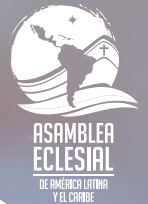


Sixth Sunday OF EASTER

PASTORAL CHALLENGE:

To accompany the native peoples and Afro-descendants
in the defense of life, land, and cultures.



Today indigenous and Afro peoples are threatened in their physical, cultural, and spiritual existence; in their ways of life, their identities, and their diversity; in their lands and projects. Some indigenous communities are away from their lands because those lands have been invaded and degraded, or they do not have enough land to develop their cultures. They suffer very serious assaults on their identity and survival because economic and cultural globalization jeopardizes their very existence as different peoples. Their gradual cultural transformation leads to the rapid disappearance of some languages and cultures. Migration compelled by poverty is deeply influencing the change of customs, relationships, and even religion.

(Dap 90)



Encounter with the Word to illuminate life*

From the Gospel according to Saint John 14, 23-29

Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words, and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me.

"I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I am coming to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur you may believe."

"We let ourselves be illuminated"

"The Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me." (Jn 15,26-27)

On many occasions, some people do not say what they think but what others want to hear, so as not to suffer the risk of rejection, retaliation, or repression. This is the resource of the "oppressed" (the poor, the minorities, native peoples or Afros, the "discarded," diverse, faithful, etc.), who feel that they must defend themselves from the arrogance of those who believe they are right. But it can also be the "mask" that people use to please others and continue dominating or manipulating because they are not interested in the "truth" but in their corrupt privileges or ill-gotten achievements.

The "Spirit of truth" is a gift of Jesus Christ to his disciples, but not an encapsulated property of the Church. Because the truth will make us free, and fundamental freedom includes inner authenticity and eco-socio-ecclesial testimonial transparency, at all times and in all spaces. It is not about clerical visibility or the spiritualization of conflicts, but about the contagious joy of the love of Jesus Christ "the Way, Truth, and Life".

Recognizing the risen Christ, and loving like him (Jhon 15:13), challenges us to "promote a Church, a shelter, in which cultural, ethnic and sexual diversities are integrated"

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



(AELAC 20), so that the "indoctrination" gives way to incarnated, inculturated, intercultural, polyhedral, merciful and eco-synodal "evangelization".

"To recognize the multiculturalism of the continent on the path of theological, pastoral and ecclesial conversion" (AEALC 25), "To promote interculturality, interreligious and ecumenical" (AEALC 33), and "to accompany the native peoples and Afro-descendants in the defense of life, land, and cultures" (AEALC 12), become evangelical imperatives of the spirit, which continues to bear witness to Jesus Christ. "With the native peoples of the Americas, we praise the Lord who created the universe as the realm of life and the shared existence of all his sons and daughters and left it to us as a sign of his goodness and his beauty" (Dap 125).

Disciples and missionaries of Latin America and the Caribbean, we are called to contribute "in strengthening their identities and their organizations, the defense of their territory, bilingual intercultural education, and the defense of their rights" (Dap 530 and 532), creating spaces that generate processes of defense of human dignity and respond to situations of injustice and poverty, favoring the theological, liturgical and spiritual expression of these peoples (cf. AEALC 25).

The truth is that our "discipleship" is measured by mutual love; our "mission" by the dignity of the most suffered-discarded; our "prophecy" by the commitment to changes with justice and peace, and our "synodality" for the evident testimony (without sublime explanations) of the lifestyle of Jesus Christ "with a new mestizo identity in Latin America and the Caribbean with black and indigenous roots, in the manner of our Mother Mary of Guadalupe" (Ibid 33 b).

To what or to whom do we testify?



Reflection to impact life from the Pastoral Challenges

We celebrate 15 years of Aparecida. This event of grace recognized and valued “the cultural wealth and diversity of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean” (DAP 56). In this region, there are “different indigenous, Afro-American, mestizo, rural, urban, and peripheral-urban cultures. (DAP 56). Aparecida states that “Accepting cultural diversity, is now an imperative,” (DAP 59). Fifteen years after Aparecida, members of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, as well as people from other cultural contexts, confirmed that in the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean there are still great economic, political, social, and cultural asymmetries. This reduces the possibilities for indigenous, Afro-descendant, and peasant communities to access life in decent conditions, often suffering poverty and exclusion.

Native peoples have requested “accompaniment” from the Church and to be treated as equals, with respect for their “worldviews and diversity” (SN, p. 67). It is explicitly requested that the Church “defend the life of indigenous peoples and denounce the abuses to the Common Home” (SN, p. 67). It is insisted that at the level of relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people “as pastoral agents, we must treat each other at the same level” (SN, p. 67). Members of native peoples question certain conceptions that the representatives of the Church have regarding the subject of native peoples and poverty. The following quote is expressive in this regard: “We do not want the Church to look at us original peoples, as 'poor things' because we have much to give and offer from our worldview. The Church must learn and respect our cultural diversity” (SN, p. 67).

Afro-descendant people have mentioned that among the aspects that hurt the most are “economic inequality, unemployment, [and the] lack of access to adequate health [...] for the Afro-descendant population” (SN, p. 68). Several voices from the Afro communities expressed their pain for the “strong traits of racism, exclusion, and abuse in their societies, and even the lack of sympathy from the Church about the reality and identity of Afro-descendant peoples” (SN, p. 68). It hurts to see that often people from these communities experience “rejection because of cultural diversity, or superiority standpoints about Afro-descendant peoples” (SN, p. 68). It also causes pain to see that many young African descendent live in situations of increasing violence. Several people express concern about the absence of an Afro pastoral in many particular Churches.

However, it gives hope to verify that “where there is a well-developed Afro pastoral [...], there are adequately inculturated pastoral models, that rescue the roots of the Black-Afro population, and where celebrations take into account their traits” (SN, p.68). For various members of the Afro community, it is also a sign of hope that “ministries are being developed with an accent well oriented to the identity of this people” (SN, p. 68).

[Cfr. Doc. Discernimiento 88-91]



The challenge we all face to influence life



Facing this challenge implies that this Easter, 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 accompany the original and Afro-descendant peoples in the defense of life, land, and cultures.

- What attitudes of Jesus can we identify that help us accompany the native peoples and Afro-descendants?
- Do you remember any words of Pope Francis that can guide us in the face of the challenge of accompanying these brothers of ours?
- What new defy does facing this challenge pose to the pastoral care of your community?
- To what could you commit to accompany the brothers/sisters of these communities?

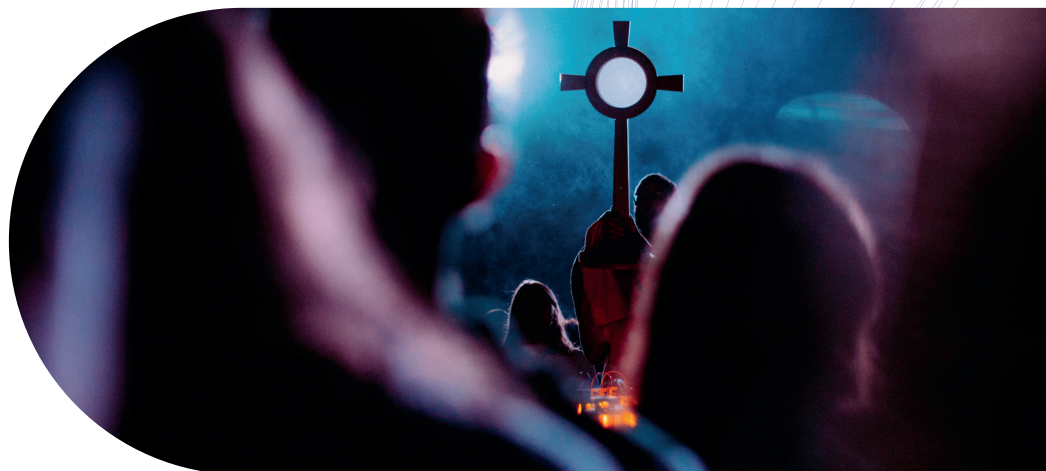
Let us take another step in our process of conversion, concerning our commitment to promote a personal encounter with Jesus Christ incarnate in the reality of the continent.

- **From our conversion:** To recognize that “the indigenous peoples of today cherish very important human values”; they are bearers of a host of cultural riches that are the basis of our present culture (Cfr. DAp 92).
- **From our community conversion:** Discover the richness of our community’s popular piety enriched by the values of these peoples. (Cfr. DAp. 93).
- **From our pastoral conversion** embracing the cause of the poor, we encourage the participation of the indigenous and Afro-Americans in church life. I. (Cfr. DAp 94).
- **From our synodal conversion:** Encourage movements for the recovery of identities, for citizen rights, and against racism, alternative solidarity income-generating groups are enabling black women and men to be architects of their history, a new history that is taking shape in Latin America and the Caribbean today. (Cfr. DAp. 97)



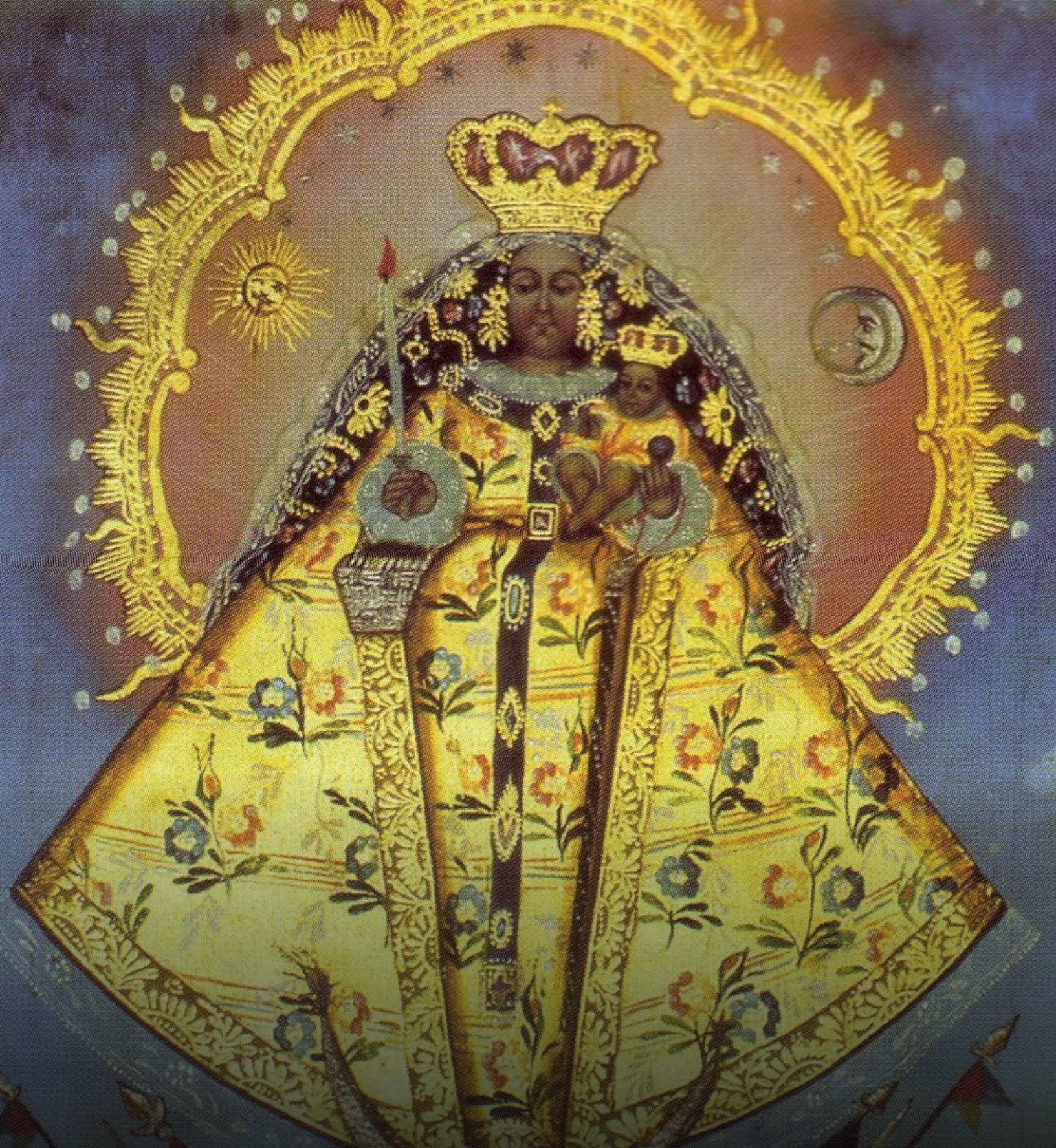
Celebrate life

*God of the life,
grant us an open heart
to walk in synodality
with our sisters and brothers
of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants
present in our Continent.
Of them, the main interlocutors,
we have first of all to learn and listen to
their words, their hopes, and their fears.
May they always be present at the dialogue table
of our communities.
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



The Virgin of Nazareth had a unique mission in the history of salvation, conceiving, educating, and accompanying her Son to his ultimate sacrifice. (DAp 267).

Our Lady of Copacabana, Bolivia