

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

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The shift brought by the Second Vatican Council was an important one that may not have been received well by all but it was a necessary for our times. We learn about it in many of the documents that came from the council especially *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. But there was also a collective work compiled by Catholic German theologians called the Handbook of Pastoral Theology, which helped put into practice these shifts of ideas after the council.



The Handbook defined Pastoral Theology as the theological reflection on the identity of the Church and its activity, not simply the implementation of this activity. The Handbook as well as the documents of the council clarified who was responsible for pastoral theology, broadening its participants. Before the council pastoral theology was seen specifically as a ministry of the clergy and after it was opened to the whole Church, all baptized share the same mission. As highlighted in the *Lumen Gentium* chapter five, *The Universal Call to Holiness*. This chapter clarifies that Christ laid down his life for his Bride, the Church not only one part of it but for all of her meaning each and every member was called to respond to him. "...He did this that He might sanctify her. He united her to Himself as His own body and brought it to perfection by the gift of the Holy Spirit for God's glory. Therefore in the Church, everyone whether belonging to the hierarchy, or being cared for by it, is called to holiness," (LG, 39). This response of all the faithful to Christ included a partaking in the ministry of pastoral theology; because now pastoral theology was seen as a source for theology a reading of the "signs of the times." Reading these signs the Church has a more adequate way of responding to the needs of her children not only in theory but also in practice. This shift brought about an application of the theological principles to concrete life.

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