

Part 1 of the document gaudium et spes

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Laurent Marbacher: *Gaudium et Spes: An Invitation to Dialogue With The World*. In his article, *Gaudium et Spes: An Invitation to Dialogue With The World*, Laurent Marbacher gives his insights into this pastoral constitution of the Second Vatican Council. Marbacher argues that the document is a call to dialogue all several levels.

Laurent Marbacher: *Gaudium et Spes: An Invitation to Dialogue With The World*.

In his article, *Gaudium et Spes: An Invitation to Dialogue With The World*, Laurent Marbacher comments on *Gaudium et Spes*, promulgated by Pope Paul VI at the end of the Second Vatican Council in December 1965.

Marbacher elucidates that *Gaudium et Spes* focuses on “the necessity of dialogue between the world and the Church” (Marbacher, 1). He perceives it to be Vatican II’s declaration of the Church’s readiness to conduct a meaningful dialogue with the world. Marbacher holds that the biblical and philosophical foundation for this dialogue is the relationship between man and God and the relationship between men. He then describes *Gaudium et Spes*’ proposals regarding the nature of this dialogue and its consequence to the Church.

Marbacher points out that *Gaudium et Spes* is the concrete expression of the desire of Vatican Council II to “explain to everyone how it conceives the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today” (Marbacher, 1).

The pastoral constitution emphasizes that “honest dialogue” is inextricably linked with the Church’s mission to spread the gospel throughout the entire world.

Marbacher indicates that the foundation for the recommended dialogue between the Church and the world is based on three factors: (1) The

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dialogue between God and men which is amply documented in the Bible (2)
The dialogue between men which goes back to the dialogues of Socrates. (3)
The dialogue between the Church and men: this is perceived by the Church to be the “ eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family” (Marbacher, 3). Gaudium et Spes recognizes that dialogue is basis of human existence , the path to a “ deeper level of interpersonal relationships” (Marbacher, 2) and the essential instrument in tackling problems of culture, labor relations and world trade The purpose of the dialogue is to express the Church’s solidarity with all men, including non-believers. It is a mark of respect “ to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters” (Marbacher, 3). It is Vatican Council II’s practical acknowledgement of the liberty of conscience and diversity.

Marcbacher attempts to reconcile the Church’s position on dialogue with contemporary theories which emphasize mutual respect, speaking the truth, listening sincerely to one’s own voice and to that of the partner in the dialogue and adopting a non-judgmental stand, open to new thinking.

Marbacher sees Gaudium et Spes as significant for the Church in its attempt to develop respect for all men, to explicitly state its views, to remain open to diverse viewpoints and to overcome barriers of ‘ cultural preconceptions’.

Marbacher’s interpretation of Gaudium et Spes captures the spirit of the document. Gaudium et Spes essentially acknowledges its link “ to the whole of humanity” (2). The Church sees its proposed dialogue as the “ eloquent proof of its solidarity with” all mankind (3), and a sign of its willingness “ to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time” (10), ranging from crises of faith to political and racial conflicts. Dialogue is

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to be the human face of the Church. Marbacher's dialogue between God and man is linked to the Church's assertion of "man's call to communion with God" (19). Again, Marbacher's dialogue between the Church and man is seen by Vatican II as a means of opening channels of communication with atheists in an increasingly socialized world and the desire to forge "a closer bond between human activity and religion" (36). Dialogue is to be the basis of the relationship between the Church and the world.

I agree with Marbacher's stand that the heart of Gaudium et Spes is its call for the Church to enter into dialogue with the rapidly changing world. It acknowledges that "the human race is giving steadily-increasing thought to forecasting and regulating its own population growth" (5). However, the Church does not firmly pronounce on birth control. It recognizes the merit of social movements, and agitations for freedom but again does not specifically state its support for civil rights. In order for the Church to retain its relevance in the contemporary world, Gaudium et Spes is a step in the right direction. Marbacher correctly identifies the pastoral constitution's emphasis on dialogue as a means of strengthening the Church's position in the world. True dialogue will give the Church a new lease on life and temporal and spiritual power.

References.

Marbacher, Laurent: Gaudium et Spes: An Invitation to Dialogue With The World. Esprit

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<http://www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/CST/conferences/gaudium/papers/Marbacher.pdf>

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Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World Gaudium et Spes.

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Promulgated by

His Holiness Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965.