

confirm that the Kingdom has already arrived on earth: "If I cast out devils by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you".(22) Before all things, however, the Kingdom is clearly visible in the very Person of Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Man, who came "to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many:"(23)

When Jesus, who had suffered the death of the cross for mankind, had risen, He appeared as the one constituted as Lord, Christ and eternal Priest,(24) and He poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father.(25) **From this source the Church, equipped with the gifts of its Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to spread among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ** and of God and to be, on earth, the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While it slowly grows, the Church strains toward the completed Kingdom and, with all its strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with its King.

6. In the old Testament the revelation of the Kingdom is often conveyed by means of metaphors. In the same way the inner nature of the Church is now made known to us in different images taken either from tending sheep or cultivating the land, from building or even from family life and betrothals, the images receive preparatory shaping in the books of the Prophets.

The Church is a sheepfold whose one and indispensable door is Christ.(26) It is a *flock* of which God Himself foretold He would be the shepherd,(27) and whose sheep, although ruled by human shepherds; are nevertheless continuously *led and nourished by Christ Himself*, the Good Shepherd and the Prince of the shepherds,(28) who gave His life for the sheep.(29)

The Church is a piece of land to be cultivated, the tillage of God.(30) On that land the ancient *olive tree grows* whose holy roots were the Prophets and in which the

reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles has been brought about and will be brought about.(31) That land, like a *choice vineyard*, has been planted by the heavenly Husbandman.(32) The true vine is Christ who gives life and the power to bear abundant fruit to the branches, that is, to us, who through the Church remain in Christ without whom we can do nothing.(33)

Often the Church has also been called the building of God.(34) The Lord Himself compared Himself to **the stone** which the builders rejected, but which was made into the cornerstone.(35) On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles,(36) and from it the Church receives durability and consolidation. This edifice has many names to describe it: *the house of God* (37) in which dwells His family; *the household of God in the Spirit*;(38) *the dwelling place of God* among men;(39) and, especially, the holy temple. This Temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Holy Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem (5*). As living stones we here on earth are built into it.(40) John contemplates this holy city coming down from heaven at the renewal of the world as a bride made ready and adorned for her husband.(41)

The Church, further, "that Jerusalem which is above" is also called "our mother".(42) It is described as *the spotless spouse of the spotless Lamb*,(43) whom Christ "loved and for whom He delivered Himself up that He might sanctify her",(44) whom He *unites to Himself by an unbreakable covenant*, and whom He *unceasingly "nourishes and cherishes"*,(45) and whom, once purified, He *willed to be cleansed and joined to Himself, subject to Him in love and fidelity*,(46) and whom, finally, He *filled with heavenly gifts for all eternity*, in order **that we may know the love of God and of Christ for us**, a love which surpasses all knowledge.(47) The Church, while on earth it journeys in a foreign land away from the Lord,(48) is like in exile. It seeks and experiences those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right-hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God until it appears in glory with its Spouse.(49) ❖

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21 & 22 October 2023
29th Ordinary Sunday

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Vatican II DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH

**PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
ON NOVEMBER 21, 1964**

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4. When the work which the Father gave the Son to do on earth (9) was accomplished, **the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the Church**, and thus, *all those who believe* would have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father.(10) He is the Spirit of Life, a fountain of water springing up to life eternal.(11) To men, dead in sin, the Father gives life through Him, until, in Christ, He brings to life their mortal bodies.(12) **The Spirit dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful**, as in a temple.(13) *In them He prays on their behalf and bears witness* to the fact that they are adopted sons.(14) The Church, which the Spirit *guides in way of all truth*(15) and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits.(16) **By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth.** Uninterruptedly *He renews it and leads it* to perfect union with its Spouse. (3*) The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, "Come!"(17)

Thus, **the Church has been seen as "a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."**(4*)

5. **The mystery of the holy Church is manifest in its very foundation.** The Lord Jesus set it on its course **by preaching the Good News**, that is, the coming of the Kingdom of God, which, for centuries, had been promised in the Scriptures: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand"(18). **In the word, in the works, and in the presence of Christ**, this kingdom was clearly open to the view of men. The Word of the Lord is compared to a *seed which is sown in a field*;(19) those who *hear the Word with faith and become part of the little flock of Christ*,(20) have received the Kingdom itself. Then, by its own power the seed sprouts and grows until harvest time.(21) The Miracles of Jesus also