



# Ecumenical Interfaith Committee Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

## Our Shared Journey With All People

*from Vatican II in Plain English*

by Michael Carsten, OFS

Pope Francis continues to call the Church, the People of God, to address issues of violence, oppression and death of human beings, and the planet itself. He is empowered to shout this out to millions of Catholics through the statements of compassionate concern and brilliant guidance given to all of us in the Second Vatican Council documents.

The Council has much to say to us about how we navigate our relationships with each other and our planet. I was recently introduced to a paraphrased version of the documents of the Council, and I have found them to be quite helpful. *Vatican II in Plain English* is written by Bill Huebsch and Paul Thurmes. For authentication of the paraphrased version, on the Publisher Page the following is written: “The Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur are official declarations that the material reviewed is free of doctrinal or moral error.”

I believe we have an obligation to read these important documents and to incorporate them into our daily lives, most especially into our prayer lives. This set of books is a great resource for doing just that.

From Book 2 (from a set of three books) entitled “The Constitutions,” I have excerpted certain quotes. This book helps us recall our shared journey, our need for a renewed understanding of our sense of community, our sense of unity, which places us on an equal basis with all people, and all their faith traditions, most especially the

lowly for whom we strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.



### Book 2 - The Constitutions *Chapter 2, The People of God*

*(Although the “verses” below are written in psalm-scripture style in the book, I present them in paragraph form to save space. The bold and italic material in verse 9 are mine as brief comments.)*

#### **Verse 9**

God has always welcomed anyone whose heart is ready to experience the divine presence. These are the ones whose lives reflect goodness and who cultivate a sense of awe. But God has always chosen to welcome

women and men, not merely as individuals but bound together, united as a people who recognize the divine. So, coming together as a people is an essential element of salvation. ... the house of Israel came as one people, united in a covenant with God, slowly growing more and more ready to receive God fully, ready to live within a full and new covenant. In Christ, this new covenant was instituted, and all were called together as a people: Both Jew and Gentile, united in one common Spirit.... The church is constantly moving and searching, wandering.. not unlike the Hebrew experience in the desert *(or the experience of the displaced now moving north through Mexico)*. And even though the Church's movement is sometimes filled with trial and tribulation, nonetheless, it *(we)* remain faithful overall. It *(we)* continues to be a visible sign of unity, a sacrament of salvation for all people. Aware of the absolute importance of its mission, the Church seeks constant renewal. It never ceases to beg the Holy Spirit for the grace it needs to be the light of the world. *Lumen Gentium!* ...

#### **Verse 12**

... This same spirit likewise sanctifies the whole world, which means that through the Spirit every aspect of the world will eventually be brought to goodness and holiness. This will happen because the Spirit gives gifts to each person and assists each in using them well. The power we need to do this comes only from God and leads us insistently to more and more become exactly who we are created to be. We call this shared, loving, sacred power by a name: we call it "grace." ... It is given to everyone at every rank of the Church. It forms us into a community which also has a name: The People of God!

#### **Verse 13**

All people everywhere and throughout all time are called to belong to this People of God. And doesn't this fit God's way of doing things? God did, after all, create us in the divine image to share human nature together.

Together we share an inescapable sameness. God even became one of us in Jesus Christ so that we might be united as human beings, that we might begin to realize that this sameness is a wonderful gift. But human unity may seem like a far-off dream. Our experience of national tensions and cultural warfare makes such ... unity appear impossible! God's reign, however, is not like an earthly one because it encompasses citizens of every race with all their various cultures and it forms these people into a Church. ...

#### **Verse 14**

Everyone on earth is welcomed into this unity, and each is called in a unique way. For those called to be Catholic, the church is necessary for salvation, according to both Scripture and tradition. ...

#### **Verse 15**

Those called to be Christians in other churches and with whom the pope is not yet fully united are nonetheless linked to the Church in many ways. United to Roman Catholics by Scripture, prayer, charity, and even sacraments, together we hope and work toward full unity. The Church urges all its members to lives that are holy and renewed to enable this.

#### **Verse 16**

And the many people who are not Christian are also connected to the People of God. The Jews remain dear to God for example, as do the people of Islam, as well as all those who seek God with a sincere heart. Likewise, those who seek no God whatsoever, if they are good and true, are also related to God's People. ...

The Word of the Church

Mike Carsten, OFS

November 7, 2018

[www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org](http://www.ofsusaecumenicalinterfaith.org)