

## Joy and Hope

Peggy Guerrero

I recently had a wonderful conversation with a lay woman who is pursuing studies in the Catholic faith. She had just finished reading *Gaudium et Spes*, the Church's document from the Second Vatican Council. The title in English is *The Church in the Modern World*, but the translation from Latin is *Joy and Hope*. Either title tells us something of Church's wisdom and vision, and taking both titles together we gain even more insight into our vocation as lay people in the Church and in the world. We are to be a sign of joy and hope. And that can be no small challenge.

How do we accept and live fully the vocation to be ourselves a sign of hope and joy in the world today? While we do experience goodness, kindness, compassion, and many good things in our lives, the world surely needs more joy and hope; that has been and always will be true on a global level and on a personal level. *Gaudium et Spes* gives us very practical tools for us to use to bring about a better world. It reminds us that we live in solidarity with the human race, that we are one in the Body of Christ.

We experience pressure to take sides; it becomes about polarization, people dividing themselves into different camps, keeping the focus on what is divisive. We long for there to be one final answer for everything, one best way, one solution for whatever problems arise. It is very hard not to be pulled into that dynamic!

*Gaudium et Spes* offers a more human approach. It calls us to dialogue with the world and with one another which is based on solidarity and respect. It tells us that we are to be "in the world" as a sign that we are truly one in the Body of Christ with Christ as the head. One way we live as that Body is when we respectfully listen to one another. We know that we bring a piece of the truth, as does each other person.

My friend found new enthusiasm for her Church. This enthusiasm could have led her to talk more and listen less, but she really grasped the message that was in the Church's document. Her enthusiasm is leading her to listen more. She is the church, a lay person in the modern world.