

Reflection Questions for Chapter 6—The Church and the Modern World

Read Chapter 6 The Church and the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) in Reclaiming Vatican II by Fr. Blake Britton. Begin with Pope John XXIII's prayer for the Vatican Council: "Almighty God! In Thee we place all our confidence, not trusting in our own strength. Look down benignly upon these members of Thy Church. May the light of Thy supernal grace aid us in taking decisions and in making laws. Graciously hear the prayers which we pour forth to Thee in unanimity of faith, of voice, and of mind." Your reflections will be shared **December 6th** in your small group. Your group may not get to all the questions. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you to those questions most important for your group.

Ch. 6:141-143 This final document of Vatican II is a pastoral constitution whose primary concern is "the care of souls." Fr. Blake highlights that the "Church is not a spectator in the world" but has the "truth the world needs to hear." How do you see the Church being in touch with the signs of the times? Out of touch? What truths do you think need to be spoken to the world?

Ch. 6:143-144 Fr. Blake says that we have a sense that we are constantly being overwhelmed by the world we have created. Pope Benedict XVI summarizes this impression on page 144. Reread this quote. What does this statement mean to you? How do you see the Church correcting this? What can you do to help change this impression?

Ch. 6:145 If every human being is "created by God for the purpose of dwelling in communion with him..." How do you answer the individual who believes that life is coincidental and the product of natural selection?

This thought process carries forward to the quality of life and if one can "no longer produce anything or live as they would like to," their life is worthless

and elimination will solve the problem. *How can we as Christians respond to this issue, with grace?*

Ch. 6:146 "One of the greatest threats in the modern world is atheism." *How does this document say we should respond to atheism?*

Ch. 6:147-151 Jesus came to give us life abundantly. We are to live in a spirit of brotherhood from which should naturally flow love and justice. "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political, and even religious matters." *How are we to treat others who think or act differently than we do? In what ways are we all equal? Where do the fundamental rights of each person originate?*

Ch. 6:151-159 Marriage and the family are closely linked to a healthy society. We see the initial plan for marriage here. *On what model is marriage based? How does the Second person of the Trinity come into a marriage, stay, and enrich the couple?*

P157 The family is the "nucleus of civilization." *How did God share with married couples a special participation in his own creative work (Gen 1:28, 2:18, 9:7; Matt19:4-6)?*

P158 Fr. Blake writes, "If the Church ain't cryin', then it's dyin'." Having young families at Church is a blessing. *Do you find yourself saying a prayer for a parent with a crying child instead of getting annoyed with the distraction?*

What can you do to support the Catholic vision for marriage and the family?

During this time of Advent, hold the pastoral teachings found in Gaudium et Spes in your prayers.