

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE
FOR
LUMEN GENTIUM

PREPARED FOR THE YEAR OF FAITH
OCTOBER 11, 2012 THROUGH NOVEMBER 24, 2013



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS
OCTOBER 2012

Lumen Gentium
Reflection and Discussion Guide

***“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 ...”***

Blessed John Paul II
At the Beginning of the New Millennium, 2001

Blessed John Paul II considered the Second Vatican Council to be “... the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century” where we find “a sure compass by which to take our bearings ...” (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium, 2001*). During this Year of Faith, we are being invited to gain a deeper understanding of who we are as Church so that we are all participants in the mission of the Church: to “go and make disciples of all nations.” (Mt 28:19)

INTRODUCTION

The Year of Faith, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI will be celebrated from October 11, 2012 through November 24, 2013, is a time for the faithful to grow in their faith in Jesus Christ and to participate even more fully in His holy Catholic Church. This year also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the convening of the Second Vatican Council and the 20th anniversary of the promulgation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Each parishioner in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis is being asked to enter into this time of reflection and celebration. One of the ways our archdiocese, as a whole, is doing this is by each of us reading and reflecting on one of the key documents of the Second Vatican Council titled *Lumen Gentium* (The “Light of Nations”). After reading and reflecting, each parishioner is invited to contribute his or her input to the production of a pastoral resource titled “10 Things We Want You to Know about the Catholic Faith.”

This “Reflection and Discussion Guide” is intended to help small groups with their reading and prayerful reflection on the document and to focus discussion toward inclusion in the parish process. It is important for the faithful to read the original document. Therefore this guide does not replace the original document, nor is it a “translation” of *Lumen Gentium*. It is intended to be used alongside the original document to facilitate individual reflection and group discussion. Reflection and discussion groups may already exist in the parish (committees, commissions, small faith communities) or they may be formed specifically for this process. A group could also be more informal such as in a family, between spouses and with youth. Regardless of the make-up of the group, it is important to remember that the goal of this reflection and discussion is to grow in our faith and to participate more fully in Christ’s Church.

CONTEXT OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council on October 11, 1962, less than twenty years after the end of World War II and during a period of much upheaval in the world. This was only the 21st ecumenical (worldwide) council in the almost 2000-year history of the Roman Catholic Church. It took place over four years with a session of the council held in each of the subsequent three years, 1963, 1964, 1965. As Pope John XXIII said in his "Opening Address to the Council," the Council "wishes to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral without ... any distortion which, throughout twenty centuries has become the common patrimony of men." As Catholics then and now are aware, doctrine is communicated through both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. You will notice that *Lumen Gentium* is a wonderful example of how both come together to form Church teaching.

TIPS FOR READING *LUMEN GENTIUM* AND USING THIS GUIDE

- Most of us do not read Church documents on a regular basis, so the writing style may seem unfamiliar. However, you will see that most of *Lumen Gentium* contains basic language and many references to Sacred Scripture.
- Occasionally you will see uncommon vocabulary from the field of theology. Don't let it frustrate you. Most of the vocabulary can be determined from the context.
- The document is separated into eight chapters. Don't try to read too much at once. Read one or two chapters at a time reflecting on the questions after each chapter.
- Many references are made to Sacred Scripture and some to Church documents.
- For the purpose of this process, it is not necessary to read the "Appendix from the Acts of the Council."
- Whether reflecting privately or in a group, always begin and end with prayer. (See "Prayer for the Year of Faith in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis" at the end of this guide as an example.)

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The reflection questions are the same for each chapter but will draw out different responses based on the material. The "suggested readings" vary based on the topic and come from *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* which can be found online at www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html.

Please note the questions after Chapter VIII at the end of the process. These questions will focus attention and discussion on questions that will aid efforts to develop the resource "10 Things We Want You to Know About the Catholic Faith."

- 1) What are the three most important ideas I want to take away from my reading of *Lumen Gentium* for me personally?
- 2) What are the three most important ideas that I want to share with others who may benefit from a clearer understanding of our Catholic Faith?

After Chapter I “The Mystery of the Church” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

For further consideration from *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (numbers 147 – 152):

149. What is the origin and the fulfillment of the Church?

758-766

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The Church finds her origin and fulfillment in the eternal plan of God. She was prepared for in the Old Covenant with the election of Israel, the sign of the future gathering of all the nations. Founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming death and Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth.

150. What is the mission of the Church?

767-769

The mission of the Church is to proclaim and establish the Kingdom of God begun by Jesus Christ among all peoples. The Church constitutes on earth the seed and beginning of this salvific Kingdom.

After Chapter II “On the People of God” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 153 – 176)

154. What are the characteristics of the people of God?

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One becomes a member of this people through faith in Christ and Baptism. This people has for its origin God the Father; for its head Jesus Christ; for its hallmark the dignity and freedom of the sons of God; for its law the new commandment of love; for its mission to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world; and for its destiny the Kingdom of God, already begun on earth.

155. In what way does the people of God share in the three functions of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King?

783-786

The people of God participate in Christ's priestly office insofar as the baptized are consecrated by the Holy Spirit to offer spiritual sacrifices. They share in Christ's prophetic office when with a supernatural sense of faith they adhere unflinchingly to that faith and deepen their understanding and witness to it. The

people of God share in his kingly office by means of service, imitating Jesus Christ who as King of the universe made himself the servant of all, especially the poor and the suffering.

After Chapter III “On the Hierarchical Structure of the Church ...” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 177 – 187)

179. Why did Christ institute an ecclesiastical hierarchy?

874-876

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Christ instituted an ecclesiastical hierarchy with the mission of feeding the people of God in his name and for this purpose gave it authority. The hierarchy is formed of sacred ministers,; bishops, priests, and deacons. Thanks to the sacrament of Orders, bishops and priests act in the exercise of their ministry in the name and person of Christ the Head. Deacons minister to the people of God in the diakonia (service) of word, liturgy, and charity.

180. How is the collegial dimension of Church ministry carried out?

876-877

After the example of the twelve Apostles who were chosen and sent out together by Christ, the unity of the Church’s hierarchy is at the service of the communion of all the faithful. Every bishop exercises his ministry as a member of the episcopal college in communion with the Pope and shares with him in the care of the universal Church. Priests exercise their ministry in the presbyterate of the local Church in communion with their own bishop and under his direction.

After Chapter IV “The Laity” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 188 – 191.)

188. What is the vocation of the lay faithful?

897-900

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The lay faithful have as their own vocation to seek the Kingdom of God by illuminating and ordering temporal affairs according to the plan of God. They carry out in this way their call to holiness and to the apostolate, a call given to all the baptized.

189. How do the lay faithful participate in the priestly office of Christ?

901-903

They participate in it especially in the Eucharist by offering as a spiritual sacrifice “acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5) their own lives with all of their works, their prayers, their apostolic undertakings, their family life, their daily work and hardships borne with patience and even their consolations of spirit and body. In this way, even the laity, dedicated to Christ and consecrated by the Holy Spirit, offer to God the world itself.

190. How does the laity participate in the prophetic office?

904-907

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They participate in it by welcoming evermore in faith the Word of Christ and proclaiming it to the world by the witness of their lives, their words, their evangelizing action, and by catechesis. This evangelizing action acquires a particular efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world.

191. How do they participate in the kingly office?

908-913

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The laity participate in the kingly function of Christ because they have received from him the power to overcome sin in themselves and in the world by self-denial and the holiness of their lives. They exercise various ministries at the service of the community and they imbue temporal activities and the institutions of society with moral values.

After Chapter V “The Universal Call to Holiness ...” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 422 – 433.)

428. Are all called to Christian holiness?

2012-2016

2028-2029

All the faithful are called to Christian holiness. This is the fullness of Christian life and the perfection of charity and it is brought about by intimate union with Christ and, in him, with the most Holy Trinity. The path to holiness for a Christian goes by way of the cross and will come to its fulfillment in the final resurrection of the just, in which God will be all in all.

After Chapter VI “Religious” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?

- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 192 – 193.)

192. What is the consecrated life?

914-916

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The consecrated life is a state of life recognized by the Church. It is a free response to a special call from Christ by which those consecrated give themselves completely to God and strive for the perfection of charity moved by the Holy Spirit. This consecration is characterized by the practice of the evangelical counsels.

193. What can the consecrated life give to the mission of the Church?

931-933

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The consecrated life participates in the mission of the Church by means of a complete dedication to Christ and to one's brothers and sisters witnessing to the hope of the heavenly Kingdom.

After Chapter VII "The Eschatological Nature of the Pilgrim Church ..." discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 194 – 195 and 207 – 216.)

194. What is the meaning of the "communion of saints"?

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This expression indicates first of all the common sharing of all the members of the Church in holy things (sancta): the faith, the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the charisms, and the other spiritual gifts. At the root of this communion is love which "does not seek its own interests" (1 Corinthians 13:5) but leads the faithful to "hold everything in common" (Acts 4:32), even to put one's own material goods at the service of the most poor.

195. What else does "the communion of saints" mean?

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This expression also refers to the communion between holy persons (sancti); that is, between those who by grace are united to the dead and risen Christ. Some are pilgrims on the earth; others, having passed from this life, are undergoing purification and are helped also by our prayers. Others already enjoy the

glory of God and intercede for us. All of these together form in Christ one family, the Church, to the praise and glory of the Trinity.

After Chapter VIII “The Blessed Virgin Mary ...” discuss:

- 1) What ideas from this chapter are new to me? What ideas from this chapter are refreshed or renewed for me?
- 2) What ideas from this chapter can help me grow as a disciple of Jesus as I deepen my relationship with Him?
- 3) How can the information from this chapter help me, by the grace of God, improve my ability to bring the light of Christ to my family, friends, community and ultimately our culture?

(For further reading, see *The Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* numbers 196 – 199.)

197. How does the Virgin Mary help the Church?

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After the Ascension of her Son, the Virgin Mary aided the beginnings of the Church with her prayers. Even after her Assumption into heaven, she continues to intercede for her children, to be a model of faith and charity for all, and to exercise over them a salutary influence deriving from the superabundant merits of Christ. The faithful see in Mary an image and an anticipation of the resurrection that awaits them and they invoke her as advocate, helper, benefactress and mediatrix.

198. What kind of devotion is directed to the holy Virgin?

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It is a singular kind of devotion which differs essentially from the cult of adoration given only to the Most Holy Trinity. This special veneration directed to Mary finds particular expression in the liturgical feasts dedicated to the Mother of God and in Marian prayers such as the holy Rosary which is a compendium of the whole Gospel.

After finishing the reflections and discussions on the eight chapters, please consider the following questions:

- 1) What are the three most important ideas I want to take away from my reading of *Lumen Gentium* for me personally?
- 2) What are the three most important ideas that I want to share with others who may benefit from a clearer understanding of our Catholic Faith?

**Prayer for the Year of Faith
in the Archdiocese of
Indianapolis
October 11, 2012 to
November 24, 2013**

Heavenly Father,
in this Year of Faith
draw us closer to You through
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
Send your Spirit to guide our
reflection on Holy Scripture and
Sacred Tradition.

May our prayerful discussion,
sharing and service to others
bear witness to the power and
beauty of the Faith. Through
our lives, may we attract others
to know you and to live in full
communion with your one,
holy, Catholic and apostolic
Church.

Grant this, loving Father, in this
Year of Faith for your Church in
the Archdiocese of Indianapolis
and throughout the world.

We ask this through our Lord
Jesus Christ, your Son, who
lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, one
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.