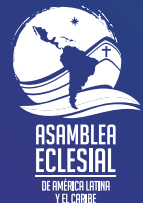


The Ascension OF THE LORD



Every disciple is missionary, for Jesus makes him participate in his mission, while also binding him to himself as friend and brother. Thus, as He is witness to the mystery of the Father, so the disciples are witnesses to the Lord's death and resurrection until He returns. Fulfilling this duty is not an optional task, but an integral part of Christian identity, because it is the witnessing extension of the calling itself. (DAp 144).





Encounter with the Word to illuminate life*

From the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke 24, 44-53.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

"We let ourselves be illuminated"

"This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (Lucas. 24, 46-48)

We have arrived at the end of the Easter season. The Ascension day tries to collect everything we have celebrated since Good Friday.

During this time of the Ascension we should not have feelings of sadness, abandonment or loneliness, instead we should feel great joy and the desire to bless God because what we celebrate is God's triumph. It's like a graduation ceremony when the student receives his diploma and family and friends accompany him full of joy.

Jesus' departing words remind us of two central themes: the gift of the Holy Spirit, which we will celebrate in a special way next Sunday, and the mission "until the end of the world". Although these words refer above all to the mission of the apostles and missionaries, all of us must be witnesses of Jesus in any part of the world. To do this we need the strength of the Spirit, and that is what we have to ask for. Jesus mainly wants that the announcement of God's forgiveness and mercy reaches all peoples; that everyone can hear his call to conversion. No-one has to feel lost. No-one should live without hope. Everyone must know that God understands and loves his sons and daughters in an infinite way.

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



Who can announce this Good News?

According to Saint Luke, Jesus does not think of priests or bishops, nor in doctors or theologians. He wants to leave “witnesses” on earth. This is the first thing: “You are witnesses of these things.” The witnesses of Jesus are the ones who will communicate their experience of a good God and will spread their lifestyle working for a more humane world.

Both the preaching of Jesus before the Resurrection and the task of the community after the Easter experience have the same background: The Kingdom of God, lived and preached, and although it took time for the first Christians to find a way to transmit what he had experienced, today, we have to continue that work to communicate the message, accommodating it to our culture.

Today, 15 years after having celebrated the Fifth General Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, we continue on the path of understanding how to be missionary disciples of Jesus so that our peoples may have life in Him, orienting everything towards the mission, which is demanding a personal, community, pastoral and synodal conversion to *“go out to meet individuals, families, communities and peoples to communicate and share the gift of the encounter with Christ, who has filled our lives with ‘meaning’, with truth and love, joy and hope!”* (AD 548).

The Church that pilgrims in Latin America and the Caribbean has a unique responsibility in this historical stage because at Aparecida, it showed its maturity, being more plural and inclusive, with a greater capacity for dialogue and tolerance. *“We cannot miss this hour of grace”* (DA 548) *because it has been a reason for renewed hope for the elderly and has offered the young with guidance to the future. “Here lies the fundamental challenge that we face: to show the church’s capacity to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the calling received and to communicate everywhere, in an outpouring of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ. We have no other treasure but that. We have no other happiness, no other priority, but to be instruments of the Spirit of God, as Church, so that Jesus Christ may be known, followed, loved, adored, announced, and com-*

municated to all, despite difficulties and resistances. This is the best service—his service! —that the church has to offer people and nations. “ (DA 14).

The call to the Great Continental Mission has required enormous creativity to announce the Gospel with words and actions that reveal the "good news" of a God who is always new. The mission, which "cannot be separated from solidarity with the needy, and the promotion of their integral human development" (DA 550), has provoked the awareness of being a Church that accompanies. "Each sector of the People of God asks to be accompanied and formed, in keeping with the particular vocation and ministry to which it has been called." (DA 282). Aparecida, that dates back to Medellin, confirmed the preferential option for the poor and excluded recognizing new faces of the poor (DA 402), faces that are still present and unfortunately, are each time more in our Continent.



Reflection to impact life from the Pastoral Challenges

One of the challenges that believers in Jesus Christ face in every age of history is how to be witnesses "of the death and resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and sign of the true God" (LG. 38). In other words, how to announce in intelligible language the good news of salvation.

The problem is not in the content of evangelization but on the way it is done according to the different circumstances. Sometimes in the midst of societies of abundance and consumption and others in those of exploited societies where injustice keeps vast sectors in subhuman conditions. of the population.

The document of Aparecida clearly states the objective of the conference which is to orient everything to the mission. Chapter seven: The mission of the disciples at the service of "full life" and chapter eight: "Kingdom of God and promotion of human dignity" guide to living a missionary spirituality that has, as its starting point the verification of "the living conditions of many of those who are abandoned, excluded, and ignored in their poverty and pain stand in contradiction to this project of the Father and challenge believers to greater commitment to the culture of life. The Kingdom of life that Christ came to bring is incompatible with such inhuman situations" (DAp 358).

The missionary commitment must lead to undertake with new force, the option for the poor and to work for human promotion and authentic liberation, which must promote all people and the whole person.

Aparecida proposes to accentuate elements inherent to missionary action, related to the integral proclamation of the Gospel, such as: attracting the encounter with Christ, and discipleship, with the happiness and joy of faith, radiating the testimony "to be able to provide a profound witness entailing close affection, listening, humility, solidarity, compassion, dialogue, reconciliation, commitment to social justice, and ability to share, as Jesus did" (DAp 363).



The challenge we all face to influence life



On Ascension Day, we celebrate the 56th WORLD SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DAY and Pope Francis in his message calls us “to listen with the ear of the heart.”

The witness of Jesus, the missionary disciple listens. The Pope says: *We are losing the ability to listen to who we have before us, be it in the normal fabric of daily relationships, be it in debates on the most important issues of civil life. At the same time, listening is experiencing a new and important development in the communicative and informative field, through the various podcast and audio chat offers, confirming that listening is still essential for human communication.*

The Pope goes on to say that in the Church there is a great need to listen and to listen to ourselves and that in pastoral action, the most important work is "the apostolate of hearing". Listen before you speak.

Bearing in mind and heart the desire to be witnesses of the resurrection and in the face of the Pastoral Challenges of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean:

- What attitudes of Jesus do we identify that can help us to carry out the “apostolate of hearing” that the Pope speaks of?
- Do you remember any words of Pope Francis that can guide us in our journey of being witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus?
- What new challenges does being a missionary disciple pose to the ministry of your community?
- What could you personally commit to in order to witness the Resurrection?

Let us take one more step in our conversion process, regarding our commitment to be witnesses of Jesus in our Continent:

- **From our personal conversion:** Continue to grow and mature in your faith, to be the light of the world and witnesses of Jesus Christ with your own life. (Cfr. DI).
- **From our community conversion:** Make a mature reflection regarding faith for the journey of life and to be witnesses of Christ from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and its shorter version, the Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (Cfr. DI).
- **From our pastoral conversion:** To be witnesses of the faith, committing ourselves on behalf of the poorest and its struggle for the dignity of each human being (Cf. DAp 98).
- **From our synodal conversion:** We are witnesses and missionaries: in large cities and the countryside, in the mountains and jungles of our Americas, in all the areas of shared social life, in the most varied “Aeropagus” settings of the public life of nations, in the extreme situations of existence, assuming ad gentes our concern for the Church’s universal mission. (Cfr. DAp. 548)



Celebrate life

Pope Francis says in his message for WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

A synodal process has recently begun. Let us pray that it will be a great opportunity for reciprocal listening. Communion is not the result of strategies and programs, but is built on mutual listening between brothers and sisters. As in a choir, unity does not require uniformity, monotony, but plurality and variety of voices, polyphony. At the same time, each voice of the choir sings listening to the other voices and in relation to the harmony of the ensemble. This harmony has been devised by the composer, but its realization depends on the symphony of each and every one of the voices

Pray for the Synod of Synodality

*Here you can download the prayer in audio and video: <https://youtu.be/SHFFuT7JhjA>

Come, Holy Spirit! You inspire new tongues and place words of life on our lips: keep us from becoming a “museum Church”, beautiful but mute, with much past and little future.

Come among us, so that in this synodal experience we will not lose our enthusiasm, dilute the power of prophecy, or descend into useless and unproductive discussions.

Come, Spirit of love, open our hearts to hear your voice! Come, Holy Spirit of holiness, renew the holy and faithful People of God! Come, Creator Spirit, renew the face of the earth! Amen.

ACRONYMS

- AEALC: Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021
- CV: Christus Vivit, Papa Francisco
- DAP: Documento 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
- DI: Inaugural Speech, Aparecida.
- IL: Instrumentum Laboris, Sínodo Amazonía.
- EG: Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis.
- EN: Evangelii Nuntiandi, Pope Paulo VI
- FT: Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis
- LS: Laudato Si, Pope Francis
- QAm: Dear Amazon, Pope Francis
- SA DF: Amazon Synod, Final Document
- SN: Narrative Synthesis. Listening to the 1st Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, 2021





“She aided in the birth of the missionary Church, imprinting on it a Marian seal that deeply marks its identity. As mother of multitudes, she strengthens the fraternal bonds among all, promotes reconciliation and forgiveness, and helps the disciples of Jesus Christ experience themselves as family, the family of God. In Mary, we are with Christ, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and likewise with our brothers and sisters. (DAp 267).

Our Lady of Divine Providence, Puerto Rico