LUMEN GENTIUM.06.....DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH

BACKGROUND: The Preparatory Commission produced the first text and it was presented to the bishops. The bishops felt it was simply repetitious of the traditional canonical and judicial approach to the nature of Church and sent it back. Draft B proved to be an enormous improvement. The bishops asked that two further chapters be added – one on Mary and the other on Eschatology. Another significant change was in the title given to the document. Originally it was called Aeternus Unigeniti Pater and in its place LUMEN GENTIUM became its final name. One should recall that this was a favorite phrase of John XXIII. In a radio address the dear Pope insisted that Christ was truly the Light for humanity and that the Church was the way the Light of Christ shines on our world. We may surmise that the Fathers of the Council took a hint from His Holiness, John XXIII.

This marvelous document has greatly enriched our theology of Church. Of all documents this was the one that the bishops spent the most time on in serious discussion. While the other document on Church (Gaudium et Spes) is much longer the discussion was much shorter. In LUMEN there were over 30 congregations (i.e. full sessions of the bishops) while all together during the Council there were a total of 168. In the long history of the Church there were different moments when particular themes needed to be developed. Early on it was necessary to clarify our teaching on Christ, on the Trinity on the Holy Spirit. But now was the time to delve more deeply into Ecclesiology. There were some great theologians in the Twentieth Century that paved the way, names like Congar, Journet, De Lubac and many others. In fact, Vatican I might well have broken ground but because of its rather hasty conclusion it was only able to create ECCLESIA CHRISTI. This, document, however, was almost entirely on the Role of the Roman Pontiff.

In many ways it could be said that most of the documents of the Council look to this one and depend upon it. Nor should it be forgotten that much had happened in the Twentieth Century to move us to a deeper understanding of the Mystery of the Church. We saw new insights through our understanding of the Mystical Body, of the work of the Lay Apostolate, of the growing use of the phrase, “People of God”, and Sacramental Theology had also advanced and there was a new approach to making productive Ecumenical contacts. All of this aided the Council Fathers immensely in their deliberations.

Another significant change came when the section on “The People of God” was moved ahead of the section on the “Hierarchy”. The reason given was that we are all the People of God and then only secondarily we have our hierarchical or charismatic roles and offices in the Church. Paul VI beautiful Encyclical, Ecclesiam Suam breaks new ground and shows the beauty of the Church with its complex identity of both being visible and invisible, of holy and yet seeking for holiness, of a truly human and divine nature, of both a spiritual and physical reality. In all there were three drafts with B far superior to A. In
C (the third and final draft) some important changes were also made. While in B it was stated unequivocally “The Church is the Roman Catholic Church” in the final draft it was stated, “This Church subsists in the Roman Catholic Church”. On Page 52 at the end of article 4 read the beautiful summary of the Holy Trinity’s action in the Church.

CHAPTER I: THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH:
1. As Christ is the light of humanity so the Church is the sign and instrument for that light to continue to shine in our world. The Church is a sacrament of communion with God and mankind and has a universal mission.
2. Sin enters the world and the Heavenly Father will ultimately send His Only Begotten Son for the world’s salvation. Old Testament history of Israel was also prep for the Church.
3. Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth…the Church is the Kingdom already present in mystery…bought with His blood. Note the two beautiful effects of the Eucharist: The work of our redemption is carried out and the unity of believers is accomplished.
4. She enjoys hierarchical and charismatic gifts. These charismatic gifts are from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit dwells both in the Church as well as in the hearts of the faithful. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Life and the Fountain of saving water springing up in our hearts – “If you but knew the gift???”
5. He inaugurated the Church by preaching the Good News, i.e. the coming of the Kingdom. It was revealed in His words, works and person. Upon His death she is born with the mission of proclaiming the Kingdom and she is the seed and beginning of that Kingdom. Note that while the Church is not identical with the Kingdom it should express it and be its beginning until the end of time when the two shall become one. It is important to recall that in Christ the Kingdom shines out in three ways – In His words, in His works, in His presence. What is more through the Church Jesus wishes those words, works and that presence to continue.
6. A few images: Sheepfold, flock, cultivated field, choice vineyard, building of God, Holy Temple, and Jerusalem above, bride.
7. Through the Spirit the mystical body is ONE; she has many different gifts; and the Spirit can be seen as the SOUL of the Church. We are only beginning to understand more fully the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and in each one of us. Article 7 insists that it is “by the communication of the Spirit the Mystical Body is constituted.”
8. She is a VISIBLE SOCIETY AND A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY; not two but one reality not unlike the Incarnate Word... It is very important to understand the following: “This is the sole Church of Christ…entrusted to Peter’s pastoral care…subsists in the Catholic Church.” Look at this on Page 357. On Page 358 it is also interesting to note that it is the role of the Church to continue the works of Charity just as He did. Gaudium et
Spes will expand upon this.

CHAPTER II THE CHURCH IS THE PEOPLE OF GOD
9. He wished to save not only individuals but a people. Indeed a Messianic People sometimes a small flock but one containing the seed of unity, hope and salvation….Read on Page 360 “Hence….whole world.” SHE IS A COMMUNION AND A MISSION. If you want a simple definition of the Church, it is these two great realities – Communion with the Head who is Christ and through Him with each other and with a Mission to bring the Good News to the world…i.e. to share with the world His saving words, His beautiful works and His Holy Presence. This is but a humble +JPK definition.
10. The priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood are essentially different but share in the one priesthood of Jesus. In fact, “They are ordered to one another.”
11. By baptism we are empowered to worship and by confirmation to witness. Discuss the document’s explanation of Baptism and Confirmation on Page 361 and on 362 (near top) the description of the priesthood of the laity and then on the bottom of the same page the use of the phrase “domestic church” which was a favorite of Pope John Paul II. Note also the role of Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Holy Orders, and Matrimony.
12. The Faithful can not err in matter of belief (sensus fidei) and they have special charisms. Give examples of these charisms.
13. Respect Inculturation; Particular Churches retain certain customs; (Note the different meanings of “Particular”) In the middle of Page 365 please note the beautiful definition of Stewardship.
14. Is She necessary for salvation? Who is fully incorporated? Who is saved? How about Catechumens?
15. Who else is closely related to her??? The baptized…the Oriental Orthodox.
16. How about Jews and Muslims: Those who seek an unknown God and even those who believe in no God but are sincere in their way of life.
17. The import of EVANGELIZATION AND MISSION…It is demanded by His command and energized by the Holy Spirit and furthermore EACH DISCIPLE HAS THE ONUS……

CHAPTER III THE CHURCH IS HIERARCHICAL
18. Along with what Vatican I proclaimed we must believe in the primacy including its institution, permanence and infallibility…and that bishops are successors to the Apostles.
19. It is a college with Peter and his successors as the head. The emphasis on COLLEGE is new and important.
20. Their divine mission called the Apostles to appoint successors. What are the three duties of the Shepherds? The SYNOD teaches that the bishops are their successors and that the priests and deacons are their helpers and colleagues and seminarians are preparing to be such.
21. Episcopal Consecration by words and the imposition of hands grants a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on bishops.

22. Collegiality has endured from the beginning; it must always be in union with the Pope to have authority; Collegiality is a powerful expression of the Universality of the Church (look also at the college of Cardinals). Each bishop has proper authority and also as a body they have supreme authority in Ecumenical Councils with at least the recognition of the Pope. Can the same collegiate power be exercised at a distance?

23. Individual bishops are the source of unity for Particular Churches and it is from them that the Church Universal is composed. They should work together for unity in faith and discipline and be advocates for the poor and for the mission work of the Church. Please note the two different meanings of “Particular Churches”.

The spiritual Patrimony of the ancient Patriarchical Churches and their daughter Churches is to be honored; also the development of Episcopal Conferences is an excellent example of collegiality. Also one of the duties of bishops is to care for the missions especially in areas of great poverty and need.

24. The bishop’s OFFICE IS A DIAKONIA. It should be noted that the canonical mission of the bishop can allow legitimate customs, for example, in the method of selecting future bishops.

25. The PRIMIUM OFFICIUM of the bishop is to proclaim the Gospel and they are authentic teachers that enjoy the authority of Christ. When are they INFALLIBLE? (cf. page 379) Declarations are to be CO-EXTENSIVE with the DEPOSIT OF FAITH. When is the Pope INFALLIBLE AS SUPREME TEACHER (cf. 380)? How about any new revelation? Did it stop with the last Apostle?

26. The bishop and the Eucharist; every celebration is regulated by the bishop therefore their lives should be witnesses to holiness. What is the meaning of “altar community”?

27. A bishop governs in his own right (not at the behest of the Pope) and there is the challenge on both sides of “being closely attached” to ones bishop.

28. The Apostles duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with a share in their ministry – bishops, priests and deacons.

PRIESTS ARE CONSECRATED TO PREACH; TO SHEPHERD; TO CELEBRATE AND DO SO IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST. Also note their twofold ministry of RECONCILIATION AND COMFORT (personal and sacramental). There is in each diocese a UNIQUE SACERDOTAL COLLEGE requiring respect on both sides calling the bishop to treat his priests as sons and friends. Also there is a duty to build up a bond of friendship and camaraderie among priests themselves and with their bishop.

29. Deacons and their duties and how we should restore this order where it is missing. How about their age and the promise of celibacy? Note that deacons are not only to minister in liturgical ways but also in the works of charity.
CHAPTER IV THE LAITY

31 Who are included? What is their principal mission, i.e. leaven. Are religious also “LAITY”????

33, by baptism and confirmation they are appointed to their mission; the Eucharist develops them in love and unity but they can also be called to more IMMEDIATE COOPERATION IN THE APOSTOLATE OF THE HIERARCHY. Note that they have a PRIESTLY ROLE. What is it? Look at Page 391.

35. They have a PROPHETIC ROLE which is to proclaim the Gospel by word and witness. In married life there is truly a prophetic role as they build up the DOMESTIC CHURCH.

36. They have a kind of ROYAL ROLE of transforming the institutions in which they are involved.

37. The laity should feel close to their priests and bishops.

CHAPTER V THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

39. The Church is unfailingly HOLY...WHY?? All are called to Holiness and to the Evangelical Counsels to the degree that it is possible.

40. We are not PELAGIANS AND WE RECOGNIZE THAT OUR SANCTITY IS A GIFT BUT WE MUST MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP IT. ALSO REMEMBER THAT A HOLY LIFE IS HEALTHY, HAPPY AND FULFILLING.

41. BISHOPS THROUGH THEIR FAITHFUL MINISTRY WILL FIND A MARVELOUS ROAD TO HOLINESS RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER AND PENANCE! AT THE SAME TIME, PRIESTS TOO HAVE THE GRACE OF OFFICE AND SHOULD BE “FOSTERING THEIR ACTION WITH OVERFLOWING CONTEMPLATION.” (REMEMBER THE DOMINICAN ADAGE: “CONTEMPLATA TRADERE”) AND SO WITH ALL THE REST – DEACONS, AND SEMINARIANS, MARRIED FOLKS, WIDOWS, SINGLES, WORKERS AND THE POOR AND SICK ALL HAVE ROADS TO HOLINESS. WHAT IS NEEDED BY ALL IS A DEEP TRUST IN PROVIDENCE.

42. UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF CHARITY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE POWER OF VIRGINITY AND POVERTY AND OBEDIENCE.

CHAPTER VI RELIGIOUS

43. DEFINE IT! IT IS NOT A MIDDLE WAY BETWEEN HIERARCHICAL AND LAY ROLES BUT DISTINCT.

44. YOU MIGHT CALL IT “A CLOSER WALK WITH JESUS THROUGH THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS AND WHICH PROVIDE US ALL WITH A GLIMPSE OF THE TRANSCENDENT. IT IS CONSIDERED A “DEEPENING OF THE BAPTISMAL CHARACTER”.

45. WHAT DOES “EXEMPT” RELIGIOUS MEAN? IT IS BOTH A CANONICAL
STATE AND A CONSECRATED STATE OF LIFE (JOHN PAUL OFTEN USED THE 
PHRASE, “CONSECRATED LIFE”)
46. THE EVANGELICAL COUNSELS ARE NOT OBSTACLES TO TRUE HUMAN 
DEVELOPMENT BUT PURIFY HEARTS AND GIVE TRUE SPIRITUAL 
FREEDOM.

CHAPTER VII THE PILGRIM CHURCH (IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT 
“PILGRIM” IS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR “MILITANT” IN DRAFT C, THE FINAL 
ONE.)
48. EXCELLENT RECAP OF CHURCH.
49. COMMUNION OF THE SAINTS AND EXCHANGE OF GIFTS.
50. HONOR ALWAYS PAID BY THE CHURCH TO THE DEAD AND ESPECIALLY 
TO THE APOSTLES, MARTYRS AND VIRGIN MARY AND THE SAINTS ASKING 
FOR THEIR INTERCESSION. REMEMBER THAT THE SAINTS REVEAL THE 
FACE OF CHRIST TO THE WORLD…NAME SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE 
EXAMPLES OF THIS. AND FINALLY REMEMBER THAT WE ARE CLOSEST TO 
THE SAINTS IN THE SACRED LITURGY.

CHAPTER VIII OUR LADY
53. MARY RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD IN HER HEART AND IN HER BODY 
AND THUS GAVE LIFE TO THE WORLD. “SHE IS CLEARLY THE MOTHER OF 
THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST” SAID AUGUSTINE. SHE IS A TYPE OF THE 
CHURCH BY HER FAITH AND LOVE.
56. GOD WILLED THE INCARNATION TO BE PRECEDED BY THE ASSENT OF 
MARY (FIAT).
57. THERE WAS THE UNION OF MOTHER AND SON IN THE WORK OF 
SALVATION FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END WHEN SHE SAID FIAT AT 
THE CROSS. IT WAS A UNIQUE COOPERATION.
61 WHY IS SHE MOTHER TO US IN THE ORDER OF GRACE?
62. HER INTERCESSION CONTINUES TO BRING US GIFTS OF ETERNAL 
SALVATION. THERE IS AN INTERESTING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HER 
SUFFERING AND THAT OF SINNERS LIKE PAUL…WHAT IS IT???
63. SHE IS A TYPE OF THE CHURCH.
64. HOW IS THE CHURCH A MOTHER?
66. SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN HONORED BY A SPECIAL CULT BUT NEVER 
LATRIA.
69. GOD BLESS OUR EASTERN SEPARATED BRETHREN AND MAY MARY 
BRING US TOGETHER AGAIN.