

Second Sunday OF LENT

PASTORAL CHALLENGE:

To offer accompaniment to the victims of social and ecclesial injustices with processes of recognition and repair.



"... In countries scourged by violence, pastoral action should be undertaken to accompany the victims and take them in, and offer them training so they can live off their work. Their pastoral and theological efforts to promote universal citizenship in which there is no distinction of persons must likewise be deepened." (DA p 414)



Encounter with the Word to illuminate life*



From the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke 9, 28-36

Jesus took Peter, James, and John aside and went up a mountain to pray. While he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake,[g] they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings,[h] one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen;[i] listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

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

“We let ourselves be illuminated”

Master, it is good for us to be here ... “This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him.” (Lc 9, 33.35)

Showing what we are, or demonstrating what we want others to see, is not the same thing. To appear seeking admiration, and to lead community processes is not the same. Being an “influencer” with attractive words or gestures, or being a prophet of the Kingdom is not the same. And of all this, we have examples in our political, social, economic, cultural, and ecclesiastical spheres.

It is clear that Jesus' experience of “transfiguring himself” leads us to the personal-ecclesial option of authenticating our vocation and mission. In other words, “to be and to seem to be” or “to seem to be and to be... missionary-disciples of Jesus Christ, who do not change course due to “persecution” or do not change “friends” due to selfish advantages. Today's Gospel invites us to contemplate the Transfiguration of Jesus.

We are witnesses (or perhaps protagonists) of people and institutions; of ideologies and theologies that adapt to the “fashionable discourse” or successful practices; that prefer the “comfort of what is known” to the risk of prophetic uncertainty; who are looking for a “microphone of their vainglory” even if interpersonal relationships are not fraternal.

It is good “to be” with Jesus Christ, but not to seek refuge from risk. It is healthy to “climb” Mount Tabor to pray, but always with eyes open and ears attentive to the clamor of the common home and the pain of the people. It is reasonable to “seek” inner serenity and security in the face of threats, but not by taming the Gospel...

Thus, let us once again “listen” to Jesus, to the Messiah, to the Son of God who invites us to follow him, to walk, to confront, to synodality; relentlessly (in this time and in our spaces), by personal choice and with community strategies to “accompany the victims of social and ecclesial injustices with processes of recognition and reparation” (AEALC, challenge 2). With the gaze and commitment of the crucified, to “not make invisible” the faces of the newly excluded (cf. DAp 65 and 402) to “accompany the victims” in their Lenten journey of attention, justice, reparation, reconciliation, and healing (AEALC, pastoral option 2, lit. c).



The face of the social and ecclesial victims cries out in this Lent

The document of Aparecida drew among its pages the new faces of exclusion, a result of the phenomenon of globalization of today's history. The Ecclesial Assembly, open to a broad listening process, adds the face of the social and ecclesial victims, due to sexual abuse, abuse of conscience, and abuse of power by some members of the Church.

In various countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, not only in society but also amongst the Catholic Church, the numerous complaints of sexual abuse of minors, as well as of adults of both sexes, were growing. The negative consequences on the dignity of minors and vulnerable people hurt us enormously. In our Church, the abuses were perpetrated by priests and consecrated persons in ecclesial environments. Most of the cases were not dealt with adequately, or there has not been an effective and transparent procedure to clarify what happened to guarantee justice for the victims. This has deeply affected the trust and credibility in the Church.

In this Lent, this painful sign requires decisive responses to credibly announce, in words and deeds, that God cares for the lives of all people, particularly the most vulnerable and defenseless (cf. DC 32).



Reflection to impact life from the Pastoral Challenges

Our pastoral challenge is to accompany the victims of social and ecclesial injustices with the processes of recognition and reparation.

In the face of abusive practices, entrenched and widespread in society and the Church, there are encouraging signs and significant steps to break the silences and cover-ups. The prevention policies for the entire Church, carefully studied and wisely applied in each context, focus on important factors that we were able to consider in our Ecclesial Assembly. We can point out the following:

- To generate training programs and a culture of care, so that all people in ecclesial spaces are capable of identifying inappropriate situations.
- To define appropriate protocols, mechanisms, and structures for reporting, repairing, and, above all, for preventing abuse.
- To develop specialized pastoral care to deal with abuses and pastorally accompany communities, involving specialized laity and experts from various disciplines.
- Greater speed and transparency in investigations, prioritizing the place of the victims.



A Lenten Call:

New initiatives animated by sensitivity for the victims and a passion for justice must be born in our educational centers and our ecclesial communities (DDC 153).

Do you know if there are such initiatives in your community?



The challenge we all face to influence life

Facing 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 and accompanied by concrete works, and not mere speech.



Bearing in mind and heart to accompany the victims of social and ecclesial injustices:

- *As followers of Jesus, what attitudes do you think we should have when accompanying and attending from a pastoral point of view, our brothers who suffer in the face of injustice?*
- *Can you remember any word of Pope Francis that can guide us in pastoral work involving processes of recognition and reparation?*
- *What new challenges does this situation pose to the pastoral of your community?*
- *To what could you personally commit in favor of the victims of social and ecclesial injustices?*

Let us take another step in our conversion process and accompany the victims of these injustices.

- **From our conversion:** Let us pray for the victims and the situation they live in. We cannot forget the suffering experienced by minors and vulnerable adults due to sexual abuse, and due to abuse of power and conscience committed by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons.
- **From our community conversion:** Let us seek to be compassionate and witnesses of the redemption of Jesus who welcomes those who suffer. We are challenged as the People of God to undertake the pain of our brothers and sisters violated in their flesh and their spirit.
- **From our pastoral conversion:** Let's open spaces in our communities to listen to the clamor of those who have been abused and that have not been heard by the Church.
- **From our synodal conversion:** Let us walk together with the commitment to promote a culture of mutual care and the promotion of safe spaces, seeking to take measures of prevention, care, and comprehensive reparation for those victims of sexual abuse, abuse of conscience, or due to the misuse of power; as well as to their families and communities.



Celebrating life

Lord of life, consoler of suffering hearts,
hear the clamor of our brothers and sisters
who have been injured by abusive situations.
Grant us courage and wisdom,
humility and grace, to act with justice.
Spread your wisdom into our prayers and endeavors
and teach us the way of justice and integrity.
Illuminate us with the truth and your mercy. 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

The Virgin Mary is a splendid image of configuration to the Trinitarian project, which is fulfilled in Christ. From her Immaculate Conception to her Assumption, she reminds us that the beauty of the human being is entirely in the bond of love with the Trinity and that the fullness of our freedom is in the positive response that we give it (DAP 141).



Virgin of Charity of El Cobre, patroness of Cuba