



“If you can remember anything about the sixties, you weren’t really there.”

- Paul Kantner, guitarist and vocalist

You probably wouldn’t recall Paul Kantner or his band Jefferson Airplane but his line surely defined a generation. Does anyone remember the sixties? Does anyone want to? Tapping into the collective consciousness of the human species, the following events are called to mind:

1960

John Fitzgerald Kennedy (JFK) is elected President of the United States of America. He is the first and only Roman Catholic to have been elected to date.

The Cold War heats up with the downing of an American U2 spy plane over Soviet airspace.

The birth control pill is released as the first oral contraceptive for women, heralding the start of the sexual revolution.

1961

The Soviets launch Yuri Gagarin into space. He is the first human being to enter space and to orbit Earth. The space race begins.

A wall is erected in Berlin, dividing the Soviet-controlled East from the American-controlled West.

1962

With Soviet aid, Cuba begins building missiles capable of reaching America.

The Cuban Missile Crisis is narrowly averted and the threat of nuclear war passes.

1963

Singapore merges with Malaysia. The *Confrontasi* begins.

200,000 demonstrators converge on Washington DC to demand equal rights for all. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks about his dream.

JFK is assassinated in Dallas, Texas.

1964

Nelson Mandela is sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted of sabotage and treason.

John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr – the Fab Four – burst onto the pop scene. Beatlemania erupts. Music will never be the same again.

1965

Escalation of the American air and ground offensive against North Vietnam. The Vietnam War ignites like napalm.

Singapore separates from Malaysia to become an independent, democratic, and sovereign republic.

1966

The Cultural Revolution begins. China enters into a virtual state of civil war.

Ferdinand Emmanuel Edralin Marcos becomes president of the Philippines.

The miniskirt becomes all the rage.

1967

Israel overcomes the combined armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the Six Day War.

1968

Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

1969

Arpanet, the military-based forerunner of the Internet, is launched.

Hundreds of thousands flock to a rural dairy farm in New York for the greatest rock-and-roll concert of the century, Woodstock.

Neil Armstrong makes one giant leap for mankind. He is the first human being to step foot on the Moon. America wins the space race.

CATALYST

The decade was peppered with triumphs and tragedies, swept as it was by the currents of segregation and integration, capitalism and communism, conservatism and liberalism.

Smack dab in the middle of all that madness, from 1962-1965, occurred an event in the Roman Catholic Church that deeply impacted the lives of

hundreds of millions of Christians around the world. That event was the Second Vatican Council.

It was unlike any of the 20 preceding ecumenical councils – all of which were convoked either to denounce errors, define doctrines, establish unity, or accomplish reform. Instead, just when the Church appeared to

be prevailing over all the controversies that the modern world could throw at her, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council to hasten *aggiornamento*: the bringing up to date of the Church.

Far from any slavish adherence to modernisation or modern trends, what

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CRUCIBLE

At the risk of oversimplifying history, the significance of the Second Vatican Council must first be anchored in a conscious appreciation of the ongoing relationship between the Church and the modern world – the general regard with which the Church is held today has not always been this cordial.

In the 1800s, the Church was everywhere dominated by secular governments and began to appear increasingly powerless as she struggled unsuccessfully to implant her values in a progressively hostile world. As modern sciences and philosophies developed, the Church struggled to accept and to apply these seemingly profane schools of thought. With the dawning of the 1900s, the Church also strove ineffectively to avert two world wars and the ongoing threat of nuclear annihilation.

Humanity had undoubtedly entered a new age; although its roots lay recognisably in the past, humanity was

invigorated by a confidence in its newfound knowledge and was poised to forge a future upon a new world order. The modern world had finally arrived but had the Church arrived with it?

Amidst these undercurrents, many people – both Catholics and non-Catholics – increasingly saw the Church as distinct and divorced from the modern world. Hardened opponents fought to compel the Church to relinquish whatever control she had over the minds of subjects who were seemingly kept in bondage to antiquated beliefs and practices; conversely, the Church reacted forcefully against any notion that suggested even a hint of the modern – especially literary and historical criticism, modes of inquiry which threatened accepted ways of reading the Holy Scriptures.

This state of mutual suspicion and exclusion persisted until the sixties.

The Second Vatican Council was the catalyst that compelled the Church to courageously confront her struggles, to sincerely reflect upon her place in the modern world, and to consistently define her position vis-à-vis those modern realities which she had previously viewed with disdain.

Given this unique opportunity for introspection, the Council Fathers reflected upon several fundamental questions: “Of whom is the Church made out of?”, “What truths do the Holy Scriptures contain?”, “What is the relationship between Roman Catholics and those of other faiths?”, “What is the state of the modern world?”, “Who are its citizens?”, and finally “What is the relationship between the Church and the modern world?”

These reflections formed the basis of the 16 conciliar documents that were officially proclaimed by the Council Fathers. It is to these that we now turn our attention.



THE CONCILIAR DOCUMENTS

When Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council and called for *aggiornamento*, he but vaguely defined its objectives and enabled the Council Fathers to reflect upon concrete realities before framing an agenda for the Council: by its end, almost every significant aspect of life within and without the Church had been touched upon.

Today, long after many of the Council Fathers have faded away, what remains of the Second Vatican Council are the 16 conciliar documents which together constitute a renewed expression of the faith for the modern world. In a very real sense, these documents are a testimony to the spirit of the Council.

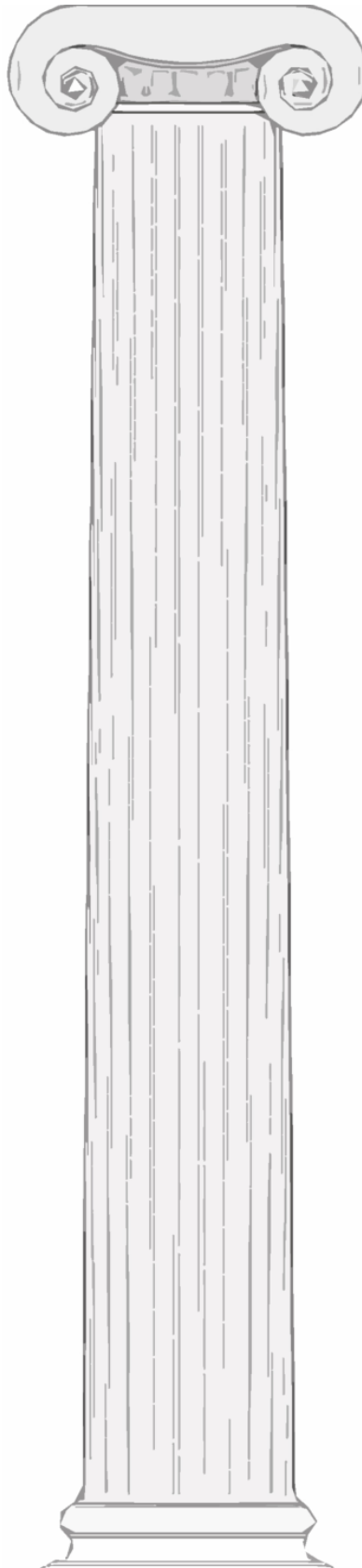
For the next 18 issues that span the remainder of 2009 and the greater part of 2010, KAIROS will explore the twin constitutions of *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, which are two of the four main pillars that stand at the centre of the Council.

Like opposite faces of the same coin, these two documents revolve around the question of identity and purpose; each cannot be reflected upon without the other. The former addresses a theological reality, "What is the Church?", whilst the latter clarifies a practical quandary, "What is the relationship between the Church and the modern world?"

Never before in history had the Church attempted to examine herself – to elaborate frequently repeated but commonly overlooked biblical imagery and to balance this with a practical explanation of the relationships between her different members with one another. Neither had the Church ever sought to examine her place and purpose in human society – to clarify and to justify the importance of her actions and contributions to an otherwise cynical public.

After decades of travelling parallel and sometimes divergent paths, the Second Vatican Council was an attempt at bridging the chasm between Church, civilisation, and culture – despite the contradictions of the modern world – as well as re-establishing common ground for Christians and citizens to work together towards the common good.

This work of continually planting the timeless seeds of Christianity in the modern world carries on today. Four popes and forty years later, the vision of the Council – as set forth in *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* – is still being brought to birth in parishes and dioceses around the globe. Here in our parish of St Mary of the Angels, this journey has already begun: we invite you to join us at this opportune time to delve deeper into our identity and purpose, as Christians and as Church.



The following breakdown thematically lists the general scope of the 16 conciliar documents. Underpinning it are the 4 constitutions that lay the foundations for all the rest:

CORE CONSTITUTIONS

LUMEN GENTIUM

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 1964

SACROSANCTUM CONCILIUM

Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 1963

DEI VERBUM

Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, 1965.

GAUDIUM ET SPES

Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965

PEOPLE OF GOD

CHRISTUS DOMINUS

Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, 1965

PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS

Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 1965

APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM

Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 1965

PERFECTAE CARITATIS

Decree on Renewal of Religious Life, 1965

RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

ORIENTALIUM ECCLESiarUM

Decree on the Catholic Churches of the Eastern Rite, 1964

UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO

Decree on Ecumenism, 1964

NOSTRA AETATE

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, 1965

DIGNITATIS HUMANAE

Declaration on Religious Freedom, 1965

MISSION

INTER MIRIFICA

Decree on the Means of Social Communication, 1963

GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS

Declaration on Christian Education, 1965

OPTATAM TOTIUS

Decree on Priestly Training, 1965

AD GENTES

Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, 1965

21st
Ecumenical Council
acknowledged by the
Roman Catholic Church.

0.44
square kilometres
The size of Vatican City,
the smallest sovereign state
in the world wherein the
Council was held.

4 years
were
spent
preparing
for the council between
1959 and 1962.

13 preparatory
committees produced 67
schemas to straitjacket
the Council. These were
eventually reduced to 17.

The Second Vatican
Council lasted for
4 years from
1962-1965;
sessions were held
during the autumn
months. As far as
councils go, this was
one of the shortest.
The Council of
Trent lasted
19 years from
1545-1563.

2 bomb
attacks
occurred
inside
St Peter's Basilica in the
months before the council.

The Second Vatican Council began with the formal
closing of the First Vatican Council. The latter had
begun in 1869 but was halted in 1870 by the
Risorgimento - the popular movement towards
Italian unification. Rome was annexed to the
modern state of Italy, leaving only Vatican City
to the Pope.

Observers from
28
different
Christian
denominations
attended the
Council.

2860
bishops participated in
the Council, the largest
number ever recorded in
Church history.

At least 274 bishops failed
to attend the Council; these
hailed from communist
or authoritarian countries.
Some were barred from
travelling. Others declined
to attend for fear of being
prevented from returning to
their dioceses.

For the first time, at
the Second Vatican
Council, women were
invited and allowed to
attend an ecumenical
council.



Pope John XXIII
never finished what he
started – he died mid-
way through in 1963
and was succeeded by
Pope Paul VI.

Both Karol Józef Wojtyła,
Pope John Paul II, and
Joseph Alois Ratzinger,
the present Pope Benedict
XVI, were in attendance.

The Second Vatican
Council produced
16 documents.
The Latin title of
each document is
exactly the same as
its opening words.

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Pope John XXIII wanted was for the Church to descend from her pedestal, to open her windows, and to let blow a breath of fresh air through her fortress mentality. This not only meant further clarifying the teachings of the Church but also further re-presenting her teachings in ways adapted to the modern world.

Like many of his contemporaries who

perceived the signs of the times, Pope John XXIII realised that for the Church to stand as a force for good in the modern world and not slip away into irrelevance, her teachings had to be capable of being appreciated and applied by all of humanity.

The Church did not live apart from the world – she lived in and for the world and could not afford to abandon it to its own machinations.

This spirit of openness and renewal pervaded the Second Vatican Council and inspired the conciliar documents that have come down to us.

The following articles presented in this third issue of KAIROS will attempt to provide a thematic overview of the council and the conciliar documents before focusing upon two of the more significant compositions for us to explore today.

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