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LEO XIV

## **GENERAL AUDIENCE**

*Audience Hall*  
Wednesday, 7 January 2026  
[**Multimedia**]

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### **Catechesis. Vatican Council II through its Documents. Introductory catechesis**

*Brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!*

After the Jubilee Year, during which we focused on the mysteries of the life of Jesus, we will begin a new cycle of catechesis which will be dedicated to Vatican Council II and a rereading of its Documents. It is a valuable opportunity to rediscover the beauty and the importance of this ecclesial event. Saint John Paul II, at the end of the Jubilee 2000, stated: "I feel more than ever in duty bound to point to the Council as *the great grace bestowed on the Church in the twentieth century*" (Apostolic Letter Novo millennio ineunte 57).

Together with the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, in 2025 we remembered the sixtieth anniversary of [Vatican Council II](#). Although the time that separates us from this event is not so long, it is equally true that the generation of bishops, theologians and believers of [Vatican II](#) is no longer with us. Therefore, while we hear the call not to let its prophecy fade, and to continue to seek ways and means to implement its insights, it will be important to get to know it again closely, and to do so not through "hearsay" or interpretations that have been given, but by rereading its documents and reflecting on their content. Indeed, it is the Magisterium that still constitutes the guiding star of the Church's journey today. As [Benedict XVI](#) taught, "as the years have passed, the Conciliar Documents have lost none of their timeliness; indeed, their teachings are proving particularly relevant to the new situation of the Church and the current globalized society" ([First Message at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Members of the College of Cardinals](#), 20 April 2005).

When [Pope Saint John XXIII](#) opened the Council on 11 October 1962, he spoke of it as the dawn of a day of light for the whole Church. The work of the numerous Fathers convened from the Churches of all continents did indeed pave the way for a new ecclesial season. After a rich biblical, theological and liturgical reflection spanning the twentieth century, [Vatican Council II](#) rediscovered the face of God as the Father who, in Christ, calls us to be his children; it looked at the Church in the light of Christ, light of nations, as a mystery of communion and sacrament of unity between God and his people; it initiated important liturgical reform, placing at its centre the mystery of salvation and the active and conscious participation of the entire People of God. At the same time, it helped us to open up to the world and to embrace the changes and challenges of the modern age in dialogue and co-responsibility, as a Church that wishes to open her arms to humanity, to echo the hopes and anxieties of peoples, and to collaborate in building a more just and fraternal society.

Thanks to [Vatican Council II](#), the Church "has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make" (Saint Paul VI, Encyclical Letter [Ecclesiam suam](#), 65), striving to seek the truth by way of ecumenism, interreligious dialogue and dialogue with people of good will.

This spirit, this inner disposition, must characterize our spiritual life and the pastoral action of the Church, because we have yet to achieve ecclesial reform more fully in a ministerial sense and, in the face of today's challenges, we are called to continue to be vigilant interpreters of the signs of the times, joyful proclaimers of the Gospel, courageous witnesses of justice and peace. At the beginning of the Council, Monsignor Albino Luciani, the future [Pope John Paul I](#), as Bishop of Vittorio Veneto, wrote prophetically, "As always, there is a need to achieve not so much organizations or methods or structures, but a deeper and more widespread holiness. ... It may be that the excellent and abundant fruits of a Council will be seen after centuries and will mature by laboriously overcoming conflicts and adverse situations". [\[1\]](#) Rediscovering the Council, then, as [Pope Francis](#) remarked, helps us to "restore primacy to God, to what is essential: to a Church madly in love with its Lord and with all the men and women whom he loves" ([Homily on the sixtieth anniversary of the beginning of Vatican Council II](#), 11 October 2022).

Brothers and sisters, [Saint Paul VI](#)'s words to the Council Fathers at the end of its work remain a guiding principle for us today. He affirmed that the time had come to leave the Council assembly and go out towards humanity to bring it the good news of the Gospel, in the awareness that they had experienced a time of grace in which the past, present and future were condensed: "The past: for here, gathered in this spot, we have the Church of Christ with her tradition, her history, her councils, her doctors, her saints; the present, for we are taking leave of one another to go out towards the world of today with its miseries, its sufferings, its sins, but also with its prodigious accomplishments, its values, its virtues; and lastly the future is here in the urgent appeal of the peoples of the world for more justice, in their will for peace, in their conscious or unconscious thirst for a higher life, that life precisely which the Church of Christ can and wishes to give them" (Saint Paul VI, [Message to the Council Fathers](#), 8 December 1965).

This is also true for us. As we approach the documents of [Vatican Council II](#) and rediscover their prophetic and contemporary relevance, we welcome the rich tradition of the life of the Church and, at the same time, we question ourselves about the present and renew our joy in running towards the world to bring it the Gospel of the kingdom of God, a kingdom of love, justice and peace.

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[\[1\]](#) A. Luciani – John Paul I, *Note sul Concilio*, in *Opera omnia*, vol. II, Vittorio Veneto 1959-1962. *Discorsi, scritti, articoli*, Padua 1988, 451-453.

## Special greetings

I extend a warm welcome this morning to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, especially those from England, Ireland, Australia, Canada and the United States of America. To all of you and your families, I offer my prayerful good wishes for a blessed Christmas season and a new year filled with joy and peace. God bless you all!

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## Summary of the Holy Father's words

Dear brothers and sisters, we begin today a new series of catecheses dedicated to the [Second Vatican Council](#) and to reflecting on its documents. The work of the Council Fathers paved the way for a new ecclesial season, placing at its center the mystery of salvation and the unity between God and his people. At the same time, it opened the Church to seek dialogue with the people of good will for a more just and fraternal world. We see that the documents have lost none of their relevance and are pertinent to the demands and challenges of today. Closely studying the Council documents will help us to be attentive interpreters of the signs of the times, and to proclaim the Gospel to all. As we make our journey of rediscovering the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, let us welcome the past with its rich tradition; let us consider the present with its joys and sorrows; and let's look towards the future with an urgent appeal for greater justice, love and peace.

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*The HOLY SEE*

