

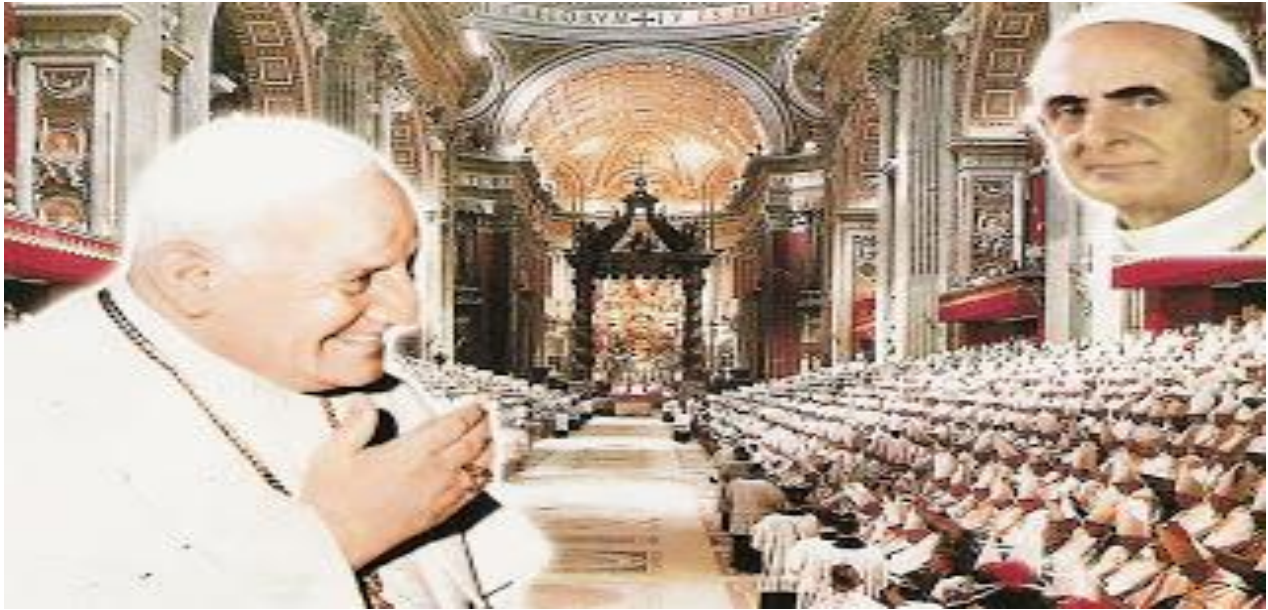
The Second Vatican Council

What did they really say?



Name: _____

Class: _____



Pope John wished the Council "to increase the fervour and energy of Catholics, to serve the needs of Christian people." To achieve this purpose:

- Bishops and priests must grow in holiness;
- The laity must be given effective instruction in Christian faith and morals;
- Adequate provision must be made for the education of children;
- Christian social activity must increase; and all Christians must have missionary hearts.

In Italian, he was bale to express his desire in one word -- *Aggiornamento* -- **the Church must be brought up to date, must adapt itself to meet the challenged conditions of modern times.** More than words, Italians appreciate expressive gestures; so also Pope John, when asked to reveal his intentions, simply moved to a window and threw it open, to let in a draught of fresh air.

Preparation for the Council

Long before the Council began, the bishops of the Catholic world were asked to submit their proposals for subjects to be raised in the Council sessions. More than 2000 lists of proposals were received together with detailed opinions from sixty theological faculties and universities. All of this material was studied and summarised, and suggestions made by the Congregations of the Roman Curia were also examined.

In June 1960, Pope John established ten commissions, entrusting to each commission the task of studying particular questions.

In this way the Theological Commission examined problems of scripture, tradition, faith and morals; other commissions considered bishops and the control of dioceses, religious orders, the Liturgy of the Church, seminaries and ecclesiastical studies, the missions, the Eastern Churches and the lay apostolate.



The Council Opens:

The Second Vatican Council opened on October 11th, 1962. More than two thousand five hundred Fathers were present at the opening Mass -- the greatest gathering at any Council in the history of the Church.

Cardinal Montini (who was soon to succeed Pope John in the chair of Peter) wrote to his people in Milan on November 18th, 1962, to explain the two "tendencies" of the bishop.

The Council, he said, was an assembly of many with complex religious problems. The unity of the Church, and its universality; the old and the new; what is fixed and what develops; the inner value of a truth, and the way in which it is to be expressed; the search for what is essential and care for particular details; principles and their practical application -- religious problems can be considered from so many different aspects.

Discussion of these problems will often be animated and lively -- yet all the bishops are united by that very love which they have for the truth.

Latin and the Vernacular:

Inevitably, many Catholics have found the liturgical changes disturbing. Older Catholics, in particular, have over the years grown deeply attached to the words and actions of the Latin Mass; they have learned to love it, in its Latin form, and it has become for them a permanent and unchanging reality in a rapidly changing world. Latin was the common tongue -- *the lingua franca* -- of the Western world, used by clerics, statesmen and scholars. Since the Mass is the common prayer of the whole Church, many feel that Latin should still be retained.

This view was expressed in the first great Decree to issue from the Council -- the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy." The Decree states "the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites."

The change from Latin to English, in parts of the Mass, has been singled out because it appears to many to be the most striking result of the Council's work. But the Council has authorized the use of the vernacular, or mother-tongue, not only for parts of the Mass but also for the administration of every sacrament and sacramental.

The Altar:

Where possible, the high altar is to be placed in such a way that Mass may be offered by the priest facing the people; **the altar should stand away from the wall of the sanctuary, so that room is left to allow the priest to move around it.**

The Council and the Liturgy:

The changes in the Liturgy of the Church show how the work of the Council affects every catholic. But these changes usually took place so slowly and gradually.

The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a strong tabernacle, placed at the centre of the high altar; but it maybe placed upon a side altar, if that side altar is dignified and easily seen. Again, the tabernacle may be placed on the altar at which Mass is said facing the people; in this case the tabernacle should be small.

The cross and candlesticks will be placed upon the altar; in certain circumstances, however, the bishop may allow them to be placed alongside the altar. **The sedilia, or seats** for the celebrant and sacred ministers, should be easily seen by the faithful.

There should be an **ambo** (lectern or reading-desk) -- clearly visible to the faithful; from which the readings from Scripture are to be made. It should be observed that many of these changes can be effected only when new churches are planned; where possible, the sanctuary of an existing church should be adapted in accordance with the Instruction of the Central Commission.

The Sacrifice of the Mass:

In the rite of the Mass, the following are the changes already announced:

1. **The celebrant does not say privately** those parts of the Proper of the Mass which are sung by the choir, recited by the people, or proclaimed by the deacon, sub-deacon or lector. The celebrant may, however, join with the people in singing or reciting parts of the Ordinary of the Mass --as, for example, the Gloria and the Credo.
2. **Psalm 42 is omitted** from the prayers to be said at the foot of the altar at the beginning of Mass.
3. The "**secret**" prayer before the preface is to be said or sung aloud.
4. The "Doxology" at the end of the Canon of the Mass (that is, the prayer "**Through him, and with him . . .**") **is to be said or sung in a loud voice.** The signs of the Cross, formerly made during this prayer, are omitted, and the celebrant holds the host with the chalice, slightly raised above the corporal. The "Our Father" is said or sung in the vernacular by the people together with the priest. be said or sung aloud by the celebrant.
5. The words spoken by the priest when giving Holy Communion have been shortened to "**Corpus Christ**" -- "**The Body of Christ;**" the person communicating says "Amen" before receiving Holy Communion; and the priest no longer makes the sign of the Cross with the host.

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7. Provision is made for the **Epistle to be read by a lector or by one of the servers**; the Gospel must be proclaimed by the celebrant or by a deacon.
8. At all Masses attended by the faithful on Sundays and Holydays, the Gospel is to be followed by a **homily**, or explanation reading from the Scriptures. This homily may be based upon some other text of the Mass, taking account of the feast or mystery which is being celebrated.
9. After the Creed, provision is made for what is called the "community prayer" sometimes called the "**prayer of the faithful.**"
10. **The celebrant will say the opening prayers at the foot of the altar;** when he has kissed the altar, he will go to his seat and remain there until the prayers of the faithful have been said before the offertory leaving it for the ambo if he himself is to read the Epistle and Gospel but returning to it for the Creed.

11. At a High Mass **the subdeacon no longer wears the humeral veil**; the paten is left upon the altar, and the subdeacon joins the deacon in assisting the celebrant.

12. Suitable **translations** of parts of the Mass are to be **prepared by** regional or national councils of bishops.

Another important change concerns **the Eucharistic Fast**. Until recent years, this Fast was from midnight. Then it was reduced to three hours.

Finally it was altered to a fast of **one hour from food and drink**; this hour is to be reckoned from the time when Holy Communion is to be received, and not from the time Mass starts.

Sacred Music:

1. The Council drew attention to the age-old tradition of sacred music and singing, closely linked to the liturgy; and the **Constitution declares that worship becomes nobler when it is carried out with solemn singing, especially when the celebrant, ministers and people take an active part.**

2. Great attention is to be paid to the **teaching and practice of sacred music**, in harmony with training and instruction in the liturgy.

3. **Gregorian chant** is especially suited to the Roman liturgy, but other kinds of

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sacred music must not be excluded. In mission lands where the people have their own characteristic musical traditions, these traditions also should be incorporated into Christian worship.

4. **In the Latin Church, the pipe organ is recognised as the traditional musical instrument**, but other instruments maybe used provided that they can be adapted for use in divine worship.

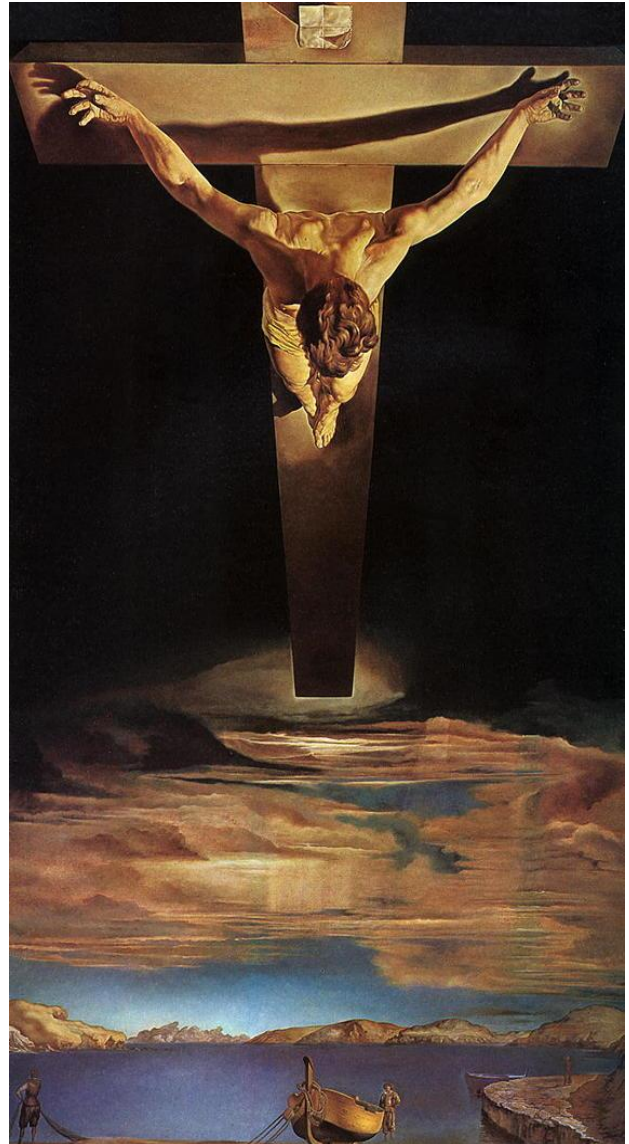


Sacred Art:

1. Things that are set apart for use in divine worship should have **dignity and beauty**, because they serve as **symbols and signs of the supernatural world**. The highest achievement of the fine arts is sacred art, which is man's attempt to express the infinite beauty of God and to direct his mind to God.
2. **The Church has always been the patron of the fine arts**. The Church reserves the right to decide whether an artist's work is in keeping with divine worship.
3. Artistic styles vary from one time and place to another. **Modern art** is the expression of our times; provided that it is in keeping with divine worship, a work of modern art and may be used for sacred use.
4. **Bishops and others responsible for churches and holy places** should remove from those places all objects which lack true artistic value, or which may be out of keeping with divine worship. Similarly, they should see that the number of statues and pictures should be moderate, and that they should be placed in such a way that a true sense of proportion is observed.
5. All things destined for use in divine worship should have **simple dignity**; lavish display does not accord with the worship of God. Each diocese should have its own Commission of Sacred Art; ecclesiastical laws, relating to the building of churches, are to be revised wherever necessary.

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The Council witnessed a dramatic demonstration of ecumenism on December 7th, when Pope Paul and the Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras I formally expressed their regret for the mutual excommunications pronounced by their predecessors. Pope Leo IX and Patriarch Cerularius, in 1054.

The documentary work of the Council, the fruit of laborious committee study, many preliminary versions, and countless revisions, is represented by sixteen final drafts, as follows:



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Four Constitutions:

"On the Sacred Liturgy" (Dec. 4, 1963),
"On the Church" (Nov. 21, 1964),
"Divine Revelation" (Nov. 18th, 1965),
"The Church in the Modern World" (Dec. 7, 1965).



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Nine Decrees:

"The Instruments of Social Communication" (Dec. 4, 1963),
"Ecumenism" (Nov. 21, 1964),
"The Eastern Catholic Churches" (Nov. 21, 1964),
"The Pastoral Duty of Bishops," (Oct. 18, 1965),
"On the up-to-date Renewal of Religious Life,
"On Priestly Formation" (Oct. 28, 1965),
"On the Apostolate of the Laity" (Nov. 18, 1965),
"On the Ministry and the Priestly Life" (Dec. 7, 1965),
"On the Missionary Activity of the Church" (Dec. 7, 1965).



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Three Declarations:

"On the Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions" (Oct 26, 1965)
"On Christian Education" (Oct 28, 1965),
"On Religious Freedom" (Dec 7, 1965).

Vatican Council II What Did It Say?

It is to be noted that this file is the gist of the business of Vatican Council II and by no means does it contain everything that the attendees accomplished there. For anyone who wants more detailed information, there are many excellent books on the subject.

Here is a Vatican II search engine which also has free downloadable text of this Council.

[Vatican Council II](#)

<http://www.stjosef.at/council/search/>

<http://home.inreach.com/bstanley/vat.htm>