

As the synod approaches:

A look at the sixteen documents of Vatican Council II

By NC News Service

Following are the 16 documents approved by the Second Vatican Council and their dates of promulgation:

● Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy ("Sacrosanctum Concilium"), Dec. 4, 1963: ordered an extensive revision of worship so that people would have a clearer sense of their own involvement in the Mass and other rites.

● Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication ("Inter Mirifica"), Dec. 4, 1963: called on members of the church, especially the laity, to instill "a human and Christian spirit" into newspapers, magazines, books, films, radio and television.

● Dogmatic Constitution on the Church ("Lumen Gentium"), Nov. 21, 1964: presented the church as a mystery, as a communion of baptized believers, as the people of God, as the body of Christ, and as a pilgrim moving toward fulfillment in Heaven but marked on Earth with "a sanctity that is real, although imperfect."

● Decree on Ecumenism ("Unitatis Redintegratio"), Nov. 21, 1964: said that ecumenism should be everyone's concern and that genuine ecumenism involves a continual personal and institutional renewal.

● Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches ("Orientalium Ecclesiarum"), Nov. 21, 1964: stated that variety within the church does not harm its unity and that Eastern churches should retain their own traditions.

● Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church ("Christus Dominus"), Oct. 28, 1965: said each bishop has full ordinary power in his own diocese and is expected to present Christian doctrine in ways adapted to

the times. It urged conferences of bishops to exercise pastoral direction jointly.

● Decree on Priestly Formation ("Optatum Totius"), Oct. 28, 1965: recommended that seminaries pay attention to the spiritual, intellectual and disciplinary formation necessary to prepare priests to become good pastors.

● Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life ("Perfectae Caritatis"), Oct. 28, 1965: provided guidelines for the personal and institutional renewal of the lives of nuns, brothers and priests belonging to religious orders.

● Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions ("Nostra Aetate"), Oct. 28, 1965: said the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in non-Christian religions, called for an end to anti-Semitism and said any discrimination based on race, color, religion or condition of life is foreign to the mind of Christ.

● Declaration on Christian Education ("Gravissimum Educationis"), Oct. 28, 1965: affirmed the right of parents to choose the type of education they want for their children, upheld the importance of Catholic schools and defended freedom of inquiry in Catholic colleges and universities.

● Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation ("Dei Verbum"), Nov. 18, 1965: said the church depends on Scripture and tradition as the one deposit of God's word and commended the use of modern scientific scholarship in studying Scripture.

● Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity ("Apostolicam Actuositatem"), Nov. 18, 1965: said the laity should influence their surroundings with Christ's teachings.

● Declaration on Religious Freedom ("Dignitatis Humanae"), Dec. 7, 1965: said that religious liberty is a right found in the dignity of each person and that no one

should be forced to act in a way contrary to his or her own beliefs.

● Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests ("Presbyterorum Ordinis"), Dec. 7, 1965: said the primary duty of priests is to proclaim the Gospel to all, approved and encouraged celibacy as a gift and recommended fair salaries.

● Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity ("Ad Gentes"), Dec. 7, 1965: said missionary activity should help the social and economic welfare of people and not force anyone to accept the faith.

● Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World ("Gaudium et Spes"), Dec. 7, 1965: said the church must talk to atheists, a continual campaign must be waged for peace, nuclear war is unthinkable, and aid to underdeveloped nations is urgent. It said marriage was not just for procreation and urged science to find an acceptable means of birth regulation.

'Council of the Bishops' reinforced bishops' authority

By Jerry Filteau

(NC) — The Second Vatican Council is sometimes called the "council of the bishops" because one of its most important achievements was to take the theology of bishops seriously and restore to them an authority that had gradually eroded in practice over the centuries.

A key document spelling out the role of bishops was "Christus Dominus," the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, which the council passed on Oct. 28, 1965, during the fourth and final session of Vatican II.

It called for reform and internationalization of the Roman Curia, the church's central administration. It ordered the formation of national or regional bishops' conferences.

The decree gave new importance to the diocese under its bishop, calling it "a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ is truly present and operative." It cast the bishop as chief pastor, teacher, priest, and guide in the faith of his portion of the universal church. It spelled out new relations between him and the priests, Religious and

laity in his diocese.

The prevailing popular view of bishops before the council, heavily influenced by legalism, tended to see bishops as basically the pope's local branch chiefs, exercising authority by delegation from him.

The decree stressed the proper, immediate, ordinary authority of each bishop in his diocese and the authority of the whole college of bishops over the whole church — always in union with the pope and under his primary authority, but by virtue of their sacramental ordination and the pastoral authority that flowed from that.

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