimum Educationis 10

The individual theological disciplines are to be taught in such a way that, from their internal structure and from the proper object of each as well as from their connection with other disciplines, such as Canon Law and Philosophy as well as the anthropological sciences, the basic unity of theological instruction is quite clear, and in such a way that all the disciplines converge in a profound understanding of the mystery of Christ, so that this can be announced with greater effectiveness to the People of God and to all nations.

Revealed truth must be considered also in

connection with the scientific accomplishments of evolving time, so that it can be seen “how faith and reason give harmonious witness to the unity of all truth.” Also, its exposition is to be such that, without any change of the truth, there is adaptation to the nature and character of every culture, taking special account of the philosophy and the wisdom of various peoples. However, all syncretism and every kind of false particularism are to be excluded.

11. Faculties of Sacred Sciences

The Church expects much from the zealous endeavors of the faculties of the sacred sciences.³⁴ For to them she entrusts the very serious responsibility of preparing her own students not only for the priestly ministry, but especially for teaching in the seats of higher ecclesiastical studies or for promoting learning on their own or for undertaking the work of a more rigorous intellectual apostolate. Likewise it is the role of these very faculties to make more penetrating inquiry into the various aspects of the sacred sciences so that an ever deepening understanding of sacred Revelation is obtained, the legacy of Christian wisdom handed down by our forefathers is more fully developed, the dialogue with our separated brethren and with non-Christians is fostered, and answers are given to questions arising from the development of doctrine.³⁵

Therefore ecclesiastical faculties should reappraise their own laws so that they can better promote the sacred sciences and those linked with them and, by employing up-to-date methods and aids, lead their students to more penetrating inquiry.

12. Coordination to be Fostered in Scholastic Matters

Cooperation is the order of the day. It increases more and more to supply the demand on a diocesan, national, and international level. Since it is altogether necessary in scholastic matters, every means should be employed to foster suitable cooperation between Catholic

schools, and between these and other schools that collaboration should be developed which the good of all mankind requires.³⁶ From greater coordination and cooperative endeavor greater fruits will be derived particularly in the area of academic institutions. Therefore in every university let the various faculties work mutually to this end, insofar as their goal will permit. In addition, let the universities also endeavor to work together by promoting international gatherings, by sharing scientific inquiries with one another, by communicating their discoveries to one another, by having exchange of professors for a time, and by promoting all else that is conducive to greater assistance.

CONCLUSION

The sacred synod earnestly entreats young people themselves to become aware of the importance of the work of education and to prepare themselves to take it up, especially where because of a shortage of teachers the education of youth is in jeopardy. This same sacred synod, while professing its gratitude to priests, Religious men and women, and the laity who by their evangelical self-dedication are devoted to the noble work of education and of schools of every type and level, exhorts them to persevere generously in the work they have undertaken and, imbuing their students with the spirit of Christ, to strive to excel in pedagogy and the pursuit of knowledge in such a way that they not merely advance the internal renewal of the Church but preserve and enhance its beneficent influence upon today's world, especially the intellectual world.

NOTES

- 1 Among many documents illustrating the importance of education confer above all apostolic letter of Benedict XV, *Communes Litteras*, April 10, 1919: A.A.S. 11 (1919) p. 172. Pius XI's apostolic encyclical *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 31, 1929: A.A.S. 22 (1930) pp. 49–86. Pius XII's allocution to the youths of Italian Catholic Action, April 20, 1946: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 8, pp. 53–57. Allocation to fathers of French families, Sept. 18, 1951: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 13, pp. 241–245. John XXIII's 30th anniversary message on the publication of the encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 30, 1959: A.A.S. 52 (1960) pp. 57–59. Paul VI's allocution to members of Federated Institutes Dependent on Ecclesiastic Authority, Dec. 30, 1963: Encyclicals and Discourses of His Holiness Paul VI, Rome, 1964, pp. 601–603. Above all are to be consulted the Acts and Documents of the Second Vatican Council appearing in the first series of the ante-preparatory phase, vol. 3, pp. 363–364; 370–371; 373–374.
- 2 See John XXIII's encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) pp. 413–415; 417–424; encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 278 ff.
- 3 Declaration on the Rights of Man of Dec. 10, 1948, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and also see the Declaration of the Rights of Children of Nov. 20, 1959; additional protocol to the Convention Safeguarding the Rights of Men and Fundamental Liberties, Paris, March 20, 1952; regarding that universal profession of the character of human laws see apostolic letter *Pacem in Terris*, of John XXIII of April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 295 ff.
- 4 See John XXIII's encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 402. See Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 17: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 21, and schema on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965.
- 5 Pius XII's radio message of Dec. 24, 1942: A.A.S. 35 (1943) pp. 12–19, and John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 259 ff. Also see declaration cited on the rights of man in footnote 3.
- 6 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 31, 1929: A.A.S. 22 (1930) p. 50 ff.
- 7 See John XXIII's encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 441 ff.
- 8 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 83.
- 9 See Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 36: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 41 ff.
- 10 See Second Vatican Council's schema on the Decree on the Lay Apostolate (1965), no. 12.
- 11 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 59 ff.; encyclical letter *Mit Brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937: A.A.S. 29; Pius XII's allocution to the first national congress of the Italian Catholic Teachers' Association, Sept. 8, 1946: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 8, p. 218.
- 12 See Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nos. 11 and 35: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 16, 40 ff.
- 13 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 63 ff. Pius XII's radio message of June 1, 1941: A.A.S. 33 (1941) p. 200; allocution to the first national congress of the Association of Italian Catholic Teachers, Sept. 8, 1946: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 8, 1946: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 8 p. 218. Regarding the principle of subsidiarity, see John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 294.

- 14 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1 pp. 53 ff. and 56 ff.; encyclical letter *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, June 29, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) p. 311 ff.; Pius XII's letter from Secretariat of State to 28th Italian Social Week, Sept. 20, 1955; L'Osservatore Romano, Sept. 29, 1955.
- 15 The Church praises those local, national and international civic authorities who, conscious of the urgent necessity in these times, expend all their energy so that all peoples may benefit from more education and human culture. See Paul VI's allocution to the United Nations General Assembly, Oct. 4, 1965: L'Osservatore Romano, Oct. 6, 1965.
- 16 See Pius XI's motu proprio, *Orbem Catholicum*, June 29, 1923: A.A.S. 15 (1923) pp. 327–329; decree, *Provide Sane*, Jan. 12, 1935: A.A.S. 27 (1935) pp. 145–152. Second Vatican Council's Decree on Bishops and Pastoral Duties, nos. 13 and 14.
- 17 See Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 14: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 104.
- 18 See Second Vatican Council's Decree on Communications Media, nos. 13 and 14: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 149 ff.
- 19 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 76; Pius XII's allocution to Bavarian Association of Catholic Teachers, Dec. 31, 1956: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 18, p. 746.
- 20 See Provincial Council of Cincinnati III, a. 1861: *Collatio Lacensis*, III, col. 1240, c/d; Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, pp. 60, 63 ff.
- 21 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 63; encyclical letter *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*, June 29, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) p. 305; Pius XII's letter from the Secretary of State to the 28th Italian Social Week, Sept. 20, 1955; L'Osservatore Romano, Sept. 29, 1955; Paul VI's allocution to the Association of Italian Christian Workers, Oct. 6, 1963: Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI, vol. 1, Rome, 1964, p. 230.
- 22 See John XXIII's message on the 30th anniversary of the encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 30, 1959: A.A.S. 52 (1960) p. 57.
- 23 The Church considers it as apostolic action of great worth also when Catholic teachers and associates work in these schools. See Second Vatican Council's schema of the Decree on the Lay Apostolate (1965), nos. 12 and 16.
- 24 See Second Vatican Council's schema on the Declaration on Religious Liberty (1965), no. 5.
- 25 See Provincial Council of Westminster I, a. 1852: *Collatio Lacensis* III, col. 1334, a/b; Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 77 ff.; Pius XII's allocution to the Bavarian Association of Catholic Teachers, Dec. 31, 1956: Discourses and Radio Messages, vol. 18, p. 746; Paul VI's allocution to the members of Federated Institutes Dependent on Ecclesiastic Authority, Dec. 30, 1963: Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI, 1, Rome, 1964, 602 ff.
- 26 See especially the document mentioned in the first note; moreover this law of the Church is proclaimed by many provincial councils and in the most recent declarations of very many of the episcopal conferences.
- 27 See Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1 p. 80 ff.; Pius XII's allocution to the Catholic Association of Italian Teachers in Secondary Schools, Jan. 5, 1954: Discourses and Radio Messages, 15, pp. 551–558; John XXIII's allocution to the 6th Congress of the Association of Catholic Italian Teachers, Sept. 5, 1959: Discourses, Messages, Conversations, 1, Rome, 1960, pp. 427–431.
- 28 See Pius XII's allocution to the Catholic Association of Italian Teachers in Secondary Schools, Jan. 5, 1954, 1, p. 555.
- 29 See Paul VI's allocution to the International Office of Catholic Education, Feb. 25, 1964: Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI, 2 Rome, 1964, p. 232.

- 30 See Paul VI's allocution to the Christian Association of Italian Workers, Oct. 6, 1963: Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI, 1, Rome, 1964, p. 229.
- 31 See Paul VI's allocution to the International Thomistic Congress, Sept. 10, 1965: L'Osservatore Romano, Sept. 13–14, 1965.
- 32 See Pius XII's allocution to teachers and students of French Institutes of Higher Catholic Education, Sept. 21, 1950: Discourses and Radio Messages, 12, pp. 219–221; letters to the 22nd congress of Pax Romana, Aug. 12, 1952: Discourses and Radio Messages, 14, pp. 567–569; John XXIII's allocution to the Federation of Catholic Universities, April 1, 1959: Discourses, Messages and Conversations, 1, Rome, 1960, pp. 226–229; Paul VI's allocution to the Academic Senate of the Catholic University of Milan, April 5, 1964: Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI, 2, Rome, 1964, pp. 438–443.
- 33 See Pius XII's allocution to the academic senate and students of the University of Rome, June 15, 1952: Discourses and Radio Messages, 14, p. 208: "The direction of today's society principally is placed in the mentality and hearts of the universities of today."
- 34 See Pius XI's apostolic constitution *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, May 24, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) pp. 245–247.
- 35 See Pius XII's encyclical letter *Humani Generis*, Aug. 12, 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) pp. 568 ff. and 578; Paul VI's encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, part III, Aug. 6, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 637–659; Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 90–107.
- 36 See John XXIII's encyclical letter *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 284 and elsewhere.