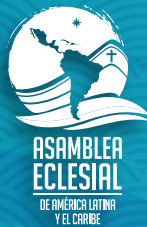


Fourth Sunday OF LENT

PASTORAL CHALLENGE:

To promote and defend the life and dignity of every person at every stage from conception to natural death.



"We again proclaim the supreme value of every man and every woman. In placing everything created at the service of the human person, the Creator manifests the dignity of the human person and calls for it to be respected." (Cf. Gen 1:26-30). (DAP 387).



Encounter with the Word to illuminate life*

From the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke 15, 1-32

"The tax collectors and sinners ail came to listen to Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law began to complain: "Look this man welcomes sinners and even eats with them."

Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to him, 'Father, give me my share of the estate. So he divided his property between them. After a few days, the younger son got everything together and journeyed to a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living.... After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him. The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. 'But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. he was lost and is found.'

* For the biblical texts we use a translation offered by the Bible of the Church in America of CELAM.

“We let ourselves be illuminated”

“We had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again. he was lost and is found (Lc 15,32)

We are convinced that it is better safe than sorry, although we tend to be more reactive than cautious and almost always look for remedies after having suffered an illness, a catastrophe, or a rupture, having made an error, committed a sin, or an injustice. Our existential protocols, to give quality to life and warmth to relationships, are bathed in impotent or guilty tears of 'what needs to be done, in Spanish "habriaqueísmo".

On the one hand, although we have decided to *"promote and defend the dignity of life and of the human person from conception to natural death"* (AEALC, Challenge 4), at the same time we tolerate the millionaire re-armaments or we are mere spectators of human trafficking. and abuse of minors, migrants or refugees. We waste our resources in dehumanizing consumerism or waste our time in useless discussions about rubrics and clothing and apologetic privileges... leaving aside *"the culture of life, which recognizes Jesus Christ in the poorest"* (cf. AEALC, Challenge 4, a).

To what extent do we prefer to focus our attention on the sublime religious melodies, so as not to *"hear the cry of the wounded people", excluded or discarded due to their own mistakes or to the criminal decisions of others?* (cf. AEALC, challenge 7).

Just as there are people who "learn" with pain from their falls, there are also those who "become depressed" when they lose privileges (social or clerical) and "become bitter" when doors are opened to others, welcoming them with mercy "ensuring that our theologies and pastoral practices encourage and facilitate listening to the cry of the poor and interaction with them, to make visible the new faces of the excluded" (AEALC, challenge 7, a).



The "prodigal" sons-fathers-brothers of our time want to rise from failure to return to love, with "processes that affect the transformation of the causes of poverty and social insecurity" (AEALC, challenge 7, b), because Jesus Christ will not leave or forsake anyone, and always opens his arms for the "encounter" that gives life... and full life. Today, in each community, we are going to prepare the great celebration of "reconciliation with life" right from the beginning of its conception and during every minute of its integral growth, with justice, equity, dignity, tolerance, respect, and solidarity.



Reflection to impact life from the Pastoral Challenges



The current culture leans towards styles of being and living contrary to the nature and dignity of the human being. The dominant impact of the idols of power, wealth, and ephemeral pleasure have become the standards of functioning of people and the decisive criterion in the social organization, above the value of the person. Faced with this reality, we announce, once again, the supreme value of each man and each woman. The Creator, by placing everything created at the service of the human being, manifests the dignity of the human person and invites respect for the.

As an ecclesial community, in this Lenten season, we proclaim with one voice, that "all human beings exist purely and simply by the love of God who created them, and by the love of God who preserves them at every moment. [...] only the Lord is author and master of life, and human beings, his living image, are always sacred, from their conception, at all stages of existence, until their natural death, and after death. The Christian view of human beings makes apparent their value, which transcends the entire universe: "God has shown us unsurpassable how he loves all human beings, and thereby confers infinite dignity on them." (Cf. DAp 387-388)

A Lenten Call:

As the People of God on the road, we commit ourselves to make visible the situations of injustice and violations of human dignity, of individuals, groups, and peoples, united as active prophets: announcing and denouncing.

Do you value your own life and defend your dignity as a person?



The challenge we all face to influence life

Facing this challenge implies that during Lent, we review our conversion process at the personal, community, pastoral and synodal levels with sincerity, recognizing that conversion must be practical, accompanied by concrete works, and not a mere speech.

Bearing in mind and heart the desire to promote and defend the dignity of life and the human person:

- What attitudes of Jesus do you think we should have to value our life and that of others?
- Do you remember any words of Pope Francis that guide us in the pastoral work for the defense of human dignity?
- What new defies does facing this challenge pose to the pastoral care of your community?
- What could you personally commit to promote and defend the dignity of life and of the human person?

Let us take another step in our process of conversion and promote and defend the dignity of life and the human person:

- **From our conversion:** let us be aware that the human being, created in the image and likeness of God, also possesses a lofty dignity that we cannot trample on and that we are called to respect and promote. Life is a gift from God, a gift and a task that we must take care of, from conception, in all its stages, and until natural death, without relativism. (Cf. Dap 464)
- **From our communal conversion:** “With the joy of faith, we are missionaries to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in Him, the Good News of human dignity, life, the family, work, science, and solidarity with creation.” (Cf. DAp 103)
- **From our pastoral conversion:** “Promote, in the Episcopal Conferences, in the dioceses and communities, courses on family and ethical questions for the Bishops and for the pastoral agents that can help to solidly base the dialogues about the problems and particular situations about life.” (Cf. DAp 469, a)
- **From our synodal conversion:** “Promote forums, panels, seminars, and congresses to study, consider, and analyze concrete contemporary issues about life in all its manifestations, and especially in the human being, particularly concerning respect for life from conception to its natural death.” (DAp. 469, c).



"As men and women of hope, we believe in the possibility of creating new structures based on the value of the dignity of the human person in the recognition of their rights." DDC 73



To Celebrate life

*Maria,
dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
in You, we entrust the cause of life, of all life.
Help us to announce with tenderness and love
to the women and men of our time,
the gospel that proclaims
that Jesus brought abundant life to all mankind.
Amen.*

ACRONYMS

- AEALC: Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021
- DAP: Document of Aparecida, 2007.
- DC: Document for the road. Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021
- DDC: Document for Community Discernment, Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021
- EG: Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis
- SA DF: Amazon Synod, Final Document.
- SN: Narrative Synthesis. Listening to the 1st Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021



The Blessed Virgin Mary is the indispensable and decisive motherly presence in the gestation of a people of children and siblings, of disciples and missionaries of her Son. (DAP 524).



Our Lady of the Rosary of Chiquinquirá, patron saint of Colombia