



The graphic features a large orange sun with rays extending downwards. Below the sun, a group of colorful human figures in various colors (green, blue, purple, red, yellow) are walking towards the right. One figure is in a wheelchair. To the right of the figures, the text 'Synod 2021 2024' is written in a colorful, hand-drawn style. Below this, the text 'For a synodal Church' is written in a simple font, followed by 'communion | participation | mission' in a smaller font.

MISSION

Archdiocese of Adelaide
The Monastery
August 1, 2023

Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

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A photograph showing a group of people sitting around a table, engaged in a discussion. A woman in a black top is speaking to a man in a purple shirt. Other people are visible in the background, some looking at documents.

A FUNDAMENTAL INSIGHT

Mission is not the marketing of a religious product,
...but the construction of a community in which relationships are a manifestation of God's love
...and therefore whose very life becomes a proclamation.

Instrumentum Laboris, §52

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VATICAN II, ON THE CHURCH

“Since the church is in Christ as a **sacrament or instrumental sign** of intimate union with God and the unity of all humanity, this council ...”

Lumen gentium, §1

...called to be the enduring presence of Christ in the world.

“In a church that defines itself as a sign and instrument of union with God and of the unity of all humanity

... **the discourse on mission focuses on the lucidity of the sign and the efficacy of the mission**, without which any proclamation lacks credibility.” *Instrumentum Laboris*, §52

3

A MAJOR SHIFT IN ‘MISSION’

In the two centuries before Vatican II, the Catholic Church adopted an adversarial approach to the modern world and tended to see itself as the sole font of grace.

In contrast, Vatican II’s *Gaudium et Spes* takes a basically positive attitude to modernity—to human dignity and equality; to democracy, the modern economy, and freedom of the press.

And it understands mission in richer terms, including in terms of **dialogue** and **reading the signs of the times**.

That is, it sees **a graced church having a mission to a graced world**.



4

MISSION IN *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

Gaudium et Spes has the key to a renewed understanding of mission:

Mission means to proclaim the truth of Christ in all times and places, and to acknowledge that grace is at work in the world.

Gaudium et Spes makes clear that **mission is working with God to make God's world a more just and livable place**, where women and men can live as sisters and brothers.

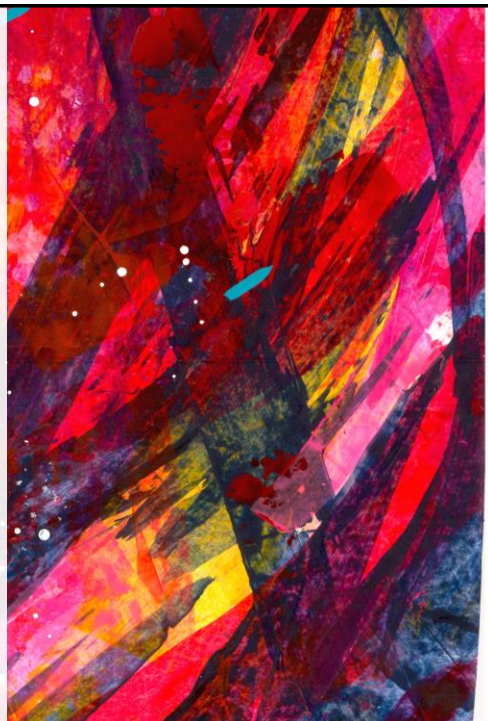
(Bevans, "The Church in Mission.")



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Gaudium et spes CHURCH—WORLD DIALOGUE

- 1. Dialogue with individuals:**
people are searching to make sense of existence, and the church is "entrusted with making manifest the mystery of God...discloses to us the meaning of existence." (§41)
- 2. Dialogue with the community:**
the church's "mission of a religious nature produces a function, enlightenment and resources which can be of service in constructing and strengthening the human community." (§42)
- 3. Dialogue should shape the life of every believer:**
"The split between the faith they profess, and the daily lives of many people is to be counted as among the more serious misconceptions of our day." (§43)

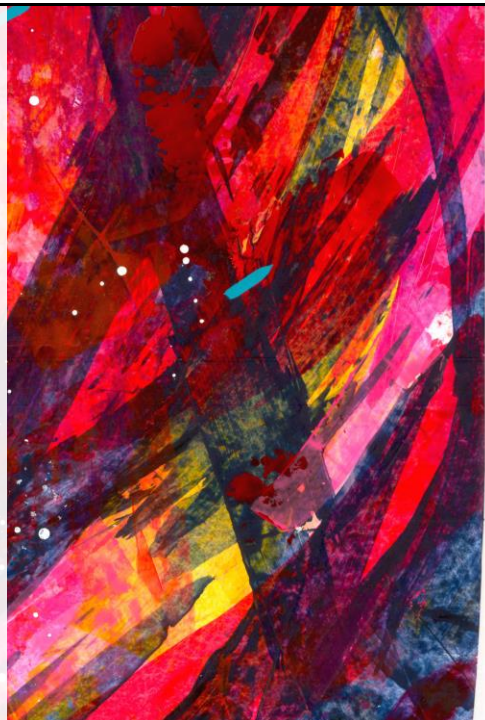


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Gaudium et spes CHURCH—WORLD DIALOGUE

4. Dialogue between the church and the world is **two way**. The believing community must keep itself open to the world.

“It is for God’s people as a whole, with the help of the Holy Spirit, and especially for pastors and theologians, to listen to the various voices of our day, discerning them and interpreting them ... so that the revealed truth can be increasingly appropriated, better understood and more suitably expressed.” (§44)



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KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

- 1 True dialogue requires a *profound openness* to and engagement with the perspective of another (individual, group, or culture).
 - Attempting to understand the world on the other’s terms.
 - So...listening to her or his words, and particular emphasis, discerning “the way she or he puts the world together”

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KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

2 As I work at openness, I realize that I had both understood and misunderstood the other. I had a lucid view of some elements, but totally misunderstood others.

- Dialogue, therefore, leads me to *reflect on and refine my own expectations and assumptions*. It leads me to retrace my steps, and reconsider my own take on the world.
- “No understanding the other without a changed understanding of self”



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KEY FEATURES OF DIALOGUE

3 Dialogue not only changes individuals' perspectives, it *brings people into a new unity*.

In a successful conversation, the dialogue partners come under the influence of the truth of the object and thus are bound to one another in a new community. To reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were. (Gadamer, *Truth & Method*)

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MISSION AS DIALOGUE

In the dialogue that is Christian life, the church's mission is:

- To proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ always, and
- Respond to the desires and struggles of this period of history, while
- Listening for the voice of the Spirit in the world.

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THANK YOU!

References:

Stephen Bevans, "The Church in Mission," *The Cambridge Companion to Vatican II* (Cambridge 2020).

Richard Lennan, *Tilling the Church: Theology for an Unfinished Project* (Liturgical 2022).

Artwork:

Lisa Bierer

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Adelaide Diocesan Assembly, October 2022



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