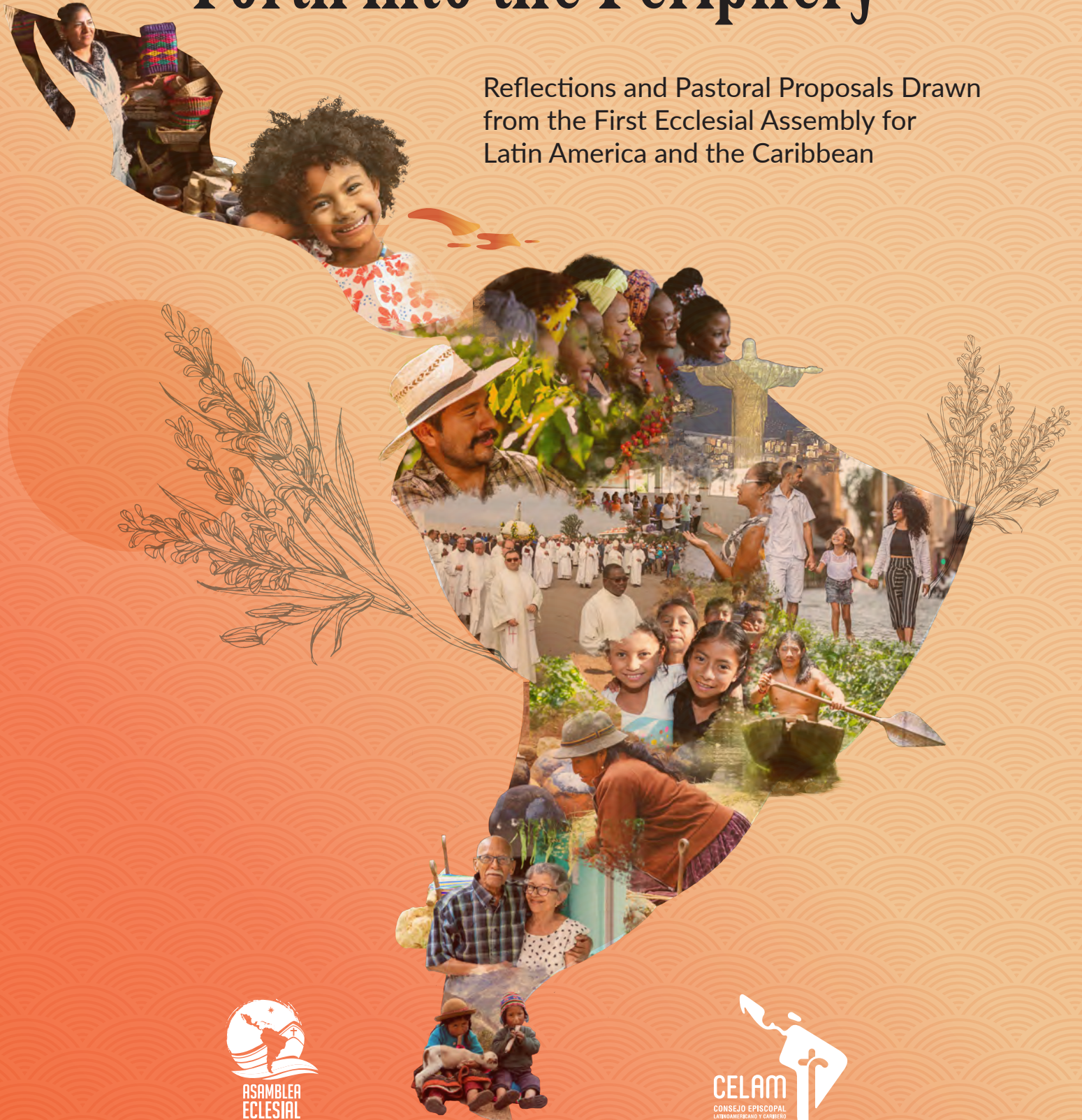


# Toward a Synodal Church Going Forth into the Periphery

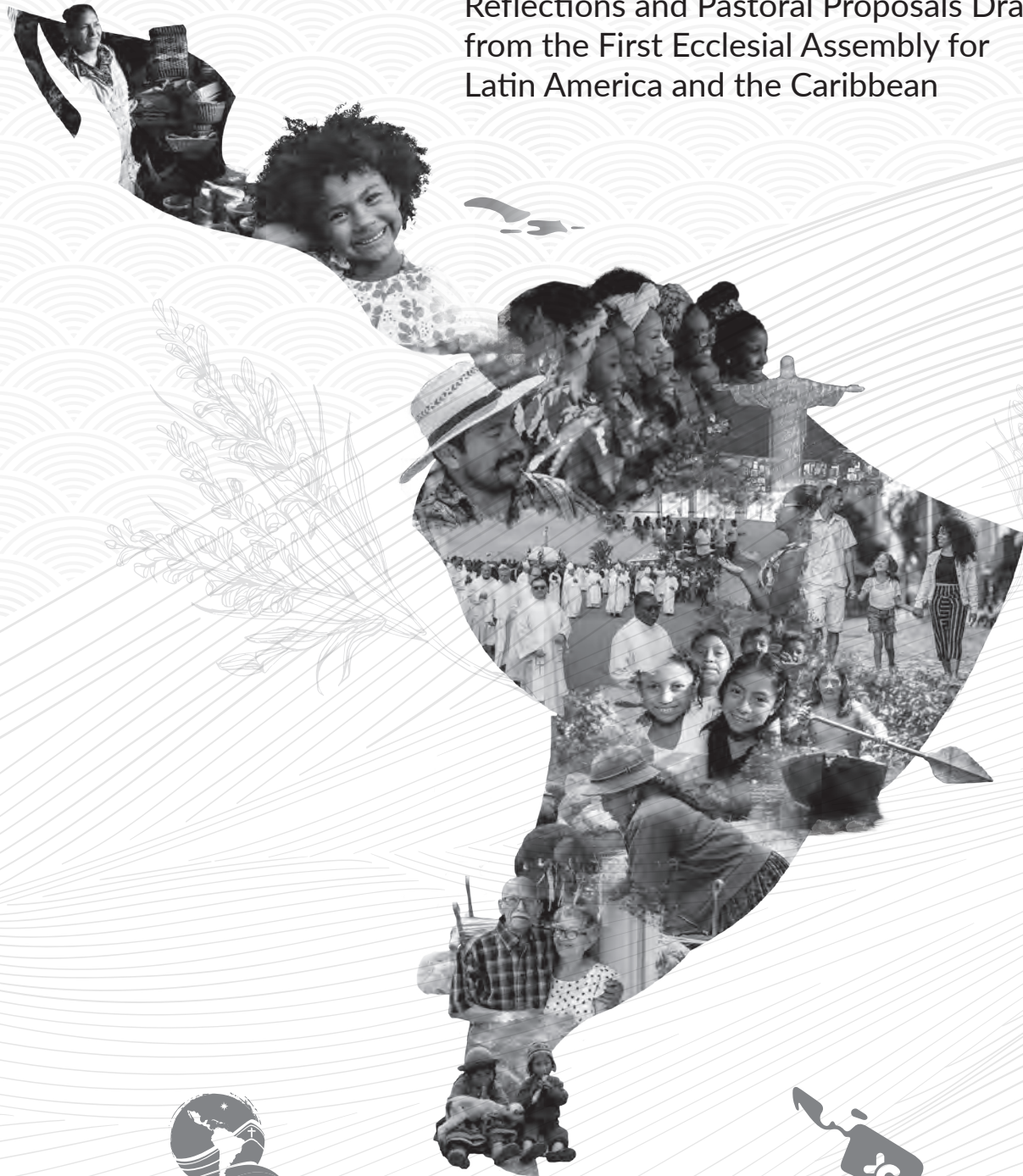
Reflections and Pastoral Proposals Drawn from the First Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean





# Toward a Synodal Church Going Forth into the Periphery

Reflections and Pastoral Proposals Drawn from the First Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean



PRESIDENCY OF THE LATIN AMERICAN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL

Mons. Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte, OFM  
*Chair*

Card. Odilo Pedro Scherer  
*First Vice-president*

Card. Leopoldo José Brenes  
*Second Vice-president*

Mons. Rogelio Cabrera López  
*President of the Committee of Economic Affairs*

Mons. Jorge Eduardo Lozano  
*Secretary General*

Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council CELAM  
Avenida Boyacá No. 169D-75  
Código postal 111166  
PBX: 6014845804  
celam@celam.org  
www.celam.org

INSTITUTIONAL DOCUMENTS COLLECTION

*Editorial direction*  
Óscar Elizalde Prada

*Editorial coordination*  
Natalia Delgadillo Chavez

*Style editing*  
Leonardo Montenegro

*Layout and design*  
Milton Ruiz Clavijo

*Front page*  
Milton Ruiz Clavijo

*Translation*  
María Luisa Valencia Duarte

*Impression*  
DGP Editores SAS

*Tradução*  
María Luisa Valencia, Fabio Antunes

ISBN: 978-958-625-862-3  
First edition: Bogotá, D.C., October 2022

**EDITORIAL CELAM**  
PBX: 6014845804, ext. 215, 216, 217  
editorial@celam.org  
ventas@celam.org  
libreria@celam.org

With due ecclesiastical licenses All rights reserved. This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part by any means without the prior written permission of CELAM.

Printed in Colombia

# CONTENTS

---

<b>Presentation .....</b>	<b>7</b>
---------------------------	----------

## **General Introduction**

<b>The Ecclesial Assembly, an unprecedented experience .....</b>	<b>11</b>
--	-----------

1. An unprecedented experience, the outcome of the outpouring of the Spirit ..... 11
2. A path of mutual listening..... 13
3. The First Ecclesial Assembly ..... 15
4. A new document with pastoral perspectives..... 17
5. A more synodal future ..... 21

<b>Part I Signs of the times challenging and encouraging us.....</b>	<b>27</b>
--	-----------

<b>Some introductory questions.....</b>	<b>28</b>
---	-----------

<b>The pandemic, a milestone signaling a change of era .....</b>	<b>29</b>
--	-----------

<b>I. Significant aspects of the reality of our peoples .....</b>	<b>30</b>
---	-----------

1. The socioeconomic sphere: Great inequities ..... 30
2. The sociopolitical sphere: The frailty of our democracies ..... 32
3. The environmental sphere: our common home in great danger ..... 33
4. The sociocultural sphere: towns, cities, migrants ..... 35
5. The religious sphere: the faith of peoples..... 37
6. The sphere of new faces in the frontline..... 39
  - a) Faces of youth ..... 39
  - b) Faces of women ..... 40
  - c) Faces of families..... 41
  - d) Faces of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples ..... 41

<b>II. Relevant aspects of our Church .....</b>	<b>42</b>
---	-----------

1. A People of God Church: A call to overcome clericalism ..... 42
2. The formation and participation of laity..... 44
  - a) Youth in the path of discipleship..... 45
  - b) A new place for women in the Church..... 45
  - c) A leading role for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples ..... 46
3. Formation programs in Seminaries and Religious Houses ..... 48



4. The cases of abuse in the Church: Voices calling for listening and action .....	49
5. A personal experience meeting Christ present in history.....	50

## **Part II A Synodal Missionary Church at the service of Full life ..... 55**

### **I.The Ecclesial Assembly in the spirit of Aparecida ..... 56**

1. God's challenges in the signs of times.....	56
a) Working for Full Life for our peoples.....	57
b) Moving ahead in an ongoing pastoral conversion of the Church.....	59
2. Aparecida on the path of Latin American and Caribbean Church.....	61
a) The evangelizing path from Vatican Council II .....	61
b) The good news from the Aparecida Conference.....	62
3. A pontificate launching a new missionary synodal phase.....	63
a) Pope Francis's call for a synodal missionary reform .....	63
b) For a Synodal Church: Towards the synod on synodality .....	64
4. The good news from the first Ecclesial Assembly .....	65
a) Takeaways from Aparecida and debts to Aparecida .....	65
b) An Assembly to revive the spirit of Aparecida .....	67

### **II. The evangelizing outpouring of the People of God in a synodal key ..... 69**

1. The dream of God: The Full life of the Spirit of Christ.....	69
a) Jesus, the Gospel of God and the Evangelizer of the kingdom of God .....	69
b) Jesus' Life-Giving Spirit: a source of love and mission.....	71
2. The People of God together in synodal communion and a missionary journey.....	73
a) The synodal communion: a constituent dimension of the Church .....	73
b) Synodal participation for listening, dialogue, and judgment .....	75
c) Open missionary synodality: Walking along with the human family.....	77
3. A Samaritan Church at the service of life in fraternity.....	78
a) The good Samaritan: a paradigm of a new fraternity.....	78
b) Social deaconship of fraternity in Latin America and the Caribbean .....	80
4. The outpouring of the Spirit in Mary and the Church .....	81
a) The call for a creative "outpouring" in the Spirit .....	81
b) Missionary visitation of Our Lady of Guadalupe.....	82

## **Part III Creative outpouring in new paths to go forward..... 87**

### **I. An evangelized and evangelizing Church under a missionary perspective..... 87**

a) Evangelizing to manifest the Kingdom of God in the world .....	88
b) An integral and integrating evangelization .....	89

## **II. Pastoral propositions and lines of action ..... 89**

1. The kerygmatic and missionary dimensions.....	90
a) The Church being a sign and instrument of the encounter with Jesus Christ .....	91
b) A Church that cultivates the spirituality of mission .....	93
c) A Church listening to the outcry of the poor, the excluded, and the rejected .....	94
d) An evangelization inculturated and in interculturality .....	96
e) Missionary leading role of youth in the Church and the world.....	97
f) From pastoral in the city to an urban pastoral ministry .....	98
g) A Church going forth to the new Aeropagites.....	100
2. A prophetic formative dimension .....	101
a) An integral formation program for the People of God as a whole.....	102
b) Formation in synodality to overcome clericalism .....	103
c) Formation for social commitment in the light of the option for the poor .....	103
d) Promoting the renewal of formation in Seminaries and religious houses.....	104
3. The spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental dimension .....	105
a) Rediscovering the experience of sacraments .....	105
b) An inculturated liturgy in our days.....	106
c) Popular religiosity as the place of the culture of encounter and evangelization .....	107
4. The synodal participative dimension .....	108
a) A People of God Church, with new ministries .....	108
b) A Samaritan welcoming Church.....	109
c) A markedly lay ecclesial culture .....	110
d) The protagonism of women in the Church and in society.....	111
e) A community network Church .....	112
f) Converting the structures of the Church.....	114
g) A Church in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue .....	115
5. The socio-transforming dimension .....	116
a) The evangelizing presence of the Church in spaces of social transformation.....	117
b) A prophetic pastoral in the face of violence and in the defense of human rights.....	118
c) Christians acting in the sphere of economy and politics.....	121
d) Pastoral care for the victims of social injustice .....	122
e) Prevention and reparation of abuses of body, power, and conscience in the Church .....	123
f) Presence and action of the Church by the side of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples .....	124
g) Special attention to migrants and refugees, incarcerated, disabled people .....	125
h) Defense and promotion of life and family .....	127
6. The ecological dimension .....	128
a) Education and spirituality to caring for our common home.....	129
b) A pastoral on integral ecology to caring for our common home.....	130
c) A prophetic Church close to all who care for our common home.....	131

<b>A Message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean .....</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>Consecration to our Lady of Guadalupe .....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Acronym table .....</b>	<b>141</b>
Acronyms of documents of the universal and Latin American Magisterium.....	141
Acronyms of documents of the process of the Ecclesial Assembly .....	143
Abbreviations of ecclesial institutions and references .....	144



# PRESENTATION

---

With this document “Towards a Synodal Church Going Forth to Peripheries — Reflections and Pastoral Propositions Stemming from the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean,” we aim to provide a significant contribution to the reflection and the journey of communities across our continent, in the certainty that “we are all missionary disciples going forth”.

The Ecclesial Assembly drew from a broad process of listening to the cries of the People of God —lay men and women, Clergy, consecrated men and women, bishops— through different online platforms, and strove to make a grateful re-reading of the Aparecida event (May 2007), as well as to project a long-term pastoral echo, in an effort to ensure that the pastoral richness of the Fifth Episcopal Conference of Latin America is increasingly known, embraced, and assimilated.

Throughout history, the Church in pilgrimage through Latin America and the Caribbean has displayed great vitality and capacity to seek God’s will looking attentively at reality, in the light of the teachings of the Divine Master.

This is a big journey, with lights and shadows, starting with the missionaries who defended Indigenous peoples, to the present time, where the dignity of people and our common home are threatened. They have always announced that Our Lord conquered death and that united we are capable of contributing to the construction of the Kingdom.

Early on, the Church in this continent tried to give an answer to “the rapid and transcendental evolution of the world and the very serious danger for Latin America that this evolution might take place on the margins of the Church and sometimes with her deaf opposition.”<sup>1</sup> Those words of Manuel Larraín, one of the founders of CELAM, in a letter to Bishop Víctor Sanabria in 1945, was at that time part of a concern and an effort to act collegially.

---

1 Letter from Mons. Manuel Larraín, Bishop of Talca, Chile; to Mons. Víctor Sanabria, Archbishop of San José de Costa Rica, September 19, 1945.

Monsignor Larrain's concern was the same that later Pope St. John XXIII would call "signs of the times". And the concern for accompanying the People of God led the Church to hold the five General Conferences gathering together Latin American Bishops, from Rio de Janeiro (1955) to Aparecida. (2007), passing by Medellín (1968), Puebla (1979) y Santo Domingo (1992).

Continuing the history that preceded the Ecclesial Assembly, we have witnessed an unprecedented and original event, in the pastoral style of the Latin American and Caribbean Church, which opens a path not to have a dead end, but to lead us through new ways to continue our walking as a People of God in pilgrimage throughout history.

Before calling to the Assembly, our aim was to hold a VI General Episcopal Conference. However, prophetically, Pope Francis suggested to give way to a process more in line with our present times: To host an ecclesial and synodal gathering, where the People of God as a whole would be able to participate and have their say, looking and discerning the fast and transcendental evolution of Latin America and the Caribbean in depth in our present time, in order to undertake new pastoral challenges.

When this process began, we could not have imagined that Covid 19 would be the historic backdrop for our Assembly. The circumstances of the pandemic forced us to rethink and reassess social, family and ecclesial ties. The march of the People of God did not stop though; we were able to creatively overcome physical distancing through listening, dialogue, communion, the new perspective of the mission. The communities did not remain "arms folded", passively awaiting. On the contrary, a new way of being a Church on the move was set in motion.

Digital platforms and virtual environments facilitated unusual ways of meeting and listening. Through them tens of thousands of faithful shared their concerns, whether on behalf of a community or in their own, about the identity of the Church and its mission in today's society. Likewise, the hybrid modality of the Assembly held in November 2021 in Mexico City —both in person and online—, gave way to a broader reflection, gathered diverse voices and proposed challenges and pastoral orientations.

The Ecclesial Assembly has been lived as "a true experience of synodality, in mutual listening and community discernment of what the Spirit wants to say to his Church".

From the “multifaceted diversity”, the participants of the Assembly “turned towards the realities of the continent, in its pains and hopes”<sup>2</sup>.

All this is compiled in this text that we are putting in your hands. Humbly we must acknowledge that the originality and the richness of the Ecclesial Assembly experience has not yet been fully conveyed in its content, while it is true that this is not a *Concluding Document* —as those emerged from the Latin American Episcopate General Conferences—, nor it is the outcome of an elaboration carried out by a group of theologians. It is the systematization of what was expressed in the dialogue of the participants in nearly a hundred working groups, made up by lay men and women, religious men and women, deacons, and bishops.

This document opens roads in six dimensions: kerygmatic and missionary; prophetic and formative; spiritual, liturgic and sacramental; synodal and participative; socio-transforming, and environmental. Those dimensions were the subject of reflection in community, clearly showing the concerns from the People of God across our region, as well as their suggestions and propositions.

Most of all, this is the beginning of a renewed march of a Church, the People of God that has decided to move forward in a synodal way. In this sense, this is also a historic step.

Pilgrims in these Latin American and Caribbean lands, the People of God —aware of their priesthood, bestowed on them by baptism—, have their feelings and desires expressed *in credendo*, recorded in this document, through the richness of the evangelizing experiences meditated from faith, as well as their achievements and pains, fruit of the noble and sincere desire to serve God in the person of our brothers and sisters.

Its content is an expression of the plural desire of a Church going forth, as it compiles the contributions from various callings and ministries of the People of God, who took part as faithful “missionary disciples” in the discernment of the challenges and pastoral orientations. Hence, this is a prophetic expression too.

The values and achievements of the Ecclesial Assembly are contained in this document; its limits are also the limits of the Assembly, like everything else in the Church. In this condition, this text was welcomed with great appreciation by the Extraordinary Assembly of CELAM held in July 2022.

---

2 CELAM. *Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. Message to the People of God*. November 2021.



The path ahead is shown as “a significant space of encounter and openness for the transformation of ecclesial and social structures that allow the renewal of the missionary impulse and the closeness to the poorest and most excluded,”<sup>3</sup> starting from the traditions and cultures of the Church. The project is based on the traditions and cultures of the continent in order to translate the one Gospel of Christ in the Latin American and Caribbean style, in a symphony where each voice, each register, each tonality enriches the experience of being a disciple-missionary.

We place the fruit of this work in the tender heart of Our Lady of Guadalupe, who accompanies this journey of the Church in the continent.

Mons. Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte, OFM  
*Chair*

Card. Odilo Pedro Scherer  
*First Vice-president*

Card. Leopoldo José Brenes  
*Second Vice-president*

Mons. Rogelio Cabrera López  
*President of the Committee  
of Economic Affairs*

Mons. Jorge Eduardo Lozano  
*Secretary General*

---

3 *Ibid.*

# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

---

## The Ecclesial Assembly: An Unprecedented Experience

*I have come that they may have life and have it  
to the full. (Jn  
10,10).*

*In this process, I ask our Lord that your Assembly is the  
expression of the “outpouring” of the creative love of His  
Spirit... that animates the Church to be, through a process  
of pastoral conversion, more and more evangelizing  
and missionary.*

(Francis, October 15, 2021)<sup>4</sup>

### 1. An unprecedented experience, the outcome of the outpouring of the Spirit

1. The first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean is carried out like a process in several stages. The most noteworthy moment was the stage of discernment and propositions, carried out in person and online in Mexico in November 21-28, 2021. The path we have gone through up to the present day configures *an unprecedented experience* in our regional Church, in that it has adopted a synodal way. This is a real milestone in our pastoral pilgrimage, a process marking a before and after in our path, as well as a significant contribution to the universal Church.
2. Just like the II Conference held in Medellín in 1968 welcomed in our land the spirit and teachings of Vatican Council II, this Assembly has been one

---

<sup>4</sup> Francis, *Message to the attendants to the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean* (October 15, 2021). Acronym: MP. In the chapters, the documents are cited with their acronyms, which are arranged in the table below, accompanied by their corresponding paragraph number.

of the earlier institutional receptions of our Pope's synodal propositions. Its aim is to "revive Aparecida", the Conference that reaffirmed conciliar renewal, and to move forward to receiving Vatican II from the magisterium of Pope Francis. This time was marked by the background of the pandemic of COVID-19 —with its fatal consequences and its restrictions to normal life—, forced online interaction, the emergence of structural inequalities, asymmetric globalization, and increasing interculturality.

3. This Assembly had a special origin. When the authorities of the Latin American Episcopal Council —CELAM— asked the Pope for a new General Conference of Bishops, he proposed that they hold an assembly with representatives from all the People of God. This meeting was to express the sense of the faith of believers —*sensus fidei fidelium*— with which the Spirit anoints Christians.
4. In this way a new synodal space is inaugurated in the continental sphere, which places the exercise of episcopal collegiality within a broad ecclesial synodality. It articulates in an original way the communion between the believers, the bishops, local Churches, Episcopal Conferences, and all of them with the Bishop of the Church of Rome, who confirms in faith and presides in charity.
5. The Assembly is situated at the beginning of the synodal process 2021-2023 convoked by Pope Francis to celebrate the XVI Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops with the theme: For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission. The announcements of both meetings were almost simultaneous and the processes of preparation, consultation and listening were intertwined. And just as the whole Church is convoked in synod, the whole Latin American Church was convoked in assembly.
6. In this context, an assembly in process was planned, marked by various stages that have not yet been completed. Three phases were outlined for our itinerary: a stage of consultation and listening as open as possible; the celebration of the Assembly with representatives of the whole Church; and the phase of synthesis, elaboration and systematization of its orientations to be implemented in the future. After defining the objectives of each moment, a Document for the Journey was published, a questionnaire for a broad listening to the People of God, a spiritual and liturgical itinerary to accompany the process and a document for discernment that oriented the shared quest in the Assembly. This stage lasted from January to November



2021 and continues now with the publication of these reflections and Pastoral propositions.

7. As we will explain later on, this document aims to gather together, creatively synthesize, theologically arrange, and pastorally project the outcomes of the process lived up to now, with listening as a point of departure. We present it with joy and simplicity because we believe that our Church, despite its limitations, is living a *kairós*, a new time of grace that God grants to renew our love for Jesus and the desire to follow him more faithfully.

## 2. A path of mutual listening

8. Our journey formally began at the Ordinary Assembly of CELAM in 2019 where we received some guidelines that would later on become the basis of the process towards the First Assembly. One of them was to make a pause for an analysis and discernment on the CELAM's mission. Following this mandate and convinced of our call, we put ourselves in an attitude of listening to the voice of the Spirit emanating from the holy People of God.
9. In response to the Pope's suggestion to "seek new paths", on February 29, 2020, a process was initiated with the goal of holding the Ecclesial Assembly at the end of that year. The momentum of the Amazon Synod, the papal exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, and the experience of the newly created Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon —CEAMA, urged us to focus on the weaving of a more synodal Church. A few days later, the pandemic that struck the whole world arose. This did not discourage us. The initiative was postponed for a year, to November 2021, with the conviction that this experience could be a prophetic sign of a Church alive and close to its people, which does not hide in the midst of the crisis, but becomes present, sows hope and builds the future.
10. A question led the discernment: what are the new challenges for our Church in the light of the V Conference of Aparecida, the signs of these times and the magisterium of Pope Francis? From the beginning, we aimed for gratefully recalling the events in Aparecida, contemplatively looking at the realities of the peoples, discerning in a theological way our current challenges, and renewing our commitment with the goal that our peoples may have a Full life in Jesus Christ, advancing together towards the Guadalupe Jubilee in 2031 and the Jubilee of Redemption in 2033.

11. We formed a commission for content creation which decided to work upon the topic: *We are all missionary disciples going forth*, and laid the foundations to prepare the *Document for the way*.<sup>5</sup> This was guided by a spiritual itinerary, following the methodology of seeing, judging and acting. The Assembly was launched on January 24, 2021. The Pope's message encouraged us to walk along the way with an ear for the people. He urged us to listen to one another and to hear the cries of our poorest and most forgotten brothers and sisters. He told us: "this Assembly must be close to the people, do not forget that we are 'll the People of God... the Church is given when sharing the bread, the Church is given with al' without exclusion and this is the sign of an Ecclesial Assembly: A Church without exclusion".<sup>6</sup>
12. In response to this invitation, an unprecedented participation process was carried out between April and August 2021, with some 70,000 people formally taking part individually, in communities and in thematic forums. This experience was unprecedented and, despite some drawbacks, intended to broaden its scope so as to giving space to those who are usually excluded from listening. For many it was gratifying to discern in a communitarian way, listening to each other and listening together to the Spirit.
13. This phase was not limited to a mere collection of data; instead, it set up a participative and contemplative view of our peoples and ecclesial communities—in the light of faith—that makes it possible to identify the presence of God in the midst of history. From it, an extensive *Narrative Synthesis of the listening* was drawn up,<sup>7</sup> along with a *Spiritual journey*. A voice reminded us of the significance of this moment: *If we want a Church that walks in synodality we have to learn to listen to each other. To listen to ourselves, even if it hurts us to hear what is said to us. Because if we do not open ourselves, the Spirit will never enter into us.* (Anonym, 2021)

---

5 CELAM, *Document for the road. First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean* (2021). Acronym: DPC.

6 Francis, *Message to the attendants to the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean* (October 15, 2021).

7 CELAM, *Narrative Synthesis Document. Listening in the First Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean. Voices from the People of God* (October 1, 2021). Acronym: SN. Quoting pages rather than paragraphs.

14. Drawing from the contributions raised, a *Document for Community Discernment*<sup>8</sup> was prepared, which gathered the contributions, formulated questions for dialogue and discernment, encouraged active participation in “An Assembly to revive the spirit of Aparecida” (DDC 11-29) and invited us to be “pilgrims in love with the Gospel, open to the surprises of the Spirit”.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. The First Ecclesial Assembly

15. The meeting and discernment phase with the delegates of the Episcopal Conferences and special guests was held from November 21 to 28, 2021. It was attended in person and online by 1,104 representatives of different charisms, ministries, ages, paths of life, cultures, and regions. 428 lay men and women (39%), 160 religious men and women (15%), 264 priests and deacons (24%), 233 bishops (21%), 10 cardinals (1%) took part. There were Hispanic migrants and guests from the Churches of the United States and Canada, as well as from the Indigenous peoples. This was a wide human, geographic, social, cultural and ecclesial diversity.<sup>10</sup>
16. On Sunday, November 21, the Assembly was launched with the celebration of the Eucharist in the Shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe. The following day the deliberations began in the light of the Word, with each day having a main theme: “The centrality of Jesus Christ and his Word in our pastoral action”, “Integral pastoral conversion and the four prophetic dreams”, “The Church in a missionary journey for the outpouring of the Spirit”, “From the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean towards the Synod on synodality” and “Testimonies on the synodality of the People of God”.
17. The message sent by the Bishop of Rome to the participants was inspiring for communion and reflection, and it is also nourishing this post-Assembly text. There he reminded us that the dynamism of the ecclesial assemblies lies in the process of listening, dialogue and discernment. In addition, the

---

8 CELAM, *Document for Community Discernment* in the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean (2021). Acronym: DDC.

9 Francis, *Homily at the Holy Mass to the Opening of the Bishop Synod* (October 10, 2021).

10 CELAM, *Abridged Report of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean*, “We are all missionary disciples going forth,” Bogotá, 2022.



call of Aparecida to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ accompanied our prayers and work. Throughout those days, we learned that the Synodal Church is a Church in pilgrimage with faith, hope, and charity.

18. We attendants feel that, despite the limits and distances, we are walking together recognizing our multifaceted diversity in the communion which unites us in the Body of Christ. Our missionary discipleship hearts rejoiced in the presence of the Lord as we shared listening to the Word and the breaking of the Bread. The itinerary of the Spirit, planned for each day and each celebration, led us to accept reality as it comes, to discern what God is asking of us, and to seek a greater commitment with grateful and generous hearts.
19. Discernment groups, which were conducted digitally through an online platform, led to a path of reflection by inviting us to move from “I” to “you” and from “you” to “we”. Each group was made up of members coming from different paths of life, countries, and ages. The itinerary began with a space to share the hopes and fears of their peoples and particular churches. The next steps were to reach consensus on challenges, set pastoral orientations, and establish priorities. This discernment was based on a deep inner disposition marked by shared prayer, the sense of Church and the search for agreements moved by the Spirit. The proposals formulated were collected by a commission tasked with categorizing and unifying them according to themes and similarities, taking care that they were all included in some way. After this work, members of the Reflection Team carried out a second revision to complete the synthesis and a group of collaborators gathered the main contributions to prepare the Message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean.
20. The first evaluations pointed out positive aspects of this synodal experience: The broad composition and genuine representation of the diverse sectors of the People of God, the transparency of the entire process —especially the communication of the results of the voices and contributions from Listening, the effort to promote active participation and community discernment in the groups, the spirituality that accompanied all the stages and the option to connect this experience with the synodal process of the universal Church.
21. Some negative aspects were noted that impeded a fuller meeting of expectations: It was not possible to include many of the voices; the delegations of each country could not effectively reflect the breadth and

diversity of the Church; there was a lack of more careful preparation of the Assembly members because the previous document failed to arrive in time; the operation of the technological platform and a certain complexity of the internal organization made the work of the groups difficult; the composition of the Assembly did not reflect the composition of listeners, especially women and young people; and some expressions of clericalism were apparent.

22. The Assembly had two closing moments. Work culminated on Saturday, November 27, with the reading of the Message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean—which was approved at the end of the Pastoral Propositions—and which was an open and ongoing missionary commission, rather than a final conclusion. On Sunday, November 28, we shared the celebration of the Eucharist on the feast of Christ the King at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe and the consecration to Mary, the first missionary disciple.
23. What we have shared will help us to continue walking with the whole Church on the path of the Synod on synodality, to consolidate what has been undertaken in the renewal and restructuring of CELAM, and to set pastoral goals for the decade leading up to the Jubilees 2031/33. For this reason, we want to give a stronger impetus to our integral salvific mission and discover new ways to follow Jesus faithfully and to communicate the joy of the Gospel.

#### 4. A New Document with Pastoral Perspectives

24. This text aims to share the main pastoral lines discerned at the Assembly with the different members of the People of God in order to guide our future evangelizing action. In the process, a decision was made that a document would not be prepared during the short time of the meeting. This would allow to gather both the fruits of the process shared during the year and those of discernment carried out in communion, all of which were expressed in the challenges and orientations.
25. The authority of this text is given by three interrelated instances of our regional Church. On the one hand, at the ecclesial level, it has the value and authority of the Assembly as a whole, which discerned with a sense of faith —*sensus fidei*— and approved its main orientations with pastoral

love. At the institutional level, it has the authority of being a text that gathers the conclusions derived from an Assembly convoked and carried out by CELAM, whose presidency decided how to elaborate it. It has been analyzed, completed and approved by the representatives of the Episcopal Conferences gathered in the extraordinary Assembly held in July 2022. This distinguishes it from magisterial documents of the General Conferences of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate. At the theological level, it has the support and backing of the Theological Reflection Team, which worked for half a year studying and assimilating the documentation and interventions, deepening and systematizing its contents, ordering and projecting its evangelizing proposals.

26. The main theme of the new document is synthesized in its title *Towards a Synodal Church going forth to the peripheries*. It gathers together and updates a triple inspiration: The topic of Aparecida –*Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples have life in Him*–; the magisterium of Pope Francis, as synthesized in two main formulations: “we are all missionary disciples” (EG 120) and “synodality is a constituting dimension of the Church”<sup>11</sup>, along with the motto of the Assembly: *We are all missionary disciples going forth*. The subtitle says that the main content are the *Pastoral propositions from the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean*.
27. Our reflection has as its slogan a verse from John’s Gospel that was referred to in Aparecida and has been repeated many times in the Assembly process: “*I came that they may have life, and have it to the full*”. “Life” is a salvific notion: This is the salvation given to us by Christ which guides us to the Jubilee of Redemption in 2033. It assumes the vital character of the culture of our peoples, the struggle for the dignity of persons and the yearning for happiness of the youngest. It expresses the new, dignified, profoundly Christian and fully human life that is received through faith: “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 Jn 5:11). It reflects the vital outpouring of the Mighty Life-giving Holy Spirit, and the Kingdom of God in its full, which is a Kingdom of life for all. It is worth clarifying that there are two meanings of the word “outpouring”, one negative and the other positive. The first indicates an excess that transgresses the norms, breaks the limits. It produces excesses that hurt human dignity or outbursts

---

11 Francis, *Discourse during the Commemoration of the Opening of the Synod of Bishops 50th Anniversary* (October 17, 2015): AAS 107 (2015) 1139-1140. Acronym: DCA.

that exceed fair boundaries. Here we are speaking of “outpouring” in a positive sense, as an abundance that transcends, as we will explain below.

28. The structure of the text responds to the method of *seeing, judging, acting*, used in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* established during Vatican Council II and which was first applied in our Church with the Medellin Documents. In recent years the three actions, circularly related, have received new accents with the use of complementary verbs: contemplating and listening for historical seeing, illuminating and discerning for theological judging, guiding and fostering for pastoral acting. To those moments, we link here the three attitudes highlighted by Pope Francis in his Message to the Ecclesial Assembly: “listening” to the voices of the Spirit in the journey of the People of God; “discernment” in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church; creative “outpouring” in new pastoral paths towards the future. This tripartite scheme allows the inclusion of facts and words—even written texts—of the whole process lived in 2021 and of the exchange of ideas made by the Theological Reflection Team to elaborate this text.
29. The primary source of the text is the Word of God written and lived in the People of God. Sacred Scripture is quoted according to the Bible of the Church in America. The teachings of the magisterium of Vatican Council II and of recent popes are gathered there. Particularly, the documents of Pope Francis and those of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate are taken up, especially the Concluding Document from Aparecida. The document of the International Theological Commission: Synodality in the Life and the Mission of the Church is cited. All the documents elaborated in 2021 for the path of the Assembly are taken as immediate sources.
30. Biblical and magisterial texts are quoted in parentheses and without reference to footnotes. In an effort to integrate many contributions, literal statements spoken and collected in the phases of the Listening and the Assembly are included in quotation marks without naming their authors. This abundance of quotations, with the reference to the acronyms of the sources, may be difficult to read, but it is an expression of fidelity to the entire journey. Many participants will be able to recognize their own voices here. The only notes, to show the editions of their sources, are in this Introduction. All documents are named as indicated in the list of acronyms.

31. Concerning the contents, the first part, entitled *Signs of the times in the lives of our peoples*, reflects our listening to different voices and our looking at some realities of our peoples and our regional Church. Since there are a plethora of topics —that couldn't possibly be analyzed in its whole— and, which are furthermore related to each other, we will try to systematize our experiences so that we convey faithfully what was said and seen, only adding clarity and coherence. The aim is not collecting data or analyzing questions, but examining some signs of our times and discovering the presence of God in history. We wish to look at them with the eyes of faith (cf. DAp 19) to let the Lord challenge us and recognize new pathways.
32. The second section is entitled *A Synodal Missionary Church at the service of Full life*. It brings some contributions to help discern the first section, dealing with challenges, and to support the third one, which outlines the orientations. It fulfills this articulating role through a theological-pastoral-spiritual-faithful-creative meditation, following common lines from different forms in the Assembly, from presentations up to groups. It wishes to link the text as a whole in an orderly manner; to account for the new characteristics of the Assembly as an unprecedented synodal event; to enlighten discernment with the Word meditated in the People of God, and to provide some echoes of the voices of the Spirit in present times. It aims to share, in line with lived and celebrated experiences, enlightening reflections linking the issues of synodality, mission, and fraternity in the community of missionary disciples, who are called to a permanent conversion.
33. The third part, entitled *Creative outpouring in new paths to go forward*, has a markedly pastoral nature. It aims to suggest new evangelizing pathways inspired by the creative outpouring of the Spirit in our Churches. It formulates, prepares, and systematizes pastoral orientations drawn from the community discernment at the Ecclesial Assembly. It takes as a point of departure, the 231 challenges produced by the groups during the second day, which are brought together in the synthesis of 41. From them, 12 were chosen by the Assembly as priorities. These propositions were arranged according to six dimensions of the evangelizing action: kerygmatic and missionary; prophetic and formative; spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental; synodal and participative; socio-transforming; and environmental. Each presents the main pastoral guiding lines and outlines broad lines of action, which do not cover all pastoral areas, but synthesize all those highlighted by the Assembly.



## 5. A More Synodal Future

34. Synodality makes up and represents the Church as the People of God on their way and as an assembly called to communion. In this unprecedented experience, we live both aspects. The First Assembly is an intense moment of ecclesial communion within the framework of the synodal road that preceded and lies ahead. In the new stage of the process that we are walking along—a stage of synthesis, reception, and implementation of pastoral guidance—we continue to walk along as a Latin American and Caribbean Church.
35. What we are experiencing is a concrete way of realizing synodality as missionary communion in history. In his recent message to the plenary meeting of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, the Pope said: “the Church is ‘a people gathered together in virtue of the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ [LG 4]. Therefore, in the reality that we call ‘synodality’ we can locate the point where the Trinity mysteriously but truly converges in history. Thus, the word ‘synodality’ does not designate a more or less democratic, not to mention a ‘populist’ method of being Church. These are deviations. Synodality is not an organizational fad or a project of human reinvention of the People of God. Synodality is the dynamic dimension, the historical dimension of ecclesial communion founded upon Trinitarian communion, which, by simultaneously cherishing the *sensus fidei* of all God’s holy faithful people, apostolic collegiality and unity with the Successor of Peter, must animate the conversion and reform of the Church at every level.”<sup>12</sup>
36. Our regional Church has open horizons and must continue to take new steps in a process that does not end, but continues to advance. In this stage of revision, appropriation and implementation of the pastoral orientations, CELAM continues to accompany the Episcopal Conferences and other pastoral instances with the organization of the continental phase of the synodal process oriented to the assembly of the faithful: “For a Synodal Church: communion, participation, mission”.

---

12 Francis, *Synodality and communion. Video message on the occasion of the Plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America* (2022/05/24-27).

37. In their Message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Assembly recognized that the Virgin of Guadalupe accompanies the journey of our Church with her motherly tenderness. Our Lady of Tepeyac shows us the face and gaze of her Son, Jesus, and accompanies us on this pastoral journey. We ask her to point out to us what God dreams and wants for His Church in our region, while, as a prayer, we offer to her the road we have traveled.





# Part I

---







# SIGNS OF THE TIMES CHALLENGING AND ENCOURAGING US

---

38. The fact that we are walking together as missionary disciples to Jesus' call for us to contemplate, listen to, and recognize the presence and will of God in the reality we live. For this we need to pay close attention to the signs of the times and to have our ears and hearts prepared. In his message to the participants in the Ecclesial Assembly, Pope Francis asked them to keep in mind the word "listening" which, together with "dialogue" and "discernment", grants it some dynamism of its own. That is why the whole process was permeated by an effort of "listening to the voice of God up to the point of listening with Him to the outcry of the people, and to listen to the people up to the point of breathing in it the will God is calling us to follow" (EC 6).
39. In this part we limit ourselves to present only a few realities that challenge and encourage us in a special way. After the introduction on listening and discernment, and the reading of the pandemic of COVID-19 as a milestone signaling a change of era, two sections are developed. The first chapter refers to various significant aspects of the reality of our peoples, following the structure of Aparecida (cf. DAp 33-100), and puts a spotlight on several emerging issues. The second one focuses on looking at several critical aspects of ecclesial life which will be examined later on. Both of them address lights and shadows, signs of death and life. It does that citing a great number of testimonies and voices from the phase of listening and the Ecclesial Assembly.

## Some Introductory Questions

40. The process of seeing and listening brought about by the Assembly allowed many sectors of the People of God in the region to analyze some realities of our societies, to contemplate various aspects of the life of the Church and to discover various signs of our times from their daily experience. The previous documents presented many situations afflicting us, such as lack of employment, growing violence, the crisis in education, the uncertainty about the future. Given that this is such a broad process involving so many voices, we will focus only on a few relevant signs.
41. In biblical tradition, listening “is the path to encounter with God” (DDC 30). St. Paul teaches us that “faith comes from hearing the message” (Rom 10,17). God gives us the faith to embrace his Word and “to enter into a dialogue that allows us to discover his action in history, to interpret the present time, and to deliver loving responses to bring forth life in any circumstance we may live” (DDC 30). Synodality “feeds from this tradition” and reaffirms that listening is an essential central element “to look for and find God’s will” (DDC 30), personally and in community.
42. Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* from Vatican Council II stresses as a duty —rather than an option— of the Church to scrutinize “the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel” (GS 4). The events at the Conference of Aparecida have closely linked it to the call to assume an attitude of permanent pastoral conversion (cf. DAp 2, 29). These signs are challenges to the life and mission of the Church. Here we have chosen only those that are most frequently mentioned and commented on in the listening process and that inspired the formulation of the Pastoral propositions by the discernment groups.
43. Aparecida showed that our peoples live a reality marked by great changes that affect our lives and have a global reach. In 2015, in the face of environmental deterioration, Pope Francis, in the encyclical *Laudato Si’*, called on all the inhabitants of the planet to commit themselves to care for our common home. The Amazon Synod held in 2019 inspired us to open new paths for the Church and an integral ecology arising from a pastoral, cultural, ecological and synodal conversion. The Ecclesial Assembly follows this line, but adding new challenges that have been posed in recent years to the evangelizing work of the Church.

## The pandemic, a milestone signaling a change of era

44. The pandemic of COVID-19, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020, caused a widespread growth of poverty not seen in the last few decades, as shown by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 2021 and which was registered in the Document for the Renewal of CELAM (cf. DDR 23-30). Many people living in poverty were infected by the virus because of the precariousness of their housing and the very limited possibilities of taking care of themselves. This revealed both the deficiencies of the public health systems across the countries of our region and the fact that women have been and continue to be the ones who are carrying out most of the caregiving tasks.
45. Some voices of the participants in the listening process express the contradictory nature of the health emergency and all its aftermath. On the one hand “the pandemic caused isolation and deaths”, “it changed everything, and urged us to rethink everything”. Others emphasize the pain, uncertainty, anguish, loss of presence and, concretely, the distancing from in person attendance to the Eucharist and community life (cf. DDC 41). As many emphasize, the pandemic has caused “many unfinished bereavements of people who have died, and whose families have often not been able to bring closure” (SN p.13).
46. On the other hand, the pandemic revealed “the enormous capacity for reinvention of communities and individuals who responded to this new context in an effective manner in the face of needs and new conditions for action” (DDC 44). It “has changed the rhythm of our lives, has left us with an awareness of care and responsibility, for example, being in solidarity with vulnerable people”. In addition, some point out that the pandemic has re-educated us “in the way we do things and see life. We have learned to value family, friends and to distinguish what is really essential and necessary in our lives” (SN, p. 13). The pandemic is a reality that cuts across the signs of the times because it affects all dimensions of existence.

# I. Significant Aspects of the Reality of our Peoples

The daily life of our peoples is made up of many aspects, both positive and negative. During the listening process, some critical situations of the reality that particularly affect the population of the region and their expectations for a better future were highlighted.

## 1. The Socioeconomic Sphere: Great Inequities

47. The socioeconomic system prevailing in Latin America and the Caribbean has produced countless victims due to injustice, marginalization and social exclusion that make it impossible for all those affected to have access to a life in worthy conditions. Many have been excluded from our societies, abandoned to their fate. During the pandemic, the number of people who, lacking economic resources, have lost their homes and are living on the streets increased significantly. The economic model that privileges the market over people and families is not based on ethical values and principles, does not accept its regulatory function, and does not allow the strengthening of social and state institutions that effectively oversee ethical practice.
48. In our societies, an economic system prevails, under a “logic of efficiency and immediacy” (LS 181), that tends to turn everything into a commodity and to give priority to maximum profit to the detriment of human, social, and environmental costs. This system has generated increasingly deep and unbridgeable inequity gaps between the reduced groups of people with the power to influence public policies, on the one hand, and the rest of the population deprived of vital goods and dignified living conditions, on the other. In the listening process, “the culture of market logic to the detriment of a fraternal and ecological economy, is criticized.” (SN p.16).
49. As studies carried out by international institutions show, the pandemic further increased inequalities. The number of people living in extreme poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean rose from 81 to 86 million as a result of the deepening social and health crisis, making it the most vulnerable region in the world. In its 2022 report, ECLAC tells of a nearly 30-year setback in the fight against poverty. According to the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food



Program (WFP), 12.7 million people in Latin America and the Caribbean suffer from hunger, mainly in five countries in Central America and the Caribbean: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Haiti. The latter is the country with the deepest food crisis in the region.

50. Inequity undermines democratic and social processes because it damages the social fabric and sparks violence. It does not affect all marginalized groups in the same way: poor, rural, and indigenous women have much tougher living conditions than their male counterparts. A common trait in most of our countries is institutionalized violence, the one caused by organized crime and the one provoked by socioeconomic inequality. As the report warns, without the necessary economic changes to overcome inequalities, “violence will deepen at all levels (family, social, political, economic), some of which has already increased exponentially” (SN p. 17).
51. The victims of this system are the poorest of the poor, the discarded who have no access to land, housing or work. Often the response of the State to legitimate claims is limited to the use of public force to repress them. In some countries, community and social leaders are targeted for assassination, their means of production are destroyed, large territories are militarized, and their social organizations are unduly criminalized. This is particularly true for the Amazon and many other regions affected by extractivism and environmental pollution, where “depredation of land is aggravated with innocent blood being shed and land defenders criminalized” (SA DF 67), ecosystems are destroyed, and community and people rights are violated. Latin America ranks first in the murders of environmental defenders.
52. It is a sign of these times that minority groups demand to be considered as interlocutors and protagonists in processes affecting their living conditions and their future. “Their words, their hopes and their fears should be the most authoritative voice at any table of dialogue” (Qam 26). They claim a central role for their proposals to the questions “What is their idea of ‘good living’ for themselves and for those who will come after them?” (Qam 26). This is not only true for the Amazon, but also for so many other places of marginalization and exclusion in urban and rural areas.
53. People living in poverty call for a dignified living and will continue to claim their right to be recognized as central actors of social and ecclesial transformation. They have been entrusted with the seed of life of a

movement of universal solidarity capable of transforming history. To listen to their cries is to dare to listen to their wisdom.

## 2. The Sociopolitical Sphere: The Frailty of our Democracies

54. One of the key spheres for people's development is democracy, which rules our political coexistence system across most of our republics. Aparecida acknowledged "a certain democratic advance which is evident in various electoral processes" (DAP 74). Nonetheless, in many cases, political power is used today in an authoritarian way disguised as neo-populist regimes from different ideologies that have taken advantage of the discrediting of State's public institutions, while tapping into popular unrest. Democracy in our countries is described as "fragile" and, in some cases, there is a real democratic crisis.
55. This reality has been encouraged by an ethical impoverishment in political practice and governance. Corruption is widespread at various levels. This is shown in the big business made with public money and in the "conscience bribing" by exponents of political and economic power.
56. As seen in the listening process, this shameful ethical crisis at state and government institutions, coupled with the fact that human dignity does not seem to be a priority for governments, has led to flagrant violations of human rights. "Some parliaments or legislative assemblies pass unjust laws spurning human rights and the popular will" (DAP 79). This results in "a loss of legitimacy of public institutions, political leaderships and justice systems, in the absence of exemplary democratic leadership fostering a culture of encounter and the search of common good above particular interests" (DDC 67-68).
57. Yet, one sign of hope is "the awakening of youth indignation in the face of corruption, with a great capacity for a response of mobilization. This shows the high degree of awareness among young people" (SN p. 162). Another positive sign is the emergence of social organizations, movements, and networks. "In our Latin America and the Caribbean, are emerging various forms of articulation and search of alternatives of articulation and encounter in the sphere of social claims and the right to participation. One of those experiences are grassroots movements for the construction of participative democracy based on respect for human dignity, nature, and

through comprehensive environmental awareness and care for the three Ls: Land, lodging, and labor, which Pope Francis has called sacred rights (EG 199)” (DDC 72).

### 3. The Environmental Sphere: our Common Home in Great Danger

58. The bishops gathered together in Aparecida wanted to create greater awareness about the fact that Latin America is the region with “one of the greatest biodiversities on the planet” (DAp 83). Mother nature is a “free legacy” (DAp 471) and that we are called to protect it with a sense of gratitude and responsibility. The Aparecida Conference also reported that land was looted and waters treated as a trading commodity by corporations (cf. DAp 84). The bishops warned about the ongoing melting of ice in the Antarctica and glaciers across the world, including Latin America. They warned about the disastrous consequences of climate change (cf. DAp 87) and about the unstoppable exploitation of natural riches that leaves “death [...] in its wake throughout our region” (DAp 473). They reported that “traditional populations have been practically excluded from decisions on the wealth of biodiversity and nature” (DAp 84), and that the more vulnerable are the most “threatened by predatory development” (DAp 474).
59. In the listening process, many attendants living in ravaged areas because of big extractivist projects were concerned about their increasingly steady expansion, often without previous informed consultation. When consultations are carried out, not in a few cases the deployment fails to fulfill all procedures required by law.
60. Extractivism is understood as “an unbridled tendency of the economic system to convert the goods of creation into capital. The action of ‘extracting’ the greatest number of materials in the shortest possible time, converting them into raw materials and inputs that industry will use, that will then be transformed into products [...] that others will market, society will consume and then nature itself will receive in the form of polluting waste”<sup>13</sup> This term is applied particularly to illegal activities, like unauthorized gold mining or illegal logging of precious timber.

---

13 CELAM, *Missionary disciples, Stewards of our common home*, (Pastoral letter from the Latin American Episcopal Council, Bogotá, 2018).

61. During listening, a number of voices identified a myriad of negative impacts from extractivist operations on ecosystems and public health. In thematic forums, they reported that they are suffering from “a hydric emergency and the lack of attention to the communities and the long-running claim of NO to mega mining” (SN, p. 201). A lot of mining activities cause “serious socioenvironmental conflicts and irreversible impacts on socio-biodiversity and nearby communities” (SN p. 201). Facing this situation, members of Indigenous and Afro-Descendant communities requested the Church to “walk along with them in the defense of Indigenous peoples denouncing the outrages against our common home” (SN p. 67). Various statements emphasized that the Church “should not remain indifferent, since by looking at it and doing nothing would turn it into an accomplice” (SN p. 67).
62. The Amazon is one of the areas that have suffered the most because of extractivism, since it promotes massive deforestation and increases the loss of biodiversity. It is an alarming sign of our times that, due to its steady environmental degradation, several areas in the regions have been getting closer, at a fast pace, to a point of no return, having disastrous consequences on climate both regionally and globally. Additionally, in the Guarani Aquifer and other areas across the region, earth degradation and environmental damage are increasing.
63. The intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) warned on February 28 2022, that “climate change brought about by human beings is provoking dangerous and widespread disruption of Mother nature, and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world”.
64. Various contributions to the listening process drew the attention to the significant increase in the number of refugees and displaced persons (cf. SN p. 27) as a result of the climate crisis, which is causing extreme temperatures, prolonged droughts, heavy rains and floods, hurricanes and powerful cyclones that are occurring more frequently and are very destructive. At the same time, the continuous increase in displacement, both within and between countries, carries the risk of strong social tensions in the places where migrants arrive. It can be observed that more and more conflicts are arising due to the increasing scarcity of vital goods, such as drinking water and food.

## 4. The Sociocultural Sphere: Towns, Cities, Migrants

65. The cultural wealth and diversity of the peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean is enormous: Indigenous, Afro-American, Mestizo, rural, urban, and suburban communities (cf. DAp 56). But this wonderful mosaic of diversity has been touched by the shift of times, at whose deepest level we have a cultural crisis. Globalization tends to standardize culture according to a dominant pattern. It is about a new colonization by imposing artificial models, despising local expressions and tending to impose a uniform culture, which deepens individual self-reference, leading to indifference towards the other, as the individual feels he does not need nor is responsible for the other (cf. DAp 46). A dismissal culture is spreading, which does not look at human beings in their dignity as sons and daughters of God and brothers or sisters to others. At the Ecclesial Assembly we listened to something that concerned us: “We are hurt by the indifference among people toward their fellow beings, their lack of trust, their lack of love. It seems that being humiliating towards the other is in vogue” (SN p. 27).
66. Since the 1950s, our region has been living an increasing urbanization process. Latin America is the highest urbanized area in the world, with 80 per cent of their residents living in cities. Of these cities, 56 have over one million residents. In the new urban and suburban areas, emerging cultures continue to be built, showing unprecedented languages and symbols (cf. DAp 510). However, amid the challenges, inequalities, anguish, and suffering, God is present in their people, in their beating life, and in the potentialities of cities. From faith, we can state that “God lives in the city” (DAp 514), but we need to look for Him and discover His presence in the various urban spheres and realities (cf. DPC 27).
67. Massive migrations are a structural reality increasingly spread and excruciating. They are a consequence of the lack of job opportunities, widespread violence, social unrest, political persecution, lack of future and, as mentioned above, environmental degradation. In Caribbean and South American countries, migratory flows have increased, deepening cultural exchanges. Today, ten million Latin Americans and Caribbeans live in a country different from the one they were born in. Forced migration affects millions of people, but particularly the most vulnerable, that is, children, adolescents and the elderly, who are exposed to disease and the risk of death. In addition, there are death merchants who engage in human trafficking and smuggling, subjecting minors to various forms of slavery



and sexual and labor violence, or to the removal of organs for transplants. This reality is a challenge for the ecclesial communities in the places of departure, transit and hosting.

68. But as was said in Aparecida, we cannot be left with a pessimistic quarrelsome reading of cultural changes, or with some blind nostalgia that everything in the past was better. We need to be capable of grasping the good secular news heralding humanizing and evangelizing processes. A sign of hope is “the lives of people that are working to look for other cultural pathways towards a sustainable way of life” (SN p. 154) There are many men and women, disciples of Christ, who are “committed to a culture of peace, with the commitment to respect racial and social diversity, actions in favor of the common good, calling for an integral ecology and activating political participation” (SN p. 157).
69. A positive effect of globalization is acknowledged in the fact “that we can be connected almost immediately to people far away, and therefore, we Christians have the chance to be present with every fraternal humanizing message that the Church wishes to bring to every home. The faith of many Christians can overcome frontiers and to reach every heart with no difficulty” (SN p. 71).
70. Another hopeful sign is the increasing recognition of the personal and affective. “It appears the fundamental value of the person [...], (and) simplicity and acknowledgment of the weak and small in existence emerges as a value, with a great scope and potential that cannot be underestimated [...]. This is an affirmation of personal freedom and, hence, of the need to question oneself in the depth of one’s own convictions and choices” (DAP 52-53). “The problem is not diversity, but the incapability to gather together all those meanings of reality into an integrating understanding, so that we are able to exert our freedom with discernment and responsibility” (DPC 22).
71. We are also hopeful about the sensitivity of the youth to environmental and social problems, as well as the growing awareness of the rights of women to participate actively in society. Without sexist distinctions, today we can see men participating and enjoying parenthood within their families, sharing the responsibility of raising their children.

## 5. The Religious Sphere: The Faith of Peoples

72. Aparecida made it clear that our cultural traditions are no longer transmitted from one generation to the next with the same fluidity as in the past. This affects the deepest core of every culture constituted by religious experience. The transmission of the faith is difficult in spheres such as education, in the beauty of cultural expressions or in the family itself, which had been one of the most important vehicles of evangelization (cf. DAp 39).
73. Our countries have undergone an important change of intra religious affiliation. The Ecclesial Assembly evidenced the growth of other Christian, non-Catholic churches, mostly Pentecostal, which have also been called evangelical in Latin America and the Caribbean. However, in recent years there has been an important rapprochement between Christians who have organized themselves to defend human rights, attend to migrant populations, defend the environment or fight against all forms of discrimination. “The establishment of many protestant Churches gives us hope that we can possibly create a new structure founded on human being worth and dignity” (SN p.123).
74. According to the Church’s 2020 statistical yearbook, 48% of the world’s Catholics reside in the Americas and the figures are growing in the northern part of the continent. This is a great challenge for the life and mission of the Catholic Church. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 92% of the population declares itself Christian, although those who say they have no religion are also growing. We can say that for now there is no change of religion, but a transformation within Christianity.
75. What some identify as the rupture of the Catholic monopoly that has been in place for centuries, it is striking the consolidation of a non-Catholic Christian bloc bringing together historic Protestants, Pentecostals and independents who call themselves evangelicals. Several have achieved social and political influence, and have even organized new confessional parties, attracting also conservative Catholic sectors with their positions.
76. But while our region remains overwhelmingly Christian, the Assembly also saw an increasing secularization, especially among young people. (cf. SN p. 21). Besides, an ongoing process of individualization has affected belonging to a religious community, especially Catholicism, motivated in part by the

affirmation of subjectivity with individualistic traits. Some groups legitimize a certain theology of prosperity, based on success and consumption, which is disseminated through the media and social networks. The value of others, of the community, of the relationship with the sacred, is lost sight of, and secularism penetrates as a culture that dispenses with God. This leads to an “institutional secularization” in which people prefer to relate to God on their own, diminishing community practice and attendance at places of worship. While it is difficult to register the signs of faith, Christians or Catholics are growing up “my way” and people who declare themselves to be without religion, who no longer fulfill the traditional role of transmitting the faith, are becoming more and more involved in the process.

77. One of the signs supporting our hope is the persistence and renewal of the Christian faith and Marian piety of many simple members of the People of God, who live the Gospel in the fabric of their daily existence and renew their adherence to Christ in the Church in the midst of a globalized and fragmented society. The narrative synthesis collected contributions that recognize the faith and values embodied in popular Catholic religiosity or spirituality (cf. SN pp. 167-170). “In our Churches and communities, we live a faith through popular devotion in the love of God, and devotion to Jesus, the Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and many saints, which sustains daily life even in the midst of very painful situations. It is a work of the Holy Spirit and a place of encounter with Jesus Christ, his Church and the work of evangelization” (DDR 42). This view is in line with one of the best pages of the Aparecida Document dedicated to popular devotion, which presents it as popular spirituality or mysticism, animated by the Holy Spirit, an inculturated form of encountering with Christ and transmitting faith (cf. DAp 258-266).
78. For many believers in Latin America and the Caribbean, devotion to Mary is a fundamental factor in their faithful experience and religious identity. She is invoked as the Mother of the God for whom we live, a Mother watching the needs of her sons and daughters. She is also recognized as the first evangelizing disciple in this continent. It is significant that she, a believing woman, appeared to Juan Diego, a representative of the native peoples and the poor, and spoke to him in his own language. The *dark lady of Tepeyac* is a sign of reconciliation and interculturality that encourages us to weave new relationships among persons, communities and peoples of diverse cultures, in which we recognize each other as brothers and sisters in

Christ, helping each other to grow in humanity and solidarity and to care for life, especially of the most vulnerable (cf. SDC 4).

## 6. The Sphere of New Faces in the Frontline

The Assembly stressed the need to recognize and value the role of many faces, especially youth and women, as agents of change in society and in the Church.

### a) Faces of Youth

79. Young people, in this new era, are set to play an important role in carrying out new social transformations and in carrying forward the technological shift at a global level. However, this digital revolution, which has an impact on the way of producing, integrating ourselves as full citizens, forging new ways of social relations, and transforming culture, is not reaching everyone, nor integrating them equally. In some cases, it has not been oriented towards achieving greater development for humanity as a whole, but has remained anchored in the model dominated by profit and political and economic domination. This model is linked to a dynamic of exclusion for people and groups that are not of interest to the market.
80. Communication technologies and social media shape the way of thinking and the mentality of youth who, when they lack mature criteria for analysis and discernment, can be manipulated and lose the possibility of affirming their own identity. This is a contemporary mode of colonization that promotes an individualistic and consumerist culture.
81. The pandemic has aggravated the risk factors for youth, since they face very complex situations linked to the economic, health, labor and social crises while limiting opportunities for access to many goods. Unemployment has soared among young people, which has favored the increase in juvenile delinquency linked to gangs and, above all, drug trafficking. Situations of sexual and/or psychological abuse, aggravated domestic violence and mistreatment of women (including young and little girls), psycho-affective breakdown due to confinement, increased internal and international migration as the only option for youth (including unaccompanied minors), increased suicides, drug use and spiritual crises due to lack of religious and pastoral care.

82. The pandemic also showed more clearly the deep educational gaps, especially for the most impoverished populations of children and youth. They suffer from the lack of access to digital educational media, which are new tools for learning and for accompanying educational processes (SN, p. 86).
83. Many young men and women from marginalized sectors suffer total or partial exclusion from access to work and education. The most likely future of this social group will continue to be in poverty. Decent work and quality education for all without distinction is a fundamental right, but one that many sectors do not enjoy.
84. We are encouraged by the protagonism of young men and women who, despite the dangers of contagion and repression, have led mass demonstrations demanding profound changes in government decisions. Many of them are taking on responsibilities in various fields, especially in politics, so that they are trying to transform things from within and not just as passive spectators. “Youth play a very important role because they are agents of change [...] We must be interested in what is happening in our country and the world so that the changes are for the good, contributing to a better development” (SN p. 93).

## **b) Faces of Women**

85. Our societies continue to be, in many respects, patriarchal and sexist, with structures that keep women in a position of inferiority and invisibility. The biased ideological assertion that women are less than men has generated a profound inequality throughout centuries, which is visible in all spheres. It has also led to a distorted historical consciousness arguing that women have contributed nothing and do not deserve to be remembered in their passage through the history of peoples, thus reaffirming their invisibility.
86. The Ecclesial Assembly emphasized the great pain generated by violence against women in all its manifestations (ecclesial, social and cultural machismo, as well as femicides). We are deeply hurt by the domestic violence to which we have often become accustomed. Aparecida reminded us that the new life that Christ brings us embraces all the dimensions of our existence, including family relationships (cf. DAp 13).

87. The growing participation of women in public and business positions, their leadership in social movements and their entry into politics at the national, regional and local levels is a sign of hope. Many women played a leading role in confronting the pandemic, promoting with creativity and strength multiple initiatives of prophetism and solidarity with the most vulnerable. There is also an increasing number of women in the academic and scientific community.

### **c) Faces of Families**

88. Real life continues to pose challenges for families to “keep united and promote coexistence based on mutual respect, love and care, listening and dialogue, along with the shared reading of the Word of God and prayer” (DAP 102).
89. Many families lost one or more members to the pandemic, which gave room to a feeling of being orphans. This is worse, with inner wounds being left as a result of the distancing imposed, which took away the chance to say goodbye to their relative in their last breath and to endure mourning without burial rites.
90. On the other hand, in the listening we heard that “there are no perfect families; they all have their own defects and virtues; a traditional family is not better than a non-traditional family and vice versa. Both need to be accompanied and to feel that they are part of an inclusive, understanding and tolerant Church conveying hope and security” (SN p. 209). A positive sign is that an effort is being made to provide pastoral accompaniment to the families in their various needs, being aware that this requires teamwork of people professionally trained in various fields, such as legal counselling, psychological care and spiritual assistance (cf. SN p. 210).

### **d) Faces of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples**

91. Fifteen years ago, Aparecida noted that “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” (DAP 90). This situation, far from being resolved, has worsened.
92. During listening, several voices stated the deep pain Afro-Descendant people endure because of “strong racism, exclusion, and abuse within



our societies, and even the lack of sensitivity about their reality and their identity within the Church” (SN p. 68). Members of African-American communities reported that their cultural diversity meets rejection from other social groups, or that they suffer due to patronizing attitudes from other people in both social and church environments. (cf. SN p. 68). The situation of many of their young men and women is hard because it is marked by different types of violence, including domestic violence, and by discrimination on the basis of their ethnic, cultural, sexual and economic identity.

93. One sign of hope is that, in order to confront the growing threats on their territories and identity, in recent decades Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples have created their own organizations to make their voices heard in society, they work as interlocutors with the State and have the collective power to reach agreements in defense of their rights.

## II. Relevant Aspects of our Church

The Aparecida Conference made a reading of various positive and negative aspects of our Church, pointing out shadows and lights in our reality (cf. DAp 98-100). The listening process also identified challenges, pains and hopes in the path of the Latin American and Caribbean Church. Some spheres, already mentioned in the previous section on the reality of our peoples, are now taken up again, but from the perspective of ecclesial life. These do not cover the various aspects of the life and mission of the Church, but rather they organize the most relevant and recurring themes of mutual listening.

### 1. A People of God Church: a Call to Overcome Clericalism

94. The outcry of many brothers and sisters is that they do not feel they are an active part of the community of disciples in the Church. More than 50 years after Vatican Council II, the distinction between those who can and know the things of God and those who simply accept and obey is still strongly felt. Some are subjects and others are passive recipients of evangelization.

95. Here we can hear the voice of those who have become aware that they are members of the same People of God on their way to communion. An opportunity for mutual enrichment is our strength in the faithful certainty that all the baptized and the diverse members of the Body of Christ are fundamentally equal. “There is a glimmer of hope that there is a desire that the Assembly builds a synodal path, in terms of adding lay people and to begin listening. That brings us hope that the Church stops, in today’s world, and asks itself how we could do that” (cf. SN p. 111).
96. One of the strongest demands is the need to overcome clericalism: “the temptation of bishops and priests who interpret the ministry they have received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be offered” (CV 98). This also applies to lay men and women who, formed in a clerical environment, unconsciously adopt forms and attitudes that favor relationships of subordination.
97. We notice an increasingly stronger desire to grow in synodality, because it means walking together in a co-responsible way for the future of our Church. Signs are multiplying that invite consecrated men and women to an authentic pastoral conversion that opens paths of greater participation of all the People of God, starting with the common vocation to take charge of the life and mission of our Church, in a lively dialogue and communitarian discernment.
98. We need “a conversion to the synodal experience,” which requires from all the willingness to “strengthen a culture of dialogue, mutual listening, spiritual discernment, consensus and communion in order to find spaces and instances for joint decision-making” (SA DF 87). Thus, we will move “towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, which welcomes with gratitude the contribution of the lay faithful, embracing young people and women, the contribution of men and women of consecrated life, as well as the lives of groups, associations and movements” (CV 206).
99. A Synodal Church is called to be a multi-faceted Church, in dialogue with all human and socio-cultural diversities, including the diversity of religions, identities and sexual orientations. For example, members of LGBTQ+ groups expressed their desire to be recognized as Christians committed to the faith and to be treated equally, in accordance with the dignity received at baptism. A sign of our times is the desire for our Church to be welcoming and inclusive.

## 2. Lay People's Formation and Participation

100. Because of its “ecclesial” condition, the Assembly was a unique space for the laity to express themselves authentically. In the listening process, some made their voices heard: “We, lay people, are the vast majority of the People of God. Our dignity comes from Baptism. Our vocation is not less worthy than that of the consecrated. We are, therefore, ecclesial subjects and mission protagonists in decision making. We should not accept being considered collaborators of the consecrated since we have an ecclesial and social co-responsibility that is expressed in the synodal journey. Clericalism does not understand these things and is a pitfall to the growth of synodality, since it prevents us from living the call of the Council to the protagonism of the laity in the Church and in the world” (SN p. 182).
101. A Synodal Church should promote the participation of the laity in spaces of cultural, political, social and ecclesial transformation, so that the message becomes flesh and dwells in Latin American and Caribbean societies. Lay men and women who lead sectors of society and culture with the capacity to transform the world from within.
102. The inculturation of the Gospel has a markedly social accent firmly in defense of human rights in many communities across the continent. The lay martyrs must be recognized and incorporated as an essential part of the history of the Latin American Church.
103. In the statements during the listening process, signs of hope were identified, such as, for example, the fact that among many Christians “there is a greater awareness of their vocation to contribute actively to the stewardship of our common home” (DDC 55). Also, it was hopeful the strong role women play in varied ethnic and cultural settings, particularly, Indigenous, Afro-descendant and rural women, who are committed to safeguarding the lives of human and natural beings (cf. SN p. 27).
104. However, there is not always a preparation for the myriad of challenges lay people must face in different spaces, which requires a solid religious formation. There is no specialized pastoral, on the particularities of parishes, which helps prepare for social, cultural and political participation, care, and transformation.

### **a) Youth in the Path of Discipleship**

105. The youth stated in the Assembly that cultural changes taking place in our society call them to be on the watch for the signs of the times so as not to lose the sense of God, to be missionary disciples and to bring life to their communities. They conceive initiatives that involve the whole community and still have so much to give. In the listening process, several participants emphasized that “it is not a matter of choosing between young and adults, but of shared work, with tradition and renewal entering into dialogue” (SN p. 89).
106. There is an felt demand from young people to be allowed to have a place along with others, to open ways towards a Synodal Church. They stress that adding and strengthening youth pastoral programs is of vital importance for the sustainability of the Church in the years to come. Their sincere and spontaneous solidarity, sensitivity and ability to behave skillfully in different settings, particularly concerning new technologies, which is vital for the new evangelization, should be highlighted: “We can all evangelize in some way, we youth can evangelize through social media because they allow freedom of expression for us to share our testimony rather than keeping silent about what we feel” (SN p. 86).
107. During the Assembly, the youth complained about the lack of recognition they feel as protagonists and agents of transformation. For this reason, the various specialized pastoral programs that accompany them in their personal searches and in their apostolic, political and social commitments are of great importance. Those are experiences that encourage leadership in ecclesial processes and youth communities, and structure an integral path of encounter with Jesus.

### **b) A New Place for Women in the Church**

108. The Assembly strongly stated that the evangelizing presence of consecrated and lay women should be made more visible and recognized, as well as their contributions throughout the history of the Church and society. They are as invisible as they are indispensable. The kaleidoscopic diversity of social, age and ethnic groups, which make up more than half of our Church’s membership, was recalled. Gradually women have achieved, with much effort, the recognition of their civil and political rights, and are also claiming their place in the Church. Women from Indigenous

peoples, Afro-descendants and Rural women are empowering themselves and sharing their knowledge, experiences and practices in their ecclesial communities.

109. Several forms of discrimination persist in the Church, permeated throughout history by culture and social systems that put men in a dominant position over women, even though this goes against the message and the life of Jesus. Calls have been raised to “creating effective conditions for women to participate in the leadership of the Church as People of God, occupying their rightful place, to include women decidedly in liturgy, decision-making and theology” (SN p. 95), whether in teaching, formation or production. It is a sign of hope to have now women trained in this area who are generating theologies with a feminine approach, which enriches the Church’s reflection.

### **c) A Leading Role for Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples**

110. Aparecida called the attention about Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples not only emerging with more force in society but also in the Church: “This is a *kairos* for deepening the Church’s encounter with these sectors of society who are demanding the full recognition of their individual and collective rights, being taken into account in Catholicism, with their cosmovision, their values and their particular identities, so as to live a new ecclesial Pentecost” (DAP 91).
111. The Latin American and Caribbean Church has given important steps to embrace that *kairós*. A faithful reading of the journey made from Aparecida up to the Assembly perceives that, in many places of our region, we have adopted a firmer commitment with Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Those communities appreciate that fact, as expressed in a remark from one member: “Even in the midst of difficulties, the Afro pastoral seeks concrete ways to improve the living conditions” of Afro-descendant communities and is committed to “fight for justice” (SN p. 68).
112. Here we would like to mention the commitment of the Latin American Confederation of Religious Men and Women (CLAR) to contribute to the conversion, to a Church decidedly on the side of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, which walks with them in the defense of their rights and territories, in the generation of a profound cultural transformation

towards Good Living for all persons and peoples and in communion with the earth.

113. During listening, we heard an emphasis in that the Church must accompany those peoples, “rather than imposing itself.” In order to do that, “we need to respect their own cosmovision and diversity” (cf. SN p. 67). We heard also repeatedly the call for equal treatment and an emphatic statement: “We do not want the Church to look upon us as ‘poor little things’, because we have so much to give and offer from our cosmovision. The Church should learn and respect our cultural diversity” (cf. SN p. 67).
114. Moved by the testimonies he heard in his meetings with native peoples, the Pope calls the attention to the danger of continuing to maintain colonizing relationships. What he affirms in *Querida Amazonia* is valid not only for that land, but also for the relations with all peoples and their cultures. Pope Francis warns us that “Nor has colonization ended; in many places, it has been changed, disguised and concealed [...] while losing none of its contempt for the life of the poor and the fragility of the environment” (QAm 16).
115. In the Church, we still need to further advance in decolonizing our minds and relationships. An authoritative voice in the Assembly expressed that “much conversion is needed from us, bishops and other pastoral agents, to give these peoples their place and overcome ecclesial marginalization. It is painful to note that many pastoral workers continue to impose a cultural and religious uniformity, without getting to know and appreciating the manifold ways in which God manifests himself”. The Holy Father insists on being open to the “Spirit’s boldness” (Qam 94) and living cultural conversion, as it “would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous” (Qam 69).
116. In the inculturation of Christian faith, Indigenous and Afro-descendant theologies play an important role. It is a sign of hope that in recent decades theologies have been developed that are an authentic expression of the Christian faith. They are based on the appropriation and appreciation of both experiences and religious and cultural expressions of their communities. Representatives of Indigenous and Afro-descendant theologies actively participate in interreligious and intercultural dialogues, promoting and enriching them with their contributions from the traditions



of their peoples. They also have much to contribute to the experience of synodality in our Church.

### 3. Formation Programs in Seminaries and Religious Houses

117. The Assembly has expressed the importance of a change in the formation of ordained ministers so as to help the move towards a Church in a synodal key. Today, in some places, there is a prevailing idea suggesting that when a baptized person reaches the sacrament of Holy Orders, he enters a different sphere, a superior category above the rest of the baptized. Although in recent decades much progress has been made in the development of an integral formation —affective, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral— as indicated in the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* of the Congregation for the Clergy, some have expressed that a type of formation centered exclusively on a curriculum of study still survives. They consider that insufficient progress has been made in integral discipleship processes, from the encounter with Jesus Christ to the conversion of the mind, heart and will.
118. Many seminaries and houses of religious formation have acknowledged the contribution of human sciences and have deemed it necessary to evaluate the psychological and spiritual suitability of the candidates enrolled at those seminaries. It is necessary to deepen affective and sexual formation including women as teachers and spiritual directors, so as to exclude all misogyny and chauvinism. A weak preparation for celibate life can lead to behaviors of double life and abuse, not only sexual, but also of manipulation of the conscience and a despotic exercise of power.
119. Each vocation has a concrete and distinctive way of living spirituality, which gives depth and enthusiasm to the exercise of its tasks. Thus, life in the Spirit does not enclose us in a comfortable intimacy, but makes us generous and creative persons, happy in missionary proclamation and service. It makes us committed to the demands of reality and capable of finding deep meaning in everything we do for the Church and for the world. As a nun at the Assembly said, “the seal of one’s own identity leads every individual to bear a gift, a charisma, and a concrete style, all unique and different. There, the varied roles and ministries of a single ecclesial calling converge: follow me. This follow me is where we all —men, women, lay people, religious, ordained ministers— become one”.

## 4. The Cases of Abuse in the Church: Voices Claiming to Be Heard and Action to Be Taken

120. A sign of these times is the commanding need to recognize and make visible the suffering of the victims of different ecclesial abuses —of consciousness, power, sexual—, to listen to their voices and to overcome any form of cover up. Another sign is to accept that a wrong use of authority and power favors vertical, abusive, discriminating relations. “The crimes of sexual abuse offend our Lord, cause physical, psychological, and spiritual damage to the victims and harm the community of the faithful”. The words of the Holy Father in his Apostolic “You are the light of the world” reflect the scope of the serious crime of sexual, economic, spiritual, conscience, and authority abuse, which different members of the Church have been responsible for.
121. It is painful for us to acknowledge before the Lord, before the victims and their families, before the faithful and the whole of society the immense damage that these behaviors have brought about: human, religious, and social destruction, the erosion of the sacred values of the human being, the loss of credibility in the Church. We confess the sin in which we have incurred through our complicit silence, the deaf ears towards the claims of the victims, the delay in the investigations and sometimes covering up in any way the crimes or diverting responsibilities.
122. Sexual, power, or conscience abuses by ministers of the Church, ordained religious men and women, and agents of evangelization, plus the opaque treatment given to the known cases, makes us see that we need to be more transparent and act always with truth. “The image of the flock is not to mislead the People as a mere sheep subject to the Shepherd’s will. The Shepherd accompanies, sometimes he corrects, but he is not the owner or master of the flock” (SN p. 102).
123. The investigations often carried out by people outside the ecclesial world, such as those involved in the media, have allowed us to see the magnitude of the universe of victims. Offenses directed against even one of God’s children, especially the least of them, are outrages committed against our Lord himself (cf. Mt 25:31-46). It is very serious that those responsible have been our brothers, called to accompany and lead the People of God. We confess with sorrow that the lack of timely and sincere recognition and the lack of clear investigations have made the burden heavier on the shoulders and consciences of those whom we have offended.

124. It is a sign of our times that this chain of misdeeds is broken when the aggressor in a penitential attitude admits the facts, assumes his responsibility, admits the serious harm caused to the sacred person of the victims, submits to the due judicial processes, and the responsible and ecclesial organisms collaborate with the victims and with justice. In the listening process, one of the voices of the participants summarized: “Every sign of conversion due to the crisis of sexual abuse and trust gives us hope: more willingness to denounce and cooperate, new and fairer resolutions, part of the Clergy recognizing errors and asking for forgiveness, humility and signs of reparation” (SN p. 102).

## 5. A Personal Experience Meeting Christ in History

125. Whoever follows after Christ, the Son of God and the perfect Man, becomes himself a fuller human being (cf. GS 41). To follow him is not merely to embrace a few principles or to obey a few rules. It is a personal change that must imbue all the dimensions of life and culture. We shall acknowledge that ourselves and our peoples have not had at all times a meeting with Jesus that is powerful enough to transform everything. For example, there is a contradiction having a majority of people belonging to catholic communities while enduring the highest levels of inequality, corruption, and violence.
126. In line with the Council, St. Paul VI, and the previous Conferences, Aparecida delivers an integral vision of evangelization, as we will explain in the third part. We see as a sign of hope that more and more lay men and women know and feel themselves to be missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, and are configured with the life, the message, the style, the destiny and the mission of the Master. They communicate his Life and live at the service of the Kingdom of God in all that it means (cf. DDC 44).
127. The Assembly heard the call for a Church that is incarnated and helpful; not entrenched in its own comfort, but going out, because everything human must have a resonance in the heart of the disciples of Jesus (cf. GS 1). It is necessary to go in all directions to bring joy and hope through the experience of God’s closeness and tenderness (cf. DAp 548). Like the Master, we are at the service of life with a preferential option for the poor and excluded. To serve life is to denounce the presence of evil and to announce the Good News of integral liberation.

128. The crisis caused by the pandemic in all spheres calls us to be “a Samaritan community, preferring those whom Jesus loves most, a community that shows firmness in the footsteps of Christ for the fragile. Our hope is encouraged by the responses of bishops, priests and committed laity” (SN p. 13). As an evangelizing community, listening to the outcry of the poor helps us to concretize our missionary option in a new historical perspective. We must deepen this way of looking at history and reality from the last and towards all, incorporating the perspectives, intuitions and visions of the humblest in our pastoral plans and social projects so as to build a new society and a new Church.
129. With our vision projected toward the horizons of 2031-2033, when we will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Guadalupan event and the 2,000th anniversary of our Redemption, we reaffirm the conviction that the way of the Church is the human being, “the way traced out by Christ himself, the way that leads unchangeably through the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption” (RH 14).

Jesus Christ, who lives in a fully human way his condition as Son of God, leads us to live the Christian existence in a more human way, as God dreams it and gives it to us with love. Christ is the Way of God toward humanity and the way of Humanity toward God in the heart of history.







# Part II

---







# A SYNODAL MISSIONARY CHURCH AT THE SERVICE OF FULL LIFE

---

130. This part contains a historical, theological, pastoral and spiritual reflection on the theme of the Assembly. It serves to articulate and enlighten. It offers contributions to discern the challenges of the reality that we see and hear, and to provide the formulation of pastoral orientations. It wishes to deepen and update the question, with a faithful and creative reflection, which assumes the main perspectives of the Assembly and provides clear reflections for the mission.
131. The theme focuses on the new ways for a Synodal Church, discipleship and mission in Latin America and the Caribbean at the service of Full life for our peoples. It takes up the Latin American pastoral tradition and, above all, the Conference of Aparecida and the magisterium of Pope Francis. It is nourished by the sources of faith from which the Church lives and by the documents of the synodal process of the Assembly.
132. We take as our inspirational motto the words that Jesus says about his person and his mission when he presents himself as the Good Shepherd: *I have come that they may have Life, and have it in abundance* (Jn 10,10). This saying is linked to the motto guiding Aparecida: “I am the way, and the truth and the Life” (Jn 14,6). In the fourth Gospel, when Jesus says “I”, he reveals his personal mystery and states his saving mission. The motto chosen refers to the “Life in abundance” through the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ, Lord, and Giver of Life, which drives the progress of the Church.
133. This reflection takes up the message of Pope Francis to the participants of the Assembly on October 15, 2021. There he called for synodal listening, communal discernment and missionary outpouring. He invited us to the “*outpouring of the creative love of his Spirit*”, which encourages us to go to the

encounter with others without fear, and which encourages the Church to be, through a process of pastoral conversion, more and more evangelizing and missionary” (MP). This outpouring of the gift of the Spirit leads from inside to the outpouring of theological life, synodal way, and the evangelizing mission. The Church on the way, in pilgrimage to the full Kingdom, is missionary as it is synodal and it is synodal as it is missionary.

134. This part is structured in two sections. The first, of a historic-pastoral nature, situates the good news of the Ecclesial Assembly on the path of our regional Church, and shows its relationship with the Aparecida Conference and the synodal process promoted by Pope Francis. The second section has a theological-pastoral reflection of biblical inspiration with a spiritual accent. It deals with the Church of Jesus as a pilgrim, synodal and missionary People of God, and with the outpouring of its mission carried forward by the action of the Holy Spirit, under the maternal gaze of Mary, to promote fraternal life among peoples.

## **I. The Ecclesial Assembly in the Spirit of Aparecida**

135. This section is broken down into four parts. It discerns the challenge that God presents to us through the reality that we live, see and hear in order to discover new ways of Full life for our peoples (1). It recalls the process of reception of Vatican Council II by the General Conferences of the bishops from the region and presents the perspectives of the Conference of Aparecida (2). It interprets and narrates the present moment of the Catholic Church summoned by Pope Francis to follow the path of synodality through its subjects, structures and processes. (3). In these frameworks it places the preparation and celebration of the First Ecclesial Assembly, gathered to thank, revive and update the spirit of Aparecida with a view to the future. (4).

### **1. God's Challenges in the Signs of the Times**

136. Jesus calls us to “interpret the signs of the times” (Mt 16:3) and “interpret what is happening at this moment” (Lk 12:56). As mentioned earlier, the Vatican Council II accepted this call as a practice inherent in following

Jesus. The expression “signs of the times” refers, in the first place, to profound, universal and accelerating changes, such as, at the time of the Council, including the aspiration for peace, the growing international solidarity, the demand for religious freedom, the longing for unity among Christians (cf. GS 4-10). In these signs, the needs and aspirations of humanity, which are present in a concrete epoch, are expressed.

### **a) Working for Full Life for our Peoples**

137. In the first part we listed various signs of this time that affect the life of our peoples. We are called to examine them and discern about them in the light of our faith, which seeks to discover “the authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose” (GS 11) in happenings. “*Evangelic discernment* is the interpretation born in the light of the Gospel and thanks to its power — this is the living Gospel that Jesus Christ is, through the gift of the Holy Spirit” (PDV 10). Evangelic discernment does not take a fact or an event as mere information to be recorded “face to which we remain indifferent or passive”. Instead, from a believer’s perspective, it is understood as “a ‘challenge’ linked to a ‘calling’ that God has us hear in a given historic situation” (PDV 10).
138. Discernment must be applied with great interior openness to the Spirit, who blows as per its own will. The Spirit of Jesus is at work in the history of our wounded world, renewing the face of the earth and bringing new life in situations of death. The Spirit is already present in the world, in an initial way, and at the end of time he will transform all creation so that it may participate fully in God’s life. Through the work of the Spirit, the future of Full life brought by Jesus Christ is already taking shape in our world. For, “the Spirit, the infinite bond of love, is intimately present in the heart of the universe, inspiring and bringing new pathways” (LS 238). A believing and discerning reading of the times perceives in the positive facts, full of meaning and humanity, signs that generate hope. It also discerns, in a reality marked by injustices, divisions and inhumanely discarded, the transforming potential of God’s presence that promises and promotes Full Life.
139. The Church is called to collaborate with God to bring about and make life grow in the name of Jesus. It follows Christ, who follows the pathway of human beings (cf. RH 14). The mission of Christ, the Good Shepherd, is to give Life in abundance (Jn 10,10). Our Assembly renews the proposition in

Aparecida: To convey “Full life for all” (DAp 361). An integral evangelization radiates the “attractive offer of a more dignified life, in Christ, for every man and woman in Latin America and the Caribbean” (DAp 361). This implies several evangelizing dynamics, among which is the approach to social and cultural movements to share the search for a fuller life and the action for an integral liberation. (cf. DPC 55). The Church works for the fullness of human existence in its personal, familiar, spiritual, social, and cultural dimensions (cf. DAp 13).

140. In a world created good by God, wounded by sin and various evils, and recreated by the grace of Christ, discernment perceives signs of life and death, lights and shadows, hopes and threats. The parable of the wheat growing up amid weeds (cf. Mt 13,24-30) tells us about this ambiguous reality. “To walk along, listening to what the Spirit tells the Church, implies [...] to help us distinguish the wheat that always grows amid weeds” (SJ 92). This always requires choosing what corresponds most to God’s will and to the new life in his Kingdom. The Conferences of Santo Domingo and Aparecida grant us a criterium for discerning social realities under the light of the Gospel, which involves judging whether they favor or hinder the dignity of human life (SD 164-209; DAp 347-430). In the same vein, we need to discern whether something enables, fosters and strengthens life in and for our peoples or whether it endangers, damages or destroys it.
141. God challenges us in the signs of damaged lives and broken relationships, of indifference to the suffering of our brothers and sisters, in the violence in our relationships with others and with the earth, in situations where there is no humanity, love or solidarity. In our present, there are two closely interrelated realities that stand out for their significance and impact: The pandemic of COVID-19, which marks a milestone of epochal transformation, and climate change, that acute ecological emergency that threatens the foundations of our shared home and life on earth. Many of the worrying and challenging signs in our world today are present and condensed in these two processes.
142. The tsunami of the pandemic has unmasked “our vulnerability” and exposed “those false and superfluous safe places with which we had built our agendas, our projects, routines and priorities. As Pope Francis emphasized in the Extraordinary Moment of Prayer (3/27/2020), we have not stopped at God’s calls, “we have not awakened to the wars and injustices of the world, we have not listened to the cry of the poor and of our

gravely ill planet. We have continued unperturbed, thinking to remain ever healthy in a sick world.” Through these signs God questions us and calls us to become aware that our “human existence is based on three closely connected fundamental relationships: the relationship with God, with our neighbors and with the earth” (LS 66). God has entrusted us with “Sister Mother Earth” —as St. Francis of Assisi called her— to care for her with responsible love and to cultivate her with wise respect, so that she may be a habitable home for all peoples and for the great diversity of living beings.

143. “God, who loves everything that has life” (Sb 11,26), encourages us to look for a dignified life for all, caring for the common goods of the earth that we need to live and coexist. This is a demand of social, environmental, climatic and intergenerational justice. The most vulnerable people and groups, who have contributed the least to climate change, are the most affected by the ecological, health and economic crisis. Pope Francis reminds us that “there are not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but a single complex socio-environmental crisis” (LS 139). God’s love is expressed in love for our neighbor and care for the earth. The Spirit impels us to carry out the necessary transformations so that our peoples may have life in fullness.

## **b) Moving Ahead in an Ongoing Pastoral Conversion of the Church**

144. God challenges and encourages us, through the signs of the times, to advance along the path of conversion of the Church, which is of renewal and reform. The Spirit of God summons us to “the path of pastoral and missionary conversion” (EG 25). It is the personal, communitarian, institutional and pastoral change of the whole Church and of everyone in the Church. The Ecclesial Assembly intends to take up this bold challenge launched by Santo Domingo, renewed by Aparecida and reaffirmed by Pope Francis. “The pastoral conversion of our communities calls for moving beyond a pastoral ministry of mere conservation to a decidedly missionary pastoral ministry” (DAp 370).
145. Santo Domingo gave the perspective and indications for this pastoral transformation: “Such a conversion must be coherent with the Council. It embraces everything and everyone: in conscience, in personal and community practice, in relationships of equality and authority; with structures and dynamisms that make present, ever more clearly, the



Church as an effective sign, the sacrament of universal salvation” (SD 30). Conversion contemplates changes in four spheres.

146. Conversion in the sphere of ecclesial community consciousness. Being coherent with the spirit and the letter of the Vatican Council II involves taking on its ecclesiology of the People of God (cf. DAp 100b). It goes beyond the notion of a Church composed of two classes of Christians in unequal conditions and understands it as the community of the baptized co-responsible in a whole ministerial Church.
147. Conversion in the sphere of personal and community actions. Conciliar renewal demands attitudes and practices consistent with its propositions. A pastoral action that promotes life in full for all must be a response to today’s challenges, especially to the cry of the poor. The Church, as an “advocate of justice and of the poor” (DAp 395), must have the choice for the poor “imbue all pastoral structures and priorities” (DAp 396).
148. Conversion in the sphere of equality and authority relationships among all Christian believers. The testimony of brotherly love is the first and foremost proclamation of the Gospel. (cf. DAp 138). There will be no change in ecclesial relationships without rooting out clericalism. Aparecida addresses the need of an “attitude of openness, dialogue, and availability to promote stewardship and real participation of all the faithful in the life of ecclesial communities” (DAp 368).
149. Conversion in the sphere of structures. The firm missionary decision to promote a culture of life “must imbue all ecclesial structures and all pastoral plans at all levels, as well as all ecclesial institutions, giving up outdated structures” (DAp 365). This conversion directly concerns pastors and the bodies that ensure the exercise of synodality, such as councils and assemblies at all levels of the Church’s life. In the local sphere, parishes are in urgent need of reconfiguration., “breaking them up into smaller territorial units with their own leadership and coordination teams is advisable so as to allow closer contact with persons and groups” (DAp 372). On the national level, Episcopal Conferences are challenged to better integrate the exercise of *sensus fidei* for all the People of God and to help particular Churches to walk along in evangelizing actions.

## 2. Aparecida on the Path of Latin American and Caribbean Church

### a) The Evangelizing Path from Vatican Council II

150. The Latin American Church has a rich conciliar, synodal and collegial experience from its origins and in its contemporary history. This common path has been intensified since 1955 with the celebration of the First General Conference of the Episcopate in Rio de Janeiro. At its request, Pius XII created the *Latin American Episcopal Council* (CELAM), an organization for communion and coordination at the service of the bishops and Episcopal Conferences that were being present in each country. Latin America became the first region with a collegiate episcopal body.
151. Our Church went over a long road that supported a growing synodality. The four General Conferences of the Episcopate, following the Council, were four outstanding milestones. The II Conference of Medellin (1968) made a first reception of Vatican II, especially the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), mediated by the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) by St. Paul VI. The III Conference of Puebla (1979), in the light of the exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* by the same pope (1975), focused the Church on its evangelizing mission. The IV Conference of Santo Domingo (1992) received the proposal of new evangelization made by St. John Paul II for the V centenary of the beginning of the Christian faith in America. The 5<sup>th</sup> Conference, opened by Benedict XVI in the Marian Shrine of Aparecida in Brazil (2007), drove an ongoing continent-wide missionary movement and consolidated “the Latin American and Caribbean face of our Church” (Dap 100).
152. Some new guidelines in this journey are expressed in the original assimilation of the Council’s orientations, such as the centrality of the Word of God, the reform of the Liturgy, the ecclesiology of communion of the People of God, the understanding of the human being in the light of Christ, the ecclesial presence in the Latin American world. There are also new categories, which were later assumed by the entire Church, such as: integral liberation, new evangelization, option for the poor, popular pastoral, pastoral conversion, permanent mission, catechetical itinerary, community of communities, biblical dimension of pastoral, and others that helped to reflect new ecclesial processes, to have a shared language in the region, and to facilitate the development of a more established synodality.

Today, the dynamics generated in the Latin American periphery contribute to the missionary reform of the whole Church, giving rise to a “permanent state of reform” (EG 26).

### **b) The Good News from the Aparecida Conference**

153. The V Conference was held in the shrine of *Nossa Senhora da Imaculada Conceição Aparecida*, around the topic: *Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ so that our peoples have life in Him*. The Conference drew upon a *Synthesis Document*, gathering together the contributions of the episcopates, and the concerns of pastors. It was developed in an atmosphere of prayer together with the Brazilian Catholic people, whose songs and prayers provided the “background music” for the participants; it was not limited to the elaboration of a Document but took on a commitment to permanent mission; it was accompanied by the maternal presence of the Black Madonna and the piety of the pilgrims.
154. The bishops applied community discernment that, according to Pope Benedict XVI, is the method par excellence of the Church gathered in Assembly as communion. Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio guided the process of reflection which gave the basic consensuses (cf. DAp 1-18; 547-554). With great unanimity, Aparecida took the initiative to animate an essentially missionary Church, gathering the impulses given by the previous pontiffs and by the pastoral path followed by our local and national Churches. It constituted a synthesis of Latin American pastoral theology, put into action the conciliar ecclesiology of the People of God in mission, presented the Church as a disciple missionary communion centered on Christ at the service of all peoples.
155. Aparecida understood the evangelizing mission as the communication of Full life in Jesus Christ (DAp 386). That is a dimension of Christian life and ecclesial identity, as stated in the expression “missionary disciples”. “Discipleship and mission are two faces of the same coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ cannot help but announcing to the world that only He saves us (cf. Acts 4,12)” (DAp 146). This mission is not given to each Christian individually nor it is separate from its affiliation to the ecclesial communion. The Church is “the community of missionary disciples” (DAp 364) keeping steadily together its sons and daughters in its communitarian life and its apostolic mission through spiritual, catechistic, and formative journeys.

156. The renewing drive of the Holy Spirit involves “a permanent pastoral conversion attitude” (DAP 366) and demands a missionary renewal of all ecclesial communities and structures (cf. DAP 365). This process of conversion, identified at the beginning of this second part, lies in the fact that the Church is missionary in essence. Aparecida, picking up on Vatican II, cites the decree *Ad gentes*, that states: “the pilgrim Church is essentially missionary” (AG 2; cf. DAP 347).

### 3. A Pontificate Launching a new Missionary and Synodal Era

#### a) Pope Francis’ Call for Synodal Missionary Reform

157. The pontificate of Pope Francis opens a new phase in the reception of the Vatican Council II. This stage is in tune with the words of St. Paul VI at the opening of the second Council session, when he expressed the “desire, necessity and duty of the Church to finally give herself a more complete definition of herself” (09/29/1963). Today, in this spirit, we note that the emergence of a new space, such as the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, deepens the common path in our Church and invites us to follow the path of “ecclesial conversion” (EG 26).
158. The Church is the People of God on the way. This People “is a mystery rooted in the Trinity, but has its historical concreteness in a pilgrim and evangelizing people, which always transcends every necessary institutional expression” (EG 111). The Church is “the People of God present among all the peoples of the earth” (LG 13; EG 114-115). It is made up of all the Christian faithful who, on the basis of faith and baptism, are ecclesial subjects. United in charity, they “constitute one Body of Christ” (LG 3), in which each member and each Church “collaborates with its own gifts with the other parts and with the whole Church” (LG 13).
159. The current pontificate takes up the call of the decree on ecumenism that “all should examine their fidelity to the will of Christ in relation to the Church and duly undertake with courage the work of renewal and reform” (UR 4). The Council teaches that “Christ calls the pilgrim Church to a perennial reformation, of which the Church herself, as a human and earthly institution, is always in need” (UR 6). Francis takes up this slogan

for a Church in a permanent state of purification and reform (cf. LG 8), an *Ecclesia semper reformanda*.

160. The call to a missionary reform responds to the pilgrim and evangelizing nature of the Church, because “the Church exists to evangelize” (EN 14). The Latin American Pope formulates his ecclesial dream with expressions along these lines: “I dream of a missionary option capable of transforming everything” (EG 27). The Church is at the service of the mission, so that the whole People of God is the communitarian subject of the proclamation of the Gospel. In its bosom all the baptized men and women are called to be protagonists of the mission, because we are all missionary disciples.
161. This new stage calls for changes in the Church’s institutional procedures. She must be “capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation” (EG 27). Aparecida called for “abandoning outdated structures that no longer favor the transmission of the faith” (Dap 365). It is urgent to review lifestyles, ecclesial relations, synodal dynamics – namely, listening, dialogue, discernment and decision making – for the better realization of the mission of the People of God.

#### **b) For a Synodal Church: Towards the Synod on Synodality**

162. It is in this context of conversion and reform that Pope Francis’ call for a Synod on synodality is situated. Its theme is: *For a Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission*. It is not conceived as a one-time event, but as a multi-year process. Pope Francis is calling the whole Church to discern the ecclesial model for moving forward in the third millennium, to deepen the process of updating —*aggiornamento*— initiated by St. John XXIII and the Vatican II, and to respond in a missionary way to this unprecedented change of epoch.
163. “The Church of God is convoked in Synod” (DPS 1). The 2021-2023 process, similar to that of our Assembly, invites us to deepen the theology of the People of God by considering the action of the Spirit in the baptized, which is the anointing that constitutes the meaning of the faith of the faithful. The Pope comments on this phrase of the Council (cf. LG 12a): “The People of God is holy because of this anointing which makes it infallible *‘in credendo’*. This means that when it believes it does not err, even if it cannot find

words to explain its faith [...] God endows all the faithful with an instinct of faith —the *sensus fidei*— which helps them to discern what really comes from God” (EG 119). This has animated our listening, has been the key to the Assembly, and should guide the future Synod.

164. This way of proceeding in the Church is realized in the encounter with the Word of God, mutual listening, communal discernment, the settlement of differences, and the achievement of consensus through fraternal dialogue. It is through these mediations that the Spirit speaks to us today. Synodal conversion requires walking together at all levels of ecclesial life: local, regional and global. This form of faith intelligence corresponds to the prophetic function of the believers through the anointing of the Spirit, which enables them to reach universal consent in matters of faith and morals.
165. The participatory process generated for the Ecclesial Assembly and the next Synod puts into action a synodal ecclesiology that views catholicity as a communion of Churches. “The synodal dimension of the Church implies communion in the living tradition of the faith of the various local Churches among themselves and with the Church of Rome” (SIN 52). The first level of the exercise of synodality takes place in each particular Church, which has a particular face that arises from bonds of history, language and culture, and from interpersonal communications and symbolic expressions of its own. From local Churches associations of Churches are woven between nations, regions and continents. In America, this being and doing of the Church can be seen, in an emerging way, in the preparation, celebration and reception of this Ecclesial Assembly and of the continental phase of the Synod of the bishops.

## 4. The Good News from the First Ecclesial Assembly

### a) Takeaways from Aparecida and Debts to Aparecida

166. We value the Aparecida event, which has modeled the pilgrim, missionary and synodal People of God across our region, even though the word “synodality” was not used in 2007. The V Conference considered the whole Church as the subject of missionary communion. “In the particular Churches, all the members of the People of God, according to their specific



vocations, are called to holiness in communion and mission” (DAP 163). At the Meeting with the Steering Committee of CELAM in Bogota, 10 years after Aparecida, Pope Francis recalled that “Aparecida is a treasure whose discovery is still incomplete” (09/07/2017). Since then, he has been speaking of the “unfinished business” and has urged to continue to implement its guidelines.

167. Aparecida presented the work of CELAM as a fraternal and collegial service to the communion between Episcopal Conferences and specific Churches. From an ecclesiology of missionary communion and with a broad regional and continental vision, Aparecida imagined new forms of union between dioceses in each nation or between countries of the same region or continent. The Conference also encouraged ways of cooperation between the Churches of the Amazon basin for an inculturated evangelization. It proposed “to raise awareness in the Americas about the importance of the Amazon for all humanity. Establish [among them] a joint pastoral with differentiated priorities, to create a model of development that privileges the poor and serves the common good” (DAP 475).
168. Those processes of synodal communion were intensified and developed in a new way during the last biennium, in line with the Universal Synod and the Ecclesial Assembly. The renewal and restructuring of CELAM approved in 2021 is situated in the new synodal dynamics, with regional and global dimensions. This reform expresses a firm commitment to the synodality and collegiality of the regional episcopal body. In the same biennium, CELAM collaborated in the constitution of two new synodal figures: the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA) and the Ecclesial Assembly.
169. Our Assembly recalled Aparecida gratefully, wished to revive its spirit and strengthen the progress of the missionary disciple community. Before highlighting the current values of that Conference, which recovered and strengthened the sense of a regional Church with its own physiognomy, we name some pending issues: the difficulties of local Churches and Christian communities to make a living reception of Aparecida; the slowness to translate the pastoral conversion into a praxis that transforms criteria, attitudes, bonds and structures; the reduction of the continental mission to its programmatic execution, losing sight of its paradigmatic dimension; the decline of joy and evangelizing ardor in the face of historical uncertainties, social crises and ecclesial ups and downs; the persistence of clericalism and

the will of self-preservation in the face of sins and wounds of members of the Church; the resistance to the pontificate of Francis’.

### **b) An Assembly to Revive the Spirit of Aparecida**

170. Aparecida underscored the disciple missionary identity of the baptized, because “The Christ-event is [...] the beginning of this new subject emerging in history that we call “disciple” (DAP 243). Discipleship emerges from the encounter with the Master and life in a completely human sense with an eschatological meaning (cf. DAP 243). Following Jesus is to identify with him up to sharing his Easter cross and his surrender for our salvation. His project “does not rely so much on big programs and structures, but new men and women who embody that tradition and news as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, the main actors of a new life for a Latin America longing for acknowledging itself with the light and the force of Spirit” (DAP 12).
171. We are missionary disciples of Christ in the community of the People of God (cf. DAP 10). The Church is a prophetic, priestly and effective servant. All its members are subjects of the theological life towards holiness. They receive diverse charisms from God in order to serve the common good which, through the animation of love, is led to “a unity that is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony” (EG 117; cf. DAP 162). God endows his people with an instinct of faith given by the Spirit that enables them to be an active subject and to speak a responsible word. It is articulated with the function of the Magisterium, a charism given to the hierarchy to integrate, guard and actualize “the faith of the Church of all times, in which the voice of tradition must resound” (EG 240).
172. Synodality encourages the People of God to live going forth to all existential, social, and geographic peripheries. Aparecida enriched the understanding of the new evangelization, which is not reduced to bring about new methods and expressions, but underscores the ardor of the Spirit and the renewal of Christian life in a pastoral key. From that perspective, the joy of delivering the beauty of the Gospel is renewed. The Holy Father calls for setting out ourselves and leaving behind our safe place to “dare to reach all the peripheries that are in need of the light of the Gospel” (EG 20). It is about “setting out from our isolated minds and throwing ourselves with courage and confidence into the mission of the entire Church.” (DAP 363). With regard to urban pastoral ministry, Aparecida urged to reaching “the

inhabitants of cities and their outskirts, both believers and non-believers” (DAP 518). The outskirts are not only privileged spaces of the mission, but also hermeneutic horizons to understand reality.

173. In the listening process, we heard: “we cannot continue to wait for people to come anymore, we must go out and look for them in their own realities.” (SN p. 134). The Assembly invites us to be an open doors Church that goes where people are. This path entails difficulties, but it is preferable to have “a Church that is injured, wounded and stained by going out into the street, rather than a Church that is sick from enclosure and the comfort of clinging to its own security” (EG 49), a Church that “goes out” to the peripheries, rather than a Church that is afraid of making mistakes and subjected to fossilizing structures.
174. The Church has the mission to communicate “a Full life for all” (DAP 361). Christian life is fully human and even more than human. Therefore, to evangelize is to bring a message of hope to those who suffer so much need and pain. Since Medellin and Puebla, the concern for the life of the people includes a preferential option for the poorest (cf. DDC 9). Synodality leads us to walk together with poor people and the poor of the people, because “It is our very adherence to Jesus Christ that makes us friends of the poor and unites us to their fate” (DAP 257). We want to help forge “a society where no one is excluded” (DAP 135) since “in the defense of the rights of the excluded, the Church’s faithfulness to Jesus Christ is at stake” (DAP 257). The Assembly promotes the proclamation of a dignified life, integral liberation and the globalization of justice and solidarity (cf. DAP 399ss).
175. The Church concretizes its mission in the care of marriage and the family, which are the source of life, the school of love and the temple of faith (cf. DAP 431-475), in the evangelization of cultures and the inculturation of the Gospel (cf. DAP 476-480), in the transformation of social structures in view of the Kingdom of God (cf. DAP 210), “entailing close affection, listening, humility, solidarity, compassion, dialogue, reconciliation, commitment to social justice, and ability to share, as Jesus did” (DAP 363). “The Church faces the great challenge of promoting the dignity of all people, not from a simplistic charity that is exhausted in simple alms, but as a promoter of humanity, of work and dignified life, in the conditions that we all deserve, regardless of color or race” (SN p. 54).

## II. The Evangelizing Outpouring of the People of God in a Synodal Key

176. At the Ecclesial Assembly a strong call resounded from many attendants to live a fuller encounter with Christ, as a source of renewal of Christian life and ecclesial mission. Jesus Christ is the center of the Gospel and evangelization. He is the New Self (Col 3,11), who makes all things new (Dap 21,5), the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hb 13,8). Therefore, the Document for discernment expressed: “As we walk toward the 2000 years of our redemption in Jesus Christ, let us keep in mind that the center of our faith is that God manifested his immense love in the dead and risen Christ. The risen Christ walks with his people and is a constant source of newness. This truth is to be welcomed with wonder and openness by the Church that we all form together” (DDC 5).

### 1. The Dream of God: The Full life of the Spirit of Christ

177. Jesus continues to be present in the Church, which is his sacrament, and acts beyond its visible limits with the saving power of his Spirit. “His resurrection is not a thing of the past; it involves a life force that has penetrated the world. Where everything seems to have died, everywhere the shoots of resurrection are reappearing. It is an unstoppable force [...] This is the power of the resurrection, and every evangelizer is an instrument of this dynamism” (EG 276). In the resurrection of Jesus, God recreates creation. We are called to bear witness to the life we have received as a gift from God in Christ, and to freely share the dream of God with all. At the Assembly we renewed this faith and committed ourselves to communicate the joy of the Gospel.

#### a) Jesus: Gospel of God and the Evangelizer of the Kingdom of God

178. The humankind is the outcome of the outpouring from the heart of God, His desire to share the abundance of his life. This is how we Christians understand that biblical phrase: “make man in our image and likeness” (Gn 1,26). God begins to fulfill his project by calling some people, making their hearts surge with a desire for fulfillment, taking them out of their

security, taking them beyond their culture, time and place: “Leave your country and your people and go to the land to which I will lead you” (Gn 12,1). Abraham’s vocation and the origins of the People of God are marked by the dynamics of gift and departure.

179. Since his dream has an essential communitarian dimension, the Lord chose a people with whom he shared his plan: “if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my own possession from among all the peoples, for the entire earth is mine. You will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation for me” (Ex 19,5-6). Not everyone embraced the social project that God gave them in the Covenant to be the People of God; but there were always people who shared His plan and received the ability to see with God’s eyes, feel with His heart and dream His dreams. We are confident that the dream of God will not fail because He always accompanies the journey of His people, He sees their oppression, He knows their pain (cf. Ex 3,7) and is concerned with liberating it. God brings forth that same concern in concrete persons and sends them to take them out of the land of slavery and to bring them “to a land that is beautiful and spacious, to a land flowing with milk and honey” (Ex 3,8).
180. The prophets kept the dream of God alive in the midst of the fragility of their people and nurtured that hope: “I will take delight in Jerusalem and rejoice in my people. No more will be heard there the sound of weeping or the cries of distress. Never again will an infant be there who dies after a few days of life or an old man who fails to live his allotted days. [...] They will live in the houses they have built; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit” (Is 65,19-21). The prophets painfully perceived the dissonance between this vocation and the sad reality of betrayal, injustice and violence that reigned among their people (cf. Is 1,4-9.21-27). The same prophetic charism is given to us members of the Church of Jesus through the gift of the sense of faith received in Baptism. In the listening process, the vision of reality manifests this double facet of pain and hope.
181. We Christians believe and confess an event unheard of: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1,14). The ultimate expression of God’s commitment to the life of humanity is the Incarnation of his Son: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may attain eternal life.” (Jn 3,16). Jesus is the unsurpassable gift of the Father’s love, who tells us: *I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance* (Jn 10,10). By the paschal

dynamism of his love and his life constantly given, he sows in his disciples the charity that springs from the heart of God and communicates the gift of his joy.: “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love!” (Jn 15,9).

182. With his person, words and gestures, Jesus manifests that the dream of God, His reign, is becoming present in his life. It is the reign of the God of Life and of the Life of God, a reign that does not come from this world but that Jesus brings to our world so that it may grow in him like a seed until God is all in all. Jesus knows the evil that nestles in the human heart, he knows what is within it (cf. Jn 2,25) and the need for us to be born again in order to live his newness (cf. Jn 3:3). To free a world dominated by evil (cf. Jn 12,31), Jesus loved “to the end” (Jn 13,1), gave his life for those whom the Father entrusted to him and became the Savior of all.
183. At Pentecost, the dream of God came true for humanity. The Spirit of the Risen One gave birth to a new humanity that proclaims the faith in every language. (cf. Acts 2,1-9) and lives the news of love in mutual service (cf. Jn 13,1-20.34-35). It is the community that gathers regularly, who listens to the apostolic teaching, participates in the common life, attends the breaking of bread and the prayers, shares its goods, eats with joy and simplicity, praises God and is loved by all the people (cf. Acts 2,42-47). The Church that is born of Easter is the sign and instrument of God’s reign that extends through his grace in the course of history. The Spirit of Truth and Love teaches and reminds us of what Jesus told us, updates the faith and keeps it ever young. The Holy Spirit does not bind himself to epochs or fashions, but brings to the present the relevance of Jesus. The Church, the community of the Spirit of Christ, must be “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Mt 5,13-14). She is called to be like “A city built upon a mountain” (Mt 5,14) and like “yeast amid the flour” (Mt 13,33).

### **b) Jesus’ Life-Giving Spirit: a Source of Love and Mission**

184. The risen Jesus, with the power of God, sends his disciples: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28,19). It pushes them to a centrifugal outreach to the nations. The mobilizing force of their sending is intensified by being united to the verb “to evangelize,” which is to proclaim the Good News. The missionary mandate is: “go forth [...] and proclaim the Gospel” (Mc 16,15). The Church, listener and believer in the Word of God, is a community in “exodal journey, uninstalled, pilgrim, learner, always



disciple, grateful, watchful of the life that wants to be born, listening to what beats inside people, things, but, above all, God”. Disciples should head to “all peoples” (Mt 25,32; 24,9.14; 28,19). Individuals do not live separately but are social persons who constitute families and nations. Therefore, mission is not addressed to isolated beings but to communicated beings who constitute communities.

185. Jesus defines the end of the mission, saying: “make disciples”. We know that “disciples” was a designation of the most ancient Christian communities. (cf. Acts 6,1; 9,25; 13,52), who followed “the way of God” (Acts 18,25). The missionary mandate implies making communities of disciples among all peoples according to the praxis of the Kingdom of God. Two actions indicate the way to introduce them into discipleship: “baptizing” and “teaching” them. To be baptized is to immerse oneself in the Trinitarian life, invoking the names of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 13:13). The baptized person is the disciple who follows the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus, the only Master (Mt 23,8). This is “all” that he has commanded us and that all nations must learn. The disciples of Jesus, who have become missionaries, collaborate so that new disciples may emerge.
186. Jesus Christ is the center of faith and mission. Evangelized by the Spirit, the Church proclaims the message of the dead and risen Christ. This *kerygma* is the first thing we must hear and proclaim; for the grace of the Gospel has absolute primacy. It is the first and foremost thing to which we must always return in the witness of the Gospel. (cf. DAp 348; EG 164). On the cross Jesus revealed the love of God to the point of self-giving and taught that the meaning of life is in loving as he loves us (cf. Jn 13:1,34). The kerygma proclaims the love of the God who communicates himself in the gift of his Son and in the outpouring of his Spirit. The content of the Christian faith can be summarized in two texts of the New Testament. One is from St. John, who proclaims: “God is Love” (1 Jn 4,8); the other comes from St. Paul, who teaches: “the greatest of these is love” (1 Co 13,13).
187. Jesus promises to be present ever amid the community of his missionary disciples (Mt 28,20). His glorious return, which will conclude the time of mission (Mt 10,23; 24,14; 26,64), begins to be fulfilled when he remains among us. He will be present when the disciples are gathered together (Mt 18,20) and break the bread (Lk 24,30; Acts 2,46); because He is “Emmanuel, God is with us” (Mt 1,23). Since then, the Risen one walks with his people, forms them in discipleship and sends them on mission.

St. Luke narrates the Acts of the Spirit by which the disciples followed the way of Jesus and became apostles to the nations. As stated, “with that foundational paradigm, the mission of the Church must be continued and constantly taken up again by each new generation.

188. Other interventions at the Assembly also recalled this vocation. “Aparecida was a shaking that the Holy Spirit gave us to the whole Church on pilgrimage in Latin America. Not all of us let ourselves be shaken by the Spirit. Starting with us, pastors, priests, laity, consecrated people... The great challenge is to accept the challenges that the Gospel and Aparecida have presented to us”. “Pastoral conversion began on the morning of Pentecost. The first communities had to discern what to do in the face of the new challenges of the mission. The Holy Spirit was showing the places and attitudes that the new scenarios would challenge to evangelization”. Without the Spirit there is no following of Jesus, no ecclesial *kairos*, no evangelizing passion. We know that “the Spirit of Jesus is acting strongly in our Latin American and Caribbean Church. He is creating something new that is already emerging”.

## 2. The People of God together in Synodal Communion and a Missionary Journey

### a) The Synodal Communion: A Constituent Dimension of the Church

189. In commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Synod of the bishops, Pope Francis said that “the path of synodality is the path that God expects of the Church of the third millennium. What the Lord asks of us, in a certain sense, is already all contained in the word ‘synod’. To walk together: Lay people, pastors, Bishop of Rome”. Synodality is not a theological slogan, nor a pastoral fad. By it we become People of God on the way. It does not designate an operative procedure, nor an organizational practice, but the particular way of being, living and acting of the Church in the time of the Synod.
190. The voice “synodality” comes from “synod”. This is an ancient word revered by the Tradition of the Church. Composed of the preposition *syn* (together with) and the noun *hodos* (way), it indicates the path that the members of the People of God travel together in history. It refers to Jesus, who introduces

himself as “the way, and the truth and the Life” (Jn 14,6), and to the fact that at the onset his followers were called “the disciples of the Way” (Acts 19,9.23). The People of God is led by Christ and is the subject of the synodal, disciple, and missionary communion.

191. The synodal vocation of the People of God expresses its pilgrim condition. The Assembly is a sign that the Church in our region has begun another phase in the reception of the Council. It is an unprecedented experience that can become a new synodal body. It testifies that synodality “indicates the specific way of living and working (*modus vivendi et operandi*) of the Church of the People of God which manifests and concretely realizes its communion being in walking together, in gathering in Assembly and in the active participation of all its members in its evangelizing mission.” (SIN 6).
192. Synodality promotes the participation of all according to the vocation of each one. The shared baptismal identity moves us to enrich the link between the *sensus fidei*, communitarian discernment and pastoral authority. This is why it should not be confused with a particular structure, such as a synod or assembly, or as an instrument at the service of episcopal collegiality. The synodality of the People of God and the collegiality of the Episcopate enrich each other in an organic way. The former can help to renew the exercise of episcopal collegiality—at the local, regional and global levels—which expresses the communion proper to the bishops among themselves, with and under Peter, the Bishop of Rome, and designates the communitarian— affective and effective— dimension of the apostolic and pastoral authority of the bishops. Synodality defines the whole Church and is manifested in synodal life, structures, processes and events.
193. Episcopal collegiality is challenged to structure new processes that take advantage of the synodal dynamic and these must assume the service of pastoral authority. All the faithful, especially the bishops and their collaborators, can contribute to the synodalization of the whole Church. If we all recognize the apostolic nature, sacramental authority and collegiality of the bishops, pastors can exercise their pastoral leadership in the light of a renewed collegiality.
194. A synodal life moves to walk along with other Churches and Christian confessions toward the unity that Christ longed for: “that all be one” (Jn 17,21). A Synodal Church deepens its relationship with the communities to which it is united by Trinitarian faith and baptism. We notice with joy that

dialogue among some Churches has led in recent years to a convergence in recognizing synodality as a revealing dimension of Church as *koinonía* and thus as a constituting element of its unity in the multiplicity of its expressions. This convergence expresses the mystery of the Church and guides the steps towards a unity understood as reconciled harmony.

195. The Synodal Church is fed Trinitarian, Christ-centered, Eucharistic, and Marian spirituality. Voices of assembly members insisted on the need to draw from this spiritual source. “This is a propitious time for humility and evangelical radicality, and to live a Christ-centered spirituality as the Aparecida document had asked from us. That demands of us ongoing spiritual discernment to put into practice the will of God.” “There is no synodality without spirituality and first we must go out of ourselves and then go to meet our brothers.” That is why “living communion is the unfinished business. The Church must offer this spirituality of communion so that the world may believe”. We recall that the Eucharist is the source, the center and the summit of all synodal life. The Body of Christ, united to Christ, its Head, is the subject of liturgical action and lives from the shared table. Communion nourishes its synodal and missionary dynamism.

## **b) Synodal Participation for Listening, Dialogue and Discernment**

196. At the Assembly, it was said that “the Aparecida project will only be put into practice if we are truly a Synodal Church”. Synodality requires understanding and living the fact that we are all People of God. From the common priesthood, all the faithful, united by the radical equality granted by baptismal dignity, are called to an active participation in the Church and its mission. We can speak of the emergence of a new synodal ecclesiality in the region.
197. Synodal and missionary conversion must be manifested in the style and manner of proceeding, for example, in relation to the recognition of the role of women in the Church and in society. Aparecida pointed out that women continue to be the great excluded in our societies (cf. DAp 454) and fall prey “of a chauvinist mindset that ignores the newness of Christianity” (DAp 453). Their participation in the Assembly was notable in the presentations, prayers, coordination and groups. This shows the progress with respect to other ecclesial experiences, but it also points out a challenge to make sure that women and men grow in “reciprocity and complementarity” (DAp 457).

198. Furthermore, synodal conversion implies understanding “the dynamic circularity of the consensus of the faithful, of episcopal collegiality and of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, [for which the Church] is called to activate the listening of all the subjects who together form the People of God” (cf. SIN 94). In the search for a new way of being and proceeding as Church, the Assembly seeks the maturation of the mechanisms of participation. These practices of mutual listening, institutional dialogue and common discernment to elaborate decisions together have been emerging in the Latin American tradition, but they need to be integrated into the ordinary life of the Church.
199. Listening is to acknowledge the identity and mission of the various ecclesial subjects on the basis of horizontal relationships founded on baptismal dignity and participation in common priesthood (cf. LG 10). All the faithful are empowered and called to place at the service of others the gifts received from the Holy Spirit. This model presupposes incorporating the logic of “mutual need” (LG 32) and overcoming unequal relationships of superiority and subordination.
200. Listening is not an end in itself, it is rather carried out in a larger process when “the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is summoned to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue and advise so that pastoral decisions may be made in conformity with the will of God” (SIN 53). These communicative dynamics create an environment conducive to taking advice, learning together and building consensus to generate shared decisions. Because if what is heard, dialogued, discerned “is not manifested in structures and processes, the style of synodality easily falls from the level of intentions and desires to that of rhetoric, while the processes and events, if not animated by an adequate style, turn out to be an empty formality” (DPS 27).
201. Synodal discernment and shared decisions help to overcome clericalism. This can sometimes be an ideological phenomenon, but it is always a disordered affection for the power of pastoral decision-making, which generates abuses of persons and communities. Faced with signs of a very clerical ecclesiastical style and abuses committed by ministers of the Church, the Bishop of Rome contrasts the spirit and practice of synodality. For Pope Francis, clericalism 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 enter

the Church as laity”, given that the first sacrament we receive and which “seals our identity forever is baptism (CV 98)” The evangelical spirituality of communion requires converting power into service and arbitrating instances of institutional care and control. An assemblywoman expressed: “We need to remember that the authority of Jesus was one of service and not of power.”

### **c) Open Missionary Synodality: Walking Along with the Human Family**

202. The expression “walking together” refers in the first place to the internal life of local Churches. In the face of common pastoral goals, “the important thing is not to arrive first, but to arrive together and on time.” This phrase has another meaning: The journey of the Church together with the march of peoples. The focus is thus on relationships, dialogue and possible initiatives shared with believers of other religions, with people far from the faith, as well as with specific environments and social groups. The Church accompanies the journey of the whole human family.
203. In tandem with Pope Francis and Aparecida, the Assembly reaffirmed that a Synodal Church is called to look at reality and evangelize from all the peripheries. It must strip itself of self-referentiality and understand itself as a servant of humanity. Reality is best understood from the peripheries. The great changes in history took place when reality was seen not from the center, but from the periphery. Conversion presupposes a paradigm shift whereby the Church is constantly centered on Christ and decentered from itself in order to reach out to the “leftovers” that the world throws away.
204. Going forth to the peripheries involves recognizing the full presence of Christ in the Eucharist and also discovering the poor as the sacrament of Christ. This is what St. Paul VI said to the rural people in Colombia (23/8/1968): “We have come here to celebrate the presence of the Lord [...] in you [...] You are a sign, an image, a mystery of the presence of Christ [...] you are a sacrament, that is, a sacred image of the Lord among us.” The whole tradition of the Church recognizes in the poor the Sacrament of Christ, not certainly identical to the reality of the Eucharist, but in perfect analogical and mystical correspondence with it. For this reason, the Assembly recognizes our Lord at the Eucharistic table and the faith of the poor as a treasure to the whole Church.



205. The Church is on pilgrimage with the human family and offers the gift of the Gospel. The world needs the synodal perspective to overcome paralyzing confrontations and disagreements, and to mature processes of dialogue that help to build bridges and walk together. The social diaconship of synodality can render a service to universal fraternity and social friendship, and help to cultivate justice, peace and care for the common home in a globalized and fragmented society. It is a “prophetic *diakonia* in the construction of a fraternal, supportive and inclusive social *ethos*” (SIN 103).
206. Missionary synodality is nourished by a spirituality in loving closeness to the people and fidelity to the mission received. As an assembly member expressed: “the greatest drive of a missionary disciple is being close to Jesus in his people and it is founded on the fact that *I am a mission* on this earth and for this I am in the world” (cf. EG 273). That is to say, mission is not an addition to my life or a request, but it is a gratuity, a precious gift in baptism. But what I am, I must activate it, nourish it, exercise it.

### 3. A Samaritan Church at the Service of Life in Fraternity

#### a) The Good Samaritan: A Paradigm of a New Fraternity

207. Christianity inaugurates a new fraternity by the free adherence of faith to the will of the Father in heaven. “Behold (the disciples) my mother and my brethren. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.” (Mc 3,35). Jesus uses a declaratory formula that was customary for founding a family: “This is my mother and these are my brothers”. His disciples form a fraternity according to the gift of the Kingdom of God: “You are all brothers and sisters.” (Mt 23,8). This is why in early Christianity the disciples call each other “brothers.” (1 Tes 1,4; Rm 16,14; Acts 12,17).
208. The Church is a compassionate brother and sisterhood in a wounded world. The first letter of Peter exhorts: “stand firm in the faith, knowing that your brethren who are scattered throughout the world endure the same sufferings as you” (1 Pe 5:9). The new brotherhood should have compassion for those who endure the same sufferings: “love the brethren” (1 Pe 2:17). A fraternal Church lives mutual love (cf. Gal 5:13-15). Brotherhood is a criterion for

discerning Christian communities. To desire the good of another, “the brother for whom Christ died” (1 Cor 8:11), orients our conduct.” (1 Pe 5,9).

209. Divine fatherhood is the deep source of universal human fraternity, by which we recognize that others are brothers and sisters. “Without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for the call to fraternity” (FT 272). Jesus is the only-begotten and beloved Son of the Father who, by his incarnation, became the Firstborn of many brothers. He is not ashamed to be our brother (Heb. 2:11) and continues to be present to the least of these (Mt. 25:31-46). His Passover shows that life is stronger than death and that fraternity conquers fratricide.
210. The Spirit of Christ binds us to form “a *mystical*, contemplative fraternity that knows how to look at the sacred greatness of our neighbor, knows how to discover God in every human being, knows how to tolerate the discomforts of living together while clinging to the love of God, knows how to open its heart to divine love in order to seek the happiness of others as its good Father seeks it” (EG 92). The Assembly was a fraternal experience in which men and women felt that they were brothers and sisters, a family experience of the Church, a fraternal table, “an open place where everyone feels at home and can participate”.
211. The figure of the good Samaritan (cf. Lk 10:25-37) sheds light on our situation. In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* Pope Francis shows how Jesus calls us to move from remoteness to closeness, from strangeness to neighborliness (cf. FT 84-86). In this parable Jesus inverted the question of the doctor of the law: “Who is my neighbor?” (Lk 10:29) and produced a radical decentering: “Who has made himself neighbor to the fallen?” (Lk 10:36); placing at the center the human being lying by the side of the road.
212. Someone becomes a neighbor when he approaches and focuses on another who needs help: “Which of the three behaved as a neighbor?” (Lk 10:36). It was not the lawyer who needed a neighbor to love; it was the needy who needed love. Jesus revolutionizes love with two novelties: its limitless universality and its practical form that leads to compassion and help. To become a neighbor is to be moved tenderly in the heart and to help with concrete deeds. Mercy has compassion in the face of misery, bends down to the victim, lifts up the fallen, supports the fragile, integrates the excluded. In the face of so much pain that afflicts the world, the only way out is to love like the Samaritan.

213. Christian faith leads us to see and love others as brothers and sisters. The other is the neighbor, whether relative, friend or neighbor, whether companion, co-religionary or compatriot. But the good Samaritan reformulates proximity by a praxis of tenderness and solidarity towards another human being in need. For those who approach with love, every other is a brother, every other is a sister, with whom a fraternal bond can be established. Christianity fosters the plural unity of the human family.

#### **b) Social Deaconship of Fraternity in Latin America and the Caribbean**

214. We are a Samaritan Church in which the primacy of love is realized by mercy that accompanies, discerns and integrates human poverty. St. John Paul II taught about God rich in mercy, Benedict XVI recalled that God is Charity, Francis says that the name of God is Mercy. His Love overflows, goes beyond and touches the wounds of those who suffer evil, violence and death in our peoples.
215. Mercy is a baseline and a hermeneutical criterion of this pontificate. The Bishop of Rome transmits a spirituality, a pastoral approach and a theology centered on the revolution of God's tenderness. He invites us to be the Church of compassion, tenderness and closeness. Mary, "our life, our sweetness and our hope," symbolizes the maternal face of God. Every time we look at Mary, we believe once again in the revolutionary nature of tenderness and affection" (EG 288).
216. A servant Church goes out to all the peripheries, especially to those marked by the most painful poverty. The Assembly confirms its option for the last and strengthens the protagonism of the discarded. The Assembly said: "We need to work so that we become a Church that is stripped, servant and aware of its missionary nature", a Church called to listen to "the cry of the poor, who have many faces, and the cry of the earth, both of which are ever more intense and closely linked". A compassionate Church that discovers the presence of Jesus in his least brothers and sisters (cf. Mt 25:31-46) starting from shared vulnerability. A Church that expands the Kingdom of God in history by working together with other people and institutions so that the poor may be the subjects of their development and destiny. (cf. DAp 384; 394).
217. The Samaritan fraternity is also manifested in the hospitable welcome of the stranger: "Among the people most affected by the serious ecological,

climatic and social crisis in the countries of our subcontinent are the migrants. Many expose themselves to high risks for their lives, safety and health by migrating to another country because they do not see a viable future for themselves and their families in their place of origin” (SN p. 18). Jesus goes on to tell us: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Mt 25:35). The Rule of St. Benedict consecrated the formula of hospitality: “all guests should be welcomed as Christ” (Chap. 53). Faith leads us to look upon and welcome others as Christ. For this reason, migrations are a challenge to recognize otherness and develop attitudes of hospitality: to welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Hospitality is a major challenge in America, a continent with many migrants from south to north. We are called to collaborate in the inclusion of all and to favor an exchange between brothers and sisters of different cultures.

## 4. The Outpouring of the Spirit in Mary and the Church

### a) The Call for a Creative “Outpouring” in the Spirit

218. In the General Introduction we spoke of “outpouring” and we said that we do so with the positive sense given to it by Pope Francis when he used the word at the Synod for the Amazon region. He pointed out that the challenges overcome us and the gift of God generates a creative outpouring to announce the Gospel and inculturate the Church according to God’s way, which respects persons and cultures (cf. QA 104-105). The term points to the magnitude of the challenges that overwhelm us; the abundance of love that compassionates and heals wounds; the synodal overflowing that seeks horizons that surpass them.
219. The Holy Spirit encourages missionary outpouring to proclaim the Gospel in a permanent outreach. Already Aparecida asked “to show the capacity of the Church to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the vocation received and communicate everywhere, by outpouring of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ” (DAp 14). The mission follows the logic of gift and excess, because it arises from a fullness of joy and enthusiasm, of gratuitousness and gratitude.
220. For the current Bishop of Rome, this word animates and illuminates the synodal processes. “In the dynamics of a synod, differences are expressed

and polished until they reach a harmony that does not need to cancel the flats in the score. This is what happens in music: with the seven musical notes with their highs and lows, a major symphony is created, capable of articulating the particularities of each one. Therein lies its beauty: the resulting harmony can be complex, rich and unexpected. In the Church, it is the Holy Spirit who brings about that harmony” (SJ 85). The Spirit generates an unforeseen overcoming of seemingly irresolvable positions and oppositions. His discreet and harmonious action surpasses our limited horizons and opens us to the wisdom of the cross, to the gift of life in abundance, to the creativity of pastoral love, to surpassing syntheses.

221. Pope Francis calls us to discover, by the superabundant light of faith, the presence of God in urban cultures, in the lives of citizens and of so many mega-urban “leftovers” (cf. EG 71-75). This requires contemplating the visible face and listening to the audible murmur of each city, which is a mirror image and an echo of the voice of its inhabitants, passers-by and visitors: “a Church on the way out in the cities” (SN p. 84). The heavenly Jerusalem, fullness of the Kingdom of God, illuminates the knowledge, love and evangelization of small and large cities. It comes from above and we go to meet it. The eschatological dimension of the Kingdom, the Church and the mission animates hope on the path of missionary an “synodal conversion, including the so”ial commitment of the People of missionary disciples.

## **b) Missionary visitation of Our Lady of Guadalupe**

222. The Church has as her mother and model Mary, the Mother of God, the first missionary disciple of Jesus, her Son and Savior. At the Annunciation she welcomed the Word of God in faith and made it flesh. There she teaches us to listen, to question ourselves, to discern God’s will and to obey it with the power of the Spirit. In this way she forms us in the attitudes that model a welcoming, prayerful, disciple Church. In the Visitation Mary goes in haste to visit and help her cousin Elizabeth (cf. Lk 1:39-56). Our Lady of the Visitation is an example of a Church going out and, on her way, visiting and staying, communicating Jesus by her presence, proclamation and service, lovingly helping those in need and communicating the joy of Christ. She celebrates the wonders of the merciful God and remembers salvation in the history of her people, sings in the Magnificat the God who lifts up the lowly, and contemplates in her heart the mysteries of faith in the midst of everyday life.

223. In the event, the image, the name and the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe the Mother of God visited our people and gave us Jesus, the blessed fruit of her womb. In 2031 it will be five centuries since Mary's missionary visit to these lands. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the first missionary disciple of the continent. In 1984, at the beginning of the novena of years to prepare the V Centenary of the beginning of the first evangelization in America, St. John Paul II affirmed that "Latin America has become the land of a new Visitation". Aparecida declared that "Mary is the great missionary, who continues the mission of her Son and forms missionaries" (DAP 269).
224. From the beginning of our American ecclesial history, the Mother of God sustains the hope of the people in the continent and is the great spiritual bond in all America. "In the Guadalupan event, (she) presided, together with the humble Juan Diego, the Pentecost that opened us to the gifts of the Spirit. Since then, countless communities have found in her the closest inspiration to learn how to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus" (DAP 269).
225. Christian faith and Catholic spirituality are reflected in the faces of the suffering and glorious Christs of Latin American Baroque culture – the black Christ of Esquipulas in Guatemala or the Lord of Miracles in Lima – which symbolize the colors of our America. The brown face of the Virgin of Guadalupe since 1531, the black face of Our Lady of Aparecida since 1617, and so many other images show the maternal love of God for the poorest of the poor.
226. The Visitation illumines evangelization as a way out, a journey and an encounter. It concretizes and actualizes the divine presence because in Christ "God has visited and redeemed his people" (Lk 1:68). This visit of God in Jesus continues through the missionary presence of the Church in our towns and cities. Our Lady is the star of an ever-renewed evangelization. She maternally reflects "the tender mercy of our God" (Lk 1:78). We know that "there is a Marian style in the evangelizing activity of the Church. This dynamic of justice and tenderness, of contemplating and walking towards others, is what makes her an ecclesial model for evangelization" (EG 288). That is why we say to Our Lady: *Hail, Queen and Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope... turn thine eyes of mercy towards us...*





# Part III

---





# CREATIVE OUTPOURING IN NEW PATHS TO GO FORWARD

---

227. The Ecclesial Assembly invites the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean to a creative outpouring in the Spirit to travel new paths in its evangelizing mission. The first section of this third part takes up again the fundamental concepts expressed previously as a framework of illumination and discernment for the presentation of the Pastoral propositions. The second section offers pastoral orientations and lines of action discerned at the Assembly. Certainly, they are not all the ones that could be pointed out for concrete pastoral life. However, they invite us to walk in a synodal way and to go forth to the peripheries, from our reality and in the light of the Spirit.

## I. An Evangelized and Evangelizing Church under a Missionary Perspective

228. The Latin American pastoral journey has outlined the face of a Church evangelized and evangelizing in a missionary perspective. Already the Conference of Medellin proposed to overcome a “pastoral of conservation” and to place greater emphasis on evangelization (Meditation 6.1). In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* St. Paul VI affirmed that the Church “exists to evangelize” (EN 14) and that, being evangelizing, she begins by evangelizing herself. She “always needs to be evangelized if she is to retain her freshness, drive and strength to proclaim the Gospel” (EN 15).



### **a) Evangelizing to Manifest the Kingdom of God in the World**

229. Evangelization aims at “renewing humanity” (EN 18; 23; 75) starting from the absolute newness of Jesus Christ who makes present the Kingdom of God in word and deed (cf. EN 7-9). The Puebla Document reinforced the links between evangelization, culture and liberation, expressing the great accents of our post-conciliar theology (cf. DP 394-395; 479-485). Santo Domingo, in 1992, called for a new evangelization that promotes an integral promotion and inculturation of the Gospel. (cf. SD 23-30; 287-303). Aparecida invited all to a continent-wide continuous missionary evangelization, that tends to “seek to place the Church permanently in a state of mission” (DAp 551).
230. In creative continuity, Pope Francis affirms that the pilgrim People of God is called to evangelize and be evangelized in order to “manifest the Kingdom of God in the world” (EG 176). The Kingdom “is liberation from all that oppresses the human being” (EN 9) and renews all things, for it leads to “a radical conversion, a profound change of heart and way of seeing” (EN 10).
231. The Bishop of Rome teaches that: “the missionary journey is a paradigm of the whole Church” (EG 15); and adds: “I hope that all communities will endeavor to put in place the necessary means to advance along the path of pastoral and missionary conversion, which cannot leave things as they are” (EG 25). The Pope distinguishes between the paradigmatic aspect and the programmatic aspect of mission. The first sense considers mission as the purpose of the pilgrim Church and the key to reforming pastoral life. Mission is the dynamizing paradigm. The second meaning expresses the pastoral programs that concretize the mission in the daily life of the particular Churches: the symbolic gestures, the punctual events, the specific plans, all the evangelizing acts.
232. Recalling the invitation of Aparecida, the Ecclesial Assembly encourages conversion to a discipleship missionary life in synodal communion, mobilizing the Church to a renewed protagonism of all the baptized, especially young people and women (cf. DAp 458). At the same time, it calls for the renewal of every ecclesial structure “so that it may become a suitable channel for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for its self-preservation” (EG 27; cf. DAp 172).

## b) An Integral and Integrating Evangelization

233. To journey towards a Church serving the Kingdom of God implies carrying out an integral evangelization, which embraces “the whole person and the whole of humanity” (PP 14), as well as the work of creation. Since it consists in manifesting the Kingdom of God in the world it includes human promotion and integral development (cf. EG 178). Consequently, the Church is called to be present in all spheres of life, carrying out pastoral action beyond ecclesial boundaries, in the socio-economic, political, cultural and environmental spheres.
234. *Querida Amazonia*, projects the horizon of an integral evangelization, with guidelines for action in four spheres based on the four dreams that also challenge the continent and the entire Church (cf. Qam 7). A *social dream*: a Latin America and a Caribbean fighting for the rights of the poorest. A *cultural dream*: a people that loves its roots and preserves its identities. An *environmental dream*: a continent that preserves its natural beauty, connected to a human and social ecology. An *ecclesial dream*: a Church with a Latin American and Caribbean face, providing “vigorous, broad and active involvement of the laity” (Qam 94).
235. Salvation implies “the passage from less human situations to more human situations” (Med, *Introduction*, 6). Therefore, the ecclesial dream is intrinsically linked to the social, cultural and environmental dreams. In reality, there will only be ecclesial communities with a Latin American and Caribbean face, centered on mission, if they are incarnated in the cultures of the continent, in harmony with nature that shelters them and in the heart of a society without excluded ones.

## II. Pastoral Propositions and Lines of Action

236. In the perspective of the Vatican Council II, an integral and integrating evangelizing action comprises, at least, the following six dimensions: The kerygmatic and missionary dimension; the prophetic and formative dimension; the spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental dimension; the synodal participative dimension; the socio-transformative dimension; and the ecological dimension. We take these dimensions as a basic outline to



classify the pastoral challenges elaborated in the discernment groups by the Ecclesial Assembly and the syntheses that were made of the proposals.

237. The numerical citations indicated in parentheses beginning with the letter D correspond to the order of the 231 Challenges as they appear in the Assembly register. Among them are the 41 Proposals that systematized the challenges and that the groups of discernment worked on elaborating Pastoral Orientations —herein called Lines of action— in view of their implementation. Many lines are transcribed verbatim, others are reworked to refine their wording, others make explicit some implicit orientations, in line with the previous ones. The way we approached the Assembly’s lines of action leads to some repetitions, although we have tried to synthesize them as much as possible.
238. Pastoral Propositions and Lines of Action are the fruit of the process carried out by the Assembly in its various stages. Therefore, in order to characterize them, we also take into account the Document for the Journey, intended to prepare the process, the Narrative Synthesis, which gathers the contributions of the listening stage, and the Document for Community Discernment, a working instrument for the Assembly, and contributions from the Acts of the Assembly. We assume these Proposals and Lines of action with the different formulations expressed along the way. In their formulation the subjects are omitted and the sentence begins with verbs that indicate the priority actions.

## 1. The Kerygmatic and Missionary Dimension

239. When we speak of the kerygmatic and missionary dimension, we refer to the very heart of every evangelizing action which, from the centrality of the Word of God, must become an announcement, proposal and accompaniment of faith in the Lord Jesus. In its various manifestations, it must be a passionate proclamation of the person of Christ to lead people to an encounter with Him and to his following, which triggers missionary discipleship, fraternal charity, ecclesial life from the new commandment of love. (cf. Qam 64-65).
240. “We have no other treasure than this. We have no other joy and no other priority than to be instruments of the Spirit of God, in Church, so that Jesus Christ may be found, followed, loved, adored, announced and

communicated to all, in spite of all difficulties and resistances. This is the best service —your service! — that the Church has to offer to people and nations.” (DAP 14).

241. The kerygmatic and missionary dimension, like all others, is transversal and develops particularly in the itinerary of the three stages of evangelization: “missionary action or first proclamation, catechetical-initiatic action and pastoral action, with differentiated goals and means” (DPC 31-37). The dialogue and discernment exercises carried out at the Assembly point out these Proposals.

### **a) The Church Being a Sign and Instrument of the Encounter with Jesus Christ**

242. It is necessary to commit ourselves so that the actions of the ecclesial communities may be a true space of proclamation and meeting with Christ risen and present in their own contexts (cf. D 13, 65,176; SN p. 126-132; DDC 11-14). We recognize that from this encounter springs conversion, the will to be a missionary disciple, growth in faith, the sense of belonging to the ecclesial community and participation in its synodal journey. From there is also born the merciful heart that arouses compassion for the poor and for those who are on the peripheries of human suffering. It renews the missionary impetus that makes us go out to others to bring them, with Jesus, to the merciful Father, communicating to them the joy of our own encounter with Him.
243. To evangelize is also to favor a renewed approach to Christ, from the centrality of the Word of God, for all of us who have already decided to follow the Lord. “We need even more this being alone with the Lord to rediscover the heart of the mission in Latin America in its present circumstances... If we do not go out with Him in the mission, we will soon lose our way”.<sup>14</sup>
244. The encounter with Christ is the fundamental criterion of discernment and planning of all evangelizing activity. We are called to be, personally and as a community, the best instruments so that many may also discover him, know him, love him and follow him in the present circumstances (cf. DAP 14). We must make alive the words of the apostle: “I became weak with the weak, that I might win the weak. I became all things to all men that I might by all means save some. And I do all things for the sake of the

---

14 Francis, *Discourse before CELAM's Directors' Committee*, September 7, 2017.

gospel, that I may share their good things with them” (1 Cor 9:22-23). We need to reappropriate the verbs that the Master conjugates in his mission: “as he walks, he finds; when he finds, he draws near; when he draws near, he speaks; when he speaks, he touches with his power; when he touches, he heals and saves. To bring to the Father as many people as he meets is the goal of his permanent going out”.<sup>15</sup>

245. *Lines of action in the first announcement:*

- To promote the encounter with Christ through the establishment and development of a creative missionary action that encourages new forms of approach and dialogue with people who are far from the faith, with those who are agnostic or atheist, and with those who say they believe but are not interested in being part of a community of faith.
- To proclaim the Gospel with a renewed methodology so that it reaches everyone, showing Jesus, who welcomes everyone without distinction, together with his way of relating to people and to creation.
- To propose faith in Jesus Christ, recognizing, in dialogue, the seeds of the Word already present in many cultures and making the first proclamation the gateway to catechesis.

246. *Lines of action in Christian initiation:*

- Promoting the renewal of catechesis as a meeting with the living Christ and at the service of initiation into the Christian life, forming especially in the community and social commitment to the faith.
- Moving from a catechesis understood only as preparation for receiving the sacraments, to the development of Christian initiation itineraries that form missionary disciples in an integral way, identified with the thoughts, feelings, attitudes, decisions and projects of Jesus, in his service to the Kingdom of God.
- Providing formation for catechists in the key of initiation to Christian life and give greater importance to adult catechesis.
- Promote the ministry of lay catechists, both men and women, in conformity with the *motu proprio Antiquum ministerium*.

---

15 Francis, *Discourse before CELAM's Directors' Committee*, September 7, 2017.

247. *Lines of Action in Ongoing Formation of Faith:*

- To exert influence for an ever more mature living of the faith, which overcomes attitudes of indifference to the challenges of the present context, through an integral, comprehensive and accessible formation, seeking that each person experience a conversion that leads to a Full life, committed to the needs of their environment and congruent with their Christian identity.
- Promote the meeting with Christ from inside the realities of our territories and contexts, in the light of the Word of God, seeking a community experience in different spheres: families, CEB, small communities, parishes, schools, movements, particular Churches.
- To promote processes of biblical animation of pastoral ministry and a renewed pedagogy in discernment for catechists and ordained ministers, in order to know how to accompany formation in the faith.

**b) A Church that Cultivates the Spirituality of Mission**

248. In the face of the great challenges posed to us by the contemporary world, the need has been expressed for a constant effort to promote and cultivate the spiritual life of the Disciples (cf. D 44). For it to be rooted in the encounter with Christ, it must be nourished in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, and in prayerful meditation on the Word; it must be enriched by active participation in the life and service of the faithful People of God and by a believing reflection on events, contexts and the evangelizing action itself.
249. We need a spirituality that “increases the joy of the Gospel in our own lives and encourages us to communicate it to everyone through personal witness” (cf. D 22). May it “encourage us to recognize our own fragility and to lose the fear of making mistakes, overcoming self-referentiality and the ideologies that place the confidence of success in our own strengths and projects” (D 109). That “unites the transcendent and the immanent, faith and social reality in evangelization” (D 224). An incarnated spirituality that leads us to the periphery, to the encounter with the victims of social injustice, and sustains us in our work for the promotion of integral and sustainable human development

250. *Lines of Action:*

- To deepen spiritual formation as an ongoing process that begins at Christian initiation.
- To foster a spirituality centered on a personal and communitarian relationship with Jesus Christ that opens us to the mystical and incarnational experience.
- -To promote a life of prayer and contemplation of the Gospel in our groups and in the missionary activity of the Church, in order to be faithful to the missionary Christ of the Father, who helps us to live and transmit the joy of the mission.
- -To re-emphasize the Biblical Pastoral Animation for community and personal daily life.
- To work for the greater recognition of popular piety as a space of encounter with Jesus Christ, of a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the simple, through which the Christian people evangelizes itself and fulfills the missionary vocation of the Church.
- To accompany and promote spirituality in all the instances of the life of the People of God which, above all, must be implored as a gift of the Risen One.
- To pay particular attention to Marian devotion, widely spread in our continent, which is centered especially in the shrines dedicated to Our Lady.
- To promote a renewed Marian pastoral pedagogy so that, in going forth, the Church may be like Mary in the Visitation, carrying Jesus, and as in the Magnificat, proclaiming the wonders of God.

**c) A Church Listening to the Cry of the Poor, the Excluded and the Rejected**

251. As a Church going forth, we want to listen more to the cry of the poor, the excluded, the discarded, the suffering People of God and the earth that is suffering too. In this way, the Assembly is faithful to the biblical roots of all salvific action, which is the manifestation of divine mercy to the cry of his people (cf. Ex 3:7-8) and to the “cry” of his Son (Mk 14:37; Acts 2:24). It also wishes to follow the recent Magisterium of the Church, for which the cry comes above all from the poor (cf. EG 187), from entire peoples (EG

190), from the earth (LS 49, 53), and “a cry that rises up to heaven” (QAm 9) and “cries out for justice” (EG 188). The Assembly recovers the ecclesial Tradition of the continent, which speaks of a deaf cry that springs from millions of people (cf. Medellín 14.2), which comes from the cry of a people that suffers and demands justice, freedom and respect for the fundamental rights of all (cf. DP 87, 89). A cry that comes above all from the poorest women who are subjected to many forms of exclusion and violence at every stage of their lives (DAp 454) and which is so often silenced (SN p. 99).

252. Among the voices heard, the call to strengthen the social dimension of the Gospel in Christian life and in the entire evangelizing mission resounds strongly. The fruits become concrete in the fifth socio-transforming dimension, but this must be cultivated from the very kerygmatic proclamation. The seed is sown in the processes of initiation, when the heart of the Christian is formed as a missionary disciple, and the Church as a school of charity, a hospital of mercy, and a leaven of transformation in its very self and in society.

253. For these actions to become a reality, it is necessary for the Church to become close, open, sensitive and committed to the problems experienced by the people. This will allow it to listen to, accompany and assume as central the voice of the most vulnerable and the discarded, in the manner of Jesus, recovering the sense of witness and prophecy in the face of the social situations that emerge. To this end, it cannot remain silent in the face of injustice, but at the same time it must be a bridge of reconciliation.

254. *Lines of Action:*

- To generate new and adequate pedagogies and methodologies of the first proclamation, of the catechesis of initiation and of the permanent formation of the faith, that achieve, in accordance with the Gospel, the cultivation and development of a more social and solidary vision of the human being.
- To strengthen the social dimension of evangelization, revitalizing processes that have an impact on the transformation of social realities.
- To implement an evangelization capable of promoting a Christian culture in the different cultural spaces, with particular attention to our shared home.



- To develop a missionary action in favor of the victims of different types of violence and prejudice through effective methods of social inclusion, fraternity and solidarity.
- To create spaces that generate processes of defense of human dignity and respond to situations of injustice in different cultures, particularly with Indigenous peoples.

#### **d) An Evangelization Inculturated and in Interculturality**

255. The Latin American and Caribbean continent is outstandingly pluricultural. Acknowledging this feature has various implications in pastoral life, in that it should keep in mind the integration of the countries in the region. The awareness of cultural diversity was already present in Medellín (cf. Med, Introduction 1: 1,2; 4, 3; 5,11) and Puebla (cf. DP 19, 52, 53, 201). Beginning with Santo Domingo, this awareness was enriched with a reflection upon inculturation (cf. SD 13, 24, 30, 49), which was picked up in Aparecida (cf. DAp 94, 479). In the narrative Synthesis and the Document for community discernment we note the need to implement it (SN p. 51, 66, 165; DDC 93).
256. Concerning the promotion of interculturality and the interreligious, the Assembly expresses that inculturation is a two-way process. It must be thought of in a perspective of reciprocity, in which the different cultures are not only enriched by the Christological mystery, but also bring to it their own riches. For this reason, all forms of colonialism must be rejected.
257. As a voice of the Spirit addressed to our Churches, the call resounds to the affective and effective recognition of the multiculturalism that characterizes us as a continent. To assume this diversity of the identity of our countries and regions is a fundamental element of our conversion. Evangelization cannot be the construction of a unique cultural form. The ecclesial community puts the Gospel in dialogue with cultures so that there may be mutual enrichment.
258. This conviction leads us to the commitment, so insistently requested, to evangelize by approaching different cultures with respect. It is a matter of entering into dialogue with those who live in these social contexts and discerning the signs of the times, the seeds of the Word and the fruits of the Gospel already sown. We wish to propose in an appropriate and adapted way the meeting with Christ and his following as an authentic life project.

This process should favor the diversity of theological, liturgical and spiritual expressions, as a true many sided ecclesial reality.

259. *Lines of Action:*

- To welcome affectively and effectively, with respect and humility, the cultural, social, religious, intergenerational, youth and human peripheries diversities.
- To recognize the seeds of the Word in different cultures in order to approach them in a spirit of inculturation and interculturality.
- To favor the theological, liturgical, catechetical and spiritual expression of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

**e) Missionary Leading Role of Youth in the Church and the World**

260. “May you (young people) be able to go against the current and know how to share Jesus, communicate the faith that he gave you. May you feel in your hearts the same irresistible impulse that moved St. Paul when he said: ‘Woe to me if I do not proclaim the Gospel’ [...] Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ to any environment, even to the existential peripheries, even to those who seem the most distant, the most indifferent” (CV 176-177). The Assembly’s discernment process has clearly underscored this desire of the pope.
261. The Assembly asked, urgently, to acknowledge that young people are main actors in the communion, participation and mission of the Church. It is a challenge to let them show us the ways of novelty and not to be afraid to embrace the cultures they embody, which manifest the way history is transformed. This means encouraging them to social and political leadership.
262. This priority is also based on the signs of hope given by the youth. A considerable number of them are interested and willing to participate in volunteer work with a social, environmental, ecumenical and interreligious focus. For many, these experiences have been inspiring and have helped them to find a “sense of life” and “their place in the Church.”
263. The Ecclesial Assembly is committed to a solid formation of the youth in the present, so that they can be witnesses of faith today and tomorrow. To this end, it is recommended to work on specific skills such as assertive

communication, listening and discernment. By achieving maturity in the faith, they will have a greater awareness of the protagonism and co-responsibility of young laity in the life of the Church. An important factor is vocational and professional accompaniment, which should be given within the framework of a life project with special attention to the affective, social and political dimension.

264. *Lines of Action:*

- To promote spaces of welcome, listening, formation and leadership so that the youth can meet Christ, be accompanied in their journey of faith as missionary disciples and learn to be protagonists of the life and mission of the Church in the world.
- To create spheres that support their innovative ideas, capable of generating new paths in evangelization, integrating their new styles and languages.
- To mobilize youth to be missionaries throughout the continent and beyond its borders.
- To support positive experiences and seek to reorient youth ministries that do not respond to the identities and needs of the youth, in coherence with the following of the Lord.
- To appropriate in depth the orientations of the exhortation *Christus vivit* and the documents of the Synod on youth.
- To recognize and promote youth participation and leadership in the use of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to undertake evangelizing actions.

**f) From Pastoral in the City to an Urban Pastoral Ministry**

265. We confirm the challenge of moving from pastoral care in the city to a more defined urban pastoral care. It is a matter of promoting an action incarnated in the reality of the cities, so widespread throughout the continent, and characterized by their own challenges, lifestyles, cultures, languages, symbols and imaginaries, beyond a simple pastoral care in the setting of a city.

266. The voices heard mention the presence and service of many missionary disciples in the cities, seeking a change towards better living conditions and a better evangelizing service. They also point to the need for greater closeness of the ecclesial community to the victims of the throwaway culture and the injustices concentrated in the cities. There is an urgent need to develop an urban pastoral ministry capable of reaching the poor and excluded, as well as the centers of decision making, both in administrative structures and in community organizations.

267. In the same way, the main affirmation of Aparecida about urban pastoral ministry continues to resonate in us: “God lives in the city in the midst of its joys, yearnings and hopes, and likewise in its pains and suffering. The shadows that mark everyday life, such as violence, poverty, individualism and exclusion cannot prevent us from seeking and contemplating the God of life also in urban environments” (Dap 514).

268. *Lines of Action:*

- To recognize that the city is the laboratory of complex and plural, contemporary culture, with a new language and a new symbology, and that it also extends to the rural world.
- To develop formation processes, based on the Word of God, that prepare the laity to recognize the living conditions of the city and to assume their tasks as citizens, giving witness to the Gospel in the different urban contexts.
- To reorient the different pastoral ministries and link them to the neighborhoods —recognizing the Grassroots Ecclesial Communities— accompanying and strengthening popular Catholic devotion.
- To go to parishes, to the streets, to homes, to educational centers, to different urban spaces, to neighborhood organizations, to make real the call to be a Church going forth and to enter into the heart of the challenges as a testimonial leaven.
- To meet and care for children, adolescents, the elderly and vulnerable people who live and work on the streets, to accompany them in the defense of their dignity and rights.
- To promote dialogue between faith and culture in new artistic, communicative, educational, professional and scientific spaces.

- To review the formation processes of Seminaries and Religious Houses so that future ordained ministers have a better knowledge of the conditions of the city and can better serve and accompany the living faith.

### **g) A Church Going Forth to the New Aeropagites**

269. The digital continent, with its information and communication technologies, appears in many ways in the listening process. On the one hand, its importance in times of the pandemic is recalled. On the other hand, we note the gap in the field of education, which already has many platforms for this purpose, but which are not accessible to all. It is noted that globalization is also taking place in this sphere, which is marked by many ideological and commercial disputes. The world of communication offers important resources for the various forms of evangelization, from mass media—which we must continue to use—to the new digital technologies.
270. There is a new digital space, sustained by the expansion of the Internet, social media and the mass use of smartphones. In these spheres, which are constantly transforming, the call to go out of ourselves, to leave the securities of other times to address the new anthropological, social and cultural challenges that are taking place there, becomes concrete.
271. The Assembly has repeatedly echoed the call to take advantage of communication technologies in the transmission of the faith, especially with the youth as protagonists. From a good use of technologies, we are challenged to evangelize the digital world, which constitutes a new social and cultural space, where many people live and build their lives. We are facing a process that generates great transformations in mentality, behavior, criteria of analysis and discernment. Hence the opportunity to recognize and promote social media and communicative spaces for the encounter with Jesus Christ and the contemplation of reality with eyes of faith. The pandemic was a social scenario that led us to enter into this cyber world as a tool to react to the situation.
272. *Lines of action:*
- To plan an integral and critical formation on the information of the media and the incursion into new technologies, involving especially youth and adolescents, with an evangelizing and transforming view of reality.

- To promote an ethical and professional use of communication technologies to achieve a quality presence of the Church through these media.
- To ensure guarantees of equity in the dignified access to computer resources and connectivity for the entire population.
- To train digital evangelizers to transmit the faith and Christian humanism.
- To face, with charity and clarity, the challenge of the presence of new groups in social media and in the mass media, which sow an attitude of distrust and suspicion towards the Church, especially about the pontificate of Pope Francis.
- To develop, in an inculturated and creative way, a missionary action in the virtual world, with a dialogical, prophetic and proactive attitude.
- To integrate in the processes of catechesis and ongoing faith formation the use of communication technologies, the internet and social media.

## 2. A Prophetic Formative Dimension

273. The prophetic and formative dimension is one of the bases for the transmission of the faith, following the ecclesial Tradition and the orientations of the Magisterium. Vatican Council II mentions the urgency of the constant formation of adults and of a true education of youth in today's circumstances. The Medellin Document provides elements for an integral and liberating education (cf. Med 4). In Puebla we sought to form a mature laity, strengthening all the instruments of formation (DP 155). In Santo Domingo there was talk of an integral formation for all pastoral agents (cf. SD 1, 3, 4). The Aparecida Document makes "a clear and firm option for the formation of our communities, for the sake of all the baptized, regardless of the role they play in the Church." (DAp 276). The contributions gathered from the Ecclesial Assembly regarding the prophetic and formative dimension for the evangelizing action for the future, can be grouped in four basic Pastoral propositions.



## An Integral Formation Program for the People of God as a Whole

274. Christian formation “entails an integral process, that is, it encompasses varied dimensions, all harmonized among themselves in vital unity” (DAP 279). In the Assembly’s Proposals, this field is quite broad and includes theological and spiritual education. It also mentions the help of social sciences and new technologies to contribute to personal and community human development. This task implies accompanying permanent processes in the journey of faith that begin in Christian initiation among children and adults and require constant updating. It should be a formation from the grassroots and reach all areas of the Church, consecrated and lay, to strengthen the ministries of all the baptized. Here we do not enter into the description of the various spiritual, sapiential, catechetical and pastoral itineraries.
275. The purpose of integral formation is to provide the means for effective communication, emphasizing listening skills, fraternal and inclusive relationships, and teamwork. Among its challenges is to recognize and accompany the “multiculturality” of the continent on the path of theological, pastoral and ecclesial conversion; to deepen incarnated spiritual formation, centered on a personal and communitarian relationship with Jesus Christ, which opens us to the mystagogical experience; to form in the culture of care for life and the common home, privileging human dignity and cultivating Christian values in the families and ecclesial communities.
276. Among the many challenges, in the theological formation, we are challenged to re-imagine, deconstruct and reconstruct the relationship between theology and pastoral ministry, in such a way that it is centered on baptism, on the option for the poor, as well as to give new impetus to the Biblical Animation of community, parish and personal pastoral ministry in order to maintain and enrich the faith in the midst of daily life.
277. *Lines of Action:*
- To elaborate a progressive, dynamic and integral formative itinerary that helps and awakens the prophetic commitment of the missionary disciples.
  - To strengthen emotional skills, intellectual capacities and attitudes of solidarity to promote projects of social responsibility.

- To rescue the value of popular education and give greater importance to education in the proper use of technology.

### **b) Formation in Synodality to Overcome Clericalism**

278. The Assembly invites us to promote and strengthen a formation in which the synodal model of Church is appropriated by all its members. This implies assuming the model of a Church that overcomes clericalism and the dichotomy between different cultural and generational expressions. It is proposed to promote dialogue and peace, on a level of synodality, as well as to seek a culture of good living, respecting diversity and appreciating the richness of difference.

279. The Assembly calls to provide tools to achieve the participation of all the People of God, overcoming all kinds of abuse and mistreatment, where we all feel safe and welcomed.

280. *Lines of Action:*

- To consolidate the synodal journey initiated, so that it may help us to respond to the current challenges from the perspective of communion and in the light of the Word of God.
- To trigger a process that favors co-responsible participation and the valuing of charisms, gifts, services and ministries in decision-making in ecclesial spaces.
- To promote a pastoral ministry of encounter centered on the spirituality of incarnation and communion.

### **c) Formation for Social Commitment in the Light of the Option for the Poor**

281. The Assembly, faithful to the Latin American face woven around Medellín and reaffirmed by Aparecida, proposes a formation for social commitment in the light of the option for the poor (cf. EG 198). It proposes to grow as a Samaritan Church, taking up the ecclesiology of the Vatican Council II, as well as being a prophetic Church according to the witness of faith of our martyrs who have lived in a radical commitment for Christ and his Kingdom.

282. We propose an evangelizing formation that contributes to a true pastoral conversion and to a civic commitment in search of a just, fraternal-soral

society, united in solidarity, respectful of the life of people and of nature. An indispensable factor for formation in this field is the centenary patrimony of the Church's social doctrine, from *Rerum Novarum* to *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli tutti*, which must be a transversal reference key in all pastoral work, in order to face situations of social injustice and environmental degradation.

283. *Lines of action:*

- To create groups of study and encouragement on the social doctrine of the Church, inspired by the Word of God and in fidelity to reality, which favors a prophetic going forth Church.
- To favor interaction among all the members of the People of God, to enter into dialogue with their realities and needs.
- To promote the articulation of networks for the defense of life with social movements and collectives organized for the care of human dignity.
- To generate intra-ecclesial networking structures, parish and diocesan, that are close and welcoming.
- To work in coordination with different actors of civil society.

**d) Promoting the Renewal of Formation in Seminaries and Religious Houses**

284. In the process of ecclesial conversion, the Assembly proposed to renew integral formation in Seminaries and religious houses in order to respond to the challenge of a Church going forth to the peripheries. This implies accompanying candidates to the priesthood and consecrated life so that they may be faithful to Christ, close to the people, humble servants, prophets who proclaim the good and denounce evil. It is a matter of formation in the “art of accompaniment” (EG 169) of shepherding and as spiritual guides.
285. An essential aspect of this educational task, in which there are already universal and local orientations, is to provide a synodal formation that helps to eradicate clericalism and authoritarianism in the Church. It is also imperative to teach the social thought of the Church and to include themes such as: integral ecology, native peoples, inculturation and interculturality.

286. *Line of Action:*

- To update the academic models and programs of the presbyteral seminaries and formation houses of the consecrated life, opening possibilities for new institutional, synodal and inculturated models, which can offer renewed channels for an integral formation that integrates in an updated way the experiential, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral dimensions.
- To assume and enrich, from the particularities of each local Church, the proposal of the new Norms (*Ratio*) for priest formation given by the Congregation for the Clergy.

### 3. The Spiritual, Liturgical, and Sacramental Dimension

287. The spiritual, liturgical, and sacramental dimension of evangelization expresses the prayer of the Church by which Christ continues to actualize the Easter mystery and to carry out his redemptive work (cf. SC 1). Vatican Council II affirms that through the Liturgy, the summit and source of Christian life, “above all from the Eucharist, grace flows to us as from its source and, with the utmost efficacy, that sanctification of men in Christ and that glorification of God, to which the other works of the Church tend as to their end, are obtained” (SC 10).
288. The Assembly favored the development of various celebrative spaces, inviting to a personal encounter with Jesus, in communion with the brothers and sisters in the faith. In a creative way, prayerful readings of the Word of God, celebrations of the Eucharist, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the recitation of the Rosary accompanied the entire Assembly process. In the Pastoral propositions, there are at least three groups that bring together the various recommendations.

#### a) Rediscovering the Experience of Sacraments

289. To rediscover the experience of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, the Assembly highlighted online and other creative forms implemented during the pandemic. This has made it possible to promote social media and various community spheres as spaces for meeting with Christ and his

Word; although it warns against the temptation to limit oneself to a mere transmission of the celebrations rather than a true community experience.

290. The Church, especially at this time, is present in the digital continent, lovingly accompanying processes of mourning, nourishing faith and hope in difficult times through the celebration of the Eucharist and the encounter in different spaces of prayer. As missionary disciples we are called to extend and strengthen this presence, without this being to the detriment of the importance of our participation in the celebrations in person (cf. SN p. 175).

291. *Lines of Action:*

- To value and promote the importance of regular participation in the Eucharist and in the celebration of the Word of God in ecclesial communities.
- Intensify the use of virtual means for a wider and more diversified participation in the ecclesial communities, as a complement to the indispensable face-to-face celebration.

#### **b) An Inculturated Liturgy in our Days**

292. During the Assembly, several voices proposed inculturated celebrations of faith, with the face and heart of our peoples. Emphasis was made on the need to recover a shared table, without exclusions, as a protagonist space for all the baptized men and women, as it happens in Grassroots Ecclesial Communities. This is a form of community living of the faith in the absence of the Eucharist in places that do not have the regular presence of priests. For this reason, it is necessary to promote a greater participation of the laity, men and women, in instituted ministries that accompany the festive celebration of the faith.

293. *Lines of Action:*

- To Recover the witness of inculturation of the BECs as spaces of incarnated living of faith and of sacraments in the commitment with the poor.
- To take concrete initiatives to create new ministries that include women, beginning by favoring greater access and participation of women in existing ministries.

- Develop contemplative wonder before the mystery of God and the sacred, formation in liturgical participation and symbolism for all Christian people, and the cultivation of the art of celebrating the liturgy –*ars celebrandi*– according to recent Pope Francis’ letter *Desiderio desideravi*.

### c) Popular Religiosity as a Place of Encounter and Evangelization

294. Popular religiosity, devotion, or spirituality, so highly valued in *Aparecida* and in *Evangelii gaudium*, is highlighted in the voices gathered in the Narrative synthesis and at other times during the Assembly. The People of God, in the listening process, underscored the participation of the faithful in acts of popular piety, as was noted even in the period of the pandemic.
295. Catholic spirituality, from its different expressions so alive and significant, can come to the rescue of the human being, of his identity and his vocation to life. In it “appears the soul of the Latin American peoples” and “is the precious treasure of the Catholic Church in Latin America, which she must protect, promote and, if necessary, purify” (Benedict XVI, *Aparecida inaugural address*). Popular religiosity has a special space for the expression of faith in the shrines spread throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Because of their devotion, simple people go to the shrine and remember that their origin is in the Lord and also that the God who loved us once never ceases to do so and accompanies us on life’s journey. In a special way, Marian shrines are places of mercy, prayer, healing and hope.
296. *Lines of Action:*
- To recognize the processes from which the people themselves, as subjects, live and transmit the faith.
  - To train pastoral agents in their ability to accompany with an attitude of service and to be an evangelizing presence in the spaces where Popular religiosity is practiced.
  - To value the privileged spaces of popular piety, especially the sanctuaries dedicated to Jesus, Mary and the saints, as a way of approaching the simple people, who are so often distant from the organized forms of parish pastoral care.



## 4. The synodal participative dimension

297. The First Ecclesial Assembly was not only carried out in a synodal way, but also made synodality one of its main challenges in the evangelizing action of Latin America and the Caribbean.
298. The way in which the Assembly was carried out, both its preparatory process and the final event, demonstrates that the Synodal Church of the first millennium is not an unrealizable utopia. The Assembly inserted episcopal collegiality into the heart of ecclesial synodality, highlighting the laity as the ecclesial subject. It is the expression of the exercise of the principle of the Church of the first millennium: “everything that concerns all must be discerned and decided by all”.

### **a) People of God Church, with new Ministries**

299. To be a Synodal Church, the Ecclesial Assembly proposes to update, in the light of the Word of God and the Vatican Council II, the concept and experience of Church as People of God, in communion with the richness of its ministry. Creating new ministries and renewing existing ones would allow for the incorporation of the laity in general, women in particular and consecrated persons, so that they have participation and power in decision-making. This means taking up the ministerial dimension of the Church from the point of view of circularity, synodality and co-responsibility, because we are all called to live the dignity and equality provided by the baptismal vocation. At the same time, it requires cultivating the joy of ordained ministry —episcopal, presbyteral and diaconal— so that it communicates the love of Jesus, Good Shepherd and servant.
300. The ministries, in a Church that is all ministerial, express the universality of the gifts of the Spirit at the service of the good of all Christians and non-Christians. Hence the importance of formation for unity in diversity, valuing and fostering the charisms and ministries.
301. Synodality makes the Church a community of communities, ever more open, merciful and sensitive, which embraces all human peripheries, recognizing and welcoming diversity. To this end, it is important to create small autonomous communities that contribute to overcoming clericalism through inclusion, proximity and encounter. This implies strengthening the role of the laity in pastoral life and missionary, so that we can walk

together as People of God and thus make communion and participation of all effective. This sphere can also be a special space for the collaboration of priests who have married and a place of welcome for migrants and other minority groups in their specific situation.

302. *Lines of Action:*

- To promote formation in all areas (faculties, seminaries, formation houses, schools of ministries, institutes, lay professorships) on a Synodal Church going forth, prophetic and committed to the defense of life in our peoples.
- To implement various spheres of communion and participation in parishes, shrines and chapels that foster co-responsibility in missionary animation.
- To create new synodal structures in all spheres of the Church, following the example of this First Ecclesial Assembly.
- To make the biblical animation of pastoral ministry a concrete school of synodality through the common practice of meditation on the Word of God, mutual listening, shared discernment, decision-making and evaluation of pastoral action.

**b) A Samaritan Welcoming Church**

303. Christian community is the home of the poor (DAp 8) and the Samaritan Church (DAp 26). It must create structures to receive all and share life in abundance with all. Aparecida affirms that, “in our subcontinent, it is urgent to put an end to the colonialist logic of rejection and assimilation of the other; a logic that comes from outside, but that is also within us” (DAp 96).
304. Pluralism, more than an opening, is a presupposition of social coexistence and cultural development. As the subject is plural, the presupposition is alterity. It is necessary today to conceive oneself in the relationship with what is different. Consequently, in the field of mission, there are no addressees but interlocutors. The current process of globalization presents itself with tendencies to impose a homogenized culture in all sectors, involving us in a “new cultural colonization” (DAp 46). Hence the need to assume cultural diversity as a counterpoint to the attempts “that seek to create a uniformed culture with approaches based on their own unique models” (DAp 59).

305. Here appears the sphere of sexual diversity. Several voices express pain for perceiving indifference and rejection of the Church on this issue. It is a matter of welcoming the groups that integrate minorities from their specific realities, so that they are not excluded from the ecclesial spaces.

306. *Lines of Action:*

- To provide spaces for action in spheres such as social ministry and civil society in order to generate inclusive actions, especially for minorities.
- To value and integrate the contribution of diverse vocations, charisms, ministries, trades and professions in order to build a hospitable Church, a true “field hospital”.
- To recognize and strengthen a new mestizo identity in Latin America and the Caribbean with indigenous and black roots, as manifested in the images of Mary of Guadalupe and Aparecida.

### **c) A Markedly Lay Ecclesial Culture**

307. Synodality is the way of being and acting in the Church in which lay people play “an active and creative role in the preparation and execution of pastoral projects for the community.” (cf. DAp 213). Aparecida, following Puebla, refers to the Church as communion and participation, house and school of communion. From this arises the need, in the work of evangelization, to include the laity in the discernment, elaboration and decision making, planning and execution of pastoral plans.

308. As has been said, for the Ecclesial Assembly it is urgent to overcome clericalism in all its expressions, among the Clergy, the consecrated, and even among the laity. With Pope Francis we affirm the need to “permit the growth of a specific ecclesial culture that is distinctively lay” (QAm 94) that fosters their active participation and provides a capillary presence of the laity in the Church. This implies enhancing the prayerful experience and the formation of the conscience of the People of God. It is necessary to share spaces of responsibility, decision-making and pastoral formation with Synodal participation.

309. In order to make this protagonism visible in all its dimensions, it is important to renew and adapt priestly, religious and lay formation, providing a permanent updating, in view of a Synodal Church, discipleship and

missionary, and in line with the norms of the *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* of the Congregation for the Clergy.

310. *Lines of Action:*

- To encourage co-responsible participation and the appreciation of charisms in the elaboration and decision making in the different ecclesial spaces.
- To promote formation in synodality, necessary for consensual decision-making.
- To facilitate a process of pastoral, personal and communitarian conversion, which allows us to recognize the wounds caused by clericalism and vertical authoritarian relationships.
- To start from the bottom up, strengthening the processes of Christian initiation and deepening the ecclesiology of communion.
- To promote a vocational culture open to all ecclesial and religious options among the youth.
- To recognize and cultivate the joy of a great number of ordained ministers who give their lives at the service of all the People of God.

**d) The Protagonism of Women in the Church and in Society**

311. Listening to the People of God in the Spirit brought to light the trajectory and voice of women who are crying out for a new place in society and in the Church at this time in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is urgent to listen to the voice, so often silenced, of women subjected to many forms of exclusion and violence in all stages of their lives. It is recognized that, in the Church, inequality still exists due to machismo, lack of recognition and lack of empowerment of women.
312. As said during the listening phase, in the ecclesial sphere some authorities do not fully accept that women may have access to leadership or management roles in a Church governed by men, in which women are the great majority of those who actively participate in the communities. It has been expressed that if a Church that marginalizes lay people persists, it does so even more with women.

313. The Ecclesial Assembly proposed to take concrete steps toward the integration and participation of women in the Church and in society. On the one hand, it affirmed the duty of admitting the exclusion of women in leadership and decision-making services. On the other hand, it encouraged a relational theology that can guarantee them spaces to recognize their dignity and protagonism, and become signs that also promote their inclusion in society.
314. These changes cannot depend on the good will of priests and bishops, but imply the formalization of their own ministries and their integration into decision-making structures both in the particular Churches and in the national Episcopal Conferences. The Assembly recalls the teaching of Pope Francis, who says that “In a synodal Church, those women who in fact have a central part to play in Amazonian communities should have access to positions, including ecclesial services [...] that entail stability, public recognition and a commission from the bishop” (cf. QAm 103).
315. *Lines of Action:*
- To recognize the exclusion of women in leadership and decision-making positions in the ecclesial sphere.
  - To generate pastoral processes in which women have greater value and participation.
  - To form for unity in diversity, encouraging the development of charisms and ministries accessible to women.
  - To ensure places and spaces in which it is made visible that the dignity and co-responsibility of women are fully considered in practical terms.
  - To reform structures, within the framework of ecclesial conversion, in order to have an organic and holistic pastoral care, seeking a complementary reciprocity between women and men.

#### **e) A Community Network Church**

316. The small or grassroots ecclesial communities are an expression of a Church willing to adopt more firmly the option for the poor. For Medellín they are “the departing cell of ecclesial structuration and center of evangelization” (Med 15,10). They enable people to come to a greater knowledge of the

Word of God, to social commitment in the name of the Gospel, to the emergence of new lay ministries and to the education of adults in the faith (cf. DAp 178).

317. It is important to revitalize Grassroots Ecclesial Communities (GEC), a way of being the Church where synodality is lived as a space of inclusion of diversity and overcoming clericalism. In them, the Word of God is at the center of communion, a space is offered to concrete persons in their contexts and a better response is given to the cries of the marginalized of our time. A common feature of the GEC is living out of the preferential option for the poor, embodying the principles and values of the Church's social doctrine.
318. The revitalization of GEC entails looking at our parish structures. Parishes are the living cells of the Church, but they need a decided renewal so that they may be truly: places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith, open to the full range of charisms, services, and ministries, organized in a communal and responsible way, capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate; open to pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live. (cf. DAp 170). Aparecida advises they are broken up in smaller territorial units, with their own leadership and coordination teams to allow for a higher proximity to the people and groups living in the region. In these sectors, "It is advisable that missionary agents promote the creation of communities of families to foster sharing their Christian faith and responses to their own problems". (DAp 372).
319. *Lines of action:*
- To decentralize parish structure and action through the creation of small communities allowing integral processes, social commitment, lay leadership, culture of encounter and a ministerial Church.
  - To promote the ongoing formation of leaders and facilitators with new narratives and paradigms of synodality that mobilize communities.
  - To revitalize and accompany the grassroots ecclesial communities as spaces for growth in faith and social commitment.



## **f) Converting the structures of the Church**

320. To generate spaces for greater participation and inclusion of youth, women and all the laity, a real change in the structures of the Church is needed, as well as the reactivation of the pastoral and economic councils in the parishes and of the diocesan and parish pastoral Assemblies. A profound revision of the exercise of authority and power is a necessary condition to overcome clericalism and to grow as a servant, synodal Church, generating new leadership and lay ministries such as, for example, care of our common home.
321. The Assembly proposes to identify and review the existing pastoral structures so that they may be effective in transmitting the faith, renewing those that can be effective, abandoning those that are already outdated, and creating those that are necessary.
322. The renewal of structures is demanded by pastoral conversion and oriented to have all of them “more mission-oriented to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself” (EG 27).
323. We must move forward in the structuring of an organic pastoral ministry in order to better serve the needs of the faithful. Every evangelizing process includes fostering human promotion and seeking authentic liberation, without which a just order in society is not possible (cf. DAp 99 y 399).
324. *Lines of Action:*
- To abandon outdated structures that no longer evangelize, promoting personal and community conversion in order to live in synodality and in participative and participatory communion.
  - To place the ecclesial organisms at the service of the reception, protection, promotion and integration of the sons and daughters of God.
  - To reform the structures from a communitarian conversion and an organic and holistic pastoral, capable of articulating the various pastoral, territorial and sectorial spheres.

- To strengthen synodal spaces such as parish and diocesan councils and Assemblies, in line with the suggestions of the instruction *The pastoral conversion of the parish community*.

### **g) A Church in Ecumenical and Interreligious Dialogue**

325. Aparecida has made us see that ecumenism is an unrenounceable path for the missionary disciple (cfr. DAp 227), in harmony with what was stated in Vatican Council II when it says that “the Church founded by Christ is unique, but there are many Christian communions that present themselves to people as the heritage of Jesus Christ” (UR 1). This is about listening to the desire of Jesus “that may be all one” (Jn 17,21). However, Latin America and the Caribbean face manifold challenges: We note that we lack unity and tolerance, we pray little together, there is insufficient formation and reflection in the laity and among ordained ministers. Sectarianism, fundamentalism and attitudes of intolerance persist, as well as a distorted use of the Gospel. However, we see that there is practical ecumenism in the grassroots communities, among the poor and simple, and there is solidarity among individuals and groups in particular. We are therefore challenged to listen and dialogue, to foster respectful, sincere and consensual understanding. We must overcome doctrinal ecumenism and strengthen loving relationships in the witness of life.
326. In Latin America and the Caribbean there is also a presence, albeit smaller, of other religions. We note that there is less tension in this area, but there is still a tendency to polarization and a tendency to close off from dialogue due to a lack of preparation or pre-existing prejudices. In some countries, however, there is evidence of encounter and common action.
327. We are called to open ourselves to God as the Father of all, as the truth that transcends the various religious interpretations. Pope Francis reminds us that “The different religions, based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society” (FT 271).
328. *Lines of Action in Ecumenism:*
- To generate ecumenical spaces of service to society, especially people with the direst need, such as formation in the economy of communion and care for the earth, an ecumenical social forum, and everything that contributes to the common good.

- To promote formation to advance ecumenical dialogue.
- To encourage the celebration of the week of prayer for Christian unity and other instances of common prayer.

329. *Lines of Action in Interreligious Dialogue:*

- To train at all levels in order to open ourselves to discover the gifts of God in the various religions.
- To promote and spread the commitments that already exist in favor of religious freedom, human rights, the defense of life and the care of the common home.
- To help distinguish the particularities of the activities of ecumenism and those of interreligious dialogue.

## 5. The Socio-Transforming Dimension

330. The socio-transforming dimension is constitutive of the way Jesus himself understands his mission, being “to bring the good news to the poor”, “to proclaim release to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind”, “to let the oppressed go free”, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4,18-19). The first Christians lived this dimension as “There was never anyone among them in need” (Acts 4,34-35). Charity deeds practiced with the more vulnerable are identified with the charity done to Christ himself (cf. Mt 25,31-46); and faith, without deeds of charity, is dead (cf. St 2,17). The ecclesial magisterium throughout the last two centuries, faithful to this principle, offers through the social doctrine of the Church, orientations for the faithful to be aware that to evangelize is “to make the kingdom of God present in our world” (EG 176).
331. Here, the socio-transforming dimension is characterized, on the one hand, by a perspective of reporting the misery that affects numerous people. Such a situation is an injustice crying up to heaven, which is why Christian men and women are called to help to bring justice in the world (cf. Med 1, 2). On the other hand, it is marked by a preferential option for the poor, in solidarity, so that it helps their integral freedom, which is implicit in Christologic faith in the God that became poor for us, so that he enriched us with his poverty (cf. DAp 392).

332. The First Ecclesial Assembly strongly stressed the socio-transforming dimension. In fact, 76 of the 231 challenges formulated by the discernment groups and more than half Pastoral propositions are, directly or indirectly, related to this dimension.

### **a) The Evangelizing Presence of the Church in Spaces of Social Transformation**

333. The Assembly felt particularly challenged to mobilize the Church to continue fulfilling its mission in socio-transformative spaces. The strengthening of the social dimension of evangelization indicates, at the same time, the worsening of the situation of the most vulnerable and the need to generate new forms of presence and advocacy with them.
334. We want to promote greater participation, especially of lay men and women, in areas of cultural, political, social and ecclesial transformation, and in the formation in the social doctrine of the Church. Latin American and Caribbean society is going through a process of secularization that confers greater autonomy to temporal realities, demanding that Christians act in the different spheres as citizens, seeking to transform them according to Gospel values and in dialogue with other groups that make up the social, political, cultural and religious fabric of our countries. This type of Christian action is present in the transformation of structures, of changes in the exercise of power, of decisive actions, and of an education that forms for justice.
335. The accompaniment of popular movements working for the sacred rights of land, housing and work is a growing reality. On the one hand, there are ecclesial initiatives accompanying them; on the other, there is a demand for greater presence and support. For the Pope, popular movements are “social poets” who, “from the forgotten peripheries, create dignified solutions to the most urgent problems of the excluded.”<sup>16</sup>

---

16 Francis, Letter to popular movements, 2020; cf. FT 169.

336. *Lines of Action:*

*To strengthen the social dimension of evangelization:*

- To favor the encounter with God and with the poorest in order to seek a more audacious, inculturated, committed and prophetic social impact of the Gospel, especially in the defense of human rights.
- To renew the formative processes based on the social doctrine of the Church so that they generate transforming commitments of the structures.
- Promote work groups through digital platforms that promote the exchange of experiences for a new political and economic mentality.
- Create and strengthen programs that develop social justice and the dignity of the person.

337. *To accompany the quest of popular movements:*

- To promote spaces and networks of encounter and accompaniment with the brothers and sisters who work in the popular movements.
- To work for the recognition and defense of the rights to land, housing and work as human values arising from the Gospel.

338. *For an evangelizing presence more effective of the Church in spaces of social transformation:*

- To prepare a processual, dynamic and integral formative plan that helps and awakens the prophetic commitment.
- To generate groups of studies and animation on the social doctrine, inspired by the Word of God and reality.
- To encourage the teaching of the Church's social doctrine in the seminaries and, transversally, in all pastoral ministries, to inspire personal, community and institutional responses.

## **b) A Prophetic Pastoral in the Face of Violence and in Defense of Human Rights**

339. Prophetic denouncing is one of the biblical reactions to the cry of those who suffer some kind of injustice (cf. Am 2:6; 4:1). In Nazareth, Jesus manifests himself as sent to “let the oppressed go free” (Lk 4:18), and in the sermon on the plain he denounces the rich and the well fed (cf. Lk 6:24-25). Prophetic

indignation marks the history of the Church, as shown by the magisterium of Pope Francis and his positions on the problem of migrants and refugees. Latin America and the Caribbean have known these voices in Bartolomé de las Casas and Antonio de Montesinos, in the colonial period, and, more recently in Oscar Romero, Enrique Angelelli, Hélder Câmara, Doroty Stang and others. The Ecclesial Assembly took up this prophetic tradition in three Pastoral propositions: two of them denouncing structural and specific forms of violence, another that proposed ways of promoting peace and human rights.

340. The first Proposal speaks of denouncing the different forms of structural, institutional, police and domestic violence, which are expressed, among others, in femicide and disappearances. To this Proposal can be added the second, more specific, which speaks of denouncing the advance of organized crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation, arms trafficking, kidnappings and the sale of organs. These types of violence are extensively addressed in the Listening Process and compiled in the Narrative Synthesis, which speaks of violence linked to the economic model, to the power of the State, against women, against ethnic differences (Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples) and sexual choice, and against Mother nature.
341. The third Proposal aims to follow the path favored by the Church in the fight against violence: the promotion of the culture of active nonviolence, the defense of human rights and peace. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declares happy those who promote peace (cf. Mt 5:9) and teaches active nonviolence, asking his followers not to respond to evil with evil, to love their enemies and to pray for those who do evil to them (cf. Mt 5:38-39, 44-48). He forgives those who murder him (cf. Lk 23:34) and, risen from the dead, offers his disciples peace as their first gift (cf. Jn 20:19). This awareness is present in the narrative Synthesis, which speaks that “the Church must form and require Christians not only to pray, but to commit themselves to the formation and structuring of a culture of peace, a culture where the person and justice are important” (SN p. 68).

#### 342. *Lines of Action*

*To face structural violence and build social peace:*

- To promote, discern and articulate networks for the defense of life together with social movements and collectives organized for the care of



human dignity, especially of native peoples, Afro-descendants, women, people with disabilities and sexual diversity.

- To encourage and support the creation of intra-ecclesial, parish and diocesan structures that support the denunciation of ecclesial, structural, social, domestic and sexual violence, from a closeness to all the sons and daughters of God, without exclusion of any kind.
- To rebuild human dignity and the social fabric to help prevent all types of violence.

343. *To face the spread of organized crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms trafficking, kidnapping, and the sale of human organs:*

- To establish mechanisms of sensibilization and denounce through campaigns carried out in alliance with civil society institutions and the academic community.
- To strengthen the Clamor network and other ecclesial networks, engaging the Church with courage and openness in prevention work and public advocacy actions.
- To support recovery communities for victims of addiction and drug trafficking.

344. *To promote an active culture of non-violence, the defense of human rights and peace:*

- To collaborate in groups and networks of society, at local, regional, national and international levels.
- To strengthen the ecclesial instances with formative processes based on the social doctrine of the Church, human rights and active non-violence at all levels of society.
- To promote a culture of dialogue, reconciliation and collaboration with other religious and social groups, reaching out to all spheres, including political actors.
- To promote the culture of peace, bringing hope and accompanying the search for justice in the midst of violence against women, migrants, missing persons, victims of drug trafficking.

### c) Christians acting in the spheres of economy and politics

345. The promotion of a solidary and sustainable economy is an ethical alternative, which must be at the service of life, as opposed to the dominant economy that kills, that only follows the market, produces garbage, depredates the common home and only seeks accumulation.
346. The voices that denounce corruption in public and private social structures, as well as judicial impunity, refer to the field of politics. It is associated with power struggles, but also with consensus around the common good. In this context, there is concern about the management of resources in the pandemic, governmental plans, abuses of authority, economic management and the relationship with the Church (cf. SN ps. 11, 58-60). The Document for community discernment speaks of corruption in all its forms, due to the intervention of economic power and drug trafficking that infiltrates political and judicial decisions. It also points out the indignation that corruption provokes, especially among youth.
347. For the social doctrine of the Church to be known and applied in all pastoral activities, Christians acting in the different spheres of society and within the Church is fundamental. For this reason, it is important to know it and to present it as an input for thinking about social commitment, the defense of life and human promotion. The social doctrine of the Church is the Gospel manifested in the societal body and one of the criteria for accompanying and guiding the laity who play a determining role in the life of the people.

#### 348. *Lines of Action*

*To promote a solidary sustainable economy:*

- To create pastoral commissions that build channels of solidarity to caring for our common home, centered on the dignity of the human person.
- To promote the formation of solidarity associative networks in the peripheries that execute common programs.
- To promote solidarity projects from the parishes through programs and undertakings, in articulation with other actors of society.

- To promote the development of a solidary and sustainable economy, and accompany the initiatives in this line that are underway in the civil sphere.

349. *To implement lay participation in the sphere of politics:*

- To awaken laity's awareness of their mission in the promotion of public policies that enable a more just and humane economy.
- To train for participation, care and social, cultural and political transformation.
- To denounce corruption in social, legal and political structures and defend democracy.
- To network with different actors of civil society.

#### **d) Pastoral Care for the Victims of Social Injustice**

350. Accompanying the victims of social injustice in processes of recognition, reparation and reconciliation is a concern of our Church. Pope Francis, in *Fratelli tutti*, recalls the need for “a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honor the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance” (FT 226). Justice “is properly sought solely out of love of justice itself, out of respect for the victims, as a means of preventing new crimes and protecting the common good” (FT 252).

351. At Puebla, our episcopal magisterium began to speak of victims (cf. DP 529, 1138, 1191). Aparecida, extending its understanding, refers to adolescents and youth as victims of false leaders (cf. DP 442), to the victims of abortion (cf. DP 469), of kidnappings, of the violence of terrorism, of armed conflicts (cf. DP 65). He also names the incarcerated (cf. DAp 207), youth victims of the negative influence of postmodern culture (cf. DAp 318), victims of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, children that have been victims of prostitution, pornography and child labor, abused women and victims of exclusion (cf. DAp 402). Aparecida recalls the importance of accompanying them all (cf. DAp 414).

352. *Lines of Action:*

- To approach and accompany the victims with the attitude of the good Samaritan, and to heal their wounds, especially those resulting from exploitation associated with migration, abuse and poverty.
- To embrace humanity, wounded by so many addictions, substances and violence, promoting—in a personal and communitarian way— processes of healing, liberation and justice.

**e) Prevention and Reparation of Abuses of Body, Power, and Conscience in the Church**

353. The issue of abuses has triggered a crisis in the Church since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Pope Francis has spoken out several times and in his Letter to the People of God (08/18/2018) recalls “the suffering experienced by many minors because of sexual abuse, abuse of power and abuse of conscience committed by a significant number of clerics and consecrated persons”. According to the Pontiff, it is a “crime that generates deep wounds of pain and helplessness, first of all, in the victims, but also in their families and in the whole community, whether believers or non-believers”.

354. The Assembly revealed the persistent lack of integral reparation to victims and their families on the part of the ecclesiastical institution. A sign of conversion would be to respond to the demand for transparency and truth to confront all these abuses. This implies a greater willingness to denounce and cooperate, and to recognize errors and ask for forgiveness with humility and reparation.

355. *Lines of Action:*

- To promote the creation and work of diocesan instances for the prevention of sexual abuse, abuse of conscience and abuse of power, together with attention and integral reparation.
- To accompany processes of recognition, reparation and justice through interdisciplinary pastoral care.
- To prevent abuse inside and outside the Church through efficient policies and protocols that generate healthy and safe environments.

## **f) Presence and Action of the Church by the Side of Indigenous and Afro-descendant Peoples**

356. Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples are among the groups particularly chosen by the Assembly to be accompanied in the defense of life, land and cultures. Having been dominated or enslaved for centuries, their living conditions did not change significantly after the colonial period. Already in Puebla their faces were identified with the “poorest of the poor” (DP 34). Aparecida says that they are not treated “with dignity and equality of conditions” (DAp 65). Their territories are still without recognition and protection, their cultures and religions are not always respected, their citizenship is diminished, their youth, children and women continue to be victims of all kinds of violence (cf. DAp 90).
357. With its limits, the Church carried out the evangelization of these peoples, promoting a real process of inculturation that nourished their faith throughout the centuries, as noted by the Conferences of Santo Domingo and Aparecida (cf. SD 24; DAp 4, 94). Today, however, this process is challenged by the new social, economic, cultural and religious dynamics of the territories where they live. Pope Francis recalls their cultural richness, their “contribution to the care of earth” (QAm 42), and denounces the interests of economic groups on indigenous and Afro-descendant territories (cf. QAm 9, 10, 14). He calls for indignation against this situation of violence (cf. QAm 15) and to take new steps in inculturation, especially of the liturgy (cf. QAm 82).
358. The Assembly calls on the Church to keep watch on these peoples, to perceive the multiple expressions of exclusion of the descendants of both founding groups of Latin American and Caribbean culture, to be their spokesperson, to defend their territories and their lives, not to see them as “poor” but rather as friends and allies.
359. *Lines of Action:*
- To praise Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples as protagonists of the inculturation of the Gospel, of the recognition of the seeds of the Word in their worldviews and of the work for the defense of life, land and cultures.
  - To admit and reject the triple discrimination that women of these groups experience: for being women, poor, indigenous or afro-descendants.

- To deepen the cultural roots of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples through meeting spaces and formative processes.
- To challenge the forms of cultural colonization disguised as evangelization and to encourage respect and exchange between cultures, as Pope Francis did during his trip to Canada.

### **g) Special Attention to Migrants and Refugees, Incarcerated and Disabled People**

360. The Ecclesial Assembly highlighted three particular situations for the Church to devote special attention to: migrants and refugees, incarcerated and disabled. The biblical tradition calls for welcoming the stranger (cf. Lev 19:33-34; Gen 18:4-7). The New Testament identifies the sick, those passing through, and those in prison, with Jesus' least brothers and sisters, before whom our final destination is determined (cf. Mt 25:35-44), and exhorts communities to practice hospitality (cf. 1Pt 4:9; Rom 12:13). Migrants and refugees, the incarcerated and the disabled represent situations of vulnerability that demand the care of the Church.
361. As described in the first part, the issue of migrants and refugees has become much more acute in Latin America and the Caribbean. They are victims of various forms of violence and human trafficking, and are among those who suffer the most. They are a group that needs special attention, that seeks refuge and that, unfortunately, does not always arouse the solidarity of many brothers and sisters. The Church must help them because their reality is a sign of our times.
362. Situations of deprivation of liberty are a challenge to the pastoral task. We need an action that ensures spiritual accompaniment and protection of the rights of incarcerated persons, and close contact with their families, especially in cases of police and state violence.
363. There are many people who suffer from different illnesses, deficiencies and physical or mental disabilities, who have other capacities and who bring their gifts to their families and communities. The Assembly proposed the organization of pastoral care of mental health that promotes respect for their dignity. In the listening process, this proposal has been valued as a response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is also an expression of care for the most vulnerable.



364. *Lines of Action*

*To shelter, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees:*

- To establish as a priority the attention, promotion, defense of their rights and accompany people forced to migrate, the displaced and refugees.
- To create spaces for the expression of faith, formation, spirituality, and socio-cultural dialogue for migrants, refugees and displaced persons, which help them to experience fraternity in their new places and make them visible as members of Christian communities.
- To work in local, regional, continental and international networks to demand, defend and promote the generation of public policies for the respect of the human right to migrate and not to migrate, for refuge and asylum.
- To raise awareness among the ecclesial communities on the causes of forced migration in order to work for its eradication and to promote hospitality in solidarity.

365. *For pastoral work at jails:*

- To strengthen prison pastoral care with interdisciplinary support, in order to establish networks of care and public policy advocacy.
- To provide spiritual accompaniment to the families of people in prison.
- To establish in the parishes a pastoral that attends to the needs of the families of the people deprived of their freedom.

366. *For a pastoral on human health:*

- To generate a culture of closeness and tenderness that allows us to care for people suffering from various illnesses with specific treatment.
- Promote the pastoral care of accompanying the sick and people suffering from disabilities.
- To accompany families, friends and caregivers with communities of listening and support.

## h) Defense and Promotion of Life and Family

367. The defense and promotion of life and the family are challenges that have been expressed in the Assembly. The Assembly proposed: to promote and defend the dignity of the life of the human person from conception to natural death; to favor, accompany and strengthen the centrality of the family in human society; to give priority to pastoral care of the family that welcomes new expressions, in their complexities and diversities. To these questions we can still associate those that some family groups propose as priorities in pastoral life: to recreate the accompaniment of children, youth, married couples and the elderly.
368. The dignity of life and of the human person from conception to natural death is taught in Sacred Scripture. Jesus came so that “they may have life and have it in abundance” (Jn 10:10). Life is threatened in Latin America and the Caribbean in many ways: by abortion and euthanasia, femicides, assassinations, hired assassins, the violation of human rights and social rights, the extermination of indigenous peoples, the plundering of the goods of creation.
369. The Assembly has affirmed the priority of a pastoral care that welcomes the new expressions of family life. In spite of having known different compositions in history, in recent times, as Pope Francis expresses in the exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, the family is undergoing new challenges, which demand a merciful pastoral care by the Church. In the listening process, alarms were triggered about family disintegration caused by migration, human trafficking, secularization, forms of violence within the family nucleus, especially against women, abuse of children, adolescents and youth. The Document for community discernment takes up these themes due to the impact of the pandemic on the family and intra-family violence. It also recalls the different family situations —such as cohabiting couples or the divorced and remarried— and the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to them today.
370. *Lines of action:*
- For the defense and the promotion of life:*
- To promote the culture of life, recognizing Jesus Christ in the poorest and most defenseless.

- To create spaces of integral formation that raise awareness about the culture of life, including health personnel and the media.
- To generate networks of pastoral action for the construction of public policies that guarantee the care of life in all of its stages and dimensions

371. *For a pastoral of the family:*

- To present the Church's message about family love and enrich it with a language more inclusive of all modes of family formation.
- To integrate with mercy and tenderness the various forms of families (single-parent, de facto unions, etc.), not in a fragmented way or only because of access to the sacraments.
- To promote the Christian and social formation of the pastoral care of the family in parishes based on their specific realities and needs.
- To protect and accompany families in situations of fragility with an attitude of inclusive mercy.
- To care especially for the elderly and young children promoting the encounter between generations to share wisdom and hope.
- To defend the rights of children to have a family and to be cared for and educated with love.

372. *For the accompaniment to childhood, youth, married couples, and the elderly:*

- To carry out an articulated work among the various specific pastoral ministries in order to attend to the demands of the different ages of life.
- Promote, in each particular Church, a biblical catechesis that encourages the following of Jesus and accompanies all stages of human development.

## 6. The Ecological Dimension

373. The Ecclesial Assembly is particularly interested in the commitment of Christians to care for the common home. Many discernment reflections have been undertaken, many voices spoken and actions suggested, which reflect the need for the ecclesial community's dedication to concrete work in awareness, coherence and advocacy for the care of the environment.

374. Several paths of action are indicated based on the teaching of Pope Francis: “living the vocation of being protectors of God’s work is an essential part of a virtuous existence, it is not something optional or a secondary aspect of the Christian experience” (LS 217). For this reason, we identify this mission as a dimension of evangelization.
375. It is worthy to note the contribution of Indigenous peoples to the care of Creation which is an inspiration for the work of the Church in the sphere of ecology: their ancestral wisdom, their worldview, their communitarian way of living, show us other ways of a more harmonious relationship with our shared home, with others, and with the transcendent. Their living memory, their denunciations, their resistance in spite of violence, offer us ways to counteract those who promote a destructive model.

### **a) Education and Spirituality to Caring for our Common Home**

376. To accept God’s call in our lives, it is essential to “listen [carefully] both to the cry of the poor and that of the earth” (QAm, 52). The present situation of the planet demands an ecological conversion on our part. We are called to assume and live our vocation to be stewards of God’s work, not destroyers of it.
377. It is a pastoral priority to collaborate in sensitizing others to form an awareness of the responsibility of all, particularly the missionary disciples, in the care of the common home. To this end, it is necessary to create and spread processes of education in integral ecology, supported by the cultivation of a spirituality of care for creation.
378. With Pope Francis, we believe that “it is not so much a question of speaking about ideas, but above all about the motivations that arise from spirituality to nourish a passion for the care of the world. For it will not be possible to commit ourselves to great things with doctrines alone, without a mysticism that animates us, without interior motives that drive, motivate, encourage and give meaning to personal and community action. We must recognize that we Christians have not always gathered and developed the riches that God has given to the Church, where spirituality is not disconnected from our own body or from nature or from the realities of this world, but is lived with them and in them, in communion with all that surrounds us” (LS 216).

379. *Lines of action:*

- To create a pastoral service to caring for our common home that promotes ecological education and awareness.
- To incorporate integral ecology in our teaching and pastoral practice.
- To undertake a process of ecological awareness, inspired by the documents *Laudato Si'* and *Querida Amazonia*, to promote awareness of the sacredness and interrelatedness of all creatures.
- To develop an ecological spirituality that encourages commitment to the great cause.
- To give priority to and reaffirm an integral ecology in our communities, adding the four dreams of the exhortation *Querida Amazonia*: social, cultural, ecclesial and environmental.
- To encourage pastoral conversion towards coherence of life, care for the common home and integral accompaniment in the formation in faith of different generations.
- To generate an ecological conversion that favors co-responsibility between personal, communal and institutional actions in favor of the care of the common home.
- To form evangelizing disciples in the social doctrine of the Church to protect creation.

**b) A Pastoral of Integral Ecology to Caring for our Common Home**

380. The discernment made recognizes the call of the Spirit to effective and prompt action in the care of the common home, which shows the coherence of our convictions and is a witness that inspires others. It is necessary to respond personally, communally and institutionally, through concrete actions, to the cry of the earth, the poor and the excluded, fostering an integral ecology in the light of the Gospel and the social doctrine of the Church. In order to deploy an effective pastoral care of ecology, it is important to weave together networks with other social groups that work for the dignity of persons and the care of the environment, and collaborate to bring about a cultural revolution that orients society as a whole towards the integral care of each person and of creation.

381. *Lines of action:*

- To witness to a culture of care in the perspective of integral ecology, assuming and promoting a lifestyle in accordance with the proposal of the Platform for Action *Laudato Si'*.
- To defend and promote life and human dignity in our shared home, changing an economy that kills for an economy inspired by the values of St. Francis and St. Clare, favoring networking and putting the poor at its center.
- To broaden and strengthen the participation of the laity in spaces of educational, cultural and political transformation in order to commit ourselves to the care of the common home.
- To welcome, care for and protect migrants and those who suffer in the geographical and existential peripheries, particularly the growing group of refugees and climate displaced persons, fostering processes of evangelization, integration and social commitment.

**c) A Prophetic Church Close to all who Care for our Common Home**

382. The Church has been asked to accompany communities affected by mining and other forms of extractivism. A prophetic Church is urgently needed to denounce injustices, human rights violations and ecologically irresponsible and violent practices toward Mother Earth. This needs to be done at all levels, in alliance with other actors of civil society.

383. *Lines of action:*

- To heed the urgent call of the earth, to denounce situations of depredation of nature, and to influence the places of decision-making to care for the common home in our region.
- To protect the existence of individuals and peoples, especially through the defense of human life from conception to death and the promotion of the dignity of all.
- To stand in solidarity with affected populations and demand social dialogue and transparent decision-making processes in all projects that affect the territories, life and health of communities.



- To contribute to the overcoming of notions of progress based on the exploitation of nature and to train in a responsible attitude for the administration of common goods.
- To develop an evangelization that stimulates a culture of care for the common home and the native peoples with an inclusive and universal sense.





# **“WE ARE ALL MISSIONARY DISCIPLES ON A JOURNEY”**

---

## **A Message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean**

As members of the Ecclesial Assembly, we gathered virtually and in person at the headquarters of the Mexican Episcopal Conference, from November 21 to 28, 2021, under the loving gaze of Our Lady of Guadalupe, we greet the People of God on the way, the men and women of our beloved Latin America and the Caribbean.

We are united by the desire to revive the spirit of the V General Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Aparecida in 2007, in harmony with the previous General Conferences and having on the horizon the Guadalupean Jubilee in 2031 and the Jubilee of the Redemption in 2033.

We confess that it is the Risen Jesus Christ who has summoned us once again and, as in Aparecida, has made us recognize ourselves as missionary disciples of his Kingdom, sent to communicate by the outpouring of joy of the encounter with Him, so that all may have Full life in Him (cf. DAp 14). Since then, Jesus accompanies us in the task of rethinking and relaunching the evangelizing mission in the new circumstances of Latin American and the Caribbean. A task that has committed us to a path of conversion decidedly missionary, to submit everything at the service of the establishment of the Kingdom of life (cf. DAp 366). This is a purpose in which we are advancing and which requires greater pastoral responsibility. A prophetic dream to which the Lord today confirms and encourages us to live walking together, guided by his Spirit.

With great joy we have lived this Assembly as a true experience of synodality, during mutual listening and community discernment of what the Spirit wants to say to his Church. We have walked together recognizing our multifaceted diversity, but above all that which unites us, and in dialogue our hearts of discipleship have turned towards the realities that the continent lives, in its pains and hopes.

We note and denounce the pain of the poorest and most vulnerable who suffer the scourge of misery and injustice. We are pained by the cry of the destruction of the common home and the “throwaway culture” that affects especially women, migrants and refugees, the elderly, Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. We are pained by the impact and consequences of the pandemic that further increases social inequalities, even compromising the food security of a large part of our population. We are pained by the cry of those who suffer because of clericalism and authoritarianism in relationships, which leads to the exclusion of the laity, especially women, in the instances of discernment and decision making about the mission of the Church, constituting a great obstacle to synodality. We are also concerned about the lack of prophecy and effective solidarity with the poorest and the most vulnerable.

On the other hand, we are filled with hope by the presence of the signs of the Kingdom of God, which lead to new ways of listening and discernment. The synodal journey is a significant space of encounter and openness for the transformation of ecclesial and social structures that allow us to renew the missionary impulse and closeness to the poorest and most excluded. We see with hope Religious Life, women and men who, living against the current, give witness to the good news of the Gospel, as well as the experience of popular piety in our towns.

This Assembly is a *kairos*, a propitious time for listening and discernment that connects us in a renewed way with the pastoral orientations of Aparecida and the magisterium of Pope Francis and impels us to open new missionary paths towards the geographical and existential peripheries and places proper to a Church going out.

What then are those challenges and pastoral orientations that God calls us to assume with greater urgency? The voice of the Spirit has resounded in the midst of dialogue and discernment pointing us to several horizons that inspire our ecclesial hope: the need to work for a renewed encounter of all with Jesus Christ incarnated in the reality of the continent; to accompany and promote the protagonism of the youth; an adequate attention to the victims of abuses occurred in ecclesial contexts and to commit ourselves to prevention; the promotion of the active participation of women in the ministries and in the spaces of discernment and ecclesial decision. The promotion of human life from conception to natural death; formation in synodality to eradicate clericalism; promotion of the participation of the laity in spaces of cultural, political, social and ecclesial transformation; listening to and accompanying the cry of the poor, excluded and discarded. The renewal of formation programs in the seminaries so that they take on integral ecology, the value of native peoples, inculturation and interculturality, and the social thought of the Church as necessary themes, and all that contributes to the adequate formation in synodality. Renew in

the light of the Word of God and Vatican II our concept and experience of People of God; reaffirm and give priority to living the dreams of Querida Amazonia; and accompany the Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in the defense of their life, land and their cultures.

With gratitude and joy, we reaffirm in this Ecclesial Assembly that the way to live the pastoral conversion discerned in Aparecida is that of synodality. The Church is synodal in itself, synodality belongs to its essence; therefore, it is not a passing fad or an empty slogan. With synodality, we are learning to walk together as Church People of God involving everyone without excluding anyone, in the task of communicating the joy of the Gospel, as missionary disciples going forth.

The outpouring of the creative power of the Spirit invites us to continue discerning and promoting the fruits of this unprecedented ecclesial event for our Churches and local communities on pilgrimage in Latin America and the Caribbean. We commit ourselves to continue on the path that the Lord is pointing out to us, learning and creating the appropriate mediations to generate the necessary transformations in mentalities, relationships, practices and ecclesial structures (cf. DSD 30).

The pastoral itinerary before us will guide us in the process of missionary and synodal conversion.

We thank the Lord of Life and all the people who have made possible the realization of this Assembly and we place them under the protection of the Virgin of Guadalupe who accompanies with her motherly tenderness the journey of the Church in this continent. To her we entrust the fruits of this ecclesial event, and we ask her intercession so that with courage and creativity we may become the Church going forth, synodal and missionary that the Lord expects of us, because we are all missionary disciples going forth.

*Issued in the City of Mexico, on November 27 in the Year of our Lord 2021.*







# CONSECRATION TO OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

---

Am I not here who am your Mother?  
Are you not under my shadow and protection?  
Am I not your fountain of life?  
Are you not in the folds of my mantle?  
In the crossing of my arms?  
Is there anything else you need?

Invested in the confidence your kind words inspire on us, we are coming today to kneel  
as the Gospel's missionary disciples  
To present thou the fruits of our Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean.  
The Holy Spirit has opened our being to its good news  
And has given us a deeply felt experience of synodality.

He inspires as a missionary Church, going forth, to dream  
with Saint Joseph, your husband,  
of new paths of identity and liberation, and of caring to all life.

From the Patagonia to northern Mexico, From the Atlantic to the Pacific,  
From the Antilles to the highest snowy peaks in the Andes From our deepest inner being  
to the more beautiful Samaritan gestures,  
We are all yours, Holy Mother!

The faces of these children represent the millions of faces  
that beautify your Latin America and the Caribbean.  
Each rose gathers the supplications and praises  
of thousands of rosaries that we fervently sing  
in every country of the continent.

Embrace us, Mother, Teacher, Missionary  
of limitless Love.  
Listen to us, help us, intercede for us.  
Help us to live the joy of the Gospel,  
so that all of us, brothers and sisters, may sing  
Praise be to you, Lord, and with you, the Wonders of the Lord.



# TABLE OF ACRONYMS

---

## Acronyms of documents from Universal and Latin American Magisterium

AA	Vatican Council II, Decree <i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i> (November 18, 1965)
AG	Vatican Council II, <i>Decree Ad Gentes</i> (December 7, 1965)
ChL	John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Christifidelis Laici</i> (December 30, 1988)
CV	Francis, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Christus vivit</i> (March 25, 2019)
DAP	CELAM, <i>Concluding Document of the 5th General Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Episcopate</i> , Aparecida (May 13-31, 2007).
DCA	Francis, <i>Discourse during the Commemoration of the Opening of the Synod of Bishops 50th Anniversary</i> (October 17, 2015)
DP	CELAM, <i>Concluding Document of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Episcopate</i> , Puebla (January 27 to February 12, 1979)
DCE	Benedict XVI, <i>Encyclical Letter Deus Caritas Est</i> (December 25, 2005)
DFJ	<i>Synod of Bishops, Final document. Young people, the Faith and Vocational Discernment</i> (October 27, 2018)
DPS	<i>Document in preparation for the XVI General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops</i> (September 7, 2021)
EC	Francis, Apostolic Constitution <i>Episcopalis communio</i> (September 15, 2018)
EG	Francis, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii gaudium</i> (November 24, 2013)
EN	Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation <i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i> (December 8, 1975)
FT	Francis, Encyclical Letter <i>Fratelli tutti</i> (October 3, 2020)
GE	Vatican Council II, Statement <i>Gravissimum educationis</i> (October 28, 1965)
GS	Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution <i>Gaudium et spes</i> (December 7, 1965)
LG	Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution <i>Lumen gentium</i> (November 21, 1964)

- LS Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015)
- Med CELAM, *Final Documents of the 2nd General Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Episcopate*, Medellín (August 26 to September 8, 1968)
- NMI John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (January 6, 2001)
- PE Francis, Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium* on Roman Curia (March 19, 2022)
- PP Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio* (March 26, 1967)
- PDV John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis* (March 25, 1992)
- QAm Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonía* (February 2, 2020)
- RH John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (March 4, 1979)
- SA DF Synod for the Amazon, *Final document Special Assembly for the Pan Amazonian Region* (October 27, 2019)
- SC Vatican Council II, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (December 4, 1963)
- SD CELAM, *Final documents of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American and the Caribbean Episcopate*, Santo Domingo (October 12, 1992)
- SIN International Theological Commission, *Synodality in the life and mission of the Church* (March 2, 2018)
- SJ Francis, *Let us dream together. The road to a better future*. In conversation with Austen Ivereigh, Buenos Aires, Penguin Random House (2020).
- SpS Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi* (November 30, 2007)
- UR Vatican Council II, Decree *Unitatis redintegratio* (November 21, 1964)

# Acronyms of documents from the Process of the Ecclesial Assembly

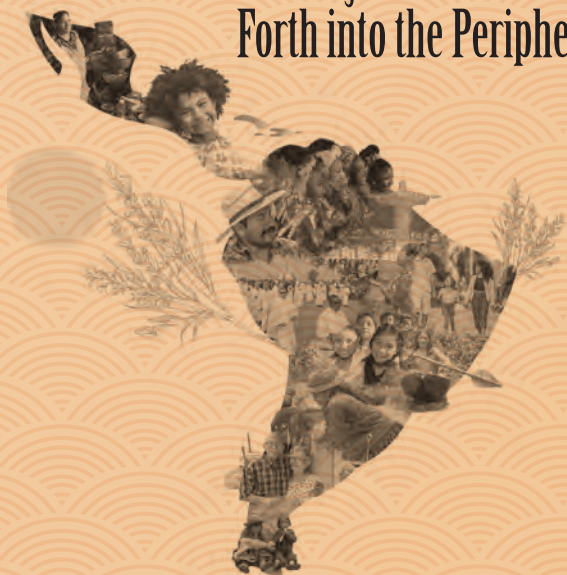
1AE	<i>First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (November 21 to 28, 2021)
D	Synthesis Commission, <i>Challenges from the First Ecclesial Assembly</i> (November 21 to 28, 2021)
DPC	CELAM, <i>Document for the road. First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (2021)
DDC	CELAM, <i>Document for Community Discernment in the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (2021)
DDR	CELAM, <i>Document for the renewal and restructuring of CELAM</i> (October 2, 2021)
MP	Francis, <i>Message to the participants in the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (October 15, 2021)
MPD	First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, <i>A message to the People of Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (November 27, 2021).
Rev Med	CELAM, <i>Revista Medellin XLVII</i> N° 182 (September-December, 2021); Bogotá-Colombia
SN	CELAM, <i>Narrative Synthesis Document. Listening in the First Ecclesial Assembly for Latin America and the Caribbean</i> (October 1, 2021)



# Abbreviations of Institutions and Ecclesial References

AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i>
CLAR	Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious
CEAMA	Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon
CELAM	Latin American Episcopal Council
DSI	Social Doctrine of the Church
ENA	Ecclesial Networks Alliance for Integral Ecology
REMAM	Mesoamerican Ecological Ecclesial Network
REPAM	PanAmazonian Ecclesial Network
TIC	New Information and Communication Technologies

# Toward a Synodal Church Going Forth into the Periphery



ISBN: 978-958-625-862-3

