

DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON
THE CHURCH
LUMEN GENTIUM

SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS
HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
ON NOVEMBER 21, 1964

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CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

1

The Church's Mission Statement

- ▣ 1. Christ is the Light of nations.
- ▣ Because this is so, this Sacred Synod desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all people,
- ▣ Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament, it desires now to unfold its own inner nature and universal mission
- ▣ .
- ▣ This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous councils.
- ▣ The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all people, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.

2

The Church fits into the grand schema of salvation
History

- ▣ 2. The eternal Father created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life.
- ▣ Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer
- ▣ All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and pre- destined to become conformed to the image of His Son
- ▣ He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant.
- ▣ In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest.
- ▣ At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion,

Christ saves us through his death on the cross and establishes his Church – a mystery now -- to share His redemption particularly through the Eucharist as we express and bring about who we are.

- ▣ 3. The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father.
- ▣ It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things.
- ▣ To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom.
- ▣ By His obedience He brought about redemption.
- ▣ The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world.

- ▣ Jesus: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself".
- ▣ As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on.
- ▣ All men are called to this union with Christ.

4

With Pentecost the Spirit comes. The Spirit gives
life to sinners, guides the Church, leads us in
prayer and renews us always

The Trinity is our creative source of unity

4. When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church, and thus, all those who believe would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father.

Thus, the Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

5. The Mystery of the Church created by Christ

- ▣ The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation.
- ▣ The Lord Jesus set it on its course by preaching the Good News.
- ▣ The Miracles of Jesus also confirm that the Kingdom has already arrived on earth.
- ▣ The Kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ who came "to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many."
- ▣ When Jesus, who had suffered the death of the cross for mankind, had risen, He appeared as the one constituted as Lord, Christ and eternal Priest and He poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father.
- ▣ From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom.
- ▣ While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.

6. Images of the Church

The Church is:

- ▣ a sheepfold...it is a flock.
- ▣ a piece of land to be cultivated
- ▣ a choice vineyard
- ▣ the building of God. A Temple
- ▣ the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.
- ▣ "our mother".
- ▣ spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb
- ▣ in exile.
- ▣ hidden with Christ in God until it appears in glory with its Spouse.

7 The Body of Christ

- ▣ Christ has established us as his body through his death and resurrection.
- ▣ The sacraments, particularly Baptism and Eucharist, unite us to the Invisible Christ and to each other.
- ▣ He is the head , we are the members with our own unique charisms.
- ▣ The Spirit flows through the body animating all and unifying us with each other.
- ▣ Christ loves the Church as His bride

8 The Church on earth and the Kingdom of God

- ▣ Not two separate realities but interrelated as the natures of Christ.
- ▣ This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Savior, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd, and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority, which He erected for all ages as "the pillar and mainstay of the truth"
- ▣ This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him, although many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside of its visible structure.
- ▣ These elements, as gifts belonging to the Church of Christ, are forces impelling toward catholic unity.

- ▣ The Church is not set up to seek earthly glory, but to proclaim, even by its own example [like Christ did], humility and self-sacrifice.
- ▣ The Church encompasses with love all who are afflicted with human suffering and in the poor and afflicted sees the image of its poor and suffering Founder.
- ▣ While Christ, holy, innocent and undefiled knew nothing of sin the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners,
- ▣ Is at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal.
- ▣ By the power of the risen Lord it is given strength that it might, in patience and in love, overcome its sorrows and its challenges, both within itself and from without, and that it might reveal to the world, faithfully though darkly, the mystery of its Lord until, in the end, it will be manifested in full light.

CHAPTER II

ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD

9 The People of God

- ▣ At all times and in every race God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right. God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness. He therefore chose the race of Israel as a people unto Himself. With it He set up a covenant.

- ▣ Christ instituted this new covenant, the new testament, that is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit.
- ▣ This was to be the new People of God established as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people, but are now the people of God".

- ▣ The state of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God.
- ▣ Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us.
- ▣ Its end is the kingdom of God
- ▣ So it is that that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race.
- ▣ Established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

- ▣ God gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity.

10 Two Priesthoods

- ▣ Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men, made the new people "a kingdom and priests to God the Father".
- ▣ All the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God, should present themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give an answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.

- ▣ Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated:
- ▣ The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people.
- ▣ The faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.

11. The Seven Sacraments

It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation.

- ▣ Incorporated in the Church through **baptism**, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; **reborn as sons of God** they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church.
- ▣ They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of **Confirmation**, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ.
- ▣ Taking part in the **Eucharistic** sacrifice, which is **the fount and apex** of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that **unity** of the people of God which is suitably **signified and** wondrously **brought about** by this most august sacrament.
- ▣ Those who approach the sacrament of **Penance** obtain **pardon** from the mercy of God for the offence committed against Him and are at the same time **reconciled** with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins, and which by charity, example, and prayer seeks their **conversion**.

- ▣ By the sacred **anointing of the sick** and the prayer of her priests the whole Church **commends the sick to the suffering and glorified Lord**, asking that He may lighten their suffering and save them; she exhorts them, moreover, to contribute to the welfare of the whole people of God by associating themselves freely with the passion and death of Christ.
- ▣ Those of the faithful who are consecrated by **Holy Orders** are appointed to **feed the Church** in Christ's name with the word and the grace of God.
- ▣ Finally, Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of **Matrimony**, whereby they **signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church**, help each other to attain to **holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children**. By reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God.
- ▣ From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries. **The family is, so to speak, the domestic church**. In it **parents** should, by their word and example, be **the first preachers of the faith to their children**; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state.

12. The Protection of the Spirit

- ▣ The holy people of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office.
- ▣ The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief.
- ▣ They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when "from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful" they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God.
- ▣ **It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank:charisms,**
- ▣ **Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after,** nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church.

13 All are called to Salvation

- ▣ **All men and women are called to belong to the new people of God**
- ▣ It follows that though there are many nations there is but one people of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly rather than of an earthly nature.
- ▣ In virtue of this catholicity each individual part contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts and of the whole Church.
- ▣ **All people are called to be part of this catholic unity of the people of God which in promoting universal peace presages it.**
- ▣ And there belong to or are related to it in various ways, the Catholic faithful, all who believe in Christ, and indeed the whole of mankind, **for all are called by the grace of God to salvation.**

14 Salvation for Catholics

- ▣ This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation.
- ▣ Christ is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation.
- ▣ In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church.
- ▣ Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved.
- ▣ Catechumens who seek with explicit intention to be incorporated into the Church are by that very intention joined with her.

15 Other Christians

- ▣ The Church recognizes that in many ways she is linked with those who, being baptized, are honored with the name of Christian
- ▣ For there are many who honor Sacred Scripture.
- ▣ They lovingly believe in God the Father Almighty and in Christ, the Son of God and Savior.
- ▣ They are consecrated by baptism
- ▣ They also recognize and accept other sacraments within their own Churches or ecclesiastical communities.
- ▣ Many of them rejoice in the episcopate, celebrate the Holy Eucharist and cultivate devotion toward the Virgin Mother of God.
- ▣ They also share with us in prayer and other spiritual benefits.
- ▣ Likewise we can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit.
- ▣ Some to the extent of the shedding of their blood.
- ▣ In all of Christ's disciples the Spirit arouses the desire to be peacefully united, in the manner determined by Christ, as one flock under one shepherd, and He prompts them to pursue this end.
- ▣ Mother Church never ceases to pray, hope and work that this may come about. She exhorts her children to purification and renewal so that the sign of Christ may shine more brightly over the face of the earth.

16. Non-Christians

- Finally, those who have not yet received the Gospel are related in various ways to the people of God
- In the first place we must recall **the people to whom the testament and the promises were given and from whom Christ was born** according to the flesh. On account of their fathers this people remains most dear to God, for God does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues.
- But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst these there are the **Mohammedans, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us adore the one and merciful God, who on the last day will judge mankind.**
- Nor is God far distant from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, for it is He who gives to all men life and breath and all things, and as Savior wills that all men be saved.
- Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.
- Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for them
- But often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings
- Wherefore to promote the glory of God and procure the salvation of all of these, and mindful of the command of the Lord, "Preach the Gospel to every creature", **the Church fosters the missions with care and attention.**

▣ 17 The Call to Evangelize the Nations

- ▣ As the Son was sent by the Father, so He too sent the Apostles. The Church has received the solemn mandate of Christ to proclaim the saving truth from the apostles and must carry it out to the very ends of the earth.
- ▣ For the Church is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part that God's plan may be fully realized, whereby He has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world.
- ▣ By the proclamation of the Gospel she prepares her hearers to receive and profess the faith. She gives them the dispositions necessary for baptism, snatches them from the slavery of error and of idols and incorporates them in Christ so that through charity they may grow up into full maturity in Christ.
- ▣ Through her work, whatever good is in the minds and hearts of men, whatever good lies latent in the religious practices and cultures of diverse peoples, is not only saved from destruction but is also cleansed, raised up and perfected unto the glory of God, the confusion of the devil and the

- ▣ The obligation of spreading the faith is imposed on every disciple of Christ, according to his state.
- ▣ Although, however, all the faithful can baptize, the priest alone can complete the building up of the Body in the Eucharistic sacrifice.
- ▣ Thus are fulfilled the words of God, spoken through His prophet: "From the rising of the sun until the going down thereof my name is great among the gentiles, and in every place a clean oblation is sacrificed and offered up in my name".
- ▣ In this way the Church both prays and labors in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, all honor and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe

CHAPTER III

ON THE HIERARCHICAL STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH AND IN PARTICULAR ON THE EPISCOPATE

- ▣ 18 -19. For the nurturing and constant growth of the People of God, Christ the Lord instituted in His Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body. For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, **serve their brethren**, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working toward a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation
- ▣ This Sacred Council teaches and declares that Jesus Christ established His holy Church having sent forth the apostles as He Himself had been sent by the Father; and **He willed that their successors, namely the bishops, should be shepherds in His Church** even to the consummation of the world.
- ▣ He placed Blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted in him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and communion. And **all this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the meaning and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible magisterium, this Sacred Council again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful.**
- ▣ This Council is resolved to declare and proclaim the doctrine concerning bishops who together with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the visible Head of the whole Church, govern the house of the living God.

- ▣ 20 Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship, and ministers for governing.

- ▣ Therefore, the Sacred Council teaches that bishops by divine institution have succeeded to the place of the apostles, as shepherds of the Church, and he who hears them, hears Christ, and he who rejects them, rejects Christ and Him who sent Christ.

- ▣ 21. Episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, confers the office of teaching and of governing, which, however, of its very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college. For from the tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of both the Church of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed, that **bishops in an eminent and visible way sustain the roles of Christ Himself as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person.** Therefore it pertains to the bishops to admit newly elected members into the Episcopal body by means of the sacrament of Orders.

22 The College of Bishops with the Pope

- ▣ 22. Just as in the Gospel, the Lord so disposing, St. Peter and the other apostles constitute one apostolic college, so in a similar way **the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are joined together. and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the body.**
- ▣ But **the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff**, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power.
- ▣ The supreme power in the universal Church, which this college enjoys, is exercised in a solemn way in an ecumenical council. **A council is never ecumenical unless it is confirmed or at least accepted as such by the successor of Peter; and it is prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them and to confirm them.**
- ▣ This same collegiate power can be exercised together with the pope by the bishops living in all parts of the world, provided that the head of the college calls them to collegiate action, or at least approves of or freely accepts the united action of the scattered bishops, so that it is thereby made a collegiate act.

- ▣ 23 **The individual bishops, who are placed in charge of particular churches, exercise their pastoral government over the portion of the People of God committed to their care, and not over other churches nor over the universal Church.**
- ▣ But each of them, as a member of the Episcopal college and legitimate successor of the apostles, is **obliged** by Christ's institution and command **to be solicitous** for the whole Church, and this solicitude, though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes greatly to the advantage of the universal Church.
- ▣ The individual bishops are obliged to enter into a **community of work** among themselves and with the successor of Peter, upon whom was imposed in a special way the great duty of spreading the Christian name.
- ▣ With all their energy, therefore, **they must supply to the missions both workers for the harvest** and also spiritual and material aid, both directly and on their own account. as well as by arousing the ardent cooperation of the faithful.
- ▣ And finally, the bishops, in a universal fellowship of charity, should gladly **extend their fraternal aid to other churches**, especially to neighboring and more needy dioceses in accordance with the venerable example of antiquity.

- ▣ 24 - 25. Among the principal duties of bishops the preaching of the Gospel occupies an eminent place.
- ▣ **In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent.**
- ▣ **Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim Christ's doctrine infallibly whenever, even though dispersed through the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held – especially at Ecumenical councils**
- ▣ The infallibility promised to the Church resides also in the body of Bishops, when that body exercises the supreme magisterium with the successor of Peter.

- ▣ 26. Every legitimate celebration of the Eucharist is regulated by the bishop.
- ▣ By the ministry of the word they communicate God's power to those who believe unto salvation and through the sacraments, the regular and fruitful distribution of which they regulate by their authority, they sanctify the faithful.
- ▣ They direct the conferring of baptism, by which a sharing in the kingly priesthood of Christ is granted.
- ▣ They are the original ministers of confirmation, dispensers of sacred Orders and the moderators of penitential discipline.
- ▣ And by the example of their way of life they must be an influence for good to those over whom they preside refraining from all evil and, as far as they are able with God's help, exchanging evil for good, so that together with the flock committed to their care they may arrive at eternal life.

27 The Role of Bishops

- ▣ 27. Bishops, as vicars and ambassadors of Christ, govern the particular churches entrusted to them by their counsel, exhortations, example, and even by their authority and sacred power, which indeed they use only for the edification of their flock in truth and holiness, remembering that he who is greater should become as the lesser and he who is the chief become as the servant.
- ▣ In virtue of this power, **bishops have the sacred right and the duty before the Lord to make laws for their subjects**, to pass judgment on them and to moderate everything pertaining to the ordering of worship and the apostolate.

- ▣ The pastoral office is entrusted to them completely;
- ▣ nor are they to be regarded as vicars of the Roman Pontiffs, for they exercise an authority that is proper to them, and are quite correctly called "prelates," heads of the people whom they govern. Their power, therefore, is not destroyed by the supreme and universal power, but on the contrary it is affirmed, strengthened and vindicated by it, since the Holy Spirit unfailingly preserves the form of government established by Christ the Lord in His Church.
- ▣ But the faithful must cling to their bishop, as the Church does to Christ, and Jesus Christ to the Father, so that all may be of one mind through unity, and abound to the glory of God.

- ▣ 28. Christ, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, (176) has through His apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of His consecration and His mission. They have legitimately handed on to different individuals in the Church various degrees of participation in this ministry. Thus the divinely established ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different levels by those who from antiquity have been called bishops, priests and deacons.
- ▣ Priests, although they do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, nevertheless they are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high Priest, they are consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd be faithful and to celebrate divine worship, so that they are true priests of the New Testament.

- ▣ They announce the divine word to all.
- ▣ They exercise their sacred function especially in the Eucharistic worship or the celebration of the Mass by which acting in the person of Christ
- ▣ For the sick and the sinners among the faithful, they exercise the ministry of alleviation and reconciliation and they present the needs and the prayers of the faithful to God the Father.
- ▣ Exercising within the limits of their authority they gather together God's family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father.
- ▣ In the midst of the flock they adore Him in spirit and in truth.
- ▣ Finally, they labor in word and doctrine, believing what they have read and meditated upon in the law of God, teaching what they have believed, and putting in practice in their own lives what they have taught.

- ▣ **Priests**, prudent cooperators with the Episcopal order, its aid and instrument, called to serve the people of God, **constitute one priesthood with their bishop** although bound by a diversity of duties.
- ▣ On account of this sharing in their priesthood and mission, let priests sincerely **look upon the bishop as their father and reverently obey him**. And let the **bishop regard his priests as his co-workers and as sons and friends**, just as Christ called His disciples now not servants but friends.
- ▣ All priests, both diocesan and religious, by reason of Orders and ministry, **fit into this body of bishops and priests, and serve the good of the whole Church according to their vocation and the grace given to them**.
- ▣ In virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, **all priests are bound together in intimate brotherhood**, which naturally and freely manifests itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in their meetings and in communion of life, of labor and charity.

29 Deacons

- At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons
- It is the duty of the deacon to administer baptism solemnly, to be custodian and dispenser of the Eucharist, to assist at and bless marriages in the name of the Church, to bring Viaticum to the dying, to read the Sacred Scripture to the faithful, to instruct and exhort the people, to preside over the worship and prayer of the faithful, to administer sacramentals, to officiate at funeral and burial services.
- Since these duties, so very necessary to the life of the Church, can be fulfilled only with difficulty in many regions in accordance with the discipline of the Latin Church as it exists today, **the diaconate can in the future be restored as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy.** It pertains to the competent territorial bodies of bishops, of one kind or another, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, to decide whether and where it is opportune for such deacons to be established for the care of souls. With the consent of the Roman Pontiff, this diaconate can, in the future, be conferred upon men of more mature age, even upon those living in the married state. It may also be conferred upon suitable young men, for whom the law of celibacy must remain intact.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAITY

- ▣ 30. The Sacred Council gladly turns its attention. to the state of those faithful called the laity.
- ▣ Everything that has been said above concerning the People of God is intended for the laity, religious and clergy alike.
- ▣ But there are certain things which pertain in a special way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their condition and mission. Due to the special circumstances of our time the foundations of this doctrine must be more thoroughly examined.
- ▣ For their pastors know how much the laity contribute to the welfare of the entire Church. They also know that they were not ordained by Christ to take upon themselves alone the entire salvific mission of the Church toward the world.
- ▣ **On the contrary they understand that it is their noble duty to shepherd the faithful and to recognize their ministries and charisms, so that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one mind.**

- ▣ 31. The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church. These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world.

- ▣ **What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular nature.** It is true that those in holy orders can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are by reason of their particular vocation especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry.
- ▣ Similarly, by their state in life, religious give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes.
- ▣ **But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God.** They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven.
- ▣ In this way they may make Christ known to others, especially by the testimony of a life resplendent in faith, hope and charity.

- ▣ 32.
- ▣ The laity have Christ for their brothers who though He is the Lord of all, came not to be served but to serve. They also have for their brothers those in the sacred ministry who by teaching, by sanctifying and by ruling with the authority of Christ feed the family of God

- ▣ 33. The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself.
- ▣ Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself.
- ▣ Moreover, by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished.
- ▣ Now the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.
- ▣ Thus every layman, in virtue of the very gifts bestowed upon him, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the mission of the Church itself "according to the measure of Christ's bestowal".
- ▣ Besides this apostolate which certainly pertains to all Christians, **the laity can also be called in various ways to a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy.** This was the way certain men and women assisted Paul the Apostle in the Gospel, laboring much in the Lord. Further, they have the capacity to assume from the Hierarchy certain ecclesiastical functions, which are to be performed for a spiritual purpose.

- ▣ 34.
- ▣ For all their works, prayers and apostolic endeavors, their ordinary married and family life, their daily occupations, their physical and mental relaxation, if carried out in the Spirit, and even the hardships of life, if patiently borne-all these become "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ".
- ▣ Together with the offering of the Lord's body, they are most fittingly offered in the celebration of the Eucharist. Thus, as those everywhere who adore in holy activity, the laity consecrate the world itself to God.

- ▣ 35. Christ, the great Prophet, who proclaimed the Kingdom of His Father both by the testimony of His life and the power of His words, continually fulfills His prophetic office until the complete manifestation of glory. He does this not only through the hierarchy, but also through the laity whom He made His witnesses and to whom He gave understanding of the faith and an attractiveness in speech so that the power of the Gospel might shine forth in their daily social and family life.
- ▣ Evangelization, that is, the announcing of Christ by a living testimony as well as by the spoken word, takes on a specific quality and a special force in that it is carried out in the ordinary surroundings of the world.
- ▣ For where Christianity pervades the entire mode of family life one will find there both the practice and an excellent school of the lay apostolate. In such a home husbands and wives find their proper vocation in being witnesses of the faith and love of Christ to one another and to their children. The Christian family loudly proclaims both the present virtues of the Kingdom of God and the hope of a blessed life to come
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- ▣ Consequently, even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can and must perform a work of great value for the evangelization of the world. For even if some of them have to fulfill their religious duties on their own, when there are no sacred ministers or in times of persecution; and even if many of them devote all their energies to apostolic work; still it remains for each one of them to cooperate in the external spread and the dynamic growth of the Kingdom of Christ in the world. Therefore, let the laity devotedly strive to acquire a more profound grasp of revealed truth, and let them insistently beg of God the gift of wisdom.

- ▣ 36. The faithful must learn the deepest meaning and the value of all creation, as well as its role in the harmonious praise of God. They must assist each other to live holier lives even in their daily occupations. In this way the world may be permeated by the spirit of Christ and it may more effectively fulfill its purpose in justice, charity and peace.
- ▣ The laity have the principal role in the overall fulfillment of this duty. Therefore, by their competence in secular training and by their activity, elevated from within by the grace of Christ, let them vigorously contribute their effort, so that created goods may be perfected by human labor, technical skill and civic culture for the benefit of all men according to the design of the Creator and the light of His Word.
- ▣ May the goods of this world be more equitably distributed among all men, and may they in their own way be conducive to universal progress in human and Christian freedom. In this manner, through the members of the Church, will Christ progressively illumine the whole of human society with His saving light.
- ▣ Moreover, let the laity also by their combined efforts remedy the customs and conditions of the world, if they are an inducement to sin, so that they all may be conformed to the norms of justice and may favor the practice of virtue rather than hinder it. By so doing they will imbue culture and human activity with genuine moral values; they will better prepare the field of the world for the seed of the Word of God; and at the same time they will open wider the doors of the Church by which the message of peace may enter the world.
- ▣ Because of the very economy of salvation the faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of human society. Let them strive to reconcile the two, remembering that in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience, since even in secular business there is no human activity which can be withdrawn from God's dominion. In our own time, however, it is most urgent that this distinction and also this harmony should shine forth more clearly than ever in the lives of the faithful, so that the mission of the Church may correspond more fully to the special conditions of the world today. For it must be admitted that the temporal sphere is governed by its own principles, since it is rightly concerned with the interests of this world. But that ominous doctrine which attempts to build a society with no regard whatever for religion, and which attacks and destroys the religious liberty of its citizens, is rightly to be rejected.

- ▣ 37. The laity have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their spiritual shepherds the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the word of God and of the sacraments. They are, by reason of the knowledge, competence or outstanding ability which they may enjoy, permitted and sometimes even obliged to express their opinion on those things which concern the good of the Church. When occasions arise, let this be done through the organs erected by the Church for this purpose.
- ▣ The laity should, as all Christians, promptly accept in Christian obedience decisions of their spiritual shepherds, since they are representatives of Christ as well as teachers and rulers in the Church. Let them follow the example of Christ, who by His obedience even unto death, opened to all men the blessed way of the liberty of the children of God. Nor should they omit to pray for those placed over them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of their souls, so that they may do this with joy and not with grief.
- ▣ Let the spiritual shepherds recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laity in the Church. Let them willingly employ their prudent advice. Let them confidently assign duties to them in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. Further, let them encourage lay people so that they may undertake tasks on their own initiative. Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions and desires proposed by the laity. However, let the shepherds respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city

- ▣ 38. Each individual layman must stand before the world as a witness to the resurrection and life of the Lord Jesus and a symbol of the living God. All the laity as a community and each one according to his ability must nourish the world with spiritual fruits. They must diffuse in the world that spirit which animates the poor, the meek, the peace makers-whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed as blessed. **In a word, "Christians must be to the world what the soul is to the body."**

CHAPTER V

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS IN THE CHURCH

- ▣ 39. Therefore in the Church, everyone is called to holiness. However, this holiness of the Church is unceasingly manifested, and must be manifested, in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful; it is expressed in many ways in individuals, who in their walk of life, tend toward the perfection of charity, thus causing the edification of others; in a very special way this (holiness) appears in the practice of the counsels, customarily called "evangelical."
- ▣ 40. Thus it is evident to everyone, that all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity; by this holiness as such a more human manner of living is promoted in this earthly society.

41. Every person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.

- In the first place, the shepherds of Christ's flock
- Priests participate in the grace of their office and they should grow daily in their love of God and their neighbor
- Ministers of lesser rank are also sharers in the mission and grace of the Supreme Priest.
- Clerics, who are called by the Lord and are set aside as His portion in order to prepare themselves for the various ministerial offices under the watchful eye of spiritual shepherds, are bound to bring their hearts and minds into accord with this special election.

Besides these already named, there are also laymen, chosen of God and called by the bishop. These laymen spend themselves completely in apostolic labors, working the Lord's field with much success.

Married couples and Christian parents should follow their own proper path (to holiness) by faithful love.

A like example is that offered by widows and single people, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church.

Finally, those who engage in labor-and frequently it is of a heavy nature- should better themselves by their human labors. They should be of aid to their fellow citizens. They should raise all of society, and even creation itself, to a better mode of existence.

May all those who are weighed down with poverty, infirmity and sickness, as well as those who must bear various hardships or who suffer persecution for justice sake-may they all know they are united with the suffering Christ in a special way for the salvation of the world.

Finally all Christ's faithful, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will. In this temporal service, they will manifest to all men the love with which God loved the world.

- ▣ 42. It is the love of God and the love of one's neighbor which points out the true disciple of Christ.
- ▣ From the earliest times, then, some Christians have been called upon-and some will always be called upon-to give the supreme testimony of this love to all men, but especially to persecutors. The Church, then, considers **martyrdom** as an exceptional gift and as the fullest proof of love.
- ▣ Likewise, the holiness of the Church is fostered in a special way by the observance of the counsels proposed in the Gospel by Our Lord to His disciples. An eminent position among these is held by **virginity or the celibate state**. This is a precious gift of divine grace given by the Father to certain souls, whereby they may devote themselves to God alone the more easily, due to an undivided heart. There are **some** who, in their freedom as sons of God, renounce their own wills and **take upon themselves the state of poverty**. Still further, some become subject of their own accord to another man, in the matter of perfection for love of God. This is beyond the measure of the commandments, but is done in order to become more fully like the obedient Christ.
- ▣ Therefore, **all the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state**. Indeed they have an obligation to so strive. Let all them have care that they guide aright their own deepest sentiments of soul. Let neither the use of the things of this world nor attachment to riches, which is against the spirit of evangelical poverty, hinder them in their quest for perfect love

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS

- ▣ **43. The evangelical counsels of chastity dedicated to God, poverty and obedience are based upon the words and examples of the Lord.** The counsels are a divine gift, which the Church received from its Lord and which it always safeguards with the help of His grace.
- ▣ It has come about, that, as if on a tree which has grown in the field of the Lord, various forms of solidarity and community life, as well as various religious families have branched out in a marvelous and multiple way from this divinely given seed.
- ▣ Such a multiple and miraculous growth augments both the progress of the members of these various religious families themselves and the welfare of the entire Body of Christ.
- ▣ These religious families give their members the support of a more firm stability in their way of life and a proven doctrine of acquiring perfection.
- ▣ They further offer their members the support of fraternal association in the militia of Christ and of liberty strengthened by obedience
- ▣ **From the point of view of the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church, the religious state of life is not an intermediate state between the clerical and lay states.**

- ▣ 44. By his profession of the evangelical counsels, then, he is more intimately consecrated to divine service.
- ▣ Thus, the state which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, though it is not the hierarchical structure of the Church, nevertheless, undeniably belongs to its life and holiness.
- ▣ 45. It is the duty of the ecclesiastical hierarchy to regulate the practice of the evangelical counsels by law, since it is the duty of the same hierarchy to care for the People of God and to lead them to most fruitful pastures.
- ▣ The Church not only raises the religious profession to the dignity of a canonical state by her approval, but even manifests that this profession is a state consecrated to God by the liturgical setting of that profession. The Church itself, by the authority given to it by God, accepts the vows of the newly professed.

- ▣ 46. Religious should carefully keep before their minds the fact that the Church presents Christ to believers and non-believers alike in a striking manner daily through them.
- ▣ Therefore, this Sacred Synod encourages and praises the men and women, Brothers and Sisters, who in monasteries, or in schools and hospitals, or in the missions, adorn the Bride of Christ by their unswerving and humble faithfulness in their chosen consecration and render generous services of all kinds to mankind.
- ▣ 47. Let each of the faithful called to the profession of the evangelical counsels, therefore, carefully see to it that he persevere and ever grow in that vocation God has given him. Let him do this for the increased holiness of the Church, for the greater glory of the one and undivided Trinity, which in and through Christ is the fount and the source of all holiness.

CHAPTER VII

THE ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF THE PILGRIM CHURCH AND ITS UNION WITH THE CHURCH IN HEAVEN

- ▣ 48. The Church will attain its full perfection only in the glory of heaven, when there will come the time of the restoration of all things. At that time the human race as well as the entire world will be perfectly reestablished in Christ.
- ▣ However, until then the pilgrim Church in her sacraments and institutions has the appearance of this world and she herself dwells among creatures.
- ▣ For before we reign with Christ in glory, all of us will be made manifest "before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has won through the body, according to his works, whether good or evil" and at the end of the world "they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but those who have done evil unto resurrection of judgment".

- ▣ 49. Until then, all things are subject to Him, some of His disciples are exiles on earth, some having died are purified, and others are in glory beholding "clearly God as He is"; all are in communion in the same charity of God and neighbor.
- ▣ For all who are in Christ, having His Spirit, form one Church and cleave together in Him

- ▣ 50. Fully conscious of this communion of the whole Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the pilgrim Church from the very first ages of the Christian religion has cultivated with great piety the **memory of the dead**, and "because it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins", also offers suffrages for them.
- ▣ The Church has always believed that the **apostles and Christ's martyrs** who had given the supreme witness of faith and charity by the shedding of their blood, **are closely joined with us in Christ**, and she has always venerated them with special devotion, **together with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the holy angels**.
- ▣ When we look at the **lives of those who have faithfully followed Christ**, **we are inspired** that we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, perfect holiness.
- ▣ **Our union with the Church in heaven is put into effect in its noblest manner especially in the sacred Liturgy**. Celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice therefore, we are most closely united to the Church in heaven in communion with and venerating the memory first of all of the glorious ever-Virgin Mary, of Blessed Joseph and the blessed apostles and martyrs and of all the saints.

- ▣ 51. This Sacred Council accepts with great devotion this venerable faith of our ancestors regarding this vital fellowship with our brethren who are in heavenly glory or who having died are still being purified; and it proposes again the decrees of the Second Council of Nicaea, the Council of Florence and the Council of Trent.
- ▣ And at the same time, if any **abuses, excesses or defects** have crept in here or there, to do what is in their power to **remove or correct** them, and to restore all things to a fuller praise of Christ and of God.
- ▣ Let them therefore teach the faithful that the **authentic cult of the saints** consists not so much in the multiplying of external acts, but rather in the greater intensity of our love, whereby, we seek from the saints "example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession."
- ▣ On the other hand, let them teach the faithful that our communion with those in heaven, provided that it is understood in the fuller light of faith according to its genuine nature, in no way weakens, but conversely, more thoroughly enriches the laity worship we give to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit.
- ▣ For when Christ shall appear and the glorious resurrection of the dead will take place, the glory of God will light up the heavenly City and the Lamb will be the lamp thereof.
- ▣ Then the whole Church of the saints in the supreme happiness of charity will adore God and "the Lamb who was slain", proclaiming with one voice: "To Him who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb blessing, and honor, and glory, and dominion forever and ever".

CHAPTER VIII

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
MOTHER OF GOD

IN THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST
AND THE CHURCH

▣ *I. Introduction*

- ▣ 52. the faithful must in the first place reverence the memory "of the glorious ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our God and Lord Jesus Christ".
- ▣ 53. The Virgin Mary is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer.
- ▣ At the same time, however, because she belongs to the offspring of Adam she is one with all those who are to be saved. The Catholic Church, taught by the Holy Spirit, honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.
- ▣ 54. Wherefore this Holy Synod,
 - ▣ in expounding the doctrine on the Church,
 - ▣ in which the divine Redeemer works salvation,
 - ▣ intends to describe with diligence both the role of the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Incarnate Word and the Mystical Body,
 - ▣ and the duties of redeemed mankind toward the Mother of God,
 - ▣ who is mother of Christ and mother of men, particularly of the faithful.

▣ *II. The Role of the Blessed Mother in the Economy of Salvation*

- ▣ 55. The Sacred Scriptures of both the Old and the New Testament, as well as ancient Tradition show the role of the Mother of the Savior in the economy of salvation in an ever clearer light and draw attention to it.

- ▣ 56. The Father of mercies willed that the incarnation should be preceded by the acceptance of her who was predestined to be the mother of His Son, so that just as a woman contributed to death, so also a woman should contribute to life. Thus Mary, a daughter of Adam, consenting to the divine Word, became the mother of Jesus, the one and only Mediator. Comparing Mary with Eve, the early Fathers call her "the Mother of the living," and still more often they say: "death through Eve, life through Mary."

- ▣ 57. **This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest** from the time of Christ's **virginal conception** up to His death it is shown first of all when Mary, arising in haste to go to **visit Elizabeth**, is greeted by her as blessed because of her belief in the promise of salvation and the precursor leaped with joy in the womb of his mother. This union is manifest also at the **birth of Our Lord**, who did not diminish His mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it, when the Mother of God joyfully showed her firstborn Son to the **shepherds and Magi**. When she **presented Him** to the Lord in the temple, making the offering of the poor, she heard **Simeon** foretelling at the same time that her Son would be a sign of contradiction and that a **sword would pierce the mother's soul** that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed. When the **Child Jesus was lost** and they had sought Him sorrowing, His parents found Him in the temple, taken up with the things that were His Father's business; and they did not understand the word of their Son. His Mother indeed kept these things to be pondered over in her heart.

- ▣ 58. In the public life of Jesus, Mary makes significant appearances.
- ▣ This is so even at the very beginning, when at the marriage feast of **Cana**, moved with pity; she brought about by her intercession the beginning of miracles of Jesus the Messiah.
- ▣ In the course of her **Son's preaching** she received the words whereby in extolling a kingdom beyond the calculations and bonds of flesh and blood,
- ▣ He declared blessed those who heard and kept the word of God, as she was faithfully doing.
- ▣ After this manner the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto **the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan.**
- ▣ Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to His disciple with these words: "**Woman, behold thy son**".

- ▣ 59. But since it has pleased God not to manifest solemnly the mystery of the salvation of the human race before He would pour forth the Spirit promised by Christ, we see the apostles before the day of **Pentecost** "persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren", and Mary by her prayers imploring the gift of the Spirit, who had already overshadowed her in the Annunciation.
- ▣ Finally, the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, on the completion of her earthly sojourn, was **taken up body and soul** into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords and the conqueror of sin and death.

▣ *III. On the Blessed Virgin and the Church*

- ▣ 60. **There is but one Mediator** as we know from the words of the apostle, "for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all". The maternal duty of Mary toward men in no wise obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows His power. In no way does it impede, but rather does it foster the immediate union of the faithful with Christ.
- ▣ 61. Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be **the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was in this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and in a singular way the generous associate and humble handmaid of the Lord.**
- ▣ 62. This maternity of Mary in the order of grace began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, and lasts until The eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation **Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked by the Church under the titles of Advocate, Auxiliatrix, Adjutrix, and Mediatrix. This, however, is to be so understood that it neither takes away from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficaciousness of Christ the one Mediator.**

- ▣ **For no creature could ever be counted as equal with the Incarnate Word and Redeemer.** Just as the priesthood of Christ is shared in various ways both by the ministers and by the faithful, and as the one goodness of God is really communicated in different ways to His creatures, so also the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a sharing in this one source.
- ▣ **The Church does not hesitate to profess this subordinate role of Mary.** It knows it through unfailing experience of it and commends it to the hearts of the faithful, so that encouraged by this maternal help they may the more intimately adhere to the Mediator and Redeemer.
- ▣ 63. By reason of the gift and role of divine maternity, by which she is united with her Son, the Redeemer, and with His singular graces and functions, **the Blessed Virgin is also intimately united with the Church.**
- ▣ 64. The Church indeed, contemplating her hidden sanctity, imitating her charity and faithfully fulfilling the Father's will, by receiving the word of God in faith becomes herself a mother. By her preaching she brings forth to a new and immortal life the sons who are born to her in baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God. She herself is a virgin, who keeps the faith given to her by her Spouse whole and entire. Imitating the mother of her Lord, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, she keeps with virginal purity an entire faith, a firm hope and a sincere charity.

65. But while in the most holy Virgin the Church has already reached that perfection whereby she is without spot or wrinkle, the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin. And so they turn their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as the model of virtues. Piously meditating on her and contemplating her in the light of the Word made man, the Church with reverence enters more intimately into the great mystery of the Incarnation and becomes more and more like her Spouse. Hence the Church, in her apostolic work also, justly looks to her, who, conceived of the Holy Spirit, brought forth Christ, who was born of the Virgin that through the Church He may be born and may increase in the hearts of the faithful also.

▣ *IV. The Cult of the Blessed Virgin in the Church*

- ▣ 66. Placed by the grace of God, as God's Mother, next to her Son, and exalted above all angels and men, Mary intervened in the mysteries of Christ and is justly honored by a special cult in the Church. Clearly from earliest times the Blessed Virgin is honored under the title of Mother of God, under whose protection the faithful took refuge in all their dangers and necessities. Hence after the Synod of Ephesus the cult of the people of God toward Mary wonderfully increased in veneration and love, in invocation and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: "All generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things to me". This cult, as it always existed, although it is altogether singular, differs essentially from the cult of adoration which is offered to the Incarnate Word, as well to the Father and the Holy Spirit, and it is most favorable to it.
- ▣ 67. This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries be made of great moment, and those decrees, which have been given in the early days regarding the cult of images of Christ, the Blessed Virgin and the saints, be religiously observed.
- ▣ **But it exhorts theologians and preachers of the divine word to abstain zealously both from all gross exaggerations as well as from petty narrow-mindedness in considering the singular dignity of the Mother of God.**
- ▣ Following the study of Sacred Scripture, the Holy Fathers, the doctors and liturgy of the Church, and under the guidance of the Church's magisterium, let them rightly illustrate the duties and privileges of the Blessed Virgin which always look to Christ, the source of all truth, sanctity and piety. Let them assiduously keep away from whatever, either by word or deed, could lead separated brethren or any other into error regarding the true doctrine of the Church.

- ▣ *V. Mary the sign of created hope and solace to the wandering people of God*
- ▣ 68. In the interim just as the Mother of Jesus, glorified in body and soul in heaven, is the image and beginning of the Church as it is to be perfected in the world to come, so too does she shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, as a sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth.
- ▣ 69. It gives great joy and comfort to this holy and general Synod that even among the separated brethren there are some who give due honor to the Mother of our Lord and Savior, especially among the Orientals, who with devout mind and fervent impulse give honor to the Mother of God, ever virgin