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Vatican Council II's golden anniversary

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Making a Difference

One of the most important events in the modern history of the Catholic church will soon reach a historical milestone. On Oct. 11, the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council will be celebrated by the church throughout the world.

On Oct. 11, 1962, Blessed Pope John XXIII confidently threw open the windows of the church, trusting that the Holy Spirit would blow through it with a fresh breeze of renewal.

During this worldwide ecumenical council -- the 21st in the history of the church -- over 2,500 bishops approved 16 documents designed to enliven Catholic spirituality, and make the church far more relevant to the modern world.

The most important of these documents, in my opinion, is *Gaudium et Spes* (?Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World?). It insists that the Catholic church must be at the service of all humanity, especially those most in need.

Its very first words powerfully proclaim this theme: ?The joys and the hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ.?

As a step in this direction, ?the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.? We are then called to strengthen those aspects that conform to Christ?s teachings, and to change those elements that do not.

The world?s Catholic bishops insisted that the church -- ?the people of God? -- cannot show any bias in protecting the lives and dignity of human beings. As one of Vatican II?s active participants Archbishop

