

UDK 272/273

**PASTORAL CONSTITUTION OF “GAUDIUM ET SPES”  
AS THE MAIN CHURCH MESSIANIC DOCUMENT OF THE SECOND  
VATICAN COUNCIL IN MODERN CONDITIONS**

**Serhii Stefanov**

*Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv,  
Philosophical Faculty, Department of Religious Studies  
60 Volodymyrska Street, Kyiv, Ukraine, 01033*

This article is dedicated to the role of II Vatican Council in the life of Catholic Church. The exact documents of the Council and their impact on Christianity were examined in general. The Constitution “Gaudium et Spes” is being examined more carefully as one of the most important documents of the Council. Also the religious studies and social aspects of the impact of the Constitution “Gaudium et Spes” in modern conditions were examined.

*Key words:* Christianity, the Council, the Church, the Constitution, Aggiornamento.

The value of the II Vatican Council as an important event not only in the life of the Roman Catholic Church, but Christianity as a whole, is recognized by almost everyone. The history of the Council, the results of the sessions, the impact on the future life of the Church – all of this was becoming many times as a subject of study in Russian and Western theological literature. As it appears, at the present stage the special attention should be paid not for finding flaws in the study of activities and the significance of the II Vatican Council but the historiography of the topic and the analysis of the influence of the most important documents adopted by the II Vatican Council on the present time. The Constitution about the Church in modern world “Gaudium et Spes” can be called among all these documents as one of the key document. Pastoral Constitution about the Church in the modern world – “Joy and Hope” – is the last of four Constitution of the Second Vatican Council. The special importance of this document is that it summarizes, integrates and takes a practical level of the fundamental consular idea “Aggiornamento”, nominated by Pope John XXIII, outlining the challenges and prospects of Church teaching about its relationship with society on attitude of the Church to the economy, poverty, social justice, politics, culture, science and technology, ecumenism and international relations. The Constitution was adopted in 2307 votes, 75 fathers of Council were against and it was approved by Pope Paul VI on December 7th in 1965 on the penultimate day of the Council that was also a powerful final accord of XXI Ecumenical Council. The Council actually completed the work that was begun by the First Vatican Council in 1869–1870 years by this document that tried to protect the Church in an increasingly growing influence of the world on it. First of all the Church’s position on the main important requirements of today was cleared up in the document and outlined the main components of the concept of the dialogue of the Church with the world and outlined the opportunities for such dialogue in the future - status of man and the Church in the modern world; dignity of the human person and its calling in the context of humanism; the role and objectives of the community of mankind and the Church in the modern world; urgent problems of our time; the dignity of marriage and the family; principles of proper culture development; problems of social and economic life and political community. Predictive relevance of these issues, which a Constitution is examining, were confirmed by recent decades after the Council – the intensification and

globalization of terrorism; religious intolerance; the gap in wealth and living standards between East and West; all-increasing wave of immigrants to Europe and a perceptible decreasing of childbirth in many regions of this continent. This all allows to see the parallel between the decadence and fall of the Roman Empire in the IV–V centuries and today's Europe civilization the heart of which was the Catholic Church during centuries. The Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" was warning about such unfavorable prospects for world and the strong voice for its support the Pope John Paul II gave at the time of his pontificate [1, p. 115].

In the second part of the Constitution the attention is focused on the issues of marriage and family culture; socio-economical and political life; peace in the international community. Despite the wealth of studies on these topics, the Council objectively states that it never aimed and did not chase for completed solution of the raised issues. The Constitution recognized by itself that the solution of issues that are changing and developing in various forms for Christians is not an end in itself because they have universal principles to address the solution of these issues in the Gospel. Emphasizing on that fact that the interest in the Christian faith is not reducing, the Council nevertheless notes that the acceleration of the movement of history is such that one can hardly keep up with it. Today the fate of themselves the human race examines as a one unit and not as a history of different nations. Now this story merges into a single one and therefore the mankind has changed the static concept of being to more dynamic and more evolutionary, and the result of this was the appearance of a huge number of new problems that require new efforts of analysis and synthesis. One of the further sections of the Constitution noted that the Council predicted the dramatic social changes that are happening at the beginning of the Third Millennium. And the forecast of Council about the end of the Second Millennium was also correct. The people more and more increasingly rely on themselves and do not trust any institution in an effort for bigger and bigger autonomy. And this was caused to widespread instability and the loss of solidarity with others. On the other hand the selfishness and arrogance of mankind had led to the appearance of practical materialism and to strengthening of criticism of the state and society, and therefore the role of the Church and the role of Christian community, but the time after the Council refuted this mistrust and confirmed the prophetic power of ideas of Constitution.

The second power of document is in that that its ideas and content were discussed in detail during whole Council and were approved by the largest Council in the history of Christianity which expressed the concern about the world and each person in particular. The Church was announcing that it intends to respond to the challenges of the modern world and talk with it in one language. Though The Church has extramundane nature and purpose, but it lives in this world and shares the fate of the world. Ecumenical Council appealed to all people and established dialogue with them, herewith the Church clearly revealed the intention to use only their own means in its activity without the help of state and not giving a clear advantage to any ideology or system of government. It is specifically emphasized in the Constitution that the Church does not mix itself with the political community and the Catholic Church also refused of declared anti-communism which was natural for predecessors of John XXIII switching to dialogue with all secular forces. The Constitution "Gaudium et Spes" emphasized on that that the dignity of the human person appears firstly in the fact that it is created by God in His likeness though because of sin a man is inclinable to evil. The Christian faith is a worthy response to the idea of human's death in the man's appointment for eternity. Where in Council emphasizes on the fundamental role of conscience in human nature which is the source of human dignity. The presence and activity of the Church in the modern world and its interaction with society is also examining in the Constitution in the prism of the family which it set in the first place because the benefit of the individuality of a human and Christian society are closely connected with fortunate position of conjugal and family

communities. Furthermore the married love is often humiliated by selfishness and hedonism, and contemporary economic, socio-psychological and social conditions lead to serious complications in the family. Due to Council beliefs the family should become the main place of development of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Furthermore this document recalls that all humanity is called to be the “new people of God”, in which forcefully the love of God is revealing [2, p. 211].

The Constitution demands that each person and each family were provided by the standard of living that is worthy of the human person which owns respect and love. Love and ability to love are related to a human in general and do not tolerate any dualism or division and that the love is the most important basis of human society - the family. Teaching about the sanctity of marriage and family and its continuity, the Council emphasizes that married love that is blessed by sacrament of marriage requires indissoluble loyalty. The understanding and cooperation of parents in the upbringing of children in the family is needed to attain harmony in it. Then the document makes important comment about the respect of women’s rights and their role in the family. It is necessary to keep the presence of women in the home environment without neglecting her social rights. First of all the parents are overimposed by responsibility to educate children to choose the way of life including calling for spiritual condition. At the end the Council calls to all those who have influence in society to cooperate in providing family values. Man perceives a certain level of life culture. The Council fathers are emphasizing that the culture must strive to cherishing human dignity. It should be accessible for everyone. As Pope John Paul II accentuated, the Evangelization is also consists in the meeting with the culture of each era. Without culture the faith would remain disembodied, opened to the speculation and politicization. Therefore the Council notes that the Church, especially in our time when the conditions are changing very quickly, peculiarly needs the help of those who are living in the world perfectly knows the different institutions and disciplines and understands their inner meaning. However, culture also requires faith. Without openness to the divine culture turns into esotericism or into pseudo culture that is aimed only at material profit. But immediately after the Second Vatican Council a cultural revolution started that was called “Cultural Revolution” of 1968, which was later supplemented by “Sexual revolution”, entrenched as the dominant ones in the public consciousness. However, these changes and the computer revolution of the past decades do not make conclusions of II Vatican Council about the connection of faith and culture less actual [3, p. 94].

Socio-economic problems as the previous public calls also got the status of important public dominants in the Constitution and they are examined in it in the angle of view of preserving human dignity, because all people are equal in human dignity, so all demonstrations of discrimination – either economical, racial or religious – they are the injustice and violence against human dignity. Economic and social inequalities offend human dignity. The human increasingly spreads its rule over the world by its technical inventions. And thus human activity should be guided in favor of benefit of a human being and preservation of its environment – the living environment. The respect for human dignity in political life also contributes to bigger respect for human rights. The respect for the rights of minorities and for those people who have other ideas or religious beliefs is rising too, so the Council condemns those political structures that trample these human freedoms. According to human nature all the citizens should participate in public life caring for the common good; they have to combine love to their Motherland with the spirit of love for all mankind. The Constitution emphasizes that the Church stands above all political systems, protects the transcendental nature of man and has the right for the Christian faith and accomplish its mission. At the same time the state and the Church are at the service of man, but together they are independent and they must follow the principles that were formulated in “Gaudium et Spes”, in particular the paragraph 76 points onto that that the Church does not mix itself with the political

community in any way and does not bound itself to any political system [4, p. 56]. Humanity cannot build up the world without real peace, so the Council condemning the inhumanity of war, stimulates everyone to the cooperation for the purpose that the peace, that is leaned on justice, will prevail among the people. As the definition in the Constitution, the peace is the fetus of God's order that was committed people because it emerged from honor. However, the Council expresses the regrets about those things that despite the recent wars that brought the world the enormous material and moral losses the war continues the ruin by such actions that exceed the brutality of past centuries in some countries of the world. In such circumstances the document draws attention to the unchangeable importance of the natural rights of nations and its universal principles. The actions that do not obey the law are unjustified crimes. At a time when there the war exists and there is no competent international authority that would ensure peace, there must be the right for fair defense, but the one thing is to defend the rights of peoples using arms, and the other is to impose their domination to other people. The new tools of war could have brought mutual destruction, and therefore the Council repeating its condemnation of a total war emphasizes that any military action that destroys the city or the whole territory is a crime against humanity. The Constitution calls for caring for the overall security through the mutual trust, disarmament and sharing relevant mutual agreements [5, p. 101].

Summing up the achievements and significance of the Second Vatican Council, it should be emphasized that there hasn't already been any important problem, either Church or human problems that Council would not take into account. Though the different opinions and views were appearing, the fathers of Council reached consensus after long discussions. Thus, using the Council the Catholic Church has proved that it creates one big monolith. The greatest achievement of the Second Vatican Council is a new spirit "Aggiornamento" which prevailed in the Church and in that spirit it has strengthened its structure, deepened its science and revived its activities. The available evidences of that are the constitutions, decrees and declarations taken by the Council. The next historic achievement of the Council was his ecumenism which revealed not only in the developed concept of ecumenism and in ecumenical documents but also in the implementation of ecumenism in the act of reconciliation of the Catholic and Constantinople Churches. At the end of the Council Pope Paul VI and Athenagoras I removed the memory of the conflict in 1054 which began the split between Christians of East and West. This act had a deep socio-religious and even psychological importance in the solemn mutual canonical manifestation of brotherly love which opens up the opportunities to the full Church unity. Though the Council did not approved any new dogmas of faith, it still left a deep impression in history, because it found the ways and means to talk about the fundamental positions of Catholic teaching in the language that not only believers but also the entire world could have heard and understand it and understand it above all as how that teaching is organically and creatively working with the present day and remains actual. The Council found the reasons to open the Catholic Church towards other confessions and religions without contradicting any dogmas. The Council testified that the Catholic Church is ready to talk about the current problems of the world. The proof of this was that what happened after the Council – the active involvement of the laity in the life of the Church. In the era of globalization and the crisis of state institutions, the structure that consists of individual centers with a strong civil asset, which is also able to form an opinion about the problems and participate in their solving, probably appears more popular.

In the last twenty years of internal and external circumstances of the Church have changed increasingly and have become much more complicated. The changes in the third world and in the young Catholic units are characterized by the fact that the center of the Church gravity is increasingly shifting from Europe to the national divisions of the Catholic Church in the southern hem-

isphere. Before the face of enormous social problems of these regions as a conceptual basement for the development of the Church in the poor regions the theoretical and practical achievements of Vatican II do not stop to be relevant that is also confirmed by numerous encyclicals of Pope John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis.

#### References:

1. Віра і розум – двоє крил людського духу : матеріали наукового колоквиуму по енцикліці Папи Римського Івана Павла II / гол. ред. А. Колодний. – К. : Світ знань, 2001. – 256 с.
2. Кияк С. Другий Ватиканський Собор і релігійно-суспільні проблеми сучасності : [навчальний посібник] / С. Кияк. – Жовква : Місіонер, 2011. – 304 с.
3. Рацінгер Й. Цінності в часи перемін. Долання майбутніх викликів / Йосиф Рацінгер ; пер. з нім. О. Конкевича. – Львів : Місіонер, 2006. – 168 с.
4. Риккарди А. Удивляючий папа Франциск / А. Риккарди. – М. : ББИ, 2015. – 275 с.
5. Alberigo G. Historia del Concilio Vaticano II / G. Alberigo. – Ed. Sígueme. Salamanca 2008. – 607 p.

### **ДУШПАСТИРСЬКА КОНСТИТУЦІЯ «GAUDIUM ET SPES» ЯК ГОЛОВНИЙ ЦЕРКОВНО-МЕСІАНСЬКИЙ ДОКУМЕНТ ІІ ВАТИКАНСЬКОГО СОБОРУ В УМОВАХ СУЧАСНОСТІ**

**Сергій Стефанов**

*Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка,  
філософський факультет, кафедра релігієзнавства  
вул. Володимирська, 60, 01033, Київ, Україна*

Метою цієї статті є дослідження ролі ІІ Ватиканського собору в житті католицької церкви. Розглянуті конкретні документи собору та їх вплив на християнство в цілому. Більш детально розглядається конституція «Gaudium et Spes» як один із найважливіших документів собору. Також розглянуті релігієзнавчі та соціальні аспекти впливу конституції «Gaudium et Spes» в умовах сучасності.

*Ключові слова:* християнство, собор, церква, конституція, Aggiornamento.