

# PASTORAL CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD

## ***GAUDIUM ET SPES***

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The Church had been at war with modernity for a long time. Church leaders looked with suspicion on any new cultural trends and scientific discoveries. The Church dealt in timeless truths, not changing realities. Hence, the Church saw itself as outside the modern world, with all of its ambiguity, uncertainty and corruption. As the world continued to advance, the Church appeared increasingly outmoded and irrelevant, with nothing to contribute to society other than condemnation of its immorality.

The Council Fathers want the Church to play a more constructive role in the modern world. The first part of this document tries to explain what that role is, and the second part deals with specific areas of concern.

### **The Church in conversation with society**

The Council Fathers want the Church to engage in conversation with the entire human family, to understand its problems and address its “anxious questions” about the meaning of human activity and about the destiny of the world and of humanity. The Church strives to “scrutinize the signs of the times” and “interpret them in light of the Gospel.” It wishes to be of service to modern society, speaking “in language intelligible to each generation” about this present life and the life to come, and the relationship between them. (#2-4)

### **The Church as champion of certain foundational truths**

The Council Fathers devote an entire chapter each to three foundational truths that they see as key to the flourishing of the human race:

- human dignity,
- human community,
- and meaningful human activity in the world.

The Church hopes to be of service to the modern world by upholding these values in all different spheres of modern society: the family, the development of culture, economic and social life, politics, and the struggle for world peace. (#40)