

The Second Vatican Council

Who?

Called by **Pope St John Paul XXIII**
Completed under **Pope Paul VI**

What?

The Council published **sixteen documents**. These documents were about how the Catholic Church needed to change in order to change with society. The most important of these documents are known as 'Constitution.'

When?

1960's
Called by Pope St John XXIII on 11th October 1962 and completed its work under Pope Paul VI on 8 December 1965.

Where?

The **Vatican**, in Rome. It is named 'Second Vatican Council' as it was the second council to be held there.

Why?

The Second World War ended in 1945. In the years that followed there was **considerable change in society, technology and in politics**. John XXIII became Pope in 1958 and wanted the Catholic Church to respond to these changes and to represent the faith in this new context.

The Second Vatican Council was the Catholic Church's response to the challenges of the modern world. It published sixteen documents stating the Church's position on different issues.



The four key documents **CONSTITUTION**

Four of the documents of Second Vatican Council were given the title of 'Constitution'. This made them the most important of the sixteen documents published. These have been guiding the Catholic Church since **1965**.

2. Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy)

This document covers changes to the Church's liturgy, which means the official public worship of the Church.

Before the Council most people attended Mass that was said in Latin. Everyone, priest and people, faced the altar to emphasise the link between the Eucharist and Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

The reforms encouraged by Vatican II were that the people should be more involved, have better understanding of the symbolism and be able to understand what was being said. So the words were translated into the local language and the altar was moved so that the priest now faces the people and his actions are more easily seen.

In addition, the lectionary has been revised so that Catholics get a richer and wider selection of Bible readings at church.

Changes to the Mass (e.g. no longer in Latin, facing the people, a wider selection of readings...)

1. Dei Verbum (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)

This is the document that sets out the relationship between the Bible, Tradition and the Magisterium.

It explains how these are each inspired by the Holy Spirit and have authority for the Catholic Church.

It also emphasises the importance of proper biblical scholarship, which means the study of the different literary styles in the Bible and the historical context of the Bible writers.

It also encourages Catholics to use the Bible as part of their prayers. It has led to an increase in specialist biblical scholars and more Bible study groups in parishes.

Using the Bible effectively

3. Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church)

The First Vatican Council produced documents about the roles of the Pope, the bishops and priests.

The Second Vatican Council wanted to make sure that all members of the Church knew that they had important roles to play.

Lumen Gentium means 'the light of the peoples' and this document encouraged ordinary Catholics to take a more active role to be part of the mission of the Church and to serve Jesus.

This means that all Catholics should act on the promise they made at their baptism to be 'lights to the world' by being of service to others.

Emphasised the importance of taking an ACTIVE role in the Church

4 Gaudium et Spes (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World)

This document was published at the end of the Council in 1965.

In the years before the Council, the Catholic Church was seen as being separate from the rest of world.

Gaudium et Spes was written to respond to the changes in society, the issues of poverty and social justice, the impact of science and technology and, above all, to encourage the people of faith to engage with the modern world.

By working for peace and social justice, Pope John XXIII wanted the Catholic Church to be a source of 'joy and hope' to the world.

Gaudium et Spes set the foundations and principles that later enabled the charity CAFOD to be set up to respond to the needs of the developing world.

The influence of this document has been dramatic. In the years since Vatican II

- dioceses and parishes have set up Justice and Peace Groups to consider local peace and justice issues
- international organisations like Pax Christi, which works for peace, have been created
- national organisations, such as the Catholic Association for Racial Justice, have developed.

Responding to changes in society, poverty, social justice, impact of science and technology and how to engage people in their faith in the modern world

Knowledge Check

1. When was the Second Vatican Council?
2. What was the Second Vatican Council in response to?
3. How many documents were published?
4. What are the four key documents known as?
5. What does the document *Dei Verbum* contain? (write a summary)
6. What does the document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* contain? (write a summary)
7. What does the document *Lumen Gentium* contain? (write a summary)
8. What does the document *Gaudium et Spes* contain? (write a summary)

Choose a Task

1. Create a detailed mind-map (try to make this visual)
2. Create a multiple-choice quiz (aim for at least 10 questions)
3. Create a poster/leaflet

CHALLENGE!

Turn over the mat and try to complete your task without looking at the information. Then refer back to the task mat to see what you have missed/could have included.

Exam Question

- b) Describe the purpose and importance of Vatican II [5]
- c) Explain the teachings of Vatican II [8]