

LUMEN GENTIUM
The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
with Fr. Jan Nowotnik



The Light of the Nations – The Mystery of the Church

The Introduction to Lumen Gentium teaches us that the Church is a mystery imbued with the hidden presence of God. The Church is a sacrament – a sign to the world of Jesus Christ.

The primary role of the Church, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ – so that all may have an opportunity to receive Christ.

Q1. How has your thinking about Church changed after listening to Fr. Jan?

Q2. How might we be an efficacious sign of God’s presence to the local community in which we live?

Q3. How do we understand ‘The Body of Christ’ and in what ways are we being called to be the Body of Christ?

The People of God

Chapters two to six of the Constitution provide a picture of the Church rooted in our identity as the **People of God**. Each different group – priests, bishops, laity and religious has their own role to play in the mission that Christ has given us.

Q1. What is your understanding of the priesthood of the baptised? In what ways do the laity contribute or might contribute to the Mission of the Church?

Q2. In the chapter on the People of God, unity is presented as key to God’s plan. Why is our connection with those who are not Catholic so important?

Universal Call to Holiness

Generally, we tend not to speak about holiness in relation to ourselves, but *Lumen Gentium* teaches us that we are called to holiness. Holiness is not reserved to the saints or those who give a lifelong commitment to the Church, such as priests and religious. All of us are called to holiness in the very different ways we live our Christian life.

Q1. What is your understanding of holiness? What is your personal experience of holiness?

Q2. How do we live out this call to holiness? What examples of 'holiness' do you see in your community and how might we support one another to live out this call?

Q3. Has your life ever been influenced by a particular religious sister, brother or priest? What was it about them that had an impact on you?

The Pilgrim Church

Chapter 7 speaks about the Pilgrim Church reminding us that the Church is not an earthly institution. At times we may speak of the Church as an institution which we can manipulate and change, forgetting that it is the Body of Christ. This chapter reminds us that from the beginning of life, when we are created in the image and likeness of God, baptised in the life of the Spirit and through baptism a part of the sacramental life of the Church, we are on a pilgrimage. This pilgrimage leads us to the heavenly kingdom, to the 'beatific vision, to the heavenly Jerusalem, where we will come face to face with the Communion of Saints.'

Q1. What is your understanding of Pilgrimage? In speaking about your own life, where do you see that your life has been a pilgrimage?

Q2. How do you understand the Communion of the Saints? In what ways might we honour the Saints? Who are the people in heaven that you turn to in prayer? In what ways do they give you strength and hope?

Mary, Our Blessed Lady

The whole of Chapter 8 is dedicated to helping us to understand the person of Mary and her place in the life of the Church. As we are told, Mary was meant to have her own document, but the wisdom of the Council Fathers led them to include her in *Lumen Gentium*. In doing so Mary becomes for us the model and the witness of what it means to be Church. She is part of the People of God.

Q1. In what ways is Mary a model for us? How does her life teach us how to be Church?

Q2. What are the memories and practices you have regarding Mary? Have these changed over time and how is your faith influenced by the life of Mary and your devotion to her?

Concluding Prayer

Conclude with a prayer of thanksgiving for the time together.

