Workshops on Vatican II
What Did Vatican II Do?
VAT402
by Bill Huebsch

General outline
(see below for details and handouts)

General Notes for all the workshops in this series:
- This workshop should fit into about a two hour window of time, depending on the length of the prayer and group discussions.
- For the discussions, you may wish to invite participants to talk first in smaller groups before inviting anyone to comment in the large group. We advise you not to omit the large group conversations as they are a rich experience for all present.
- The room can be set up either with tables around which participants sit, or in theater style. In either case, you do need an LCD projector and laptop to use the PowerPoint.
- The talking points are in the Notes pages of the PowerPoint. To go there, click on view and choose “notes.” You may print in this mode and use the pages as your guide.
- The prayer resource and handout is included in this packet.
- You may wish to read Book One of Vatican II in Plain English before presenting this workshop. Many of the details which will add color and dimension to your presentations will be found there. You can obtain copies at PastoralPlanning.com. Follow the Vatican II links on the home page.

What Did Vatican II Do?
A review of all 16 Council Documents

Open the workshop:
Convene the group, welcoming all warmly. Open with a prayer of your choosing, but we recommend you keep it relatively brief. [Handout included below:] A suggested prayer can be found below. You may reproduce this for use within your group. The faith sharing and breaking open the Word portions of this prayer are very important. As we open our hearts to one another, we grow in faith.
First Conversation:
After prayer, lead a large group (or small groups, leading to the large group) conversation on what people think they know the Council did. What reforms did it make? What areas of church life which are important today did it not discuss? (Things such as the role of women, ecology, the internet, terrorism, flight from active practice of the faith, how to blend modern medicine and psychology into church teaching, among others.)

The presentation:
Using the notes on the PowerPoint presentation and your own knowledge, lead the group through each of the Documents of the Council, pausing after each to allow for questions and comments. Ask people to follow along and make notes on their handout, which is below. Allow questions as you go, but don’t let them swamp your progress. You may need to take a comfort break part way through.

You may wish to divide up the key documents, assigning each to a small group and ask each small group to report back on the key points found in that document. The key documents include:
- The Constitution on the Church
- The Constitution on the Liturgy
- The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
- The Constitution on Divine Revelation
- Ecumenism
- Laity
- Nostra Aetate (on Non-Christians)

Close the workshop:
When finished, invite a large (or small) group conversation once again, asking the questions:
- What strikes you most strongly in what you heard in this workshop?
- What particular point touched your heart?
- What did you not hear that you thought you would?
Leader: (Leader alone, in these or similar words:) Friends, Christian charity toward all men and women grows out of our spirituality and deep personal conviction that, in the end, we will be judged on how well we have loved - and nothing else. Let us pray for the grace of a charitable heart.

Prayer:
Oh Divine Source of Charity and Love,
grant us the humility to choose love
even in the face of rejection and hatred.
Shape our hearts and minds
to more closely reflect Jesus’
and guide our souls
into your Way. Amen.

The First Reading (Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)
On December 26, 1958, Pope John astonished his own staff and all those living in Rome by going to visit the prisoners in a local prison. As he entered the high, gloomy rotunda from which the corridors to the triple-tiered cell blocks radiated, he was touched by the sight of all these men, imprisoned for various crimes. A thousand of them, dressed in convict striped uniforms were assembled there to greet him. Pope John addressed them as “Dear Sons and Brothers,” and told them that his own brother had once been arrested for hunting without a license, and
that he understood how a man may break the law to steal for his hungry family. “In your first letter home,” he said, “say that the Pope came to see you, that he was here among you. And in my Holy Mass and in my daily breviary I will have a special thought and intense affection for each of you and for all your dear ones.”

The prisoners knew he meant it. They felt the strong current of his love and the dynamic power of his sheer goodness flowing into them, as they stood together singing Adeste Fideolis. The officials, unduly nervous as officials always are, had mapped out a course for the Pope’s inspection tour marked by a red carpet. He soon veered off it, meandering down the dank and musty corridors while the prisoners knelt to kiss his ring. One old man with a long police record asked humbly if the Pope’s message of hope was also for him. “I have made many mistakes, Holy Father,” he said.

Bending over the kneeling man, John wiped his tears away; then he raised him and embraced him with a great bear-hug saying, “I looked into your eyes with my eyes. I have put my heart near your heart.”


Faith Sharing: (Here direct the group to share in twos or threes for about 5 minutes.)
Who are the ones around you most in need of your compassion and understanding? In whose shoes is it most difficult for you to stand? Whose sins do you find it most difficult to forgive?

The Second Reading, in Pope John’s own words.
(Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)
One of the similes used by St. Francis de Sales, which I love to repeat, is: ‘I am like a bird singing in a thicket of thorns’; this must be a continual inspiration to me. So, I must say very little to anyone about the things that hurt me. Great discretion and forbearance in my judgments of men and situations: willingness to pray particularly for those who may cause me suffering, and in everything great kindness and endless patience, remembering that any other sentiment or mixture of sentiments, a la Macedoine, as they say here, is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel and of evangelic perfection. So long as charity may triumph at all costs, I would choose to be considered as of little worth.


Activity Suggestions
(Offer the group suggestions for actions as part of their prayer.)
1. It’s helpful in the Christian journey to pay attention to the small things, the details of life. In this we will find the key to spiritual growth. What are the small ways in your everyday life in which you can offer others humble charity?

2. Spend time with the Examen each evening.
3. There is a difference between genuine charity, and manipulative giving. In the former, it’s the welfare of the people that’s important. In the latter, it’s control through generosity. Consider this in your own life. Where do you draw the line?

4. List those whom you find it most difficult to treat with charity. Those whom you resent, dislike, or compete with. Those who have done something to hurt you or a loved one. Those who seem selfish, entitled, or lazy. How could you find opportunities to offer them charity? What would you lose if you did? What would you gain?

5. Who are the ones in your neighborhood or town most in need of genuine love and charity? Those in jail? Those with AIDS? Those who are homeless? Those who are wealthy? Those in the arts? Those who are young? Plan ways to reach them with your charity this month.

**Reading from Scripture:** (Read aloud, or invite a reader to do so.)

Love from the center of who you are; don’t fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

- Don’t burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don’t quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody.

- Don’t hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you’ve got it in you, get along with everybody. Don’t insist on getting even; that’s not for you to do. “I’ll do the judging,” says God. “I’ll take care of it.” Romans 12:9-19 – The Message

**Breaking Open the Word**

What words or phrases struck you in this reading?
How do these words touch your life?
What hope do these words bring to you?

**Closing Prayer:** (Pray aloud together.)

We call on you, Oh God of Love, and recognize that you are with us in all we say and do.

Now grant that we might be earnest in our pursuit of love so that we might turn moments of darkness into moments of light.

Guide us to live in such a way that all will see in us a humble charity that reveals through us your presence to the world. Amen.
Quick Reference Guide
The Documents of Vatican II
Bill Huebsch

1. The Dogmatic Constitution on THE CHURCH

(In Latin: Lumen gentium) A strong document argued by the Council from the first day to its passage; widely supported; set major new focus for the church. Approved on Nov 21, 1964. Vote: 2151 to 5.

Here are the key points:
- The church is in Christ; it is a sacrament of Christ, a mystery of depth. (1)
- It is the Body of Christ. (3, 7)
- It is the People of God, among whom the baptized are called as ministers. (Ch 2)
- It is led by the bishops, bound as a college, in unity with the pope, in a bond of charity and peace. (Ch 3)
- The primary role of the bishop is to shepherd God’s people. (21) The ministry of the bishop is that of a servant to the people of God. (24)
- The permanent deaconate is restored. (29)
- There is a distinction between the “priesthood of the baptized” and that of the “ordained.” (10)
- For those called to be Catholic, the Church is necessary for salvation. (14) But merely following the law of the Church is not enough; we must also live in love. (14)
- Those in other Christian churches are also related to us. (15) Likewise Jews, Moslems, and all who seek God are connected to us. (16)
- The role of the faithful is to be church in the world. (34) We are to seek the Reign of God in our everyday work. (33)
- The call to holiness is universal, and the way to holiness is love. (Ch 5)
- Religious live as dedicated members. (Ch 6)
- We are part of the great “communion of saints” bound together in God’s love. (47-51)
- The blessed Virgin Mary takes her place, too, among God’s people, and all devotion to her must ultimately lead to Christ, the Lord (Ch 8).

2. Dogmatic Constitution on DIVINE REVELATION

Here are the key points:

- This document restored the understanding that all revelation is complete in Jesus Christ. He alone is the source of revelation. The Scriptures, therefore, are the foundation of divine revelation. Tradition elaborates the meaning of the Scriptures for each generation. (4)
- Doctrine and dogma are expressed in different words for different generations. But the eternal truths do not change. (5-6)
- Dated routine changes but authentic tradition remains always with us. (5)
- Our response to God’s revelation is faith. Through faith we entrust our whole selves to God. This faith is handed on to all generations through living traditions. (8)
- There is a close link between Scripture, Tradition, and the teaching authority of the Church. (10)
- Revelation is handed on to us by the Church. (7-9)
- God wants us to know God fully! (2)
- God reveals the inner life of the Trinity to us, communicating God’s own self to us. This is known to us as grace. (2)
- This revelation is complete in Christ, but what the Gospel demands of us is still being revealed. God is still speaking.
- Over time, there is growth in our understanding of what God desires (8).
- This growth in understanding is expressed in our sacred Tradition. So Tradition and Scripture have a very close connection and flow from the same divine well.


Here are the key points:

- The bishops wanted [1] to give vigor to the Christian life of the faithful; [2] to adapt what is changeable to the needs of today, [3] to promote union among all who believe in Christ, and [4] to strengthen the church’s mission to all humankind. (1)
- This document established that the Mass (liturgy) is the source and summit of the Christian life. (10)
- It said that, for the liturgy to be effective, the faithful must be [1] well disposed, [2] know what they are doing, and [3] participate. (11 & 14)
- It established that some elements are changeable (language, books, prayers, music, persons, and places) and some aren’t (Scripture, bread, wine, offertory, consecration, communion). (21)
- It allowed for use of the vernacular in worship. Latin was retained in an official way but for full participation to become a reality, the language of the people would be needed. (36, 54)
- It restored the Eucharist as an act rather than a static devotional object. This meant a down playing of devotions outside of Mass (rosary, benediction, and so forth) in order to focus on the liturgical year and rites. (48)
- It established Baptism and Eucharist with primacy among the sacraments. (6)
- It called for the full, active, conscious participation of all the faithful as the aim to be considered before all others. (11)
- It reminds us it is never enough to simply follow the “letter of the law” making sure we are correct and proper. (11)
- It allowed for the removal of elements that are “out of harmony with the inner nature of the liturgy.” (21)
- It proposed a list of reforms, including simpler rites (50), more use of the Bible (51), the prayer of the faithful (52), roles for the laity (30), and others.

4. Pastoral Constitution on the CHURCH IN THE MODERN WORLD (in Latin: Gaudium et spes) A very important, historic document speaking to the church and to all people about the hopes and dreams of the human family. The first document to address the whole world issued at such a council. Approved on Dec 7, 1965. Vote: 2309 to 75.

**Here are the key points:**

- "The joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ." (1)
- We must look at and trust the signs of the times and understand the world in which we live. (Contrast with Pius IX's Syllabus of Errors in 1864: The pope "cannot and should not be reconciled and come to terms with progress, liberalism, and modern civilization...") (4)
- All human persons have dignity and are our responsibility. (Ch 1)
- Everyone must consider his or her neighbor as “another self.” (27)
- We should have respect and love for those who think differently than we do. (28)
- The church lives and acts in the world. "Let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part, and religious life on the other." It isn't "the world against the church." It's "the world together with the church." (43)
- We must all seek the common good. (25-26)
- God's voice echoes in our very depths and is called “conscience.” (16)
- We have an inborn hunger for God. (21)
- Treated problems of “special urgency”: Households of faith, culture, economics, politics, & war and peace. Called all to support and seek the common good. (Part 2)

5. Decree on COMMUNICATIONS: A relatively weak, seldom read document, condescending in tone and addressed to the media and those who control it. This document is seen as out-of-touch with the overall theology of the council. Approved 1960-164 on 12-04-63.

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- Seeks restoration of ties not return to Rome.
- Admits blame for separation was on both sides.
- Calls for a change of heart to make ecumenism possible.
- Says that sharing in worship may at times be necessary for gaining of the grace of unity. (8)
- Encouraged dialogue and calls for the Roman Church to reform itself as part of the process of reunion.


- Gives a job description for bishop and stresses the need for shared decision making (collegiality).
- Calls for bishops to be servant leaders.
- Established diocesan pastoral councils.

9. Decree on PRIESTLY FORMATION: Relaxed the rules for training established at the Council of Trent 450 years earlier but still misses the mark for today's needs. A starter document, calling for training in Scripture, pastoral counseling, ecumenism, history, and personal formation. Allows for local training guidelines to produce priests more ready to deal with local pastoral realities. Approved on Oct 28, 1965. Vote: 2318 to 3.

10. Decree on APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY: Has less influence than the Constitutions but important as the first document in the history of ecumenical councils to address itself to anyone other than the church's own clergy. Approved on Nov 18, 1965. Vote: 2305 to 2.
- Declares that the laity have a ministry by virtue of their baptisms, not merely a sharing in the ministry of the ordained.

- Calls on priests to support the laity.
- Reaffirmed celibacy for priests of the Latin Rite, while saying that celibacy is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood but seems "suitable."
12. **Decree on MISSIONARY ACTIVITY:** Encouraged retaining local, "pagan" religious customs and incorporating the gospel into them, a radical idea. Also states that the whole church is missionary, meaning that all the people of God are called to introduce others to the faith. A document which is meant to consolidate all strains of ecclesiology discussed elsewhere. Promulgated on the last day of the council in 1965. Approved on Dec 7, 1965. Vote: 2394 to 5.

13. **Decree on THE APPROPRIATE RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE:** Urged religious women and men to (1) return to their roots, their reasons for being founded and to (2) adjust to the needs of changing times in the modern church. Does not repeat the teaching of Trent that religious life is a superior state to that of the married. Approved Oct 28, 1965. Vote: 2321 to 4.

14. **Declaration on CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:** A weak document which left most of the work to post-conciliar development. Still under study today. Approved on Oct 28, 1965. Vote: 2290 to 35.

   - Began as a statement only about our relations with the Jews but was widened to say that "the truth" is present outside the Body of Christ and is to be respected wherever it is found, mentioning in particular Hinduism, Buddhism, & Islam, as well as Judaism
   - The Catholic Church, it states, encourages dialogue and opens itself to the contributions of these others.
   - Most importantly, it states that the Jews cannot be blamed as a race for the death of Jesus; they are loved by God and every form of persecution or discrimination is condemned!

   - Allows for the development of doctrine.
   - Says that the freedom of persons requires that no one ever be forced to join the church.
   - The church claimed freedom for itself in this document, but also for all religious practice of every kind everywhere.