

Our debts with

Aparecida

Balance 15 years later



15 años de Aparecida

Recordando juntos


CELAM
CONSEJO EPISCOPAL
LATINOAMERICANO Y CARIBEÑO

PRESIDENCY OF THE LATIN AMERICAN BISHOPS' COUNCIL

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Bogota, D.C., May 2022



INTRODUCTION

1. The Ordinary Assembly of CELAM in May 2019, among other agreements, gave three mandates to the new leadership headed by Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos of Trujillo: to complete the new headquarters, renew and restructure the institution, and hold the VI General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate. The renovation and restructuring are underway. The new headquarters is about to be inaugurated.
2. On the project of a VI General Conference, during the traditional greeting visit of the newly elected Presidency of CELAM to the Holy Father, when they came to the subject, Pope Francis prophetically asked if a new General Conference was necessary, since Aparecida was not yet fully incarnated in the Latin American and Caribbean Church, and especially considering that it still had so much to give to the universal Church. Instead, he proposed the organization of an Ecclesial Assembly. This should take up the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and bring together all vocations and states of life (bishops, clergy, religious life and laity) to deepen Aparecida, in line with the experience of the Synod of the Amazon.
3. But a concern of Pope Francis remained open: to know those aspects that are considered pending from Aparecida. The debts of the Latin American Church with Aparecida.
4. This document reviews the background and historical contexts, and systematizes a series of personal interviews with various relevant actors who participated in the Conference. It presents the contributions that they consider substantive and the "debts" in relation to the understanding of mission as a permanent state, pastoral conversion, the reform of ecclesial structures, clericalism and the care of the common home. In addition, they point out proposals on how to advance in the pending tasks and identify new challenges in the current reality that could not have been foreseen, in the dimension they have reached, fifteen years ago.
5. In this sense, it is useful to read this document together with the challenges and pastoral orientations of the Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean.



HOW WAS IT POSSIBLE TO APPEAR?

6. The road that made it possible to reach this V Conference was not an easy one. In May 2001, a CELAM Assembly was held that called attention to the great changes that had occurred after the IV Conference of Santo Domingo (1992). It was time to ask the Pope to convene a new General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. At the CELAM Assembly in May 2003, it was decided that the Episcopal Conferences would begin to get involved in this proposal. In February 2004, the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences agreed that the theme could have as its axis the vocation of Christians to be disciples of Jesus Christ for the life of our peoples. There, the Central Commission was constituted to help prepare for the V Conference, if it was finally confirmed.
7. In May 2004, after three years, St. John Paul II clearly and forcefully expressed his decision that Latin America should continue its own tradition of holding these general conferences. It was a very personal decision of the Pope, who wanted to respect the historical path of the Latin American Church. In November 2004, a document of participation was sent to the Episcopal Conferences to encourage dialogue and receive proposals.
8. In this context, on July 7, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI approved the theme of the V Conference, expressed as we know it: "Disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ, so that our peoples may have life in Him". On October 14, 2005, during the Synod of Bishops, the Pope received four Latin American Cardinals (Errázuriz, Rubiano, Hummes and Bergoglio), who expressed their desire that the V Conference not be held in Rome but in Latin America, with the presence of the Holy Father. In the midst of this conversation, Pope Benedict decided that it would be held in Brazil, next to the Sanctuary of Aparecida, in May 2007. Two months later he sent the prayer to pray for the V Conference.
9. CELAM began to work arduously organizing seminars, conferences, symposiums and meetings with specialists to collaborate in the preparation of the Conference. The topics were diverse: media, presbyterate, business and politics, Marian theology,

cultural changes, women, missiology, etc. These were very enriching meetings, with participants from all over the continent contributing their diverse points of view.

10. With these inputs and the contributions of all the countries of the region, the Synthesis Document was drafted in January 2007. Cardinal Francisco Errázuriz (president of CELAM), Bishop Andrés Stanovnik (secretary general), Bishop Víctor Manuel Fernández (rector of the Catholic University of Argentina), Father Sydney Fones (assistant secretary), Bishop Ricardo Ezzati, Bishop Santiago Silva Retamales, Father Mario Franca Miranda, Consuelo Vélez, Father Francisco Merlos and Sister Rosa Moreno participated in the drafting of the document.
11. The development of the Conference, which began on May 13, 2007, was marked by the inaugural speech of Pope Benedict XVI, which widened the space for discussion. So much so, that one observer marveled at the diversity of positions and how they achieved consensus or majorities. From a faith perspective, it is interesting what a delegate relates about what happened at the Pentecost celebration, on May 27, 2007: "it seemed that everything was illuminated and the diverse views opened the way to a document, widely agreed upon, which was concluded in the remaining three days". There is no doubt in her mind: the Holy Spirit was at work in Aparecida.
12. Aparecida is also an event that allows us to understand the pontificate of Francis. It is a contribution of the Latin American and Caribbean Church to the Universal Church, even though it is a process that continues in the Ecclesial Assembly and is still developing.





THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

13. History is essential for a proper understanding of events. The last fifty years, from the Rio de Janeiro Conference to the Aparecida Conference, were full of profound transformations. To this end, it is relevant to recover the sequence of events, which we synthesize through the decades.
14. One fact emerges with force, and allows us to understand the missionary impetus of Aparecida: to take up again the regional response to the Second Vatican Council, with the hope of renewing its optimism. In this regard, it is worth remembering that the Second Vatican Council (which produced the profound renewal of the Church in our time, listening to the voice of the Spirit) arose at a time of great enthusiasm, of many utopias, in a climate of euphoria experienced above all by a Europe that was rebuilding itself after the Second World War. The two decades, the 1950s and the 1960s, when CELAM was born, were the most optimistic of the last centuries.
15. In 1952, the National Conference of Brazil (CNBB) was formed. In 1955, CELAM was founded as a result of the first General Conference in Rio de Janeiro. Also in those years, Caritas was created in almost all our countries. And in January 1959 Pope St. John XXIII announced the Council, the idea of which was enthusiastically accepted by all. From then on, hopes were concentrated on the great event of the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the middle of the 1960s.
16. However, even before the end of the "decade of optimism", the symptoms of successive crises that would compromise the application of the Council began to appear. The first was the "student rebellion" in 1968, an event that strongly manifested the crisis of modernity and perplexed many theologians. A very significant coincidence is that in the same year in which the Church in Latin America gathered in Medellín to generously welcome the Council, Europe was frightened by the crisis of modernity and began to seek security in the return to institutional refuges, in a movement contrary to the Council, which had proposed the reconciliation of the Church with the "modern world." The Catholic intelligentsia, especially the young university students, found in the Council a propitious and contemporary support to enter the harsh debate in the cloisters, in the midst of the reform, in front of other young people who saw in the Cuban Revolution a path for Latin America and the Caribbean.

17. It is important to keep these facts in mind in order to understand the difficulties in the application of the Council, and also the lack of harmony between the Church in Latin America and the concerns of Rome, which was closely experiencing the tension of the cultural crisis in Europe. A quick look at the following decades shows a sequence of crises that have had a profound impact on the motivations of Aparecida.
18. The 1970s saw the "oil crisis", with soaring prices and the emergence of the "petrodollars" phenomenon, which western banks assimilated and transformed into easy and abundant sources of loans to developing countries. At the institutional level, guerrilla groups appeared and the expansion of military dictatorships that used kidnapping, torture and assassination as common practices.
19. In the 1980s, the debt crisis deeply marked our countries and continues to this day. It was the transition from "productive capitalism" to speculative "financial capitalism".
20. The end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s saw the crisis of the real socialisms, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, as a symbol of the great political transformations in Eastern Europe, which led to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.
21. The 1990s saw the arrival of globalization, under the command of neoliberalism, which proclaimed privatizations, the abandonment of the "social welfare state" and collective utopias, the deregulation of the state, the exasperation of individual success and financial power, the indiscriminate opening of markets (with the pretension of being the definitive solution to the problems of development), the "single truth" that would lead history from then on, without contestation. Christians did not have the capacity to add content to globalization: solidarity, the common good, care for creation, etc.
22. These events had a global impact, but especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, where violence, unemployment and poverty increased. At the same time, inequality, corruption and drug trafficking increased, and the destructive exploitation of natural resources was reproduced in an amplified manner.
23. In this context, it did not take long for the impasses caused by an exclusionary and concentrating economic globalization to manifest themselves: 1. 2. Increase in exclusion and violence. 3. 3. Crisis of ethical values. 4. Loss of cultural and subjective identity. 5. 5. Crisis of solidarity.



24. Thus, the new millennium, which seemed to be arriving with an air of utopia close to its realization, began, on the contrary, immersed in a profound civilizational crisis that deeply touched all institutions. The Church, dormant for more than a decade, reacted by seeking to recover the enlightenment offered by the Holy Spirit at the Second Vatican Council.
25. This is the historical framework in which the V Aparecida Conference was held. The problems to be faced were not simple! The Latin American and Caribbean Church had just signed the "option for the poor", in Medellin; the "preferential option for the poor", in Puebla; and the "preferential option for the poor, which is neither exclusive nor excluding", in Santo Domingo. An option that gradually became blurred, until before the inaugural speech in Aparecida, where Pope Benedict XVI affirmed that "the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith".
26. But the deeper the crisis, the greater the opportunity for the Gospel to preserve its validity as a fruitful proposal for welcoming the excluded, for fraternity and cosmic reconciliation. The more evident the human collapse, the more the way opens for God's action.



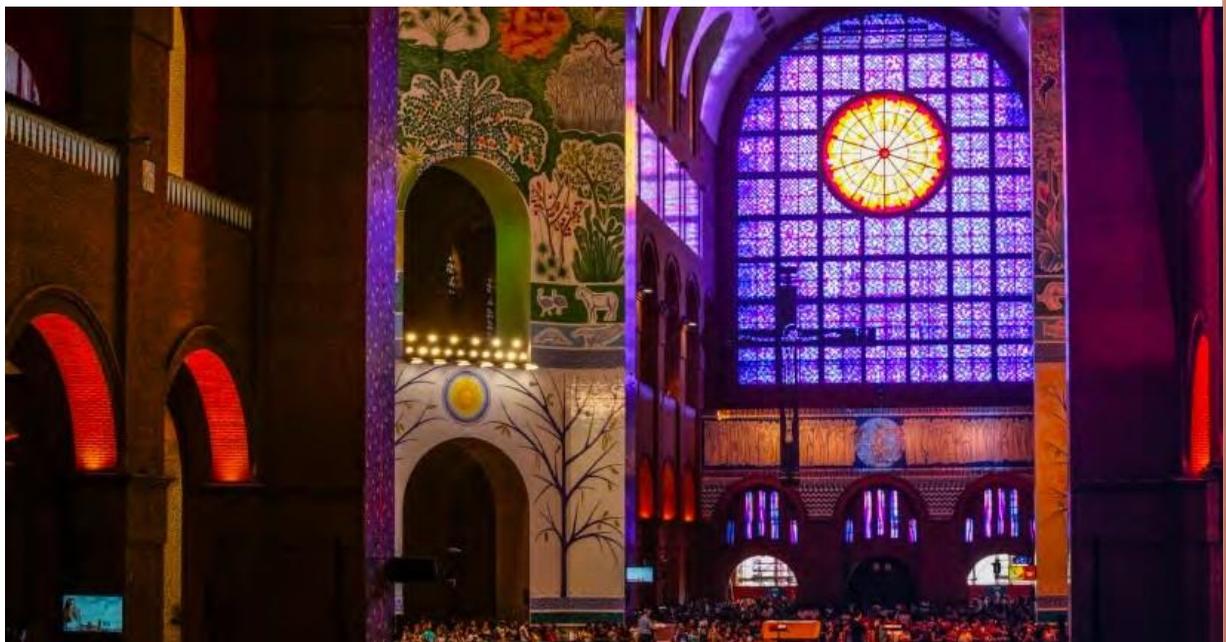
IV

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE APARECIDA CONFERENCE

27. Throughout its 500 years of history, the Latin American Church has shown a vital transforming force. After the Second Vatican Council, it became more determined in its missionary vocation expressed in the Conferences of Medellin, Puebla, Santo Domingo and Aparecida. Discovering the validity of the Gospel of Jesus and the ways to reencounter Him was the basic task at stake with the V Conference.
28. Indeed, Aparecida was presented as a privileged moment, the hour of grace, the great opportunity, a propitious occasion for the Church to listen to the calls of the Spirit through reality, which cries out for a fruitful re-encounter with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and for new forms of ecclesial expression.
29. In this sense, the great achievement of Aparecida is to have recovered the sense of a continental Church with its own characteristics, bearing an original path and with the capacity to make substantive contributions to the universal Church. Through Aparecida, the Latin American and Caribbean Church resumes its march reaffirming its fisonomy and idiosyncrasy. It is its own missionary and pastoral experience that matures and expresses itself in Aparecida, from which it constitutes a contribution to the universal Church. The Holy Spirit showed its ways, its new ways!
30. Continuity and creative renewal are given to the main pastoral lines of the previous Conferences. A Church centered on mission and on the evangelization of culture. A Church that includes integral, environmentally and socially sustainable human development. A Church that strongly installs the value of a pastoral care that assumes the preferential option for the poor, called to pay attention to the vulnerable sectors: youth, adults, women, children, migrants, the sick, native peoples. A Church that thinks of new ways of doing politics, professionalizing it, taking care of the common good and the common goods.
31. Aparecida calls us to walk along the path of a new pastoral conversion, based on the communitarian dimension of faith. For Aparecida, it is urgent to overcome the intimate view of faith, a kind of itinerary of a Christianity without Christ, without Church, without community, pruned of those questions that are the essence of the Gospel. The Conference introduces the idea

of a center in Christ and in the peoples, from Christ to the peoples. Each ecclesial community must be a powerful center radiating the Kingdom of life. This mission is to go to the essential proclamation, which is the proclamation of Christ, the Lord who loves, who saves, who is alive.

32. From this concern, Aparecida makes a call to mission, to a Church in permanent outreach, to overcome the confinement in small groups. It calls for the formation of ecclesial communities in a permanent state of mission: a centrifugal mission where each ecclesial community should be a center radiating life in Christ and attracted by the power of love. In order to do this, it is necessary to set out on a quest, to stop waiting, to abandon comfort, to take on the uncertain. The Church is called to enter into a permanent state of mission, transforming mentalities and structures so that they become effectively missionary. In this context, the need to revive pastoral work in small and medium-sized communities arises from Aparecida, where believers can feel closer to the figure of the parish priest and, based on the Word of God, spread and contribute to the evangelizing mission, taking into account the context that surrounds them.
33. Aparecida refines the figure of a Church of missionary disciples. Mission is inseparable from discipleship, and we must all be missionaries. The missionary is someone who does not go in his own name, but is sent by the Church. Mission must be communion. In turn, we are all disciples, and we need to relearn, to listen again to the Master. The disciple must be committed to the mission, to an encounter with Christ that produces life and helps us to live better.

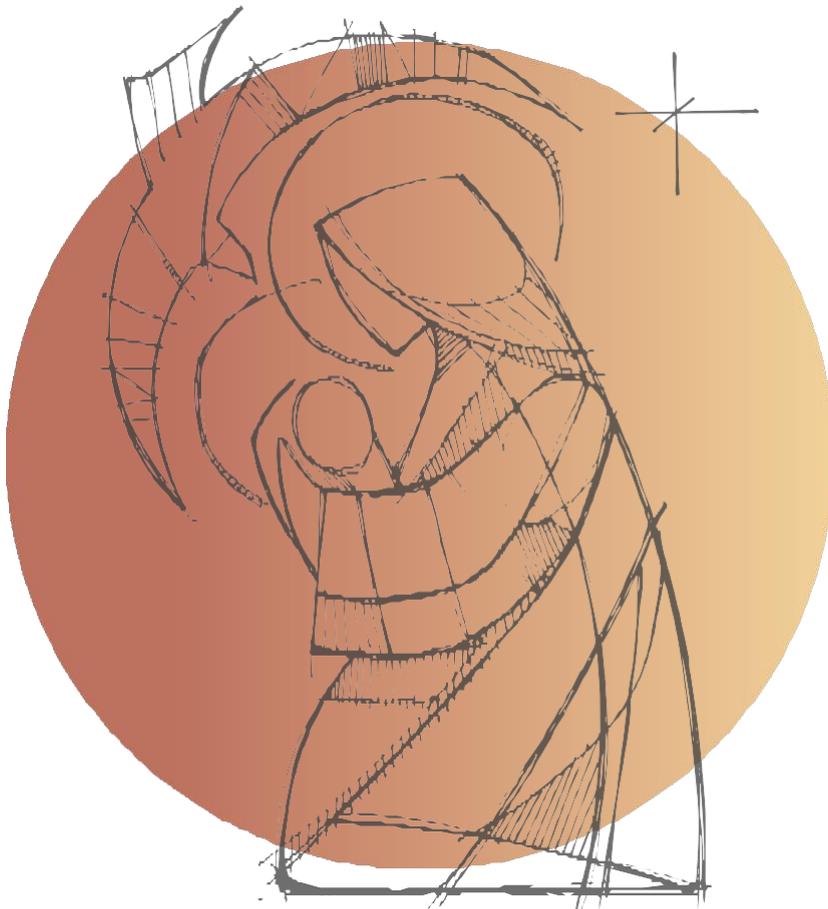


34. In this sense, Aparecida envisions a Church that is all about discipleship, in a constant process of evangelization. In this way, emphasis is placed on missionary spirituality and particularly on the problem of the formation of pastoral agents. The new missionary discipleship must be able to be lived:
- a) a personal encounter with Jesus; a personal experience of Christian faith;
 - b) a solid theological-doctrinal formation; and, also,
 - c) insertion into the community, community life as the place of encounter with Jesus Christ.
35. But Aparecida leaves no doubt as to the purpose of this missionary and disciplic conversion: "so that our peoples, in Him, may have life". The intimate relationship between evangelization and human promotion, integral human development, is taken up again here. The "for what" is extremely important, because it indicates the finality of everything, both of discipleship and of mission. This means that everything we do is to communicate and promote the "overflow" of life, so that people can live a life worthy of the children of God. For this we need to show that a relationship with Jesus Christ does not make us less happy, but helps us to develop fully and to enjoy existence more. We want people to live fully, integrally; therefore, poverty, pain and abandonment are painful. Everything the Church does or teaches should be manifested as the offering, defense and promotion of a dignified, full and happy life for all.
36. For the same reason, Aparecida is the reaffirmation of a Samaritan and prophetic Latin American Church: a Church of solidarity, welcoming, companion on the road, advocate of the poor. The preferential option for the poor is rooted in Christological faith, it is an option of God himself. He always takes up the defense of the excluded, the oppressed, the defenseless and those who suffer injustice. Aparecida reaffirms that missionary discipleship should not only reach isolated individuals, but also peoples, transforming cultures, institutions, and favoring integration among Latin American nations. The Church must not be preoccupied with itself, with its own self-support, but must place itself at the service of this full life for all.
37. Aparecida calls us to welcome the "new subjects of the Church", those who until now have not felt properly integrated and who are not only the object of pastoral attention, but also responsible for this transformation of the Church. They can add their own gifts and stories for a correct reading of the Gospel from the context in which they find themselves.
38. Aparecida also introduces new challenges that should be the object of pastoral action, including the shared role of men and women as co-protagonists in the evangelizing task. The mission must permeate with the Gospel the societies and cultures of our times.

countries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. We must accompany the people in the social and environmental challenges they have to face, from life that has not yet been born to life in the sunset, including the gifts of the earth and its biodiversity.

39. In Aparecida, there was also a broader series of relatively generalized concerns among its protagonists, which can be highlighted:

- a) the biblical animation of all pastoral ministry that allows a more direct contact of the faithful with the Word of God;
- b) the centrality of the Eucharist, ensuring that everyone gets to enjoy the Sunday banquet;
- c) the renewal of the preferential option for the poor, making it more concrete and closer;
- d) the need for a pastoral style characterized by closeness, making us accessible and able to speak the language that is significant today;
- e) the importance of reforming all ecclesial structures so that they may be effectively missionary, eliminating those that do not fulfill this finality; and
- f) the intention of promoting and accompanying the Church's commitment to public life.



V

DEBTS, DIFFICULTIES AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

40. Brothers and sisters, there remains the sensation that the Aparecida discourse has permeated the language of the Latin American and Caribbean Church. However, the same does not always happen with ecclesial praxis.
41. In the following paragraphs, different views on the main aspects in which there are pending issues, which must be taken up as a pastoral challenge, are integrated.

Mission and mission statement

42. The concluding document of Aparecida proposed the realization of a Continental Mission, which was understood by some as an activity to be carried out, without assuming the sense of advancing towards a Church in a state of mission, in a society that has changed. This is no longer a time of Christianity, but in a pluralistic society. In this sense, we remember the metaphor used by one of the founders of CELAM, Bishop Manuel Larraín, when he said that "it is not that the fish have changed, but that the water has changed".
43. Although Aparecida signified the completion of the effective entry of the Latin American Church into the universal Church, which seeks to recover the practice of the first Christian communities, it is evident that the Latin American and Caribbean Church is still far from being a Church on the way out, of missionary disciples, a concept that Pope Francis installed during his pontificate.
44. It seems that the concepts of mission in its paradigmatic and programmatic dimension were confused, reducing the meaning of Continental Mission to a single and same program of pastoral action in the whole continent. In this way, the possibility of understanding that the reality of each country and particular Church is different, and that each community must undertake a particular path of pastoral conversion, based on a theology that assumes the cultures and what they contribute to the ways of reflecting and speaking about God and Jesus Christ, was ignored.
45. In this sense, the challenges to live the state of permanent mission are to recover the missionary zeal with a disciplic identity, expressed, among other aspects, in:
 - a. To value today's world and promote inculturated faith, where people appropriate the Gospel in their own way, going a step further, allowing the new aspects of the Gospel to be expressed. The Gospel never exhausts its

plurality of meaning, which is why it is necessary to abandon conservationist positions of resistance.

- b. To give decisive impetus to a Church that goes out to meet people, as a friend and guest, not as a colonizer. In this encounter, new pastoral responses should be discovered.
- c. To be at the side of those who suffer, sharing their pains and sorrows, encouraging their hopes and joys.
- d. To go out of the comfort zone to meet people in their daily lives, announcing the Good News of Jesus Christ.
- e. Dialogue with the world of politics, social, cultural, business and work.
- f. Enter the new places of evangelization, for example, the digital world.

Pastoral conversion

46. Similarly, the concept of renewal or pastoral conversion (which includes the areas of ecclesial conscience, actions, relationships of equality and authority and the structures of the Church) has been incorporated into the language and projects of a Church on the way out, but this conversion is far from complete. The implications it has for the life of the Church have yet to be discerned and assumed. There has not been enough appropriation and internalization of the guidelines of Aparecida to make them the path of the Latin American and Caribbean Church's journey.
47. In this sense, some pastoral leaders have been very slow in putting into practice the great transformations called for by the Fifth Conference. It was not possible to create the channels for pastoral conversion to permeate hearts. Synodality is still not expressed in the effective participation of all the baptized, lay men and women, in the pastoral decisions of the communities. We need a Church that goes out of itself in search of new horizons to transmit the Gospel, but also to open itself to them. To open the doors to go out, but also to open the doors to welcome people in their great cultural diversities, social and life contexts.
48. This reality demands a variety of initiatives, according to the pastoral creativity of each parish, diocese or Episcopal Conference. Some suggestions are the following:
 - a. To assume the internal missionary challenge in the face of the resistance of some ordained ministers, religious men and women, as well as lay men and women, to the change of mentality and transformation of structures.
 - b. Responding to the challenge of unity in the face of a certain division and polarization regarding the pontificate of Pope Francis. There are some who consider themselves openly opposed to his magisterium and pastoral proposals. Others are apparently



They assume his initiatives, but show passive resistance to any transformation. And also those who truly, in word and deed, walk along the paths traced out by his Magisterium.

- c. To advance in the ecclesiological understanding of the People of God, by virtue of which all persons are equal in dignity, insofar as they are baptized.
- d. Generate new languages for the proclamation of the Gospel, which are significant for the interlocutors in the place where they are.
- e. To grow in a greater Latin American and Caribbean identity, valuing the diversity that exists within the continent.
- f. Accompany the communities in the incorporation of the synodal dimension in their pastoral practices. It is not enough to talk about synodality, it must be lived.

Reform of structures

- 49. Another deficit with respect to Aparecida is the reform of structures, an expression of pastoral conversion, which still needs to be addressed with its own strength. The risk of not advancing in this direction is to limit oneself to a reform that does not touch the heart and only promotes administrative and functional improvements or updates.
- 50. Once again, the message has taken hold, but there is no reaction. The structures remain more or less the same as before, despite the fact that *Evangelii Gaudium* has taken up this aspect with force, relaunching its proposals.



51. Some suggested actions in this area are listed below:
- a. Activate the pastoral and economic councils in the different ecclesial instances.
 - b. Discern the appropriate size of parishes, so that they can organize themselves and live their sense of community of communities. That the communities be small, on the scale of the people.
 - c. To make the periphery the center, leaving the pyramidal conception, in the key of a Church going out.
 - d. Discern whether the current structure of each Episcopal Conference is the most suitable for fulfilling its pastoral and prophetic mission.
 - e. Continue with the process of renewal of CELAM, promoting a greater harmony of the Latin American and Caribbean Church with the great pastoral guidelines of Pope Francis.

Clericalism

52. Clericalism slows down the processes and strength of our mission. It is still present in the daily and institutional life of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is a pending debt that is expressed in poorly exercised power relationships, with authoritarian, self-referential traits, unwilling to listen. Clericalism hinders us from opening ourselves to a new scheme of participation, where all the members of the People of God truly participate because of their common dignity. This infantilizes the exercise of non-priestly ministries, so necessary for the proclamation and living of the Gospel in a pluralistic society.
53. From the momentum of the journey together proposed by synodality, we must move towards a baptismal Church that recognizes in pastoral action the contribution of the baptized to build the Church, in a spirit of listening, dialogue and discernment. Some ways to advance in this direction are:
- a. To strengthen formation in the itinerary of missionary discipleship, in a lay perspective, so that they may assume their role in the Church with an adult view of the faith, based on an encounter with Jesus Christ.
 - b. To foster listening, dialogue, discernment and co-responsibility in the exercise of animation and authority, as a way of living missionary discipleship.
 - c. To train for the different ministerial responsibilities, understanding them as a service, which should be exercised in a communitarian way.
 - d. Identify and systematically implement actions to overcome structures and practices that perpetuate clericalism within communities and the Church.

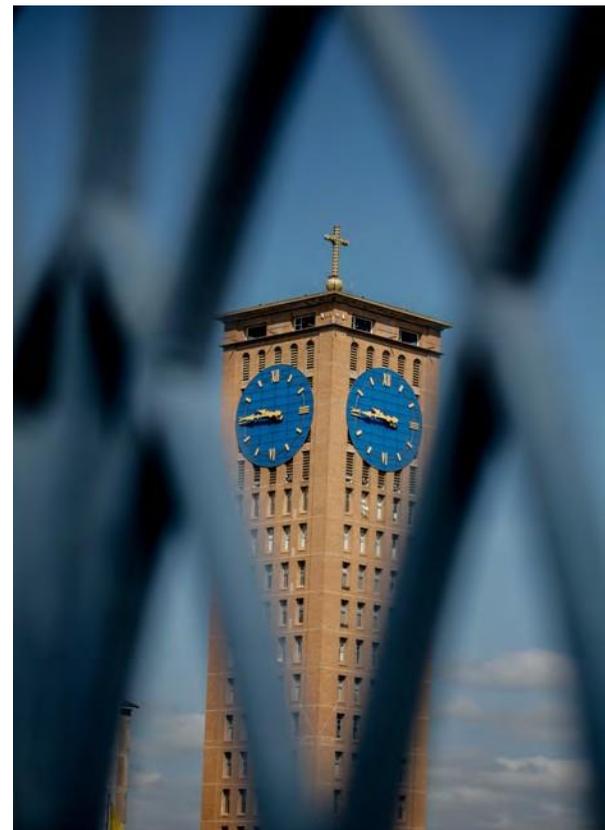


Care of the "common home"

54. In Aparecida, the importance of not losing sight of the serious situation of the "common home", degraded in its biodiversity, was stressed. The prophetic insistence of many Brazilian bishops made it possible to observe a reality that is also characterized by abuses and social and structural exclusions in rural and urban areas, against poor workers, peasants and native peoples. All this put on the agenda the need for a renewed evangelizing action of the Latin American and Caribbean Church in these areas. This perspective, which was born in the context of the Amazon, implied awakening the whole Church to integral ecology. It is the space for the emergence, maintenance and promotion of life that is at risk. Although there have been notable advances, it will be in itself a pastoral challenge pending for a long time to come. Apare-

This pastoral orientation has been strengthened by the Encyclical *Laudato si'* and the Apostolic Exhortation *Que- rida Amazonia*, issued by Pope Francis, and by the emergence of the Apostolic Exhortation *Que- rida Amazonia*. This pastoral orientation has been strengthened by the Encyclical *Laudato si'* and the Apostolic Exhortation *Que- rida Amazonia* - given by Pope Francis - and the emergence of the original structure of the Ecclesial Confe- rence of Amazonia.

55. By way of suggestions, the following initiatives are proposed to promote the care of the common home:
- Integrate the challenges of climate change into the formation of missionary discipleship.
 - Incorporate care for the common home into the agenda of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.
 - To deepen the theological scope of this pastoral initiative.
 - Articulate the challenges of the common house with the initiatives of the San Francisco and Santa Clara economies.



VI

"NEW THINGS" EMERGED AFTER THE APPEARANCE OF THE

56. The Aparecida Conference was held in 2007; it was impossible for it to foresee all the changes that would take place in the Latin American and world reality. Some of these "new challenges" were identified in the still open process of the Latin American and Caribbean Ecclesial Assembly. At present, therefore, they are the subject of discernment and the search for pastoral responses. We identify the following topics:

Anthropology

57. In society there is a change in the conception of the basic identity of the human being that must be understood in order to provide an adequate pastoral response. An idea of the individual has emerged that starts from the self-perception of one's own identity and responds to the subjective tendencies of each person. This substantially modifies the bonds and the way of conceiving life, placing it on the margins of God and transcendence. That is to say, the identity of the human being would no longer need to transcend himself. This is a very profound change that it is important to discern in order to offer a com- prehensible response to today's society.
58. One of the effects of the pandemic was to enhance individualism, focusing on one's own security and needs, increasing fear and distrust of others. The confinement in the small world increased the questioning of the State, the weakening of support networks and in many cases the decline of solidarity. It will be necessary to develop pastoral initiatives to reverse this situation and enhance the efforts that are being made.
59. The passage from dehumanization to transhumanism, unimaginable fifteen years ago, but already a reality. The decay of what it means to be a worker, a laborer, in a world that increasingly wants to dispense with human labor. Transhumanism is to move from human labor to robots, who do not have unions, who do not need social benefits. In the logic of profit maximization, it is more attractive to prepare a robot than to employ the labor of a worker, who at the end of his active working life will have to be paid a pension and take care of his basic needs.

60. In the midst of a world that is falling back into the temptation of war and violence as "legitimate" means of exercising or attaining power, the Church must work actively in the search for peace and justice. We must be aware that God has our intelligence and our hands to intervene in today's reality and to perfect Creation.
61. In the spiritual life there appear "privatizing tendencies" of religiosity that obscure the social dimension of faith. It is necessary to remember that an adult faith nourishes action with prayer and avoids the temptation of mythical and magical mentalities of divine action.

Synodality

62. Pope Francis gave special emphasis to synodality as the method proper to the ecclesiology of the People of God, making it an important challenge. The need to live out the equal dignity of all the baptized in pastoral life is strongly felt. This must be expressed both in ecclesial structures and in pastoral actions. In this regard, the new constitution *Prædicare Evangelium* provides very clear guidelines.
63. Global society can no longer be understood as in a state of Christianity. The Gospel is not known by many people. It is necessary that, from the communities, synodically, its members enter into dialogue with the different spaces of society as missionary disciples.

Women's participation in the Church

64. It is urgent to respond to the challenge of respecting women's dignity. It is a cry that goes up to heaven that women participate in a more protagonist way and in decision-making spaces. It is a right arising from the gift of baptism received in the Church itself.

Ecclesiastical abuses of power, conscience and sexual abuses

65. The pain caused by abuses of power, conscience and sexual abuse within the Church - actions that are inconsistent with respect for the dignity of the human person - leads to questioning, alienation and loss of legitimacy of the Church itself. This type of situation also diminishes the evangelizing commitment, makes pastoral agents feel more fragile and diminishes their capacity to express the voice of the Church in the face of the diversity of political, social and economic issues that especially affect the poorest and most vulnerable.
66. The Church is not credible if it does not adequately address the way in which abuses are dealt with. For this reason, it is necessary to adapt the procedures for dealing with abuses.



The company has been able to meet the requirements of truth and transparency, as well as the accompaniment and reparation of the victims.

Welcoming diversity

67. The discussion on gender issues and the accompaniment of the LGTBQI+ population, considering the advances that science shows in this regard and, of course, the mercy of Jesus.
68. The new dynamics of the family reality that leads to reflect on the pastoral response.
69. The "married priests" who are asking for a more active participation in the Church. At present, a relevant number of them are organized and desire a more concrete role, contributing pastorally with their formation and vocation.

Realities specific to Latin America and the Caribbean

70. Among the realities of our continent, it is necessary to highlight the presence of indigenous and afro-descendant peoples. There is a strong need to offer a relevant channel to the incipient indigenous and afro-descendant pastoral.
71. Approximately 80% of people in Latin America and the Caribbean live in cities of more than 50,000 inhabitants (UN Environment Program, 2022). To a large extent, our evangelizing action continues with rural structures and methodologies, which do not consider the emerging transformations. An example of this is that many of the metaphors and symbolisms used refer to rural reality, which is distant from urban language.
72. The new geographic and existential peripheries: people sleeping on the streets, drug addicts, drug trafficking and corruption, human trafficking. The "surplus and disposable" have grown.
73. The Popular Movements as subjects of social change, containment and representation of broad sectors that do not feel taken into account by political parties or traditional trade unions. Pope Francis has insisted on the accompaniment of their search for Land, Housing and Work.
74. It is necessary to evaluate the need to generate liturgical rites specific to the Latin American and Caribbean culture, such as the one being developed for the Amazonian rite.



Politics and economics

75. Polarization and lack of dialogue are evident in many countries, with a weakening of democracy, the rise of populism and totalitarian tendencies.
76. The deterioration of the quality of life and the increase in the levels of inequality and poverty, which have been exacerbated by the post-pandemic economic crisis. This aggravates the problem of being a continent with Christian roots and at the same time the most unequal in the world.
77. The growth of the migration phenomenon in Latin America, which in Africa was mainly seen from the point of view of immigration to the United States, currently has movements throughout the continent, expressed in migratory flows that generate social and pastoral challenges in almost all countries.

Ecology

78. Concern for the care of the common home began in Aparecida and has taken on increasing strength. Pope Francis' pontificate offers a global perspective in the encyclicals *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. This religious outlook, empathizes with the concern of the international political arena, which can be seen, among others, in the UN reports.



Science, technology, communication and global information

79. Technification and digitalization in the field of business threatens to dehumanize it. The confluence of biotechnology, nanotechnology and neuroscience, with informatics and robotics generate a space where human work becomes less and less relevant. One of the expressions of the above is the acceleration of distance work and telematic communication, in the context of COVID-19. This poses challenges for education, qualification of workers and a new organization of human labor, in addition to other public policies. Failure to address this challenge in a timely manner may lead to social crises with unsuspected consequences.
80. Another expression of the above is the influence on people's daily life, health and consciousness. In today's society people are increasingly observed and intentionally influenced.
81. The emergence of social networks and the media's power over public opinion are a key to today's world, which in 2007 was incipient. Today it is a new way of sharing information. The concept of media has been replaced by these networks. Each person has the ability to have a massive impact on others, for good and for bad. The dissemination of information is no longer the prerogative or monopoly of a few, but, many times, access to information has to do with simple citizens who have a cell phone or cell phone, and with that the power to disseminate, viralize and distribute information.

Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue

82. In the spirit of highlighting the relevance of the contribution made by other religious traditions to the Aparecida Conference, interreligious dialogue is added. Before the conciliar declaration *Nostra Aetate*, there was no dialogue with non-Christian religions. Today it is deepening. And the Latin American and Caribbean region is a "zone of interreligious coexistence", where there are no clashes or tensions that produce violence between religions. This is a singularity that must be preserved and strengthened.

VII

INVITATION

83. Fifteen years after it was held, the Fifth Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be a beacon that illuminates the pastoral options of the Church on pilgrimage in this land. The Holy Spirit urges us to continue to deepen these paths and to venture into new challenges. A meditative rereading of the Conclusive Document of Aparecida in the light of the Pastoral Guidelines of the Ecclesial Assembly is an invitation to renew our response as missionary disciples.
84. We thank God because as the Good Shepherd He guides and leads us in this time of history. We want our pastoral and community conversion to unite us more closely to Him and to our brothers and sisters so that our peoples may have full life. May Mary accompany us with her maternal love.

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