

Fifth Sunday OF LENT

PASTORAL CHALLENGE:
To increase instruction in synodality
to eradicate clericalism.



► *“In the face of individualism, Jesus issues a call to live and journey together. Christian life deepens and develops only in fraternal communion. Jesus tells us, “You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers” (Mt 23, 8) (Dap 110).*



Encounter with the Word to illuminate life*



John 8, 1-11

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning, He came again into the temple and all the people gathered around him; He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery and having set her in the center of the court they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do You say?" They were saying this, testing Him so they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, he straightened up and said to them, "He who is without a sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone with the woman still standing in the center of the court. Straightening up Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, she said, "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus said "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now sin no more."

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

“We let ourselves be illuminated”

"I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now sin no more. (John 8,11).

Faced with the suffering, misfortunes, or threats that we experience, there is a great temptation to spend energy looking for "culprits" instead of investing it in looking for solutions. To explain phenomena of nature or traumatic events, we look in the cellars of history, in the sewers of revenge, in the snipers of morality, and in simple soteriological explanations that provoke more resentment, fatality, and guilt.

We can ask ourselves, what would our families be like with more dialogue and less violence? What would our communities be like with more fraternal teams and fewer medieval rituals? What would our countries be like with more distributive justice and fewer waste vultures? what would our common home look like with less lofty declarations and with more practiced awareness?

Jesus, faced with so many “multiple infidelities” (also religious) invites us to assume “responsibilities”, without throwing stones at others; and to go out from the guilty paralysis to the “merciful discipleship” that lifts up, dialogues, demands, and accompanies each person and community.

We need to “uprise” from the weaknesses and threats to "walk together" along paths (sometimes narrow). of integral conversion. For this, we need to “increase training in synodality to eradicate clericalism (AEALC, challenge 5) of those who throw stones at others to hide their own adultery (cf. John 8,7) and react with violent condemnation before the discarded, who need so much mercy. Thus, the walls (socio-ecclesial) will be transformed into synodal bridges "favoring co-responsible participation and appreciation of the various charisms in decision-making, in the different ecclesial spaces" (AEALC, challenge 5, a).



In order to not deep-root ourselves in the “myth of Sisyphus” (always starting something but never getting anywhere), it is essential to promote comprehensive, experiential, spiritual, and intercultural instruction in synodality; necessary for decision-making” (AEALC, challenge 5, b) with all subjects, in all ecclesial instances and with new training itineraries in seminaries and training centers (cf. (AEALC, challenges 6 and 8) for participation, care, and social, cultural, ecological, political, and ecclesial transformation, of the entire Holy People of God.

Jesus Christ does not condemn sinners, nor does he justify errors-crimes, rather, He "raises" and encourages them to recover the synodal path of mercy that transforms (cf. Jhon 8:11).



Reflection to impact life from the Pastoral Challenges

There is a growing desire to grow in synodality since it means walking together co-responsibly with the future of our Church. The synodal style, a recurring concept in the Church's journey, cannot be just a particular concept or event but must be reflected both in ecclesial structures and processes (cf. DC 68). Thus, synodality is a natural way of being Church where the laity "plays an active and creative role in the preparation and execution of pastoral projects for the community." (cf. DAp 213). This desire emerges strongly in the listening process, where it is said: "We hope that a synodal Church will become a reality, a church that goes out, where we are all taken into account. May listening to the Word of God transform our hearts" (SN, p. 111).

Synodality must always be understood, therefore, in an 'outgoing' dynamism, bringing to life the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone" (EG 31) if it is not to fall prey to a kind of se ecclesial introversion." (cf. EG 27).

In the practice of synodality, we enrich and encourage each other in faith, "learning from one another" (CV 206). In this way, we will be able to "better reflect that marvelous polyhedron that the Church of Jesus Christ should be" (CV 207).

On this Lenten journey and in light of the celebration of the recent Ecclesial Assembly, why does this fifth challenge invite us to eradicate clericalism?

Clericalism, a phenomenon so old and so new, is one of the strongest distortions, considered by Pope Francis as " a constant temptation on the part of priests who see the ministry they have received as a power to be exercised, rather than a free and generous service to be offered." (CV 98). For the Pope, clericalism is the root of many evils in the Church and a major obstacle on the way to a synodal Church, since it leads to forgetting the truth that we all share the grace of baptism and the gift of the Spirit and therefore, we are all members of the People of God. It is worth remembering that "we all entered the Church as laity", given that the first sacrament we receive and that "seals our identity forever, is baptism" (CV 98). (Cf. DC 34).



In this Lent, we are all called to embark on paths of conversion, because clericalism is not only a temptation for priests, but also for bishops, as well as for religious men and women, laymen and laywomen. The Pope explicitly calls on the bishops to flee from clericalism and reminds them that saying no to abuses, be they of power or of any other kind, means saying no forcefully to all kinds of clericalism. At the same time, on several occasions during his speeches addressed to Laity, he emphasized that they too must be very careful of this temptation. Let us then welcome the call of the Spirit to convert to the synodal experience and live in this time of grace that is the Ecclesial Assembly and its preparation process (Cf. DC 35).

A Lenten Call:

With the clear awareness of being missionary disciples, let us seek in our dioceses and communities, to participate in the diocesan phase of the Synod on synodality, to listen to each other, meet and offer our contribution to this important ecclesial event.



The challenge we all face to influence life

To face this challenge implies that during this 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 increase instruction in synodality to eradicate clericalism:

- 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, in order to train yourself in synodality?



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

- From our conversion: Recognize the temptation of clericalism in our lives.
- From our community conversion: Bring to life the culture of encounter proposed by Pope Francis, through close communication, in feeling with the other, and in going out of oneself to give to those most in need.
- From our pastoral conversion: Encourage popular piety and popular pastoral care as an antidote against clericalism, stimulating inculturation, encouraging in the community the experience, proclamation, and celebration of the faith.
- From our synodal conversion: Being synodal implies mutual listening in which each one has something to learn. Are we capable of listening to others with the desire to learn?

Synodality draws from the biblical tradition and reaffirms that listening is the Church's way of being and one that cannot be renounced in order to seek and find the will of God. (Cfr. DDC 30)



To Celebrate life

*God of Life,
we need your Spirit,
of your ever-new breath.
Take away the fears of the Church,
free us from our selfishness,
break all ties,
and cast down the power that is not service.
Give us to fully enjoy the filiation
and the fraternity freely received.
Amen*

ACRONYMS

- AEALC: Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021
CV: Christus Vivit, Papa Francisco
DAp: Documento of Aparecida, 2007.
DC: Documento para el camino. Asamblea Eclesial de América Latina y El Caribe, 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 various devotions and shrines spread all over the continent attest to Mary's closeness to the people, and they likewise manifest the faith and trust that her devotees feel toward her. She belongs to them and they experience her as mother and sister. (DAp 269).

Our Lady of Coromoto, patron saint of Venezuela