

THE DOGMATIC CONSTITUTION ON THE CHURCH *LUMEN GENTIUM* AFTER 50 YEARS

Ștefan LUPU*

Abstract: Beginning with a big picture of the Council, the intended study presents the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*. Pointing at the beginning to the genesis of the document, the author describes the content of each chapter, the internal dynamic and the major accents of the Dogmatic Constitution. The important aspects of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which have had an impact on the life of the Church during the 50 years after the Second Vatican Council, are presented in conclusion.

Keywords: Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, Christ, Church, Pope, bishops, laity.

We celebrate this year 50 years from the closure of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). In order to emphasize the importance of this event, several scientific and ecclesiastical events are organized within our local Church, which have as target the analysis of the documents elaborated by the Council's fathers and their reception in the life of the God's people. I chose to present the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, within this colloquium organized by the Theological Institute of Iasi (Romania).

Above all, I would like to mention that, although the documents of the Second Vatican Council can be read from an anthropological (starting with *Gaudium et Spes*) and ecclesiological perspective, (starting with *Lumen Gentium*), and also from a Christological (starting with *Dei Verbum*) and theological one (starting with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*), they still should be read as one text.

1. The Second Vatican Council, an organic whole

The extraordinary Synod of the bishops from October 1985, gathered in order to celebrate 25 years from the closing of the Council, was admitting, in a final report, the structuring role of the four constitutions, seen as crucial points of the Council and of its interpretation. Also, it emphasized the „communion ecclesiology” as part of the Second Vatican Council.

* Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iassy (email: slupu@itrc.ro)

We can distinguish the documents according to their authority degree: obviously, the constitutions are at the highest level; they are followed, in the end, by the declarations. The central axis goes from *Lumen Gentium* (supported by *Dei Verbum* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*) to its reply in *Ad Gentes*, and finally to its extreme development, *Gaudium et Spes*. The constitutions (three dogmatic and one pastoral) appear to be crucial, nevertheless from *Lumen Gentium* they get the most decrees and declarations regarding their architectonical organization:

- The decree on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) and that on the Eastern-rite Catholic Churches (*Orientalium Ecclesiarum*) in the third session (see *LG II*);

- The decree on bishops (*Christus Dominus*) (*LG III*), on adaptation and renewal of religious life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) (*LG VI*) and the non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*) (*LG II*);

- The decree on laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) (*LG IV*);

- And finally, the decree on priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*).

The other documents could be considered to be complementary, whether it is about those of *Gaudium et Spes* (*Inter Mirifica*, *Gravissimum Educationis* and *Dignitatis Humanae*) or of *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (*Optatam Totius*), that is of *Lumen Gentium*. Briefly, the entire Council is structured on the poles *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*, their condition of possibility being given by *Dei Verbum* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

This way, the ramification of the documents of the Council goes from *Lumen Gentium* (which implies *Dei Verbum* and it is made possible by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*) to its final form, *Gaudium et Spes*. If want to establish a separation, we could say that the liturgy is the entrance gate in the theology of the Council, as the gathering of the fathers is firstly a liturgical act; although its horizon is not the Church, but the world of this time; its final base is the revelation of God in Christ and in the Holy Spirit (*Dei Verbum*); for this historical revelation, the Church is the mystery and the sacrament, as the body and the bride of Christ, which is the light of the world (*Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*).

Consequently, first of the councils which published a constitution on Church is also the first which addressed a „pastoral” constitution to the non-Christians; and after it had promoted a renewal of the liturgy deep to its spirit (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 17, 23, 29) and being grounded on a close articulation between „the first and the second Testament” (*Dei Verbum* 7 and 16) of the Holy Scripture, Tradition, Magisterium and the spiritual life of the faithful.

The Second Vatican Council seems to be the result of the liturgical, patristic, biblical, ecumenical, apostolic movements of the previous decades.

As being an ecumenical Council, it has become a magisterial event that we should have in mind when interpreting the previous tradition. Regarding this situation, the lecture of the Council texts is not enough; we should regard the Second Vatican Council as an exemplary judgement of the previous tradition (for example, the Marian one). „We should read the Tradition starting from the Second Vatican Council and not the other way round”¹. This is the principle of a „continuity hermeneutics”² or of the reform asked by the Pope Benedict XVI even from the beginning of his pontificate. Maybe we are so used to consider the Council as a magisterial act, what really it is, but before all it is an act of the Catholic Tradition and this is how it should be understood.

2. The dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*

After these clarifications, we can present the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen Gentium*. Firstly, we will see the history regarding the elaboration of the Constitution, followed by a brief lecture of each chapter, and, in the end, we will emphasize on some important aspects of its content.

The Second Vatican Council was considered, even from the point of view of the materials that helped to its preparation, as a continuation of the First Vatican Council. This one, being interrupted by the political events, had to vote rapidly the papal infallibility, without having time to reflect on the role of the other „vicars of Christ”, that is, the bishops. The last two councils should be considered as a whole also for the fact that they are the first in which the Church made an analysis of itself. Also, as Mons. G. Philips notes, „in connection with First Vatican Council and the whole context before it, there can be signalled a real progress regarding the doctrine... The connection established between sacramentality and collegiality represents for us the most important theological progress made by the council”³.

We find more fragments in *Lumen Gentium*, where solemn formulas are used, such as „the Holy council teaches” (*LG* 14, 20, 21); „it teaches and declares” or „it formally teaches” (*LG* 67), this meaning that we should see here the exercise of a doctrinal authority⁴. Also, due to the Mons. Philips, we are in front of the „authentic Magisterium”, „although the Council didn’t proclaim any new thesis as being «*de fide definita*»”⁵.

¹ G. ROUTHIER, „Un concile à interpréter. Les enjeux d’un style nouveau”, *Études* (2007) 259.

² BENEDICT XVI, „Discourse to the Roman Curia” (22 of December 2005).

³ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero. Storia, testo e commento della Lumen gentium*, Jaca Book, Milano 1975, 202.

⁴ Cf. PH. DELHAYE, „L’autorité théologique des textes de Vatican II”, in *DTC*, III, 4335.

⁵ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero...*, 603.

Finally, the famous words from the beginning of the Dogmatic Constitution apply to Christ, the prophetic light for all the peoples: „*Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*, Christ is the light of the world”; that’s why, „the holy Council... intends... to enlighten all the people with the light of Christ, which shines on the face of the Church” (LG 1). But we should follow our way and face the genesis of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

2.1. *The history of writing the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen gentium and its enacting*

Mons. G. Philips is the most indicated person in designing, as he did in his famous comment, the genesis of the dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*⁶. However, our author turns to be discrete, this being the reason for which we have to appeal to some other commenters, such as R. Laurentin⁷ in order to understand the events mentioned by Mons. Philips when he is presenting briefly the three levels of the text:

- The primary project or the *Text A*, elaborated starting with 26th of November by the organizing sub-commission *De ecclesia* of the theological Commission and which was asked by the Council to be re-elaborated by the end of the first session;
- The second project or the *Text B*, established during the period of the first session, sent to the fathers starting with the summer of 1963 and discussed during the time of the second session;
- The final text or the *Text C*, established during the period of the second session, sent in July 1964 and adopted after the discussions at the end of the third session.

The initial project of *Lumen Gentium* (Text A) had 11 or 12 chapters for a 123 page document; the organizing commission „after hard works” consigns it in the summer of 1962. Briefly discussed at the end of the first session, the draft knew the intervention of 76 fathers, among which Mons. E. Desmet, bishop of Bruges, distinguished against the „triumphalism”, „clericalism” și „juridicism” of the project. The intervention of the cardinal Suenens, in keeping with the opening speech of the Pope John XXIII, forced the necessity of remaking the process, asked by the summoning of the parents.

This way, the mixed commission *De ecclesia* had to adopt, as a starting point of its work, between 25th of February and 10th of March 1963, a draft

⁶ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero...*, 17-66.

⁷ Cf. R. LAURENTIN, *L'enjeu du Concile. Bilan de la première session; Bilan de la deuxième session ; Bilan de la troisième session; Histoire, textes, commentaires*, Seuil, Paris 1963; 1964; 1965; 1966. A more useful reading can be U. BETTI, „Histoire chronologique de la Constitution”, în *L'Église de Vatican II*, II, Unam Sanctam 51b, Cerf, Paris 1966, 57-83.

of „an Belgian origin”, which was circulating (as others) at the beginning of the Council and was structured in four chapters: the mystery of the Church, the hierarchy and, especially, the episcopate, the laity, „the perfection states” (this chapter will be intensely discussed).

Even from the beginning of the opening speech of Pope Paul VI, the elaboration of the draft on the Church was meant to be the primary task of the Council, which actually consecrated half of the work to the second session. The general talk, which took place from 30th of September until 1st of October, finished by taking into consideration the project. The introduction and the first chapter about the mystery of the church (from 1st to 4th of October) were implying less problems than the second chapter, dedicated at that time to the hierarchical constitution (4-16 October). The vote from 30th of October, referring to five questions raised on 29th October, but promised since the 15th of October, allowed the advancement of the reflection about the consecration of the bishops, the belonging to the college of the bishops, the authority on the entire Church and the divine origin of the Apostolic College united with its Head, as well as the reintroduction of the diaconate.

In these circumstances, it was discussed, from 16 to 25 of October, the third chapter, which handled the people of God and, especially, the laity. Suddenly finished, the discussion had an epilogue on 7th of November, when the cardinal Döpfner summed up the interventions of the fathers who couldn't interfere on the fourth chapter. The moment a sort of „fight for a separated chapter” was taken place, especially among the monks/friars, the subdivision of the third chapter was shaping out. On 29th of October, another crucial event was taking place, because the fathers had pronounced, with a weak majority, in the favour of instructing the draft (already existing) on the Virgin Mary in the same Constitution *De Ecclesia*.

The doctrinal commission took the task again, right before the second session, to revise the project after the 2000 written or verbal (amendment) sentences of the fathers. It finished into choosing, during the sessions, a subdivision of the chapter that became the fifth „on the vocation to holiness within the Church and on monks/friars”, leaving in hands of the Council to decide a real separation. On February 5th, it was added, on behalf of the cardinal Larraona, and supported by Paul VI, a text on „the relationship between the pilgrim of the Church and the Church of Heaven”, a text that will be introduced in the fifth chapter, regarding the holiness, and the chapter on Holy Mary.

Being printed in July and sent to the fathers, the text C encounter, at the beginning of the third session, the procedure that was predicting, for some chapters from *De Ecclesia*, more indicative votes and it was saving a special vote for the actual division of the fifth chapter. This ballot, which

added a positive result (1.105 *placet*, 698 against and 7 null), took place on 30th of September, the day when the actual IV, V and VI chapters of the Constitution were voted. This way, the revision of the texts could be approached.

The entire draft was approved on 19th of October and, after the final and almost pro vote of the fathers, Paul VI enacted the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* on 21st of November. The same day, he proclaimed Mary „Mother of the Church”, surprising many fathers, as this title had been taken out from the elaboration of the eight chapter.

2.2. *The content of the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*

There is no sense of making here a detailed synthesis of the great Council document, as this act would be quite difficult since the text has a concise and dense character. I think it is more useful to have a look on the general structure of the text, bringing some explanations referring to the content of each chapter.

I. *The mystery of the Church.* The Church is seen in the light of Christ (*Lumen gentium*: the light of the world, that is, the light of all peoples) and of its mystery, as a complete accomplishment of the saving plan of the Holy Trinity (conceived by the Father and fulfilled by the incarnate Son and by the Holy Spirit), as a final covenant with the humanity, as first-fruits of the Kingdom of God, as body of Christ, as complex, theandric reality, visible and invisible at the same time.

II. *The people of God.* The Church represents the new people of God. It consists of all sorts of faithful: the pope, the bishops, the priests, and the laity. These people, anticipated in the old Israel, are realized by the new covenant started by Christ, which doesn't cancel the previous one, but it renews and continues it in a more universal and deep way. The Son of God passes to his people the messianic offices: the priest (the universal priesthood of the faithful), the prophecy and king, and the Holy Spirit assist him with his special charismas (ministerial and universal). It is the universal sacrament for world salvation (meant to welcome all peoples) and it has a strong and exhaustless vocation.

III. *The hierarchical constitution and the episcopate.* As people of God, the Church receives its fundamental structures from its Founder. He assigned to the apostles and their successors the mission to lead the Church. This one has two supreme authorities: the Sovereign Pontiff and the Episcopal College. The College of the Bishops together with its leader, the Roman Pontiff, and never without him, constitutes the subject of supreme and complete power on the entire Church, even though this power can't be practiced without the consent of the Roman Pontiff. Each bishop has the

office of teaching, sanctifying and leading his local Church, being assisted in this triple mission by priests and deacons.

IV. *The laity.* Although they are enjoying of a substantial equality with the other members of the people of God with regard to the dignity and the vocation, the laity is in charge of special functions. That's why, the triple messianic office which also belongs to the laity (not only to bishops and priests) has as goal not only the people of God, but the entire world: the consecration, the leading and the cultural upgrade of the world, both by confessing and by world (the prophetic function). The relationship between laity and clerics should inspire from the filial humility and also from sincerity. The fathers can receive from the laity useful suggestions and necessary knowledge in order to appreciate better the temporal aspects. In other words, a mutual understanding based on obedience and respect, and more than that, on love.

V. *The universal vocation of consecration in the Church.* This kind of vocation is addressed to the entire people of God taken as whole, but also to each member. The duty of consecration, according to the explicit will of God, is common to all faithful, from the Pontiff to bishops, to priests, to simple clericals and to laity in all the moments and social status. The consecration is possible to all of the people because God offers light and vocation to all of them. The married couples consecrate each other by living the marital life in the light of the mystery of Christ united with his bride, the Church. Those who have chose chastity could aspire to the heights of the integral chastity and the heroic charity. The life of the entire mystical body is a permanent tension for perfection.

VI. *The friars.* All the members of the Church are called by God to consecrate themselves (as it is said in chapter V), but this vocation can be realized in different ways and on different ways. The friars chose the so-called way of the evangelical advice (poverty, chastity, obedience) when they oblige themselves to follow the votes recognized by the saint hierarchy, so that the monastic state gets some features of stability and officiality. But they still remain in the field of the ecclesiastic institutions and don't occupy a different level within the hierarchy, an intermediary between the hierarchy and laity, all having the possibility (consecrated or not) to participate to the monastic established.

VII. *The eschatological character of the Pilgrim Church and its union with the Heaven Church.* The truths clarified in this chapter are two: the relationship of the Church with the Kingdom of God and with the Heaven Church, although without being separated by it. Actually, the Church is the Kingdom of God in development, but the accomplishment of the Kingdom will be done across the time. The pilgrim and the heaven Church are

different, but they are not separated as two autonomous realities, but as two phases, two levels, and two moments of the same reality. The communion of the saints is based on the crucial union between the two churches, which is actually a single one into Christ, the totality of his mystical body. The pilgrim Church continues the life and the passions of Christ, the Redeemer, while the heaven none enjoys the triumph of the glorified Christ.

VIII. Blessed Virgin Mary, The Mother of God, within the mystery of Christ and of the Church. The indefinable mystery of Mary, mother and daughter of the Church at the same time, is illustrated by the determination of her role in the process of salvation and by the definition of her place within the new people of God. Firstly, it is underlined the relationship between Mary and the incarnation of the Word of God in order to save the people. That's why, the connection between Mary and the Church is stated, the main figure, because, as Mary having worked with the divine omnipotence, conceiving and giving birth in a unique way to Christ, in the same way the Church works together with Christ for the birth of the faithful who form his mystical body. Of course, the work of redemption is based entirely on Christ, the only intermediary between God and people; but Holy Mary, who gave Christ to the world and took place to the events of his life, can't stay away. Indeed, she worked with her Son for our salvation. Mary is also the example of the Church, as she represents that kind of perfection to which the Church aspires for its members. In the end, the Council states the legitimacy and usefulness of the Marian cult, which cannot, of course, have the same nature with the adoration which is meant only for God; nonetheless this cult of Mary is special, different from that offered to the saints.

2.3. *The dynamic of the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*

Mons. Philips, in his comment, writes down that the principle that guided the elaboration of *Lumen Gentium* was the following one: „Let's start with what is common and to handle with the specializations afterwards”⁸. In this way, the chapters of the Constitution „present themselves by two, following a logical order, less expected, but easy to be justified”: the first two chapters talk about the *mystery of the Church*, firstly in its transcendental dimension, than in its historical form; the next two chapters describe the *organic structure* of the community established by Christ, priests and laity; then, the draft has in view the *crucial mission* of the Church, which is nothing else but the consecration of all, fact testified in their own way by the friars; the last two chapters handle the final apoth-

⁸ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero...*, 20.

eosis, the *eschatological development* of saints' community, for whom Holy Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of all the people, is the protector.

Having in mind these aspects, prof. A. Chapelle showed in a unique way the dynamic of the elaboration, under the form of escaping and returning figure, specific to Thomas Aquinas, of a theology of the redeeming incarnation⁹. In this way, the Church enroots in the Mystery of God (chapter I and II) and is the beginning of its growth (III and IV); the holiness is its result (V and VI), a holiness that fulfils beyond death and gets its fulfilment in Holy Mary (VII and VIII). In general, the Church comes from God (I) and in Virgin Mary is already fulfilled into God (VIII). In such a dynamic movement, „the fundamental Constitution of the Church” (I-IV) is in charge of the „saving mission” (V-VIII). We can see the solidarity which connects the people coming from God (I-II), the bishops, the priests, the deacons (III), the laity (here including the friars) (IV), in the same vocation of consecration (V): however, the friars have of their own what belongs to the world (VI) and it is already realized in the saints of the heaven and, especially, in Virgin Mary (VII/VIII). But it also can be noticed that is not possible to isolate some of the elements of the dynamic composition of the Church without raising some tensions.

Forgetting the mystery of the Church (I-II), for example, and its eschatological vocation means to leave behind the eschatological structure (III-IV) and its mission (V-VI) in an impossible confrontation between the institution and the ascetism. Or, in the same way, if the mystery (I-II) and the structure of the Church (III-IV) are separated of their fruitfulness (V-VI), already present, then the Church is no longer than a sign where the reality of the vocation doesn't live anymore. Or if the mystery of the Church is separated by its historical form (I/II), the hierarchy is seen as being separated from the laity (III/IV), the monks are understood separately from the universal call to consecration (V-VI), and Virgin Mary, without the saints of the heaven (VII/VIII). These considerations have an obvious ecclesiological interest, because it allows us to view, with regard to *Lumen Gentium*, the power or the subsequent ecclesiological derivatives.

The Church, coming from the Holy Trinity and visible within the history as people of God, structured by the hierarchy and the laity, leads people to the holiness of God. The friars bring testimony for this fact, with regard to the eschatological vocation realized by the communion of the saints and prefigured by Mary for our hope. This is the dynamic; this is the cohesion of the Dogmatic Constitution, in relation to which Mons. Philips was saying that „is impossible to move an important point from the end to

⁹ Cf. A. CHAPELLE, „La vie religieuse dans le mystère de l'Église”, VC 51 (1979) 104-111.

the beginning of the Constitution without having to rewrite the text from the beginning”¹⁰.

2.4. Some important aspects

Lumen Gentium is kind of chart for the life of the entire Church, and this very one is understood as a sacrament, that is a mystery (I). Then, the re-dimensioning of the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ by the means of the one belonging to the people of God is present in all forms (II).

In the third chapter, the sacramentality of the episcopate, the fullness of the priesthood sacrament is mentioned very clearly and, as consequence, it can be stated the Episcopal Collegiality with and under Peter – even though the notion of collegiality doesn’t appear, and only the definition of the Episcopal College, mentioned in the „preliminary explicative note” meant to end the debate. An important chapter about laity follows, being seen as participants to the sacerdotal, prophetic and royal mission of Christ. This means that, as it is stated in the fifth chapter, we are all called to consecration, thus, to live the evangelical advice, testified especially by the friars in the sixth chapter. But the pilgrimage Church, united with the heaven Church, is on the way of her eschatological fulfilment (VIII), aspect already seen in Mary, herself being included in the mystery of Christ and of the Church (VIII).

3. The reception of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* within the contemporary ecclesiology

Although it didn’t stated new dogmatic definitions and it didn’t appeal to technical theological and rigorous formulas, and it used a simple language in a biblical way, the Second Vatican Council meant to development a complete and fascinating frame of the Church, giving to each part the intended importance, the role and signification.

Within the new image of the Church shaped by the Second Vatican Council, those aspects, left behind or neglected completely by the post-Tridentine ecclesiology, are reshaped, that is, the communal, charismatic, cultural, ecumenical aspects, of great importance, some of them important for the divine dimension, other for the human and historical dimension of the Church.

That’s why, we can say, as Georges Dejaifve did, that „in the history of the Church, the day marked by the enacting of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* represents, with no doubts, the beginning of a new era (...) The

¹⁰ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero...*, 634.

Constitution *Lumen Gentium* represents, in my opinion, a turning point for the Roman Catholic ecclesiology (...) We could say that we moved from an institution-Church to a community-Church, from a power-Church to a poor and pilgrim Church”¹¹.

The same Dejaifve, trying to sum up the original features of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, stops to five:

1. *The difference between the Kingdom of God and the Church*: the Church is only the beginning, „the germ” and not the complete form of the Kingdom;

2. *the communal dimension*: there is an essential equality between all the members of the Church, because all of them enjoy themselves of the same crucial vocations and duties and, with regard to this aspect, „it is not daring to talk about a real „supernatural democracy, where the Holy Spirit is the guarantor present in each of us, despite the diversity of each duties”¹²;

3. *the sacramentality*: this covers not only some particular sign but the Church itself in her deep nature and that is why „the sacramental aspect will characterize all the elements of the ecclesiastical communion and it will give its ontological structure, before any dominant juridical consideration”¹³;

4. *the catholicity*: this is understood not only regarding the quantity as the quality, thus, as an attitude that tends to adopt the multiplicity and to make room to the diversity: „to be indeed a sign of salvation in the universe, according to the diversity of the peoples”¹⁴;

5. *the politicity*: it is about the attention offered to the social and political problems with which it confronts: „The Church is aware of its own temporal mission in this world, as a condition of the total salvation and of the unity of the entire world”¹⁵.

Also Mons. Gérard Philips summed up seven characteristics of the ecclesiology of the Council, an ecclesiology which, with regard to „the essence is the same, but the ways of expressing are not the same anymore. It takes place a turnover, or better said, a return to the historical and biblical thinking to the detriment of the static conceptual drafts. This way, the respect for the revealed truth not only that it suffers, but also seems more significant, and the saving force of the word of God is exulted (...). If the

¹¹ G. DEJAIFVE, „L’ecclésiologia del Concilio Vaticano II”, in *L’ecclésiologia dal Vaticano I al Vaticano II*, Brescia 1973, 87-88.

¹² G. DEJAIFVE, „L’ecclésiologia del Concilio Vaticano II”, 91.

¹³ G. DEJAIFVE, „L’ecclésiologia del Concilio Vaticano II”, 92.

¹⁴ G. DEJAIFVE, „L’ecclésiologia del Concilio Vaticano II”, 93.

¹⁵ G. DEJAIFVE, „L’ecclésiologia del Concilio Vaticano II”, 94.

old Church shows us today a new face this due certainly to a double fidelity: for its origin and for the stable axis of its evolution”¹⁶.

Next to the two features underlined by Dejaifve: „The communal dimension (=community) and 2. Open attitude towards the others (=catholicity), Philips underlines the following aspects as characteristics of the vision about the Church, present in *Lumen Gentium*:

3. *the return to the biblical and patristic sources*:

4. *the personalism* both for the understanding of the Church (which is not considered as a „thing”) and of the attention paid to all the members of the Church, including the humble ones;

5. *the dynamic*: „the Church cannot be static, it never accepts us to be inactive and sends us continuously to all the streets of the world”¹⁷

6. *the historical dimension*: „Now we see the mystery of the Church in its historical dimension. Our faith is not based on wise and abstract axioms. We believe in the actual intervention of the living God in the living history of the humanity”¹⁸. According to Philips, what had determined the fathers of the Council to give advantage to the model of „the people of God” and less to the one of the „mystical body” was actually the consideration of the historical dimension of salvation and the Church. „We discover more dynamic in the image of a people which travels, especially if it is about a nomad tribe looking for its final place, crossing steppes and deserts, heading for the Promised Land. And we also move in these groups, more or less enthusiastic, more or less tired, more or less guilty, but always full of hope, due to the power coming from the Holy Spirit which acts in our weakness”¹⁹.

7. *a synthesis focused on the mystery of salvation* made by Christ and offered by God to anyone who believes. Gathering everything around this mystery, the revealed doctrine referring to the Church gets shape and unity: the Holy Trinity, the Creation, the Fall, the Incarnation of the Redeemer Son, spreading the Gospel and gathering the chosen people through the Holy Spirit, the source of Eternal Life and vocation by the means of the saving ways, that is the sacraments, the virtues and the life lived according to the commands of Christ and all these due to the power of the sacramental bread²⁰.

Mons. Philips, in his notebooks from the Council, was writing down on March 16th 1963: „I read again the draft, carefully, together with Cerfaux,

¹⁶ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 619.

¹⁷ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 634.

¹⁸ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 625.

¹⁹ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 626.

²⁰ G. PHILIPS, *La Chiesa e il suo mistero*, 624.

especially regarding the quotes from the Scripture. After this work, Cerfaux seemed satisfied". (It is about the quotes from the first and the second chapter from *Lumen Gentium*). Later, when he will return to his entire adventure of the Council, on 24th of May 1965, Philips was writing: „When I read again the text of *Lumen Gentium*, I have the feeling, as Mons. Parente says, that «è però una bella pagina!» (otherwise it is a good page!), especially the entire first chapter, and, in certain degree, the second one". After 50 years, re-reading the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* could well attract those who want to do that.