

VATICAN II

ON RELIGIONS AND DIALOGUE

Links are to the Vatican website, but the texts quoted are taken from *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents. A Completely Revised Translation in Inclusive Language*, edited by Austin Flannery OP. Northport, NY; Dublin, Ireland: Costello Publishing Company; Dominican Publications, 1996.

[Vatican II. "Lumen Gentium: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church."](#)

1. By the power of the Gospel the Spirit rejuvenates the church, constantly renewing it and leading it to perfect union with its spouse (LG 4)
2. In order that we might be unceasingly renewed in him (see Eph 4:23), he has shared with us his Spirit who, being one and the same in head and members, gives life to, unifies and moves the wholly body. (LG 7)
3. This church (the unique church of Christ), constituted and organized as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines. Since these are gifts belonging to the church of Christ, they are forces impelling towards Catholic unity. (LG 8)
4. At all times and in every nation, anyone who fears God and does what is right has been acceptable to him (see Acts 10:35) (LG 9)
5. Advancing through trials and tribulations, the church is strengthened by God's grace so that it may not waver, through the weakness of the flesh, from perfect fidelity, but remain a worthy bride of the Lord, ceaselessly renewing itself through the action of the Holy Spirit until, through the cross, it may arrive at that light which knows no setting. (LG 9)
6. Rather it (the church) fosters and takes to itself in so far as they are good, people's abilities, resources and customs. In so taking them to itself it purifies, strengthens and elevates them. (LG 13)
7. ... But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, first among whom are the Muslims: they profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day. (LG 14)

8. Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – these too may attain eternal salvation. (LG 16)
9. Nor will divine providence deny the assistance necessary for salvation to those who, without any fault of theirs, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God, and who, not without grace, strive to lead a good life. (LG 16)
10. Whatever of good or truth is found amongst them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men and women that they may at length have life. (LG 16)
11. The effect of its (the church's) activity is that whatever good is found sown in peoples hearts and minds, or in the rites and customs of peoples, is not only saved from destruction, but is purified, raised up, and perfected for the glory of God. (LG 17)
12. The church, to which we are all called in Christ Jesus, and in which by the grace of God we attain holiness, will receive its perfection only in the glory of heaven when the time for the renewal of all things will have come (Acts 3:21). (LG 48)

[Vatican II. "Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation."](#)

13. ... Jesus Christ ... completed and perfected revelation and confirmed it with divine guarantees. ... The Christian dispensation, therefore, since it is the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord, Jesus Christ (see 1 Tim 6:14 and Tit 2: 13). (DV 4)

[Vatican II. "Gaudium Et Spes: Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World."](#)

14. It is by the gift of the holy Spirit that humanity, through faith, comes to contemplate and savor the mystery of God's design. (GS 15)
15. All this holds true not only for Christians, but for all people of good will in whose hearts grace works in an unseen way. For since Christ died for everyone, and since all are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the paschal mystery. (GS 22)

16. As the firstborn of many, and by the gift of his Spirit, he established, after his death and resurrection, a new communion of sisters and brothers among all who received him in faith and love; this is the communion of his own body, the church, in which all as members one of the other would render mutual service in the measure of the different gifts bestowed on each. (GS 32)
17. Constituted Lord by his resurrection and given all authority in heaven and on earth, Christ is now at work in human hearts by the power of his Spirit; not only does he arouse in them a desire for the world to come, but he quickens, purifies, and strengthens the generous aspiration of humanity to make life more humane and conquer the earth for this purpose. (GS 38)
18. When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise – human dignity, sisterly and brotherly communion, and freedom – according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom “of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace.” (GS 39)
19. Redeemed by Christ and made a new creature by the holy Spirit, a person can, and indeed must, love the things which God has created; it is from God that they have been received, and it is as coming from God’s hand that they are seen and revered. (GS 37)
20. The church also realizes that men and women are continually being aroused by the Spirit of God and that they will never be utterly indifferent to religion – a fact confirmed by the experience of past ages and by a variety of evidence today. (GS 41)
21. With the help of the holy Spirit, it is the task of the whole people of God, particularly of its pastors and theologians, to listen to and distinguish the many voices of our times and to interpret them in the light of God’s word in order that the revealed truth may be more deeply penetrated, better understood, and more suitably presented. (GS 44)
22. The church has a visible social structure, which is a sign of its unity in Christ: as such it can be enriched, and it is being enriched, by the evolution of social life, not as if something were missing in the constitution which Christ gave the church, but in order to understand this constitution more deeply, express it better, and adapt it more successfully to our times. (GS 44)

[Vatican II. "Ad Gentes Divinitus: Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity."](#)

23. This universal plan of God for the salvation of humanity is not carried out only secretly, as it were, in people's souls, nor by the efforts, including religious efforts, by which they seek God in many ways "and perhaps grope for him and find him – though indeed he is not far from each one of us (see Acts 17:22); for these efforts need to be enlightened and corrected, although in the loving providence of God they may lead one to the true God and be a preparation for the Gospel (AG 3)
24. So, although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own are ignorant of the gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him (Heb 11:6), the church nevertheless still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelise. (AG 7)
25. (Missionary activity) purges of evil association those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples, and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God. ... So whatever goodness is found in people's minds and hearts, or in the particular customs and cultures of peoples, far from being lost is purified, raised to a higher level and reaches its perfection, for the glory of God, the confusion of the demon, and the happiness of humankind. (AG 9)
26. (Christians) should be familiar with their national and religious traditions and uncover with gladness and respect those seeds of the word which lie hidden among them. ... Just as Christ penetrated to people's hearts and by a truly human dialogue led them to the divine light, so too his disciples, profoundly pervaded by the Spirit of Christ, should know and converse with those among whom they live, so that through sincere and patient dialogue they themselves might learn of the riches which a generous God has distributed among the nations. They must at the same time endeavour to illuminate these riches with the light of the gospel, set them free, and bring them once more under the dominion of God the saviour. (AG 11)
27. When the Holy Spirit, who calls all women and men to Christ and arouses in their hearts the submission of faith by the seed of the word and the preaching of the gospel, brings those who believe in Christ to a new life through the womb of the baptismal font, he gathers them into one people of God which is a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Pet 2:9). (AG 15)

[Vatican II. "Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions."](#)

28. "Ever aware of its duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, (the church) reflects at the outset on what people have in common and what tends to bring them together." (NA 1)
29. Humanity forms but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (see Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His saving designs extend to all humankind (see Wis 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom 2:6-7; 1 Tim 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (see Apoc 21:23ff). (NA 1)
30. Thus in Hinduism people explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. (NA 2)
31. (Bhuddism) proposes a way of life by which people can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or with divine help. (NA 2)
32. The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men and women. (NA 2)¹
33. In (Christ), in whom God reconciled all things to himself (see 2 Cor 5:18-19), people find the fullness of their religious life. (NA 2)
34. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their social life and culture. (NA 2)
35. The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. (NA 3)
36. Together with the prophets and that same apostle, the church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph 3:9; see Is 66:23; Ps 65:4; Rom 11:11-32). (NA 4)

¹ D'Costa shows that the word "truth" in the text should be capitalized as "Truth". The Latin is *Veritatis*, the reference implied but not cited being Jn 1:9. See Gavin D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), 104.

37. It is the duty of the church, therefore, in its preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's universal love and the source of all grace. (NA 4)
38. We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's image. People's relation to God the Father and their relation to other women and men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says "they who do not love, do not know God" (1 Jn 4:8). (NA 5)