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**Appendix:
Pope Paul VI
Discourse and Messages at the Close
of Vatican II**

Editor's Note: Pope Paul VI was deeply influenced by Jacques Maritain and honored him by presenting his "Message to Men of Thought and Science" to Maritain at the end of the Vatican Council. In turn, Maritain cited Paul VI's "Message to Heads of State" and his closing "Discourse" as providing the clues for proper interpretation of Vatican II.¹ Maritain believed that the Council signaled the end of the "sacral age" and the beginning of a new age whose dominant motif shall be the "goodness and humanity of God our Father" (Tit 3.4). He refers to Paul VI's use of the term "hominem integrum" (the whole man, or human beings in their full integrity) in the "Discourse" at the final session of Vatican II. In addition he states that the world shall see a great reversal in so far as the great task shall no longer be that the human Church must defend the divine, but rather the Church in her divine mission shall be the defender of the human. And citing Pope Paul VI's "Message to Heads of State," Maritain says that in this new age all the Church now asks is for liberty. These messages and this discourse contain some subtle turns of phrase upon which turn the future of the Church and its approach to modern world. A delicate balance is struck between the respect for the integrity and autonomy of secular affairs and the important role of religion in the influence of worldly affairs and the transcendence of the Church's aim. In the "Discourse," Paul VI explains how to understand the deepened respect for secular, human affairs in light of the central religious significance of the council. The translations done in 1965 sometimes distort or obscure some of the important phrases and ideas and they are not readily available. So we provide for the record fresh translations of these key statements.

¹ Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 4.



Jacques Maritain receives "Message to Men of Thought and Science" from Pope Paul VI at the close of Vatican Council II, 8 December, 1965

To Seekers of Truth: Message to Men of Thought and Science¹

A very special greeting to you, seekers of truth, to you, men of thought and science, explorers of man, of the universe, and of history, to all of you who are pilgrims on the pathway to the light and also to those who have stopped along the way, worn out and disappointed by an empty search.

Why a special greeting to you? Because all of us here, Bishops, Fathers of the Council, long to hear the truth. What has our effort been during these last four years, if not a keener search for a deeper meaning of the message of truth entrusted to the Church, an effort at more perfect docility to the Spirit of Truth?

Surely our paths were bound to cross. Your road is ours. Your pathways are never foreign to ours. We are the friends of your calling as seekers, the brethren of your weariness, the admirers of your achievements, and, if need be, the consolers of your discouragements and your failures.

For you therefore, we have this message, too: continue to search, without ever tiring, nor ever despairing of the truth. Remember the word of one of your great friends, Saint Augustine: "Let us seek with the desire to find, and let us find with a desire to seek even more." Happy are those, who, possessing the truth, seek it more earnestly in order to renew it, to deepen it, to give it to others. Happy are those who, having not found it, advance toward it with a sincere heart: may they search for the light of tomorrow with the light of today, until the light is at its fullest.

But do not forget this: if thinking is a great thing, thinking is first of all a duty; woe to whoever willingly shuts his eyes to the light! Thinking is also a responsibility: woe to those who darken the spirit by the thousand tricks that degrade it, that inflate it with pride, that deceive it, that deform it. What other fundamental principle is there for men of science if not to make every effort to think rightly?

For this purpose, without disturbing your progress, without bedazzling your vision, we come to offer you the light of our mysterious lamp: faith. He who confided it to us is the supreme Master of thought, he whose humble disciples we are, the only one who said and who could have said "I am the light of the world; I am the way, and the truth, and the life."

This word applies to you. Never perhaps, thank God, has there been so clear a possibility as today of such a profound accord between true science and true faith, mutual servants of the same single truth. Do not stand in the way of such a fruitful meeting! Have confidence in faith, the great friend of intelligence! Enlighten yourselves in its light in order to grasp the truth, the whole truth. Such is the wish, the encouragement, and the hope that we, the Fathers of the whole world gathered in council in Rome express to you before we disband.

¹December 8, 1965. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966), pp. 10-11, trans. Richard Lemp and John P. Hittinger.

To the Guardians of Temporal Power: Message to Heads of State¹

At this solemn moment, we, the Fathers of the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, at the point of disbanding after four years of work and prayer, in full consciousness of our mission towards humanity, address ourselves with respect and confidence to those who hold in their hands the destiny of humankind on earth, to all the guardians of temporal power.

We publicly proclaim: we honor your authority and your sovereignty; we respect your office; we recognize your just laws; we esteem those who make them and those who apply them. But we must speak a sacred and inviolable truth: God alone is great. God alone is the beginning and the end of all things. God alone is the source of your authority and the foundation of your laws.

It is upon you that the task falls to be on this earth the promoters of order and peace among men. But do not forget: it is God, the true and living God, who is the Father of men. And it is Christ, his eternal Son, who came to tell us that and to teach us that we are all brothers. It is he who is the great artisan of order and peace on earth, for it is he who guides human history and who alone can incline hearts to renounce those evil passions that engender war and misfortune. It is he who blesses the bread of humanity, who sanctifies its work and its suffering, who gives it joys you cannot impart and who gives it comfort in sorrows you cannot console.

In the midst of your terrestrial and temporal city, he mysteriously builds his spiritual and eternal city, his Church. And what does she ask of you, this Church, after nearly two thousand years of all kinds of vicissitudes in its relations with you, the Powers of the Earth; what does she ask of you today? As we said in one of the major texts of this council: she only asks you for freedom, the freedom to believe and to preach her faith, the freedom to love her God and to serve Him, the freedom to flourish and to bear her message of life to men. Do not be afraid of this: she is in the image of her Master, whose mysterious action does not transgress on your prerogatives, but heals everything human of its fatal emptiness, transfigures it, and fills that emptiness with hope, truth, and beauty.

Let Christ exercise this purifying action on society! Do not crucify Him again: it would be sacrilege, for He is the Son of God; it would be suicide, for He is the Son of Man. Allow us, His humble ministers, to spread everywhere unfettered the "good news" of the Gospel of peace on which we have meditated during this council. Your peoples will be the first beneficiaries of it, for the Church will form loyal citizens for you, friends of social peace and of progress.

On this solemn day when she closes the sessions of her twenty-first ecumenical council, the Church offers you through our voice her friendship, her services, her spiritual and moral energies. She addresses to you all her message of salvation and benediction. Welcome it, as she offers it to you, with a joyous and sincere heart and bear it to all your peoples!

¹ December 8, 1965. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966), pp. 11-12, trans. Richard Lemp and John P. Hittinger.

**On the Religious Significance of Vatican II:
Discourse at the Last General Session of Vatican II¹**

Venerable Brothers,

Today we bring to a close the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, and we bring it to a close while it is still very strong and vigorous. This is what your presence here in great numbers shows, the orderly arrangement of this assembly reveals, the formal conclusion of the council's work confirms, and the harmony of mind and will proclaims. And while some questions raised during the council's deliberations are not yet suitably resolved, this indeed shows that the council concludes its work not out of exhaustion, but rather with the vitality which has inspired all the meetings and which will, with God's help, lead it to resolving these questions after the council is dismissed.

Our council will hand down to posterity an image of the Church: this hall filled with holy pastors who profess the same faith and breathe out the same love; who are joined together in a society of prayer, discipline, and an eager devotion to the task; and who all — what is truly remarkable — have a single wish, namely to offer themselves like Christ, their teacher and Lord, for the life of the Church and the salvation of the world.

But our council hands down to posterity not only an image of the Church, but also the patrimony of her doctrine and precepts, the deposit entrusted to her by Christ himself. Her people have constantly reflected on this deposit through the centuries and have turned it into their own flesh and blood, as it were, by giving it expression in their way of life. This deposit of faith is now illuminated in so many of its parts and has come to be established and arranged in its fullness and integrity. This living deposit of faith constituted by the divine power of truth and grace is capable of giving life to everyone who receives it devoutly and by it nourishes his own life.

What this council was in reality, or what it accomplished, might have been the subject of our final meditation. But this would require too much time and attention; nor, at this last and solemn hour, would we venture to comprehend in a few words a matter of such importance. We desire rather to devote these weighty moments of time to a thought that both humbles our souls and lifts them to our highest aspirations. We desire, that is, to ask ourselves: What is the religious importance of our council? By the term "religious" we mean to signify our relationship to God, which is, after all, why the Church exists, what she believes, what she hopes for, what she loves; this personal relationship to God defines what she is and what she does. In this light then we must ask what we have done here: have we brought praise to God; have we sought knowledge and love of Him; have we advanced in our efforts to contemplate Him; have we increased our desire for His glory; have we developed our abilities to proclaim Him to men who look to us as pastors and teachers of the ways of God?

¹ December 7, 1965. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 58 (1966), pp. 51-59, trans. Michael Woodward and John P. Hittinger.

We sincerely believe the answer is yes. From the very outset we followed the fundamental intention according to which the whole reason for the council was established. Our predecessor of happy memory, John XXIII, rightly considered the author of this ecumenical council, gave the opening speech and his words still resound in this Basilica of St. Peter. At that time the pope said:

The greatest concern of an ecumenical council is that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine be guarded and taught with a more powerful and persuasive account.... Christ the Lord truly proclaimed this message: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." The word "first" means that this is especially where our energies and thoughts should be directed.

And the result in fact corresponded to his intention. That we might appreciate the result in its reality we should recall the age in which the council took place: it is an age when, as all agree, men are more concerned with seeking mastery of this world than they are in seeking the kingdom of God; it is an age when forgetfulness of God has become a common habit of mind, as though the progress of the sciences warranted it; it is an age when the principle impulse of the human person, who had attained a clearer consciousness of himself and his freedom, claims an unabridged freedom not subject to any law beyond the order of natural things; it is an age when the ideology of "secularism," pushing ahead by privilege of today's advances in learning, is held as the wisest norm by which society should be governed; it is an age, moreover, when human reason has fallen so far as to embrace the "absurd" and complete despair; it is an age, finally, when the greatest religions of the world were subject to disturbances and changes never experienced before. It was in this age, then, that our council was celebrated to the praise of God, in the name of Christ, by the breath of the Holy Spirit "who searches all things" and even now animates the Church from within "so that we may know what God has given us" (1 Cor 2:10-12). In other words, the Spirit brings the Church to a deep and comprehensive understanding of human life and the world.

With the help of this council, by a doctrine of human nature and the world which is theological and theocentric, as they say, the Church has turned the minds of men to herself, as it were provoking those who consider her alien and outside of the viewpoint of our time. She embraces what the world at first considers absurd – the claim that God exists. But we are strongly confident that the age will later of its own accord acknowledge this belief as humane, wise and beneficial. For God is; He actually exists; He lives; He is a person; He is providential, endowed with infinite goodness, and He is not only good in himself, but especially good in regards to us; He is our creator, our truth, our happiness; so much so that when a man tries to fix his mind and heart on God through contemplation he elicits an act of his own spirit which is the most fine and perfect of all; thus even in the modern world, in all fields of human endeavor, we can and should aspire to this contemplative act so that all human activity is raised and perfected in its own order from within.

Someone might say that the council focused less on the elaboration of divine truths than on its principal theme – the consideration of the Church, her nature, her composition, her ecumenical task, and her apostolic and missionary work. This ancient religious society, which is the Church, was eager to meditate on herself in order to know herself better, to define herself better, and from this, to present her mind and teachings. This is all true; but this awareness of herself was not the sole end she proposed to herself, nor was it simply to display her talents for earthly culture. Calling herself back to herself, the Church has penetrated the hidden recesses of her own being, not in order to please herself with scholarly investigations that delve into religious psychology or the history of her own past, not in order to describe her laws or regain, by dedicated effort, her own rights. But she does so in order that, alive in herself, and through the Holy Spirit, she might better understand the efficacious word of Christ, might search more deeply the mystery, which is the wisdom and presence of God around her and within her, and might nourish more and more in herself the flame of faith, that hidden power on which her strength and wisdom depend. This is the flame of love by which she is compelled to sing praises of God without end, since, as St. Augustine says, “it is the nature of the lover to sing.” Yes, this particular religious purpose is clearly evident from the council’s documents, especially those which discuss divine revelation, the liturgy, the Church, priests, religious, and the laity. From these it is shown how clear, fresh, and rich is that spiritual stream which, flowing out of a vital contact with the living God, breaks forth from the heart of the Church and is poured through her onto the parched and arid ground of our world today.

As we trace, however, the religious power of this council, we must not overlook a certain purpose that is of utmost importance, for it was very prominent in it: to examine the modern world. Never, perhaps, before the time of this synod, has the Church felt herself brought to such a necessity: that she had to understand and, as it were, draw near to the society of men around her, to know it and consider it rightly and bring herself into it, to serve it and deliver to it the message of the Gospel, even to seek it out, somehow pursuing a society that changes so quickly and continually. This disposition arose from the fact that the Church, in an earlier age and especially in this past century, remained apart and separated from secular culture. This disposition to understand and draw near to the society of men is always entailed by the Church’s primary duty, the salvation of men; at no time has it not been so. It has prevailed constantly and successfully at this council. On account of this, a suspicion arose in some people who believed that a philosophy, found in the outside world from the teaching of “relativism,” predominated in the men and acts of the synod, which paid too much attention to transitory matters, to new currents that thrive in human culture, to perceived needs of others that arise; all this to the detriment of a fidelity owed by the majority to accepted doctrine, and with the loss of a religious perspective and purpose, which should be the proper concern of the council. We, of course, do not think that such ruinous designs should be attributed to it, if its true and authentic resolutions and genuine acts are considered.

We prefer to notice that our council's spirituality was chiefly one of love, on account of which express purpose no one will be able to treat the council as though it were irreligious or deviating from the holy Gospel, when we remember how Christ himself taught us that "in this all may know we are his disciples, if we love one another." (*Jn* 13:35) We may also allow the words of the apostles to resonate within our hearts: "This is pure and unstained religion before our God and Father: to visit orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself undefiled by the world." (*Jas* 1:27); and again: "Whoever...does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?" (*1Jn* 4:20).

Indeed the Church, gathered together in the council, has devoted herself to reflect – not only on herself and the relationship by which she is joined to God – but also on man, and on man as he really shows himself at this time: man, we say, who lives; man who is devoted to promoting himself alone; man, who not only considers himself worthy to be the one that unites, as in a center, every study, but who is also not afraid to affirm that he is the center of everything, even a law unto himself. The whole man as a phenomenon – using an expression of the current age – clothed and appearing in countless roles, has set himself before the council fathers, who are themselves men, yet all pastors and brothers, endowed with an intense concern and love: man, who complains bitterly about his lamentable lot; man, who in the past and in our own time judges others as below himself, and is therefore always wavering and insincere, covetous and proud; man, who is dissatisfied with himself, who bursts into laughter and tears; man, who can adapt to everything and play any role; man, who is narrowly focused on the investigation of science; man as such, who thinks, loves, and strains in effort, ever turned to some desire, like that "growing son" (*Gn* 49:22); man, who must be considered to have a certain sacredness on account of the innocence of his childhood, the secret of his poverty, and the devotion that his griefs produce; man, on the one hand caring only for himself, on the other fostering society; man at once "praising the past" and awaiting the future, while happily dreaming of the past; man, on the one hand guilty of crimes, on the other hand adorned with the sanctity of morality; and so on.

Let us say that the fiercely ambitious ideology of secular humanism has now finally come forth to provoke the council to a fight. We stand confronting each other: the religion which is the worship of God who wished to become man, and the religion (for it should be considered such) which is the worship of man who wishes to become God. Yet what happened? A fight? A war? An anathema? This rightly could have been expected, but it clearly did not happen. That parable of the good Samaritan was the example and norm that directed the spirituality of our council. Indeed an immense love toward men completely pervaded the council. The needs and interests of men, observed and then examined more closely, which become ever more burdensome the more the son of this world grows, held the entire focus of this synod's study. At least ascribe this praise to the council, you of this age who are single-mindedly devoted to humanity, who deny any truths that transcend nature; acknowledge our new assiduity for humanity. For we too, or rather we above all others, are devoted to humanity.

What has this fullest gathering observed in human nature? Or, having gained light from God, what did it endeavor to know? It desired to look fully upon man's countenance, which always displays two appearances, the the grandeur and misery of man; both its greatest evil, in which it undoubtedly struggles as if with an incurable sickness, and its goodness that remains, marked by hidden beauty and extraordinary courage. The truth must be confessed openly, that our council, when it made its own judgment on man, turned more to regard his fair side rather than his harsh side, and with full awareness interpreted everything in its best aspect. The council brought much affection and admiration to the men of our age. Their errors were certainly rejected, just as love as well as truth demanded; but men were only admonished concerning their error, always under the sound precept of respect and love. And thus it happened that, instead of a study of the ills which destroy souls, saving remedies full of comfort were brought into their midst, in order that the council might speak to men of this time, not in dire prophecies, but in tidings of hope and words of assurance. The things in them that are good it treated with due respect, and even great honor, and it confirmed all its undertakings and studies, seeking to heal and raise these things from within to their full integrity. We shall mention but a few more prominent examples. The countless languages scattered about and being used today have been brought into the sacred order of rites, so that human words might be addressed to God and in turn divine words to men. Also of great import is that natural, deep-rooted inclination to affirm the full rights that are to be enjoyed by man insofar as he is man; this inclination of itself is a harbinger of a destiny that surpasses nature. Thus, we desire, with highest hopes, that this inclination may prosper and that man may enjoy his own dignity, genuine freedom, abundance of learning, improved social conditions, justice and peace; that all of these, we say, may be enhanced and encouraged to a richer perfection. Ultimately we must speak as pastors devoted to the sacred task of bringing the light of the Gospel to all men. At present, we can speak only too briefly of those many deep questions that touch the true flourishing of man, which the council discussed; nor was it the council's purpose to resolve all the more urgent questions of daily life. Some of these questions were set aside for more careful investigations, which the Church will establish later; many others were treated in a very brief and general way and, because of this, allow fuller explanations and various applications.

Now, however, it is good to notice that the Church, through her own magisterium, while she did not wish to define any point of doctrine with extraordinary dogmatic rulings, nonetheless articulated her own authoritative doctrine on many questions, to whose norms men are today bound to conform their conscience and reasons for action. Therefore the Church has entered into a dialogue, so to speak, with the men of our time, always retaining her authority and truth, and yet engaging in a willing and friendly conversation proper to pastoral love. She wants to be heard and understood by men. And thus she not only adapts her words to the understanding of men, but employs a way of speaking that is commonly used today in clear conversations. These words derive great power to attract and persuade from the experience of life on which they depend and from the decent sentiments of humanity by which they are affected. The Church spoke with the men of our age as they are.

There is another aspect of the council we think worthy of consideration: that it has examined the rich abundance of doctrine with a single purpose, to serve man in all matters connected with his life, in all his weakness and in all his need. The Church has, in a certain sense, professed herself the handmaid of the human race, and at a time when her magisterium and pastoral rule, because of the solemn celebrations of this ecumenical council, exhibited themselves in a brighter and more powerful way. Indeed the purpose of exercising her ministry occupied a central place.

In celebrating this council, has all we have said about it and all we could say further that pertains to its human importance, deflected the mind of the Church to a cultivation of today's perspective, which is focused entirely on man? It must be said that the Church has not departed from her straight road, but has directed it into that region. Those who correctly discern this particular focus, in which the council considered the temporal aspects of human good, must agree that such attention should have been paid to pastoral concerns, which the council wished to follow as the essential mark of its own efforts. And they should acknowledge that this same focus is never separated from the true core of religion, because of the love which moves it (for where there is love, there is God!), or because of the close bond, always confirmed and promoted by the council, which man's temporal good has with his spiritual, religious, and eternal good. The church turns herself toward man and the world, but at the same time she is lifted up toward God.

The men of our time, whose attitude forces them to judge the importance of things by their expediency, ought to recognize the gravity and significance of this ecumenical council because at least it addressed in a unique way its own usefulness toward men. No one, then, may claim that the Catholic religion is not useful. For when she particularly expresses the deliberate and efficacious nature of her own action, that is, when she celebrates this ecumenical council, she clearly declares that she exists for man's sake and promotes his flourishing. Since this is so, it must be admitted again that the Catholic religion and human life are joined to one another in a friendly agreement, and that both are striving together for one human good; in other words, that the Catholic religion exists for the human race and is, in a certain sense, the life of the human race. Indeed she should be called life because of her doctrine, which is excellent and perfect in every way, which she hands down to man (Is not man, left to himself, a mystery to himself?). And she rightly hands down this doctrine, because she derives it from the knowledge she has of God.

In order that we may fully know man, true man, integral man, it is necessary that we first know God himself. It will suffice at present to recall the burning words of St. Catherine of Siena: "In your nature, O eternal God, I know my own nature." Yes, the Catholic religion is life because it reveals man's nature and his final end, and gives his life a fuller meaning. It is life, finally, because it has the highest law of life and because it brings into man such hidden power of life that it actually makes him divine.

Venerable brothers and beloved sons, and all who are present here, if we remember that the face of Christ, the Son of Man, is to be seen in the face of every man, especially when it has become translucent with tears and sorrows. And if the

face of our Heavenly Father is to be seen in the face of Christ, according to the verse: "He that sees me, sees also the Father," (*Jn* 14:9), then our way of judging human matters is transformed when it is brought into Christianity which is directed completely to God as its center. And so we may express the meaning in this way: that is necessary to see man in order to see God.

Is it not, then, the intention of this council, because it focused on man particularly and diligently, to propose to the world of our time a liberation and a consolation, to which it may ascend by steps? In the end, does not the council teach us by a simple, new, and solemn argument to love man in order that we may love God? To love man, we say, not as an instrument, but as a primary end so that we may attain our highest end that transcends human things. Thus is the entire council described and defined in terms of its religious meaning, since it is nothing else than a certain invitation, forceful and friendly, by which the human race is called to find, with the help of brotherly love, that God of whom Augustine says: "To turn away from him is to fall; to turn toward him is to revive; to remain in him is to be secure . . . to return to him is to be born again, to dwell in him is to live." (Augustine, *Sol.* I,3)

Certainly we are supported by this hope at the conclusion of this Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and at the beginning of the human and religious renewal that it has set for itself to reflect upon and promote. We have confidence, venerable brothers and council fathers, that this will come to pass for ourselves; and we hope the same will come to pass for the whole human race, which we have been taught to love more and to serve better.

Now, finally, that all these things may turn out well, we invoke again the prayers of St. John the Baptist and St. Joseph, patrons of the ecumenical synod, Saints Peter and Paul, the foundations and the protectors of Holy Church, together with St. Ambrose, the bishop whose feast we celebrate today, uniting in him, as it were, the eastern and western Church. At the same time we fervently implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ, whom we also call the Mother of the Church. And with a single voice and spirit we give thanks to God and proclaim his glory, who is the living and true God, the one and supreme God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.