

DOCUMENT FOR EL DOCUMENTO DISCERNMENT

At the First Ecclesiastical Assembly of Latin America and the
Caribbean

"We are all missionary disciples on the way out".



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ACRONYMS

COP 26: Conference of Parties 26 on Climate Change.

DAp: Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops (CELAM), Aparecida, Brazil, 2007.

DPC: Document for the Way. First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean. 2021.

EG: Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis, 2013.

FT: Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis, 2020.

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In Spanish: Grupo Intergubernamental de Expertos sobre el Cambio Climático.

LS: Encyclical Letter *Laudto Si'*, Francis, 2015.

ODUCAL: Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean.

UN: United Nations.

QAm: Apostolic Exhortation *Dear Amazon*, Francis, 2020.

RH: Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, John Paul II, 1979.

SN: Narrative Synthesis "Listening at the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean 2021.

VG: Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, Francis, 2017.

Introduction

A new *kairos*: the Spirit at work
in the Latin American and
Caribbean Church



1. When Pope Francis, in his video message of January 24, 2021, summoned us to begin the journey towards the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, he invited us all to participate fully in this new experience, walking together as the People of God. This is the first time that we have held an Ecclesial Assembly - and not only an Episcopal Assembly - in our Church, in this region. In this we experience the newness of the Spirit who surprises us and leads us along new paths of conversion and personal, community and institutional renewal. Many people, men and women of different ages and from different vocations and ministries in our Church, participated with great interest, joy, dedication and commitment through the different modalities in the listening process. For many it was a rewarding experience to discern in a communitarian way, listening to each other and together listening to the Spirit. We are living a *kairos*, a time of grace, which God gives us to renew our love for Jesus and our desire to follow him more faithfully to proclaim with joy the Gospel of the Kingdom of God that is already present in our midst. The Spirit of Jesus is acting powerfully in our Latin American and Caribbean Church, creating something new that is already emerging.
2. This *Document for Community Discernment* has been elaborated from the multiple contributions of the People of God to the listening process. The active participation of so many people has been a grace, a strong experience of synodality. We invite you to read the Document slowly, in a prayerful and discerning attitude, that is, giving space for God to speak to us through its letters. The questions proposed throughout the text invite us to contemplate the different aspects linked to each of the central themes, reflecting on them as we walk together as "pilgrims in love with the Gospel, open to the surprises of the Spirit

1FRANCISCO . *Homily at the Holy Mass for the Opening of the Synod of Bishops*, October 10, 2021.



¿...NO ESTOY
YO AQUI
QUE SOY
TU MADRE...?

1. The horizon and purpose of the First Ecclesial Assembly



3. The First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean is taking place on the horizon of the 500th anniversary of the Guadalupean Event (2031) and the 2000th anniversary of our redemption through the death on the cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ (2033), a date that reminds us of the founding events of our Christian faith.
4. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the first evangelizing and missionary disciple of this continent. It is significant that she appeared to Juan Diego, a representative of the native peoples and the poor, men and women of diverse languages and cultures. It is not by chance that the Virgin of Guadalupe made Juan Diego, ambassador of her message of conversion to the Gospel and renewal of the faith that springs from the encounter with Jesus Christ and his Good News, because the 'little brunette of Tepeyac' - as she is also known - is a sign of reconciliation and interculturality that encourages us to weave among us, individuals, communities and peoples of diverse cultures and life contexts, relationships in which we recognize and welcome each other with love, as brothers and sisters in Christ, helping each other to grow in humanity and solidarity and to care for life, especially that of the most vulnerable.
5. As we move toward the 2000 years of our redemption in Jesus Christ, let us keep in mind that the center and essence of our faith is that God "manifested his immense love in Christ who died and rose again" (*EG* 11). In the Resurrection of Jesus, God recreates and renews all creation. As missionary disciples we are called to bear witness to the new life in Christ that we have received as a gift from God, and which at the same time commits us to share it with our brothers and sisters. The Risen Christ walks with his people and is "a constant source of newness" (*EG* 11). This truth is to be welcomed with wonder and openness by the Church that we form together.
6. The First Ecclesial Assembly takes place, in turn, on the horizon of the synodal journey towards the XVI Ordinary General Assembly, to be held in October 2023, in Rome. Pope Francis considers that the phase of active participation of the People of God on the way to this Ordinary General Assembly is already an important and integral part of the Synod, in view of the purpose expressed in its title, which involves the universal Church: "For an

Synodal Church: communion, participation and mission". In fact, the *Preparatory Document for the Synod* affirms that "walking together, and reflecting together on the road travelled, the Church will be able to learn, from what she will experience, which processes can help her to live communion, to achieve participation and to open herself to mission."² For this reason, both Pope Francis and the General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops are very interested in listening to the experiences and learnings that emerge from the development of the First Ecclesial Assembly and from the process of listening prior to its realization. We are bringing a novelty to the universal Church by holding for the first time an Ecclesial Assembly in which the various sectors of the People of God are actively participating.

7. In this First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, which is taking place 14 years after Aparecida, we are gathered synodically as disciples of missionaries. We wish to recall the theological and pastoral contributions of the V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops in Aparecida. We wish to discern together the will of God with his Church in this region, on the horizon of the two significant dates, 2031 and 2033, in order to formulate the priority pastoral orientations that will animate our common journey for the coming years. In contemplating our reality, with its challenges and potentialities, we reaffirm our pastoral commitment so that, in Jesus Christ, our peoples may have full life (cf. Jn 10:10).
8. The Church in Latin America and the Caribbean has made a long journey over the past decades that has favored a growing synodality, which we are still learning and developing. A review of the General Conferences of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate, from Rio de Janeiro (1955), through Medellin (1968), Puebla (1979), Santo Domingo (1992) and Aparecida (2007), shows that the Church in this region has been a pioneer in many areas of reception of the Second Vatican Council and continues to be so. The novelty on the part of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean in the reception of central concepts and orientations of Vatican II is also expressed in various categories such as 'new evangelization' and 'new evangelization'.

2 General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops. *Preparatory document for the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, 1.

We are also seeking a 'pastoral conversion' towards new ways of understanding and doing pastoral work in very diverse contexts and of generating new ecclesial organisms that facilitate and promote an ever more deeply rooted synodality in our Church.

9. Since Medellín and Puebla, the preferential option for the poor has been a central characteristic of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. In order to walk together in faith, the millions of poor men and women of the continent must be included in the communion of the People of God. In this regard, Aparecida tells us that "the same adherence to Jesus Christ is what makes us friends of the poor and in solidarity with their destiny" (DAP 257), an essential and indispensable characteristic of a truly synodal Church. In the same way, Aparecida called attention to the Amazon and the need to promote a joint pastoral ministry in that territory. With this, in a certain sense, it prepared the way for the Amazon Synod (2019), which in its preparatory phase, with extensive listening in the Amazonian territories, and in its post-synodal phase, is a privileged expression of synodality and has been a source of inspiration for the present Ecclesial Assembly and its listening process. A very important fruit of the Amazon Synod has been the constitution of the Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon (CEAMA), an unprecedented ecclesial organism in the universal Church born in June 2020, and which on October 17, 2021 was canonically erected by Pope Francis. It arises from a pioneering work, whose lessons and fruits the Amazonian and Latin American Church offers from the territory of the Amazon to the universal Church. The current renewal and restructuring of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CE-LAM), expresses the firm commitment of this important episcopal body to synodality, since with the restructuring the foundations are being laid for a synodal Church in the region. It is also worth mentioning that the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious Men and Women (CLAR) has been contributing for a long time to generate a growing mentality and practice of synodality in our Church, as well as Caritas in Latin America and the Caribbean, among other ecclesial instances in the region.

Question for reflection:

First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean

- *What resonance do these words generate in us and what do they inspire us in relation to our vocation to be missionary disciples going forth in a synodal spirit?*



2. An Ecclesial Assembly at the spirit of Aparecida



10. Under the motto "We are all missionary disciples going forth", lay men and women, religious men and women, priests and bishops want to give a new impulse to the discipleship and missionary process proposed by the V General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopate, in Aparecida, starting from a renewed reading of the signs of the times, always with a look of faith "nourished by the light and strength of the Holy Spirit" (*EG* 50) and in consonance with the Magisterium of Pope Francis, especially welcoming *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si'*, *Dear Amazonia* and *Fratelli Tutti*.

2.1 We are missionary disciples of Jesus Christ

11. A substantial contribution of Aparecida has been to highlight the discipleship and missionary identity of the baptized, emphasizing that "the event of Christ is [...] the beginning of that new subject that emerges in history and that we call disciple" (*DAP* 243), showing that discipleship is the result of the encounter with Jesus, is the response to the love given and the beginning of every authentically Christian life, that is, fully human and, therefore, with a clear eschatological horizon (cf. *DAP* 243).
12. From this fundamental fact, Aparecida unveils the most relevant features of discipleship: its origin is in the call of Jesus; the disciple's response reveals his freedom; going 'after Him' manifests a dynamism; and living together involves a relationship with Christ, provoking a process of conversion and rupture with 'what came before'. The consequences of this following are translated into a life 'conformed' to that of Jesus, to the point of sharing his destiny of the cross and his mission of self-giving for others.
13. Aparecida provokes the Church to live an authentic "pastoral conversion" (*DAP* 366) in order to rethink the new Latin American and world circumstances "from a personal and communitarian encounter with Jesus Christ" (*DAP* 11). And this path of pastoral conversion has a novel accent on the person of the disciple, because this task "does not depend so much on great programs and structures, but on new men and women who incarnate this tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of his Kingdom" (*DAP* 366).

nists of new life for a Latin America that wants to recognize itself with the light and strength of the Spirit" (*DAP* 12).

14. The Ecclesial Assembly wants to strongly promote this pastoral conversion based on discipleship and missionary life, mobilizing the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean towards a renewed protagonism of the baptized - the missionary disciples - in the new evangelization, especially of women (*DAP* 458); and mobilizing the ecclesial structure "so that it becomes an adequate channel for the evangelization of today's world rather than for its self-preservation" (*EG* 27; cf. *DAP* 172).

Questions for reflection:

2.2 **We are disciples in the People of Dios** How can we strengthen our identity as missionary disciples?

15. We must understand pastoral conversion from an ecclesiology characterized by the image of the People of God, vitally present in the important in conveniences and obstacles.
 - What helps us in following Jesus and in mission, and what are the most important in conveniences and obstacles?
 - What progress and what debts do we have in relation to the "pastoral conversion" mentioned in the *Aparecida Document*?

Aparecida Document (cf. *DAP* 10 and 25 other numerals). This People, which has a priestly and prophetic character through baptism, comprises all its members as subjects in the Church. Likewise, it is configured by the 'charisms' with a multiple and diverse richness of gifts that are led towards "a unity that is never uniformity but a multiform harmony that attracts" (*EG* 117; cf. *DAP* 162).

16. In this missionary communion "God endows all the faithful with an instinct of faith - *sensus fidei* - which helps them to discern what is truly from God" (*EG* 119). This *sensus fidei* is a prophetic gift of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that makes possible infallibility in believing and in the active witness to

believers in matters of faith, doctrine and life (cf. *DCP* 70). Thus, the Spirit gives the disciples a wisdom that allows them to grasp them intuitively (cf. *EG* 119); and we are also aware that the 'sense of faith' must be understood within a global ecclesiology that integrates the Magisterium, respecting its hierarchical function at the service of the whole People of God, and integrates "the faith of the Church of all times, in which the voice of tradition must resound" (*EG* 240). In the words of Aparecida, "faith frees us from the isolation of self, because it leads us to communion" (*DAP* 156). This also implies our commitment, from our option for the poor, to collaborate in the generation of "a society without the excluded" (*DAP* 135). Aparecida prophetically denounces that many times the poor are not only marginalized but excluded and discarded. Certainly, "the Church's fidelity to Jesus Christ is at stake in defending the rights of the excluded" (*DAP* 257).

17. This journey toward the First Ecclesial Assembly places us in a process of attentive listening to the voice of the Spirit, with a renewed awareness of the "sense of faith," "knowing that this variety helps the various aspects of the inexhaustible richness of the Gospel to be better manifested and developed" (*EG* 40; cf. *DAP* 162). In this regard, as was wisely pointed out in the listening process, "the first thing that is born in our communities is to say: 'let us not be afraid of what is different'".

Questions for reflection:

- 2.3 **A People of God with a synodal spirit**
 - *How do you feel your communities the sense of belonging to the People of God?*
 - *Do we feel we are members of the diocesan Church?*
18. The Assembly is giving shape to a process that invites the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean to make a synodal pilgrimage, under the light of the Holy Spirit, always keeping the challenge of evangelization as its guiding principle (cf. *DAP* 368).
 - *Is there room in our communities for all charisms and are they adequately integrated?*

And this synodality cannot be just a concept or a particular event, but must be embodied in both structures and ecclesial processes (cf. *DPC* 68). Thus, synodality is a natural way of being Church where the laity "are an active and creative part in the execution of pastoral projects for the benefit of the community" (cf. *SDP* 213). This desire emerges strongly in the listening process, where it is said: "We hope that a synodal Church, going out, where all are taken into account, becomes a reality. May listening to the Word of God transform our hearts" (*SN*, p. 111).

19. Because "communion is missionary and mission is for communion" (*DAP* 163), synodality must always be understood in a 'outgoing' dynamism. Without this vision, the Church falls prey to a kind of self-referentiality (cf. *EG* 27). For this reason, the "objective of these participatory processes will not be primarily the organization of the Church, but the missionary dream of reaching out to all" (*EG* 31).

Questions for reflection:

- *How are the links between the various communities of the same diocese and between the various vocations, charisms and ministries?*

2.4 A People of God "on the way out" towards the existential peripheries

20. The understanding of the missionary Church, strongly present in Aparecida as a Church "in a permanent state of mission" (*DAP* 551), invited us to strongly promote the new evangelization by confirming and revitalizing "the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, from a personal and communitarian encounter with Jesus Christ that gives rise to missionary disciples" (*DAP* 11). This missionary impulse was enriched with an updated understanding of the 'new evangelization', which is no longer reduced only to new methods or expressions, but accentuates the interior ardor and the renewal of Christian life itself. From this point of view, the task of confirming,

renewing and revitalizing the beauty of the Gospel "does not depend so much on great programs or structures, but on new men and women who incarnate this tradition and newness" (*DAp* 11).

21. In this sense, Aparecida placed the focus of the Church 'outside herself', disposing her to go out of her own comfort zone in order to "dare to reach out to all the peripheries that need the light of the Gospel" (*EG* 20). It is a matter of "coming out of our isolated conscience and launching ourselves, with courage and confidence (*parresia*), into the mission of the whole Church" (*DAp* 363), which is to bring the good news of salvation to all the territorial and existential peripheries. As lucidly pointed out in the listening process, "we can no longer wait for people to arrive, we must go out to look for them in their own realities" (*SN*, p. 134).

Questions for reflection:

2.5 A people of God that gives life.

22. The process towards the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean has at its heart, finally, to revitalize the dynamism promoted in Aparecida to communicate "a full life for all" (*DAp* 361), knowing that the first road that the Church must travel to fulfill its mission is man, "the road traced by Christ himself, a road that leads immutably through the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption" (*RH* 14).
23. Therefore, the Aparecida proposal emphasized other elements inherent to the mission. Thus, the Church has the task of integral evangelization, radiating in its teachings, in its ethical orientations, in its norms and in all its activity, the "attractive offer of a more dignified life, in Christ, for each one of us".

The mission of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean is to "bring about a dynamism of conversion, humanization, reconciliation and social insertion" (*DAp* 361) (cf. *DPC* 50). This implies a movement towards culture, secularized environments, social and cultural movements, to proclaim the gift of the fullness of life that comes from Jesus Christ, which leads to integral liberation (cf. *DPC* 55).

24. The life offered by Christ, which includes the fullness of human existence in its personal, family, spiritual, social and cultural dimensions (cf. *DAp* 13), is concretized by the Church in an infinite number of ways, among which are the preferential option for the poor, facing the challenge of poverty, the excluded, the common good, integral ecology and the transformation "of structures, especially those that create injustice" (*DI* 4).
25. The Church also concretizes her life-giving mission in the care of the family and the family (cf. *DAp* 431-475), in the care of migrants and in the evangelization of the diverse cultures of our peoples (cf. *DAp* 476-480), which "entails affectionate closeness, listening, humility, solidarity, compassion, dialogue, reconciliation, commitment to social justice and the ability to share as Jesus did" (*DAp* 363).
26. From the above we can see the task of the Ecclesial Assembly to give renewed impetus to the proclamation of a life of dignity for all, so that we missionary disciples may be promoters of liberation from all slavery and protagonists of the globalization of dignity, so that the excluded may have more humane conditions (cf. *DAp* 399ff.). As has been luminously pointed out in the listening process: "the Church faces the great challenge of promoting the dignity of all people, not from a simplistic charity that is exhausted in simple almsgiving, but as a promoter of humanity, of work and dignified life and in the adequate conditions that we all deserve, regardless of color or race" (*SN*, p. 54).
27. This also implies the challenge of working for the transformation of social structures in view of the Kingdom of God (cf. *DAp* 210), seeking "to illuminate with the power of the Gospel the criteria of judgment, the determining values, the points of interest, the lines of thought, the inspirational sources and the sources of inspiration, and to promote the development of the social structures in view of the Kingdom of God" (cf. *DAp* 210).

the life patterns of humanity that are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (*EN* 19; *DAP* 331).

28. Undoubtedly, this path entails difficulties, but, as Pope Francis says, it is preferable to have "a Church that is bruised, wounded and stained by going out into the street, rather than a Church that is sickened by confinement and the comfort of clinging to its own securities" (*EG* 49), a Church that "goes out" to the peripheries, rather than a Church that is afraid of making mistakes and subjected to stiffening structures.
29. Finally, we cannot overlook the fact that in the spirit of Aparecida is the joy of evangelizing, so present in the Magisterium of Pope Francis. That is why he so strongly affirmed the challenge of "showing the Church's capacity to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the vocation received and communicate everywhere, with an overflow of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ" (*DAP* 14).

Questions for reflection:

- *What structures of sin generate oppression and exclusion, and what are the signs of death?
we are called to address urgently as a Church?*
- *How can we grow in evangelizing audacity?*



1024,256

286,640

564,225

3. Listening and discernment: the signs of our time we are most challenged by



3.1 Listening, a spiritual path on the synodal journey of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean

30. In the biblical tradition, listening is the path of encounter with God. He has made us capable of receiving his word in order to enter into a dialogue that makes it possible to discover his action in history, to interpret the present moment, and to give responses of love that generate life in every circumstance in which we live. Synodality draws from this tradition and reaffirms that listening is the Church's way of being, and an indispensable way to seek and find God's will. Within the framework of this First Ecclesial Assembly, the whole Church in the region, with the animation of CELAM, has wanted to encourage a disposition for a genuine attitude of unprecedented listening that is consistent with this moment of ecclesial renewal that we are living, and above all as an unavoidable call to discern the signs of the times and to heed the cries and hopes of the poor, of our sister mother earth, and of all the People of God.
31. In the midst of the toughest crisis of our generation, due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19, the Church began to listen in order to build a *sensus fidei*, without excluding anyone, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. The listening process took place between the months of April and August 2021, thanks to multiple ecclesial instances that became true bridges to reach different places and make it possible to welcome the pains and special needs of the People of God as never before in the region.
32. This process received direct participation from close to 70,000 people from all over our region: 47,000 in diverse community spaces; 8,500 as personal contributions; and 14,000 participating in spaces for reflection in the form of forums throughout Latin America, on the broadest and most diverse topics.
33. Although the numbers are significant for being an unprecedented exercise, it is necessary to reaffirm that listening is a means, not an end, that seeks always, and above all, to find the calls of God in the midst of reality and to uncover the presence of Christ incarnated among us. That is to say, this journey towards the Ecclesial Assembly expresses its dynamism of following Jesus in the very experience of listening, even together with, and beyond the

assembly meeting activities or their documents. Therefore, as a spiritual experience, we offer a series of questions to work on the fundamental area of listening in this *discernment document*:

- a. How has the process of listening and approaching others challenged, confronted and transformed me?
 - b. What experience of God have I had as a result of these dialogues and listening encounters, and what invitations to open new paths are the ones that remain most vivid in my heart?
34. We invite everyone to take up the report *Narrative Synthesis: Listening in the First Ecclesial Assembly*, an essential document for the discernment that we propose in this phase. It is an explicit reflection of the sentiments of faith of the People of God, and of the voice of the Spirit that we are to discern in this assembly journey³ .

Let us pray in a synodal spirit:

- *With the prayer on listening proposed to us by Pope Francis in his Apostolic Constitution *Episcopalis Communio*, n. 14: "Let us ask the Holy Spirit, above all, for the Synod Fathers (here we are talking about those who participate in this Assembly), the gift of listening: listening to God and we listen with him the cry of the people; listening to the people, until we breathe in them the will to which God calls us".*
- *And with this living voice of the People of God that fully reflects the value of listening in this process of discernment: "that, through the method of listening, there is the possibility of putting an end to clericalism, which has always been a great obstacle for our Church. The opportunity to participate as the People of God to contribute ideas and work together gives us hope and impels me to work more for the Kingdom of God" (SN, p. 107).*

3 In this link you can access the contributions generated by the listening process: <https://asambleaeclesial.lat/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Sintesis-Narrativa-FINAL.pdf>

3.2 Signs of our times, criteria of selection

35. The listening process has led us to look at reality as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ (cf. *DAp* 20), allowing us to identify some signs of the times that today challenge us with particular force. Given that, in a particularly dynamic world, many signs of diverse consequences are evident, we have made the effort to highlight some of them which, because of their significance, their cultural implications or their radical evidence, demand from us an attentive and prayerful gaze that mobilizes the Church towards a path of renewed conversion and mission. In this sense, we are aware that some realities, such as that of the poor - the new poor in our societies - are striking and interesting, and are closely linked to various signs of our times. These are realities that have been addressed from different perspectives in the various reflections on the signs of our times that most challenge us.

3.3 The pandemic, a milestone of the changing era

36. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a worldwide pandemic, which implied a generalized confinement of people, a decrease in travel and the closure of many productive and service activities. It meant the shared experience of facing a situation that altered our dynamics of meeting, working and living together and implied a rethinking of many activities that until the beginning of the pandemic were taken for granted and were part of everyday life.
37. The pandemic has caused "an increase in poverty levels without precedent in recent decades and has a strong impact on inequality and employment"⁴. Globally, Latin America is the region with the greatest social inequality. The pandemic highlighted the great inequalities in the region.

4 ECLAC, *Press Release on the 2020 Annual Report "Social Panorama of Latin America"*, March 4, 2021. Available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/presentation/files/version_final_panorama_social_panorama_para_sala_prebisch-403-2021.pdf.

existing inequalities. As a result, inequality indexes worsened even more throughout the region⁵. ECLAC estimates that the total number of poor people reached 209 million at the end of the year, which means 22 million more poor people than in 2019. It is they, men and women living in poverty and extreme poverty, who, in the first place, are affected by the lack of employment and income. This is especially true for women. Many families living in poverty and extreme poverty are suffering from hunger or malnutrition. Due to the precariousness of their housing and the very limited possibilities to take care of their health, many poor people became ill with Covid-19; as a consequence of the precariousness of the public health systems in Latin American countries, many poor people died from Covid-19. In the different societies of the region, women "perform most of the caregiving tasks "⁶.

38. Overcrowding in many modest homes of poor families contributed to an increase in domestic violence. This situation also occurred in families with greater economic resources during the pandemic, as shown by corresponding research throughout Latin America. Those most affected are women and children⁷.
39. In many countries worldwide, in general, and in Latin America and the Caribbean, in particular, the pandemic favored authoritarianism of various kinds on the part of national, regional and local governments, which weakened democracy and in some cases put it at risk. In response to this reality, in several countries of our region many young people and young adults took to the streets in the midst of the pandemic to participate in massive marches against authoritarian regimes.
40. The pandemic also had a considerable influence on behaviors typical of our Latin American culture, such as greeting, hugging, meeting..., even other actions that are signs of fraternity were postponed because they were considered 'dangerous'. The people who participated in the time

5 Cf. ECLAC, *Annual Report 2020*.

6 ECLAC, *Covid Reports-19*, April 2020, p.1.

7 See 3.5 "*The increasing violence in our societies...*"

Some say that "the pandemic has created isolation, unity for the family, deaths", "it has changed everything and urged us to rethink everything", even though many also only underline the pain, the uncertainty, the loss of presence and, concretely, the distancing from the face-to-face participation in the Eucharist and in community life.

41. The pandemic forced us to increase communication mediated by technology, allowing, on the one hand, interaction between physically separated people, but it also revealed the unfair distribution of access to communication networks, the Internet and communication technologies (cell phones, computers).
42. On the other hand, communities responded in different ways to the pandemic. After the initial impact, some reduced their pastoral activity, others only held virtual meetings, prayers and Eucharists, and many went out to meet those most affected by the indirect consequences of the pandemic, such as impoverishment, loss of work, hunger, precarious living conditions. One community that participated in the listening phase is hopeful: "because we have listened to the clear suffering of the people. Because we have accompanied them spiritually through social networks with messages and prayer. Because we have created dining halls for children and the elderly... especially for migrants, that is, health care, especially for the most vulnerable.
43. The painful reminder that this pandemic meant of the fragility of life, of the precariousness in which most of the population of our continent lives, meant for many people a sign of death and hopelessness. This is expressed in phrases such as: "we do not know what will happen in the future, if the vaccines are adequate, if we will return to our former life, etc.". Many people suffer from so-called pandemic exhaustion and grief at the impossibility of burying loved ones who have died from Covid-19. In some contributions to listening, the importance of "accompanying the many unfinished mourning of so many people who have died in the pandemic, and whose families have often not been able to make a closure" (*SN*, p. 13) is pointed out.

44. The pandemic also showed us the enormous capacity to reinvent ourselves, the communities and the people who responded to this new context in an effective way to the needs and the new conditions for action, "because it has changed the rhythm of life, it has left us aware of care and responsibility; for example, being in solidarity with vulnerable people". In addition, it is pointed out that the pandemic has re-educated us "in the way of doing things and seeing life. We have learned to value family, friends and to distinguish what is really essential and necessary in our lives" (SN, p. 13). Jesus Christ, Lord of life, invites us, as he did at the tomb of Lazarus, to recognize the pain of death and loss, and that pain does not leave us paralyzed. With his help we may be able to act in a renewed way, being signs of resurrection.

Questions for reflection:

3.4 Caring for the Common Home, an urgent call

In our opinion, what aspects of our pastoral practices can we improve from what we experienced during the pandemic?

"The environmental crisis is global, but it begins in the particular, at the local and community level. And it is felt especially in vulnerable places" (SN, p. 27).

- *How can we help people suffering from the pandemic to become aware that the*

Lord accompanies us in our suffering?
"The invaluable contribution of the native peoples, their ancestral wisdom, their vision, their communitarian way of living, (...) shows us other ways of a more harmonious relationship with our Common Home, with others, with the transcendent. Their living memory, their denunciation, their resistance in spite of violence, shows us ways to confront those who promote this destructive model" (SN, p.27).

45. The *Document of Aparecida* thematizes care for the environment as an important dimension of the mission of disciples (*DAP* 98). It promotes the awareness that Latin America is the continent with "one of the greatest biodiversities of the planet" (*DAP* 83) and that nature is "a free inheritance" (*DAP* 471) that we are called to care for with gratitude and responsibility. The document denounces the unbridled exploitation of nature that causes destruction and death throughout the region (cf. *DAP* 473), criticizes "predatory development" and stresses the need to "seek alternative development" (*DAP* 474c). Since then, environmental damage and the ecological crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean have increased and the situation has worsened. Awareness of this is expressed in many contributions to the listening process.
46. In the forums on issues related to extractive activities and projects, many people from communities affected by mining projects stated with deep concern that these projects are increasingly advancing. In many cases they cause "serious socio-environmental conflicts, irreversible impacts on socio-biodiversity and surrounding communities" (*SN*, p. 201). Extractivism is practiced mainly in formal and informal mining and agribusiness. There are other related activities that also have a negative impact on the environment and the respective populations when they do not comply with the necessary protection, as is the case with the generation of infrastructure required to transport raw materials to other parts. The same applies to the construction of hydroelectric dams, which in many cases involve drastic interventions in the course of rivers, with multiple consequences for the lives of the people and ecosystems in the region. Many communities are suffering a "water emergency" (*SN*, p. 201) due to large-scale mining and/or extensive agribusiness projects that affect water resources in intervention areas.
47. Often in the territories where projects are implemented, prior and informed consultation with the communities is not carried out, even though national and international laws prescribe it. It is part of the Church's mission to be in solidarity with the affected populations and to demand before the appropriate authorities that they be consulted.

The social dialogue and transparent decision-making processes in all projects where the territories, life and health of the communities are affected (cf. *LS* chap. III, especially 182) must be carried out "first and foremost with the last ones" (*QAm* 26). Dialogue must be "first and foremost with the last ones" (*QAm* 26). The people must be respected "as protagonists" (*QAm* 27). "Their words, their hopes, their fears should be the most powerful voice at any dialogue table" (*QAm* 26).

48. In the contributions to the forums on environmental conflicts and extractivism, there has been an insistent call for the Church to accompany communities affected by mining and other forms of extractivism, to be a prophetic Church that denounces injustices, human rights violations and ecologically irresponsible and violent practices towards Mother Earth, and to do so at all levels - local, national, regional and international - in alliance with other actors in civil society (cf. *SN*, p. 201).
49. Global Witness recorded 227 cases of attacks on environmental activists worldwide in 2020. Of the ten countries with the highest number of recorded attacks in the world, seven are in Latin America. Nearly three-quarters of the attacks recorded in Brazil and Peru occurred in the Amazon region. Many men and women live under permanent threats against themselves and their families because of their commitment to human rights and the implementation of an integral ecology. In the contributions to the listening process, it is recognized that in various places the Catholic Church in Latin America and the Caribbean is a point of reference through its bishops, priests, religious men and women, lay men and women, who, in the light of the Gospel, are present in the communities. They support them in a sustained way in their just struggles for the recognition of their rights linked to their territory and for the respect of human rights, as well as in their sustained efforts for an integral ecology and the care of the Common Home. This is a sign of encouragement and hope for communities affected by extractivism. So are the examples of companies that respect the communities, are sincerely committed to the processes of social dialogue and to an integral ecology. It can be observed that there are companies that

have ethical practices and observe established laws, regulations and procedures, but unfortunately this is not a generalized reality.

50. Many participants in the listening process expressed their concern that "the effects of climate change" that can be observed in different parts of Latin America and the Caribbean "are increasingly intense and affect everyone, but especially the most vulnerable" (*SN*, p. 27). Several contributions emphasize the fact that the current crisis "is not only a crisis of the planet at the ecological level, but is an integral problem of which we are a part, since our common welfare is also affected by the damage we have done to our Common Home" (*SN*, p. 30). The results of the latest report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), presented on August 9, 2021, show that the concerns expressed are very clearly founded. In their research, climatologists have found that climate change is already widespread around the world, is advancing rapidly and "is intensifying"⁸. There is an urgent need to take strong measures "immediately, rapidly and on a large scale" to drastically reduce greenhouse gases and slow down climate change. Many experts believe that the next ten years will be decisive in bringing about the necessary cultural changes in favor of greater care for the climate and the earth; otherwise we will undermine the foundations of our Common Home and head for a climate and ecological catastrophe.
51. Various contributions express the pain and concern felt at the growing number of refugees and displaced persons in Latin America and the Caribbean (cf. *SN*, p. 27). One senses how much human suffering displacement entails for all those who are forced to leave their places of origin because of natural disasters. At the same time, the growing number of displacements within and between countries brings with it a high risk of strong social tensions and conflicts in the new places where displaced persons arrive. The same applies to the growing scarcity of vital goods such as drinking water and food due to climate change. Caring for the environment and the

8 IPCC, *Press release*, August 9, 2021.

climate is an indispensable part of peacebuilding and peacekeeping work.

52. Some contributions state that the Covid-19 pandemic is a "result of the imbalance of nature" (*SN*, p. 27). Concern about the growing imbalance in and between ecosystems is shared by many scientists in various parts of the world; on the basis of their research they warn about the high risks posed by increasing and massive deforestation. The pandemic has shown that it is not possible to have a healthy life on an increasingly sick earth. As the encyclical *Laudato Si'* stresses, everything is connected. Contributions to the listening process show that many people are alarmed by the advancing degradation of ecosystems, which in many parts of Latin America and the Caribbean goes hand in hand with the increasing loss of biodiversity. Awareness is growing that biodiversity plays an important role in the imperative to curb global warming and stabilize the climate.
53. This is especially true for the Amazon. In its pastoral guidelines on the care of the environment, Aparecida calls to "raise awareness in the Americas of the importance of the Amazon for the whole of humanity" (*DAP* 475). This was done especially in the process of the Amazon Synod (2019). As recent studies show, the Amazon is seriously threatened in its existence as it approaches, in several areas, the "tipping points" or "points of no return"; upon reaching this point, vast areas could be transformed into savannah. This would have incalculable disastrous consequences for the climate throughout the earth. The Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network (REPAM), in alliance with many indigenous organizations and multiple social networks, is working to raise awareness of the fact that the Amazon concerns us all. Concern for it is also a demand for justice and solidarity with the people who live there and in particular with the native peoples who seek to care for the Amazon for the good of all humanity. There are voices in the listening process that express deep appreciation for the "invaluable contribution of the native peoples" (*SN*, p. 27).
54. In the contributions to the listening process, several pre-realities are mentioned. occupants in the ecclesial sphere. Some commentaries state that "in the

In most ecclesial spaces and in the daily life of many members of the People of God, there is not much awareness and sensitivity to the pressing need to care for our Common Home. Moreover, it is noted with concern that not a few Christians consider these issues to be alien to the Christian faith and to "ecclesial identity" (*SN*, p. 28).

55. In the midst of the ecological, climatic and cultural crisis we are experiencing, there are also reasons for hope that are mentioned in the listening process: many people are becoming more aware of the fact that the conditions of life for human beings and for most other living beings on the planet are seriously threatened, and along with this there is a greater awareness of the Christian vocation to contribute actively to the care of the Common Home.
56. Another reason for hope, which was mentioned, is that in many areas of the Church there are many creative initiatives, often carried out in coordination with other actors and networks, to make known and promote the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and to put it into practice (cf. *SN*, p. 31). Another reason for hope in Latin America and the Caribbean are the numerous ecumenical and interreligious proposals for the care of the Common Home. In addition, there is the "commitment and participation of young people, with socio-environmental and political activism, with an ecumenical and interreligious outlook" (*SN*, p. 27).
57. To accept God's call in our lives, "an attentive listening to the cry of the poor and of the earth at the same time" (*QAm*, 52) is essential. The present situation of the planet demands an ecological conversion on our part. We are called to assume and live our "vocation to be protectors of God's work. This is not something optional "nor a secondary aspect of the Christian experience" (*LS* 217), but is at the heart of the Christian faith.
58. Integral ecology is based on the notion that in our world "everything is connected" (cf. *LS* 16 and others). For this reason, "a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach" (*LS* 49). In the Amazonian Synod, the Church, listening to the voices of the peoples of the Amazon region, courageously denounced that one of the main causes of the

The main cause of environmental destruction is "predatory extractivism" (*FD* 67); this is also true for many other areas in Latin America and the Caribbean. For the good of our Common Home and of humanity, it is essential to overcome this scourge, which is unsustainable according to ecological and social criteria.

59. The crisis facing our Common Home is linked to a culture of unbridled consumption and a lifestyle without greater ecological responsibility, without responsibility for future generations and without "love for the common good" (*FT* 63). There is an urgent need for a "courageous cultural revolution" (*LS* 114) toward a simple and sober lifestyle and an alternative way of understanding and practicing the economy so that it may be at the service of life and people, especially the most impoverished and vulnerable. It is important to "weave networks with other groups that work for the dignity of people and the care of the environment in order to develop a cultural revolution that orients society as a whole towards the integral care of each person and of creation" (*SN*, p. 29). Undoubtedly, the promotion and defense of human rights is an inherent part of an integral ecology. In his message to the UN Climate Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, Pope Francis emphasized the need for "a renewed sense of shared responsibility for our world," adding that "each of us [...] can take a role in changing our collective response to the unprecedented threat of climate change and the degradation of our common home."

Questions for reflection:

- *In the face of the unprecedented threat of climate change pointed out by Pope Francis, where do we perceive the power of the Spirit that brings new life?*
- *In the current situation of the planet, our common home, what is the significance of to be missionary disciples going out with an option for Integral Ecology?*
- *The Amazon and other biomes in the region (Mesoamerican biological corridor, Guarani aquifer and the Gran Chaco, the glaciers of the Andes, among others) are seriously threatened in their existence. How does this worrying situation challenge us, what does it call us to?*

3.5 The growing violence in our societies: a call for greater commitment to active nonviolence and the promotion of peace

60. The listening process evidences the relevance of this topic in the family and in society. It highlights violence in relation to women, structural poverty, criminality and towards groups representing sexual diversity: LGBTIQI+. Several contributions indicate that violence is also expressed in the treatment given to the land and to so many people, by marginalizing, excluding and discarding them.
61. The issue of violence against women appears with a dual dimension: as a particularized and transversal expression. There are contributions that show expressions of social, cultural and ecclesiastical machismo, which justify violence in the family, society and the Church. Regarding the family, reference is made to the increase and invisibilization of domestic violence. Regarding society, the increase in femicides is mentioned, as well as the invisibility and impunity on the subject. In relation to the Church, the forms of exclusion and imposition of limits on the roles that women can develop are mentioned.
62. It also highlights the increase in poverty in the continent, since poverty is the product of an unequal economic system that has increased its profits as a result of the pandemic, generating an increase in crime, drug trafficking and death rates. Concern is repeatedly mentioned regarding the lack of guarantees for a full life in some countries, which increases migration and the abandonment of territories.
63. As for the Church, some see it as closed in on itself: "it hurts us that our Church finds it difficult to approach the other..." (SN, p. 23). It also hurts clericalism, pastoral violence - expressed in the lack of attention, welcome and accompaniment - and the exclusion produced by the Church towards people of sexual diversity. It is asked to be careful with the expressions of a clergy that is far from reality, that has no approach to the base communities, ecclesial and lay groups. Also, it is invited to avoid silence, bureaucracy, lack of openness and the

lack of dialogue to face the social and environmental problems we are experiencing. There is a constant call to see the world with the eyes of Jesus, with the urgency to recognize the signs of the times in order to respond to them promptly and prayerfully.

64. On the other hand, many contributions made mention of everything that generates hope in relation to the presence of the Church, since there are many experiences of comprehensive care to accompany women and adolescents who have suffered sexual, physical or psychological violence, exclusion or discrimination. Also noteworthy is the work of the prison ministry that accompanies people deprived of their freedom and their families towards a genuine rapprochement with God, and the protection of their rights in cases of police or state violence. Great efforts are being made to promote the human rights of the most excluded people.
65. Among the proposals for promoting a culture of peace, we are invited to strengthen the formative processes of the Church at all levels and in educational centers. It also invites us to incarnate more strongly a spiritual life that fights against individualism, exclusion and discrimination. It is proposed to accompany pastorally and in their socio-political causes the various historically excluded, discriminated and violated populations, including LGBTIQI+ sexual diversity groups, migrant, gypsy, Afro and indigenous populations. Likewise, to promote social, charitable, faith and political pastorals, human rights centers, campaigns and public demonstrations to raise awareness about the types of violence against people and sister mother earth. It is also necessary to encourage experiences of incarnated spirituality with and from young people, because "young people are the hope for transmitting a culture of peace, love and charity" (*SN*, p. 135); "the commitment of young people to a new Church on the move must be prioritized and encouraged" (*SN*, p. 159). Other suggested initiatives include encouraging the creation of peace-building circles and promoting a mystagogical, biblical and processual catechesis, educating in interiority, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Questions for reflection:

- *What are the manifestations of violence in our specific environment?*
- *What means would help the Church assume its role as promoter, manager and guardian of peace through its structures and the Church's educational and pastoral platforms?*
- *What should be the prophetic position of the Church in the face of the different manifestations of violence in our territory?*

3.6 Strengthening democracy and the defense and promotion of human rights

66. The Church is called to serve humanity. She carries out her presence through evangelization in its social dimension (cf. *EG*, ch. 4), the place where the Kingdom of God must be made present (cf. *Mt* 1:15). Certainly, "evangelization would not be complete if it did not take into account the reciprocal interpellation that in the course of time is established between the Gospel and the concrete, personal and social life of man" (*EN* 29); this implies that as missionary disciples we assume "evangelically and from the perspective of the Kingdom the priority tasks that contribute to the dignification of every human being, and to work together with other citizens and institutions for the good of the human being" (*DAP* 384). As Pope Francis expresses it well, "from the heart of the Gospel we recognize the intimate connection that exists between evangelization and human promotion, which must necessarily be expressed and developed in every evangelizing action" (*EG* 178), that is to say, we are motivated and inspired by the Gospel made social body in the Social Doctrine of the Church.

67. One of the social spheres of great importance for the development of peoples is that of democracy, which was analyzed by the bishops in Apareci- da in 2007, and where they recognized "a certain democratic progress that is shown in various electoral processes" (*DAP* 74), but they also made it clear that the electoral route has often been used to obtain power, which is exercised in an authoritarian manner through neo-populist regimes that are often used as a means to obtain power, which is exercised in an authoritarian manner.

have taken advantage of the discrediting of the public institutions of the State and political parties, while at the same time navigating popular unrest. This reality not only has not changed, but has deepened in many countries, spurred by a serious ethical crisis in the exercise of politics, in political parties, as well as in governments, which has generated massive corruption, the purchase of conscience by the economic factor and in some countries by drug trafficking, as well as public policies out of step with the needs of the poorest and the rights of indigenous peoples, which do not respect the land or the ecology, causing growing impoverishment and social inequality.

68. As noted in the listening process, this regrettable ethical crisis of political and government institutions, as well as the absence of the centrality of human dignity in public policies, has led to flagrant violations of human rights and to "some parliaments or legislative congresses passing unjust laws above human rights and the will of the people" (*DAP* 79); All this results in "the loss of legitimacy of public institutions, political leaders and justice systems, without the emergence of exemplary democratic leaderships that promote a culture of encounter and a search for the common good above particular interests"⁹. In this situation, the people feel violated, without rights, repressed, and see that power is used to create laws that restrict freedom; those who suffer most from this situation are migrants, women, native peoples, peasants, those deprived of freedom, workers, the displaced, mother earth, who often do not find mechanisms to reverse this situation; in many places the defenders of human rights, the rights of nature and native peoples have been threatened and even assassinated, as has already been affirmed. The voices that resounded in the listening process express that "the testimony of so many martyrs and defenders of human rights and nature, the resistance of indigenous peoples and communities, defending their rights, gives hope..." (*SN*, p. 37).

9 CELAM. *Process of renewal and restructuring of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council*. Bogotá, 2021, n. 30.

69. Although the Church has done much to avoid these unfortunate situations and to promote human rights within a juridical framework that places the human person at the center, there is still much to be done. As has been well expressed by some voices, we must avoid conceiving the Church "as an NGO, a structure that concentrates on the administration of material and ritualistic resources, without opportunities for listening" (*SN*, p. 162), so they propose "to go out of themselves to reach the existential peripheries, who are convinced that politics, economy and community relations can be recreated, around dialogue, acceptance of the other, shared construction" (*SN*, p. 162). In the face of this complex reality, we must be aware that "the Church does not have solutions for all particular questions. But together with the various social forces, it accompanies the proposals that best respond to the dignity of the human person and the common good" (*EG* 241).
70. Some voices in the listening process have questioned the relevance of the Church in social and political matters; In the face of this concern, it is good to recall what Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said when he affirmed that although "the just ordering of society and the State is a principal task of politics," the Church "cannot and must not remain on the margins of the struggle for justice" (*DCE* 25), a thought that is ratified by Pope Francis when he affirms that "all Christians, including pastors, are called to concern themselves with the building of a better world. This is what it is all about, because the Church's social thought is above all positive and proactive, it directs transforming action and in this sense it is a sign of hope that springs from the loving heart of Jesus Christ" (*EG* 183). In this regard, the laity play a determining role in social life, mainly in politics and the economy. Their responsibility from their faith and from their being Catholics is to "order, manage and transform society according to the Gospel criteria and the patrimony of the Social Doctrine of the Church"¹⁰.

10 FRANCISCO. "Message for the meeting of Catholics with political responsibilities at the service of the Latin American peoples". In: CELAM, Teachings of Pope Francis in Latin America and the Caribbean, p. 250.

social agents with the responsibility "to contribute to the construction of unity and the development of society"¹¹.

71. The rehabilitation of politics to which Pope Francis has called us will take place with an integral rethinking that works "on the basis of great principles and with the common good in mind for the long term" (*FT* 178). For this we need political leaders aware of the need for ethical values in their lives, with a leadership earned by their testimony of service to the people as their own mission, who know how to respond from faith to the temptations coming from the financial and media powers; hence the need for the Church to promote "processes of formation on the identity, vocation, mission and commitment of the laity in social and political life based on the Social Doctrine of the Church" (*SN*, p. 163).

72. In our Latin America and the Caribbean, forms of articulation and networks are appearing, seeking to meet in the sphere of social demands and the right to participation. One of these experiences is that of the popular movements in the construction of a participatory democracy that respects human dignity, human rights, nature through an integral ecology and achieves 'the three T's: land, roof and work'.
-to which Pope Francis has referred¹² - as sacred rights. These popular movements work from the peripheries because from there one can see more clearly, and in our time it is obligatory to "listen to the peripheries, open the doors to them and allow them to participate. The suffering of the world is best understood together with those who suffer"¹³; hence the need to promote the participation of movements and peoples in order to strengthen democracy and ensure respect for human rights, in an attitude of knowledge and love, because "only from this real and cordial closeness can we adequately accompany them on their path of liberation" (*EG* 199).

11 FRANCISCO. "Meeting with the civil authorities of Bolivia". *Ibidem*, p. 99.

12 FRANCISCO. "Message at the Second World Meeting of the Popular Movements". *Ibid*, p. 108.

13 FRANCISCO. *Videomessage at the IV World Meeting of Popular Movements*. October 16, 2021, No. 4.

73. As men and women of hope, we believe in the possibility of creating new structures based on the value of the dignity of the human person in the recognition of his or her rights, but also in the search for respect for Mother Earth and the strengthening of an integral ecology. The emergence of new popular movements of peasants and indigenous people who fight for their rights, the signs of prophecy in the members of the People of God in the denunciation of injustices and the defense of the most vulnerable, the awakening of the indignation of young people in the face of corruption and the lack of guarantees for the future, the formation of new leaders for social and ecclesial life, the positioning of the peripheries as a space for encounter, the scrutiny of the signs of the times in order to discern God's call to serve the social reality, open the field to a greater commitment of the Church to the most disadvantaged. This commitment cannot forget openness to transcendence, because through it "a new political and economic mentality could be forged that would help to overcome the absolute dichotomy between the economy and the common social good" (EG 205). Let us take the risk of dreaming, of creating a new society.

Questions for reflection:

- *How to promote an integral formation from the Social Doctrine of the Church for a greater citizen participation in the spaces of social and political organization, which promotes a creative incidence in the construction of fraternity and social friendship?*
- *How to generate greater interest in the Christian community in favor of the defense and promotion of the human rights of the most vulnerable, of sister earth, as well as to preserve and accompany the life and action of human rights defenders and activists?*

3.7 Commitment to integral education and transformative education

"Education is the basis for all change and is key to the transformation of people's lives and society. An integral education that promotes justice, solidarity and peace. It is everyone's responsibility to collaborate so that educational gaps are closed" (SN, p.44).

*"It is time to look ahead with courage and hope. May we be sustained, therefore, by the conviction that in education lies the seed of hope: a hope of peace and justice. A hope of beauty, of goodness; a hope of peace and justice; a hope of beauty, of goodness; a hope of peace and justice.
hope for social harmony" (Pope Francis)¹⁴*

74. In this globalized world of great scientific and technological advances, where information and knowledge are generators of wealth and, consequently, social, economic and cultural gaps are notably greater, education becomes relevant as a factor of critical thinking and social transformation. An education that places the person at the center and seeks to develop all his or her dimensions, so that being aware of his or her abilities and limitations, he or she can build a life project in openness to God and to others. An education that affirms the dignity of the person expressed in respect, autonomy and the responsible exercise of freedom, that accompanies the human being in the search for the common good, that encourages the construction of fraternity and social friendship.
75. The great educational gap, which is due to the lack of access to quality education for all, should strengthen the Church's commitment to quality education in all sectors of society, especially for those with fewer economic resources and for groups of populations that are traditionally neglected, such as indigenous peoples, the displaced and Afro-descendant communities. This invites us, as Christians, to work for equal opportunities for access to comprehensive, quality public education, making educational justice an important dimension of the Church's mission.

14 FRANCISCO. Videomessage on the occasion of the meeting promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education: "Global compact on education. Together to look beyond". October 15, 2021.

76. As a Church committed to the preferential option for the poor, it is important to contribute from all educational institutions - schools, occupational education centers, colleges and universities - to overcoming the great educational gaps and to generating equitable opportunities in the field of education. Gaps profoundly affect the future prospects of children and young people living in poverty, causing frustration and pain. In particular, girls and young women are affected in multiple ways by the lack of greater justice in the field of education. As expressed in the listening process, many indigenous peoples want to work together with the Church to promote quality Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE), in which indigenous teachers have a leading role and their own identities are reaffirmed. In several contributions to the listening, the desire is expressed that the Church, through the Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (ODUCAL), should promote "cross-cultural policies that combat academic structural racism within the universities of ODUICAL" (*SN*, p. 66) and promote a dialogue of knowledge on equal terms among universities.
77. The Church has numerous educational institutions that offer a relevant contribution to the gestation of the culture of peoples, an education that seeks to be integral and integrating, and that is constantly challenged to contribute to the formation of people with critical thinking, aware of reality, creative in the face of new challenges, committed to the human and social environment and to the planet, who are capable of caring for all lives in their different manifestations and of showing solidarity through tenderness, compassion and generosity.
78. Educating in these complex times implies more creative and dynamic educators who encourage the participation and growth of students from the novelty of their own, opening spaces for active listening, dialogue and joint decision-making with them and their families, thus contributing to the construction of a better integral education. All this implies recognizing ourselves as master craftsmen of the culture of encounter and universal fraternity.

79. The Church recognizes in the university the propitious space to establish a dialogue between faith and reason, and from there to contribute to the development of peoples. The members of the university community live and share the concerns, anxieties, shortages and needs of the different houses of study, and in the midst of all these threatening situations, they also establish relationships with people, actions and concrete experiences that allow them to experience a different reality in the midst of the crisis, seeking to focus the vital energy contributed by each university as a concrete sign of hope, strength and encouragement.
80. In *Veritatis Gaudium*, Pope Francis asks universities to take up the challenge of the Second Vatican Council to overcome this divorce between theology and pastoral ministry, between faith and life, and the need for a "persevering effort of cultural and social mediation of the Gospel" (VG 3). To this end, it presents the following criteria:
- a. Contemplation and spiritual, intellectual and existential introduction into the heart of the *kerygma*.
 - b. A culture of encounter that allows dialogue at all levels, not as a mere tactical attitude, but as an intrinsic requirement for experiencing the joy of truth as a community and for deepening its meaning and practical implications.
 - c. Inter- and transdisciplinarity, exercised with wisdom and creativity in the light of Revelation.
 - d. The urgent need to decisively activate appropriate synergies with the academic institutions of the various countries and with those inspired by different cultural and religious traditions (cf. VG 4).

3.7.1 *Rebuilding the Education Pact Global*

"Every change requires an educational path that brings to maturity a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society" (Pope Francis)¹⁵

81. One of the most outstanding ideas of Pope Francis' message in his call to the Global Education Pact is the sustained hope that a better world is possible through the persevering task of turning it into a 'village of education', where each person assumes his or her role of educating others through his or her occupation, profession, trade or activity, in every area of his or her life. A village formed by all and built on alliances that will be achievable once the capacity to build open human relationships based on patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding is increased. Accompanying this idea, the Pope speaks of a threefold courage that will serve to deepen the capacity to make a pact with the other or with others: "a pact exists when we recognize the other, different from us, not as a threat to our identity, but as a fellow traveler "¹⁶.
82. The Global Education Pact includes the vision of an education that goes beyond the school: it is about accompanying society in the discovery of its educational vocation. The educational village will be a reality if we all recognize ourselves as citizens of the same village and assume responsibility for the education of the younger generations. In this sense, it is necessary to assume the call to establish and strengthen educational alliances "with men and women of culture, science, sports, artists, and operators of the mass media in all parts of the world, so that they also sign this pact and, with their witness and their work, become promoters of the values of care, peace, justice, kindness, beauty, acceptance of others and fraternity "¹⁷.

15 FRANCISCO. *Message for the launch of the Global Education Pact*. September 12, 2019.

16 Global Education Pact. *Instrumentum laboris*. Available at: <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/resources/Risorse/instrumentum-laboris-en.pdf>.

17 FRANCISCO. *Videomessage on the occasion of the meeting promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education: "Global compact on education. Together to look beyond"*. October 15, 2021.

83. Educational policies in the continent should be based on an educational pact that involves everyone, that puts the educational issue on the table not only in the teaching and family sphere, but also in the government project, in the business, artistic and religious fields, This is a path that as a Church we assume responsibly in our mission as baptized persons, in the light of the Word of God, seeking to illuminate the reality of education so that it may be integral and transformative.

3.7.2 *Education popular*

"Popular education is a space that generates cultures through pedagogical experiences that contribute to the expansion of worldviews, thus generating new visions, feelings and attitudes towards reality."

(Listen to Ecclesial Assembly).

84. The Church must continue to contribute, more and more each day, to form people who are committed to transforming the world, confronting poverty, injustice, corruption in all its forms, and the destruction of life and the planet, taking steps towards a popular education based on participation and transformation. Through an education in values and quality that generates a critical view of reality, we can form people capable of getting involved in the construction of a just and egalitarian society for all. For Pope Francis, "it is necessary [...] to unite efforts to achieve a broad educational alliance, with a view to forming mature people, capable of rebuilding the fabric of relationships and creating a more fraternal society"¹⁸.
85. A popular education based on reflection and dialogue is necessary. "It is urgent [...] an education that empowers and opens paths of participation and future for all. And for this, the Church must strengthen the awareness of educating in a network; educational networks that make visible the added value of Catholic education. Education is the platform for social change and in this sense one of the best possibilities to work for the Kingdom" (SN, p. 44).

18 FRANCISCO. *Address to the participants in the seminar on "Education: the global pact"*. February 7, 2020.

Questions for reflection:

- *What challenges do we recognize for the educational institutions of the Church in the continent, within the framework of the Global Education Pact?*
- *How to constitute and implement pastoral processes, at all educational levels, committed to the dialogue between faith - science - technology, in favor of an integral ecology?*
- *How can the Church, the People of God in mission and on the move, promote an integral education inspired by Gospel values with a special focus on the poorest?*



4. Listening and discernment: the ecclesial signs that most challenge us



4.1 A synodal and evangelizing Church: of everyone and for everyone

86. Aparecida called for a Church that is open to diversity, that appreciates and fosters respectful encounter and dialogue among the diverse members of the People of God; a Church that bears witness to the great love of God, that tears down the walls and erases the frontiers that we have built among ourselves when we have not kept in mind the words of Jesus: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so also love one another. By your love for one another, all will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:34). His Spirit urges us to transcend these unjust boundaries and divisions and to recognize ourselves as beloved sons and daughters of God and as brothers and sisters in Christ.
87. The *Aparecida Document* focuses, above all, on socio-cultural diversity in society and the Church; in relation to the ecclesial sphere, it reflects on the diversity of charisms and ministries. It is important to note that in the listening process, on the way to the First Ecclesial Assembly in Latin America and the Caribbean, there are numerous contributions in which the sexual diversity of the members of the Church is also thematized and wants to be recognized and respected.

4.1.1 *The great socio-cultural diversity in society and in Church*

88. Aparecida recognizes and values "the richness and cultural diversity of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean" (*DAP* 56). In this region there are "diverse indigenous, Afro-American, mestizo, peasant, urban and suburban cultures" (*DAP* 56). It is affirmed that "assuming cultural diversity [...] is an imperative of the moment" (*DAP* 59). Fourteen years after Aparecida, members of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, as well as people from other cultural contexts, noted in their contributions to the listening process that in the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean there are still great asymmetries in terms of economic, political, social and cultural power. This reduces the possibilities of indigenous, Afro-descendant and afro-descendant communities to participate in the listening process.

and peasants to have access to a life in dignified conditions, often suffering from poverty and exclusion.

89. There is a request on the part of the indigenous peoples that the Church "accompany" them and treat them as equals, respecting their "worldviews and diversity" (SN, p. 67). It is explicitly requested that the Church "defend the life of indigenous peoples and denounce abuses against the Common Home" (SN, p. 67). It is insisted that at the level of relations between indigenous and non-indigenous people "as pastoral agents, we must treat each other at the same level" (SN, p. 67). Members of indigenous peoples question certain conceptions that Church representatives sometimes have about the issue of indigenous peoples and poverty. The following quote is expressive in this regard: "We do not want the Church to look at us native peoples as 'poor people', because we have much to give and offer from our worldview. The Church must learn, respect the cultural diversity that we have" (SN, p. 67).

4.1.2 *The peoples afrodescendants*

90. In the various contributions by members of the Afro-descendant people, among the aspects that hurt the most are mentioned "economic inequality, unemployment, [and the] lack of access to adequate health care [...] for the Afro-descendant population" (SN, p. 68). Several voices from Afro-descendant communities expressed their pain at the "strong traits of racism, exclusion and abuse in our societies, and even the lack of sensitivity in the Church to the reality and identity of Afro-descendant peoples" (SN, p. 68). It hurts that often members of this people experience a "rejection of cultural diversity, or postures of superiority in relation to Afro-descendant peoples" (SN, p. 68). It also causes pain that many young people of African descent live in situations of increasing violence. Several contributions express concern about the absence of an Afro pastoral in many particular Churches.

91. However, it gives hope to note that "where there is a well-developed Afro pastoral [...], there are pastoral models adequately inculturated, with a rescue of the roots of the Afro-black population, and where there are celebrations full of their own characteristics" (SN, p. 68). For several members of the Afro community it is also a sign of hope that "ministries are being developed with an accent well oriented to the identity of this people" (SN, p. 68).
92. The contributions value the fact that "even in the midst of difficulties, the Afro-descendant pastoral seeks concrete ways to improve the living conditions" of the Afro-descendant people in the continent. It is strongly committed to respect for the dignity of people of African descent and "the struggle for justice" (SN, p. 68).
93. With regard to pastoral orientations, the desire is expressed to "make culture a transversal part of evangelization" and openness to "a true inculturation of evangelization" (SN, p. 70).

4.1.3 People with diverse sexual identities and orientations

94. With reference to sexual diversity, several voices express pain at perceiving indifference and rejection by the Church in the face of sexual diversity issues. We are challenged to perceive "the pain of LGBT-BIQI+ people who feel rejected by the Church" because of their sexual identity and orientation. There is "dismay" that after five years of *Amoris Laetitia* very little progress has been made, "especially with regard to the formation of the clergy and the hierarchy in the face of sexual diversity" (SN, p. 195). As Church we are called to listen to these voices and the pain expressed in them, and to ask ourselves what the Gospel tells us about this reality about which we must acquire and deepen our knowledge in a resolute and at the same time rigorous way¹⁹.

19 Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education. "Male and female he created them". *For a path of dialogue on the question of gender in education*, February 2, 2019.

95. In reference to what gives hope, mention is made of the "Basic Ecclesial Communities"; "spaces such as Padis+ (Pastoral de la Diversidad Sexual) of the Christian Life Community (CVX), that welcome and build on the positive"; "some new ecclesial instances [...] that promote lay participation and respect for sexual diversity"; "citizen participation and social movements that provide new possibilities for dialogue, more centered on the person and the common good, questioning the current model"; "citizen participation and social movements that provide new possibilities for dialogue, more centered on the person and the common good".that promote lay participation and respect for sexual diversity"; "citizen participation and social movements that provide new possibilities for dialogue, more centered on the person and the common good, questioning the current model" (SN, p. 195). 195).
96. Regarding what is lacking in our Church, it is pointed out that there is a need for greater awareness of the reality that "the people of God are diverse" (SN, p. 195) with respect to their sexual orientations and that "persons of sexual diversity also need psycho-spiritual accompaniment [...] as well as] their families" (SN, p. 195) who experience firsthand the pain of rejection and structural indifference within and outside the Church. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the fact that "sexual diversity is a very great family challenge [...] because of the lack of acceptance in the Church, which should be the refuge par excellence based on God's love" (SN, p. 195). We are called to respond as an evangelizing and synodal Church to this reality. In this process, what the Congregation for Catholic Education points out to us is very relevant when it affirms that "a meeting point is the education of children and young people to respect each person in his or her particular and different condition, so that no one, because of his or her personal conditions (dis- ability, origin, religion, affective tendencies, etc.) can become an object of harassment, violence, insults and unjust discrimination. This is an education to active and responsible citizenship, in which all legitimate expressions of the person are welcomed with respect "²⁰.
97. In relation to pastoral orientations, the need for greater formation on issues of sexual diversity to acquire more rigorous and respectful knowledge about human sexuality and to disseminate positive experiences in the pastoral care of sexual diversity, by fostering attitudes of respect,

acceptance and openness to encounter and dialogue with our brothers and sisters, is strongly emphasized. The witness of a committed person

20 *Ibid.*, No. 16.

We work precisely so that men and women of sexual diversity are treated within the Church and in society with the same rights as heterosexuals and with the dignity of being sons and daughters of God. We have a more loving look at our neighbor, and we will continue to welcome fathers and mothers who come to our pastoral ministry in search of comfort and companionship in the face of a Church that maintains a discriminatory look in relation to the issue of sexual diversity" (SN, p. 196). There is a call to overcome discriminatory looks and attitudes and to allow ourselves to be transformed by the Spirit in a Church that welcomes and includes.

4.1.4 People with different abilities (special)

98. Representatives of the population with different abilities and their companions also participated in the listening process. Those who accompany them expressed their pain for the non-inclusion of this population - in many cases - in ecclesial environments. It hurts them that in general "there is still no specialized training to integrate people with disabilities, so that those of us who are actively involved [in pastoral work] can be able to attend to them and help them in the right way to integrate into the community" (SN, p. 199). In several comments it is noted that in most cases it is necessary to implement inclusive strategies (*Braille*, sign language and others) and to pay more attention to the accessibility of physical spaces, so that people with different needs can participate in the activities in parishes, communities and ecclesial institutions. The Church also has the mission to contribute, together with other actors, to build a more inclusive society that generates work for people with different abilities. In the listening session, special emphasis was placed on "implementing ecclesial spaces where the study and (theological) analysis of how people with intellectual disabilities live, feel and express God" (SN, p. 199).

4.1.5 In the light of the Word of God and the Magisterium

99. A synodal Church is called to be a Church open to diversity, a Church of all and for all. This expresses a horizon towards which we are called to walk. The figure or icon of Peter in his conversion process in the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:34f.) can communicate to us something essential about the dispositions necessary for intercultural coexistence. Because of his preconceived ideas and cultural and religious prejudices, Peter at first strongly resists entering Cornelius' house. But little by little he opened himself to the newness of the Spirit, who allowed him to see reality in the light of God and transformed him, as his words at the moment of his conversion show: "I now truly understand that God makes no distinction between persons" (Acts 10:34).
100. In a synodal Church we are called to live a process of conversion like Peter, open to the newness of the Spirit. The great diversity of culture, social, abilities and sexual orientation in our region, call us to generate with creative love intercultural relationships "where diversity does not mean threat, does not justify hierarchies of power of some over others, but dialogue from different cultural visions, of celebration, of interrelation and of revival of hope" (*DAP* 97). It is a diversity that is neither opposed to unity nor built at the expense of it, but rather a "diversity reconciled" (*EG* 230) with unity. A good image of this unity, which Pope Francis often uses, is the polyhedron "where at the same time that each is respected in its value, the whole is more than the part" (*FT* 145). A synodal Church is called to be a polyhedral Church, in dialogue with socio-cultural diversities, religions, identities and sexual orientations; a Church that makes room for diverse spiritualities and ways of incarnating and living the Christian faith with creative love.

Questions for reflection:

- *What moves me/us as I/we read the voices of indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, people with disabilities, and people from the LGBTIQI+ community?*
- *Through these voices, what is the Spirit saying to us as a Church on the way and what attitudes and actions would help us all to form a true multi-faceted Church?*

4.2 The pastoral challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to families today

"Lords, what must I do to be saved? They said to him, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your family. And they proclaimed the Word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house" (Acts 16:30-32).

101. The journey towards the First Ecclesial Assembly has made us look with great gratitude at the great ecclesial event of Aparecida, where Pope Benedict XVI in his inaugural address affirmed that "the family, 'patrimony of humanity,' constitutes one of the most important treasures of the Latin American peoples [...]. The *Document for the Journey* with which he began the listening process led us to become more aware that the life offered by Christ, which includes all the dimensions of human existence, that is, personal, family, spiritual, social and cultural (cf. *DAP* 13), is concretized, among other things, in a commitment to the care of marriage and the family (cf. *DAP* 431-475).
102. Fourteen years after Aparecida (2007), we can see that the challenges for families to remain united and foster a coexistence based on respect, mutual love and care, listening and dialogue, as well as the reading of God's Word and common prayer, are even stronger. This is especially true for the time of the pandemic we are living through. It is increasingly clear that in Latin America and the Caribbean there are very different family realities, which demand pastoral creativity to explore new ways of accompanying them in their different realities. In

the listening process, on the way to the First Ecclesial Assembly, many contributions have pointed out the characteristics of a pastoral care that is oriented towards the human, psycho-social and spiritual needs of families today.

103. An overview of the contributions on the topic of the family offered by the *Narrative Synthesis of Listening* leads us to become more aware that many families, particularly those living in highly vulnerable conditions, have been strongly impacted by the pandemic and its consequences, such as the loss of work and income, the increase in poverty, the precariousness and existential insecurity, the fact that they have had to coexist in very small domestic spaces during times of confinement, in many cases, and a significant increase in domestic violence, The loss of jobs and income, the increase in poverty, precariousness and existential insecurity, the fact of having to live in very small domestic spaces during times of confinement, in many cases, and the significant increase in domestic violence, in addition to the great difficulties in accessing public health services to receive adequate and timely care for the disease and the required treatments; the care at home of family members infected with Covid-19, while protecting other family members from infection with the virus; and bereavement - or the impossibility of bereavement - for the loss of family members. On the other hand, the pandemic has awakened or deepened in many families the awareness that they are 'domestic church' and led them to creatively seek different ways of praying together, reading the Word of God and nurturing their faith as a family. Often several families met regularly and virtually to celebrate faith and practice solidarity, accompanying each other and coordinating actions to support other families around them.
104. At present, many families suffer from an exclusionary economic system, and many are affected by polluted environments, overcrowding and few green areas, especially in the cities. Several voices in the listening process have expressed pain at the visible increase in domestic violence. These situations require our attention and a creative and effective pastoral response, both to protect women and children, who are the most affected by violence, as well as to go to the root of the problem and promote other ways of relating and tools for learning how to live together.

solve conflicts in a peaceful manner. In the listening, people who have relatives deprived of their freedom shared the precarious situation in many prisons regarding the respect of human rights of prisoners. They reminded us of the importance of pastoral accompaniment of the families of those deprived of their freedom. This requires close collaboration between prison ministry and family ministry, and with integral social ministry in general. Several voices highlighted the relationship between the protagonism of families in the education in civil, moral and religious values, with pastoral formation, as something vital. In the listening process, many expressed their concern for the particularly vulnerable family situations of victims of trafficking, of people in human mobility, of people living on the street and of the families of our brothers and sisters of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants. It is recognized that in many places the Church is present accompanying these diverse groups of people in conditions of high vulnerability.

105. In the contributions to the listening process, something primordial is pointed out when reflecting on family pastoral care in a Church on the road to conversion towards an ever stronger experience and practice of synodality: "we must be aware that there are no perfect families; they all have their defects and virtues; and a traditional family is no more than a non-traditional family and vice versa. Both need to be accompanied and feel that they are part of a Church that is inclusive, understanding, tolerant, that transmits hope and security" (*SN*, p. 209). Different contributions emphasize the importance of "creating in all members of the Church attitudes of welcoming, listening, openness, closeness and solidarity, in order to better understand the realities and experiences of families" and to include families in diverse situations in our parishes and communities, "without prejudice, rejection or condemnation". It is a matter of accompanying through family ministry all families and "in all their stages, (also in unwanted situations such as divorce) without any kind of discrimination (*SN*, p. 209)".
106. The accompaniment required by the various expressions of families requires a "comprehensive pastoral plan to assist families [in their needs] with a qualified team (legal advice, psychological care and

(*SN*, p. 210) and a specialized formation of the people -clerics, laymen, laywomen, men and women religious- who work in this pastoral ministry. In times of pandemic and post-pandemic, the pastoral care of bereavement needs to be strengthened, "not only in the face of the death of someone" (*SN*, p. 209), but also to initiate and generate processes of accompaniment that help the inner wounds caused by the loss of family members, neighbors, friends and members of the community to heal (cf. *SN*, p. 209)".

107. Another area of attention in family ministry has to be the family as 'domestic Church'; this has been highlighted by several members of the People of God in the listening process. It is important to see to it that the awareness in families of being 'domestic Church' and the practices of faith sharing in the family are not lost in the post-pandemic time, but are strengthened by the family ministry. In the contributions to listening, another aspect is mentioned: that in family pastoral care there should be an awareness of "the important contribution that families can make to the preservation and care of the environment in their daily lives" (*SN*, p. 209).
108. In several contributions, a strong awareness is expressed that in our parishes and communities the number of older adults is growing and that this reality calls for a pastoral care of older adults, which is already being developed in several places. It is suggested that in the pastoral care of families, alliances should be promoted between young people in our parishes and older adults, recalling the words of Pope Francis: "today we need a new alliance between young people and older adults, of the future, of dreaming together, of overcoming conflicts between generations to prepare the future for all"²¹.
109. In order to support the family, in view of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, the listening process clearly expressed the need to continue along the path marked by Aparecida (cf. *DAP* 437) and to continue promoting projects that promote evangelized and evangelizing families, families that are the first school of faith, in dialogue with governments and society regarding pro-life policies and laws,

21 FRANCISCO. *Homily at the Holy Mass for the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly*, July 25, 2021.

marriage and the family; to promote parish and diocesan centers with a pastoral ministry of integral attention to the family, especially to those who are in difficult situations: adolescent and single mothers, widows and widowers, the elderly, abandoned children, etc. The challenge posed by Aparecida to seek ways to proclaim the Gospel in words and deeds so that it can be heard as good news for the life of different families and to facilitate a personal and family encounter with Jesus who has come so that we may have life and have it in fullness (Jn 10:10) is still valid.

Questions for reflection:

4.3 Young people, protagonists of society and the Church today

• *What attitudes of Jesus do you think we should have when accompanying and attending pastorally to the situation of families?*

"I said, 'Ah, Lord God, I have no authority to speak; I am only a man.' But the Lord said to me, 'Do not say, 'I am too young'; for you will go where I send you and say what I command you. You need not be afraid of them, for I will be with you, to deliver you" (Jer 1:6-8).

110. On the road to the First Ecclesial Assembly, let us remember what the bishops gathered in Aparecida noted with great appreciation: "young people and adolescents constitute the great majority of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean. They represent an enormous potential for the present and future of the Church and of our peoples, as disciples and missionaries of the Lord Jesus. Young people are sensitive to discover their vocation to be friends and disciples of Christ. They are called to be 'sentinels of tomorrow', committing themselves to the renewal of the world in the light of God's Plan" (*DAP* 443).

111. In Aparecida, the bishops were very aware of the reality of youth at that time and observed with concern situations very similar to those we have been able to share in the listening process.

4.3.1 Youth voices in the listening process

112. In the Listening Process, the voices of people in general about the situation of young men and women in society and in the Church were collected, as well as the voices of young people themselves commenting on their own situation. In the various contributions about what hurts the most in the current situation, the following aspects are mentioned: "the pandemic has aggravated multiple risk factors for youth" (SN, p. 86)²²; young people are most affected by the pandemic, and the situation of young people in the Church and in society is not the same as the pandemic itself. 86)²²; young people have to "face "very serious situations associated with the economic and health crisis, various social conflicts, lack of opportunities, the enormous increase in unemployment", [a factor] that has contributed greatly to the increase in juvenile delinquency; "being exposed to situations of sexual, psychological" or spiritual abuse; "mistreatment of women", girls, adolescents and young people; "psycho-affective breakdowns due to confinement"; "increased mistreatment of women", of girls, adolescents and young people; "increased mental and emotional distress due to confinement" (SN, p. 86); "increased violence" (SN, p. 86); "increase in internal and external "mistreatment", "caused by the economic situation" that leads many young people to see this as the only option to have access to a dignified life; "spiritual crises" due to lack of accompaniment in daily life during the pandemic; and "situations of drug use" and other toxic substances that have worsened in "this time of deep crisis". It is also noted with concern that the mass media have a strong influence "on the thinking and mentality of young people," who have few criteria for critical analysis and discernment of the information presented. These young people easily "end up being manipulated and lose the possibility of affirming their own identity". Similarly, the educational gaps - and their consequences - suffered by many children and young people in rural and marginal urban areas stand out. In many places where young people live, "the impact on the common home has increased" due to multiple activities.

22 The following quotations are from the same page of the *Narrative Synthesis*.

socially and ecologically responsible. This reality diminishes the chances of many indigenous youth to remain in their territories.

113. It is worth emphasizing here that in the ecclesial sphere - according to the contributions received - what hurts and worries the most is the following: during the pandemic, in many cases, accompaniment of young people was significantly reduced or completely suspended. This affected many young people who felt abandoned in the face of the shocking experiences brought about by the pandemic. In many cases, there was a lack of creativity in exploring new ways to reach out to young people in the midst of this crisis. The aging of many communities and their priests and pastoral agents is also perceived with concern, because there is a lack of young people who participate in an active and lasting way in the communities and in the parishes. In the contributions to the listening process, it is noted that many young people, although at first they choose to be and participate in parishes, after a while they withdraw in frustration because they perceive "conservative attitudes of many ecclesial bodies that do not appreciate the identity of young people, their experiences, concerns and horizons" (*SN*, p. 86f.). Often experiencing "a vertical way [that] is imposed on them" and that "does not correspond to their meaningful searches, [...] they end up being disappointed and leave the Church and seek other paths of faith" (*SN*, p. 87). Young people sometimes feel that their innovative ideas and initiatives are not appreciated, and there is no possibility of generating new paths in pastoral ministry and catechesis that integrate new styles and languages, more incarnated in the reality of youth. Likewise, in various areas of their lives, secularized tendencies are increasing. Sometimes they are accompanied by aggressively anti-Christian environments. Especially in areas of higher education, "an agnostic and atheistic relativism" (*SN*, p. 87) is growing. It is mentioned in the contributions to the listening process that this presents a strong challenge where it is necessary to encourage an open, communicative, dynamic and interactive catechesis and pastoral care; young people, in many cases, question the existence of God and stop believing.
114. There are increasing numbers of families in which the Christian faith is no longer being passed on to the next generation. This presents new challenges to catechesis and youth ministry. In the first place, there is a great lack of credibility.

The Church's clericalism and, especially, the cases of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse of power, as well as financial scandals, have generated a strong disenchantment in many young people and have led them to distance themselves from the institutional Church. Secondly, there is a lack of diverse forms of pastoral and spiritual accompaniment that express creativity and "audacity of the Spirit" (QA 55), forms that correspond more to the realities, deep concerns and search for meaning of young people through the encounter with Jesus Christ and his Word, in the definition of their life project, vocation and career, in personal recognition and in the face of the diverse expressions of culture or identity. Finally, a more human, close and missionary youth ministry is needed, leaving the vertical scheme; the traditional forms of proselytism and the traditional physical spaces, where many times they are locked up, waiting for young people to approach, do not respond to the current needs of many. We want a youth ministry that allows us to form agents of change for society and the Church.

115. The reality of young people today is very complex and full of contrasts. For this reason, along with the signs that hurt, there are, at the same time, signs of hope that can be perceived and highlighted in the listening process:
- a. The participation of young people in society and in the Church, providing positive initiatives as actors of significant change.
 - b. Many young people have a critical conscience that drives them to be seekers of deeper truths and questioners of schemes that do not respond to their reality, to their need for discernment and to the challenges they face on a daily basis.
 - c. There are a considerable number of young people who are interested and willing to participate in volunteer work - with a social, ecological, ecumenical and interreligious focus. For many, these volunteer experiences have been inspiring and have helped them find a "sense of life" and "their place in the Church" (SN, p. 86). From these positive experiences, many have opened themselves to other experiences in the Church. Many youth volunteering in urban and rural contexts facilitates involvement in human rights advocacy, abuse prevention, advocacy work and work in the field of education (SN, p. 86).

We work together with indigenous peoples in the defense of their collective rights, peace-building and care for our common home, in activities to overcome racism and foster intercultural relations of mutual respect and appreciation, and in a variety of activities that are a concrete expression of the Gospel in different contexts.

- d. There is a great interest among young people in integral ecology, the environmental situation, the recognition of human rights, the defense of women and girls who suffer from violence, the promotion of a more solidary economy and the direct fight against corruption. There are young people interested in revaluing their cultural roots by recovering their traditions. Pope Francis reminds us that "roots are not anchors that bind us to other eras and prevent us from incarnating ourselves in today's world to bring something new to birth. On the contrary, they are a point of rootedness that allows us to develop and respond to new challenges" (CV 200).
 - e. Among the many contributions, we highlight the recognition of young people committed to their education and willing to place their knowledge and skills at the disposal of others. These young people should be incorporated into the organizations and bodies of reflection and ecclesial decision-making at all levels: parish, deanery, diocesan, national, continental and world levels. They themselves demand spaces in which they can be welcomed, listened to and accompanied, and can experience the hope of being active members of the Church and 'pastoral subjects', not just passive objects of pastoral work. "The voice of young people is fundamental, in the Church we are there to listen to them and guide them, but undoubtedly they will be the builders of the paths that society" (SN, p. 87) and the Church need. "Our duty is to accompany them and give them the best tools" (SN, p. 87) that will allow them to forge new paths in response to today's challenges.
116. Let us recall in this context the words of Pope Francis in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*: "I want to emphasize that young people themselves are agents of youth ministry, accompanied and guided, but free to find ever new paths with creativity and daring. [It is rather a matter of bringing into play the astuteness, ingenuity and knowledge that young people themselves have of the sensitivity, language and problems of other young people" (CV 203).

117. In youth ministry, then, the following must be kept in mind:

- a. In relation to young people "it is not only a matter of being social and cultural actors, which they already are, but of being so from a faith rooted in Christ and from the values of the Social Doctrine of the Church" (SN, p. 88).
- b. To make it easier for young people to be evangelizers in the world of youth: "we young people can evangelize through social networks, since they allow us to give witness with freedom of expression and not to remain silent about what we feel" (SN, p. 88).
- c. "Young people are a great treasure of our communities, they naturally have a special energy, perception and sensitivity to the pain of others; to respond to this, it is necessary to promote, create and create spaces for listening" (SN, p. 89).

4.3.2 Seeking new paths with the youth

118. In order to accompany and care for our young people, we recognize the need to continue along the path marked out by Aparecida (cf. *DAP* 446), by way of very specific lines of action, highlighting, among others, the preferential option for young people, the impulse to youth ministry encouraging initiatives of evangelization with a youthful dynamism, the promotion of the encounter with the living Jesus Christ and their following in the Church in the light of God's plan, his Word, the experience of the sacraments, spiritual accompaniment and the apostolate in a specific vocation.

Questions for reflection:

- *What attitudes of Jesus do you think we should have when accompanying and attending pastorally to the situation of young people and their new challenges?*
- *Do you remember any words of Pope Francis to guide us in our pastoral work for young people?*
- *What could you commit yourself personally and as a community for young people? What are the characteristics of your environment and context?*

4.4 From pastoral care in the city to urban pastoral care

119. For an inculturated evangelization in the urban world, the first requirement is to know the city which, as Aparecida affirms, "is the laboratory of contemporary culture, complex and plural" (*DAP* 509), with "a new language and a new symbology, which also extends to the rural world" (*DAP* 510). It emphasizes that "the proclamation of the Gospel cannot do without today's culture", which "must be known, appreciated and in a certain way assumed by the Church" (*DAP* 480). In this particular regard, the *Narrative Synthesis of the* consultation phase for the First Ecclesial Assembly registers, in the Church, a "lack of openness to dialogue and empathetic listening, which would make it possible to face the real problems of the parishioners, considering especially the cities" (*SN*, p. 85). Furthermore, it reveals that "the clergy is often distant from reality, without approaching the daily life of the laity, in the city and in general" (*SN*, p. 85). It shows that they lack openness to the reality of parishioners and dialogue with them in the urban context.

120. In fact, the city is not simply a physical space, but above all a cultural horizon that creates a style of being, a way of living and living together, in short, a new culture. In it there is a change in the relationships between human beings, God and nature, through a greater appreciation and realization of the freedom and autonomy of the individual, with profound consequences for the evangelizing mission of the Church. On the one hand, as the consultation records show in relation to the theme of secularization, the traces of 'modern culture' are part of the face of the city, such as the emancipation of reason from the tutelage of religion and the State in relation to the Church, accentuating the autonomy of the individual from the control of institutions and the neighborhood, the freedom to choose and decide for oneself, fashions, music, consumer society, leisure, patterns of behavior, etc. On the other hand, it is enough to take a close look at the complexity of the city, from the large to the small, to realize the presence of other factors such as the disconcerting interweaving of the modern, the pre-modern and the post-modern, as well as certain contradictions such as the presence of ethnic pluralism and at the same time of racism, tolerance and all types of fundamentalism, inter-religious dialogue and confessionalism, urban and suburban, the urban and the suburban, the urban and the suburban.

The invisible presence of the culturally uprooted, of those excluded and discarded by an economy that kills because it is centered on profit and the market, together with those who attempt inclusive practices to defend life, rights, values, etc., is also present.

121. Especially in recent decades, with the emergence of a globalized world and the gestation of a still incipient planetary consciousness, in the city, instead of an urban culture, there is a mosaic of fragmented cultures, exposed to the hegemony of a globalizing globalization that has turned the planet into a 'global village'. In the cities of this village there is no longer a collective urban subject, but multiple globalized local subjects, interculturally connected, but exposed and defenseless before a globalization that, on the one hand, is the bearer of values and a horizon of new possibilities and, on the other hand, is also the matrix of a 'culture' of the destruction and death of the autochthonous. In the correlation between the global and the local, the global tends more and more to volatilize the local, exercising permanent violence on the endogenous, the autochthonous, diversity, plurality, differences and the different.
122. It is in the midst of this complexity and these contradictions that the Church needs to be present and develop an urban ministry, for God dwells in the city. However, urban pastoral care is not simply 'pastoral care in the city'. Rather, it is a pastoral action incarnated in the urban reality, characterized by its own challenges, lifestyle, languages, symbols and imaginaries. As attested by the records of the listening for the First Ecclesial Assembly, it is urgent to take into account that the accelerated process of urbanization in our continent demands an inculturated evangelization in the city, which makes the transition from a pastoral of the city to an urban pastoral. In this perspective, the *Narrative Synthesis* of this phase of listening registers the imperative of "a greater development of the urban pastoral, especially in the big cities" (SN, p. 85), because "the risk of the absence of pastoral agents in this context hurts" (SN, p. 85). On the one hand, it is noted "the weakness of vocation ministry in the cities" (SN, p. 84), although, on the other hand, it is encouraging to see "young theologians seeking changes" (SN, p. 84) in this space, as well as "the growth of committed people" (SN, p. 84) in this area, as well as "the increase in the number of people involved in vocation ministry in the cities" (SN, p. 85).

with a Church going out into the cities" (*SN*, p. 84). It is also encouraging to note, according to those consulted, "the intensification of formation, catechesis and mission in the cities" (*SN*, p. 84), although the "lack of a greater listening to the laity, especially in decision-making regarding the life of the Church in the cities" (*SN*, p. 84).

123. The Aparecida Conference challenged the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean to a renewed urban pastoral. The bishops pointed out that, in the face of the new reality of the city, new experiences are fortunately taking place, such as the renewal of parishes through their sectorization and the creation of new ministries, new associations, groups, communities and movements. In fact, movements and associations that gather their members around a charism have proven to be an important space for the presence of the Church in the city, as are the practices of popular piety in the sanctuaries, as well as catechumenate initiatives for young people and adults, linked to the fields of study or work.
124. Aparecida also noted attitudes of fear in the face of the complexity of the city, with a tendency to close in on old methods and to adopt a defensive attitude in the face of the new culture (cf. *DAP* 513). For this reason, the bishops encourage the local Churches to a new urban pastoral ministry that is attentive to the varied and complex social, economic, political and cultural categories, composed of elites, middle class and poor; that is open to new experiences, styles and languages; that transforms parishes more and more into communities of communities; that it should support the experience of environmental communities, integrated into communities at the supra-parish and diocesan levels; that it should favor pastoral care for those who arrive in the city and for those who already live there; that it should intensify the ecclesial presence in the urban peripheries, which are growing due to internal migration and situations of exclusion (cf. *DAP* 517).
125. For Aparecida this requires a style of action adapted to the reality of the city in its language, structures, practices and schedules; an organic and articulated pastoral plan that focuses on the city as a whole; strategies to reach out to gated communities, residential buildings and shantytowns; a greater presence in the city's decision-making centers,

both in administrative structures and in community organizations; a decentralization of Church services, taking into account professional categories; specific training for priests and pastoral workers capable of responding to the new challenges of urban culture (cf. *DAP* 518).

Questions for reflection:

4.5 A new place for women in the Church and in the society

126. Listening to the People of God, in the Spirit, brought to light the trajectory and voice of women in the development of urban culture, especially in the Church. In addition to the suggestion made in the Latin American and the Caribbean, it is urgent to listen to the factors that often silence this of whom significant proposals have been put forward?
- Given that the city is not simply a physical space but, above all, a cultural background that creates a way of being, a way of living and living together, what would be the characteristics of a Church incarnated in the urban world?
- Since the development of urban culture for a new society and, in the Church, in addition to the suggestion made in the Latin American and the Caribbean, it is urgent to listen to the factors that often silence this of whom significant proposals have been put forward?
- (*SN*, p. 95). Unfortunately, gender inequality persists in society "in labor, social and political spheres and, ultimately, must be eradicated" (*SN*, p. 19). The category 'gender', which is alluded to in several quotations that appear in the listening, refers to the way in which the difference between the sexes is lived in each culture²³. In the Church, "gender inequality still exists because of machismo, the lack of listening to and empowerment of women" (*SN*, p. 18). It is not always recognized that "women play a preponderant role in the development of every community, society and of the Church, because they are communicators, promoters, strength, mothers and professors" (*SN*, p. 18).

²³ *Ibid.*, No. 11.

nal" (SN, p. 18). However, it is often "dehumanized, discriminated against and excluded, a situation that has increased with the pandemic" (SN, p. 18). It cannot be forgotten that "the true Church of Jesus Christ will be the one that fully recognizes the work of women, and thus also contributes, as a social institution, to a world without misogyny" (SN, p. 95).

4.5.1 *What hurts the most*

127. In the social sphere, what hurts most is "exclusion, discrimination and inequalities" (SN, p. 92), the result of "structural oppression with covert machismo in society" (SN, p. 92), which is expressed in "violence generated against women - intrafamilial, sexual, economic, patrimonial, abuse and sexual violence, femicide, prostitution, human trafficking, etc., in all social classes" (SN, p. 92). Unfortunately, "some women assume this marginalization or rejection as something normal, or minimize it, naturalize it" (SN, p. 92). In the face of this, we need "to be a Church that denounces injustice, the exploitation of women, the violation and infringement of human rights" (SN, p. 94).
128. In the ecclesial sphere, "some authorities, in many cases, are conservative, sexist and clericalist" (SN, p. 92), making it difficult "for women to have access to leadership or management roles in a Church dominated by men, when they are the great majority of the people of God, missionaries, religious, etc." (SN, p. 92). If the Church "marginalizes the laity in general, it marginalizes women even more" (SN, p. 92). This is the case of "various religious congregations relegated to domestic service to men, subordinated to the priest or permanent dia- cone" (SN, p. 92). Historically, "the voice of religious women has sometimes been ignored (minimized)" (SN, p. 92), without due "recognition and support for the strong catechetical and educational evangelizing work" (SN, p. 92), which they perform. There is still present in many ecclesial spaces, "a patriarchal theology, which is not liberating, which does not consider the thinking of women and has not adapted to the new reality" (SN, p. 92). Likewise, "there is no serious reflection on the possibility of receiving ordained ministries for women, when the Church is populated by a majority of women" (SN, p. 92). They indicate that "it hurts that women cannot vote in some of the formal structures of the Church" (SN, p. 92).

4.5.2 Which gives us hope

129. In the social sphere, what gives us hope is "the empowerment of women, occupying places of greater participation and leadership as workers, in governments and social movements, as well as sustaining the family, giving strength and stability to their homes" (*SN*, p. 92). Fortunately, there is "growing awareness of the role of women in society" (*SN*, p. 92), which translates into "the increase of their participation in the various spheres of social life" (*SN*, p. 92), by "the implementation of new laws in favor of their inclusion, such as advances in wage equality" (*SN*, p. 92). The "shared searches and struggles in the movement of urban and rural women, philosophers, theologians, politicians, standing up and defending their independence, their identity and their rights" (*SN*, p. 36) stand out. In short, it is encouraging "the commitment of women despite their wounds and their invisibilization" (*SN*, p. 92).
130. In the ecclesial sphere, what gives us hope is, on the one hand, "the great strength, participation and interest of women in moving the Church forward" (*SN*, p. 92), and, on the other hand, "the advances in their real and equal inclusion as neighbors and protagonists" (*SN*, p. 92). In many ecclesial spaces there is "respect and equality of options in relation to priests and bishops" (*SN*, p. 92), with "participation of women in ecclesial instances, such as giving communion, reading the Gospel, leading retreats, talks, catechesis, pastoral work and many other ministries" (*SN*, p. 92). There is "presence and participation of women in feminist movements in the life of the Church or articulated to it" (*SN*, p. 92). It is worth mentioning "the activities, efforts and work from the pastoral of women, congregations, groups of lay and lay women, which offer comprehensive care programs to assist women and adolescents who have suffered sexual, physical, psychological violence, exclusion or discrimination. The social pastoral and Caritas groups also assist women, children, adolescents and adults who have experienced physical, social, sexual and psychological violence" (*SN*, p. 33).

4.5.3 *The most absent*

131. It is noted that what is most lacking is "support, guidance, formation and spiritual formation" (*SN*, p. 93) for women "in their different roles and areas where they work" (*SN*, p. 93). There could be greater "encouragement and organization of small basic communities for the growth and promotion of women" (*SN*, p. 93) in which, "from the Word, they share life and their history" (*SN*, p. 93). If on the one hand, "in Latin America and the Caribbean there is much participation of women as catechists, or other services for the community" (*SN*, p. 96), on the other hand, "they are not included in the councils where decisions are made at the parish, diocesan, national and world levels" (*SN*, p. 96).

4.5.4 *The most present*

132. It cannot be ignored that women make up "the majority of active participants in ecclesial communities" (*SN*, p. 93) and "have broad participation in the life and work of the Church" (*SN*, p. 93), since "they are the majority in the movements, in pastoral activities" (*SN*, p. 93). However, "they have not been given equal opportunities and rights" (*SN*, p. 93), despite the fact that "they are the most committed to the pastoral work of evangelization" (*SN*, p. 93). They are still not "allowed access to ordained ministries", remaining "excluded from decision-making, both ecclesial and social" (*SN*, p. 93).
133. There remains underlying "a system that generates growing inequality and re-produces a patriarchal ideology, which ends up oppressing women" (*SN*, p. 93). In the end, women lack "greater education to change the paradigm of themselves and their contribution to society and to the Church. When this happens, she raises her sons and daughters in equality of treatment, relationships and participation in the life of the family" (*SN*, p. 93).

4.5.5 Proposals

134. All need to feel challenged by the great "challenge of the full participation of women in society and in the Church" (*SN*, p. 93). In the social sphere, it is urgent to "include women in the economic development of the country and seek gender equity" (*NS*, p. 94), as well as to "strengthen women's rights through networking and teamwork" (*NS*, p. 94), which implies a "broad and open understanding of the realities of the family, which allows us to include everyone, especially women, in their qualitative and quantitative contribution" (*NS*, p. 94). For this, it is important to "encourage and sponsor leadership schools for youth and women in politics and rights with an ethnic, generational and class approach" (*SN*, p. 94), promoting "the formation of an awareness of subjects of rights, dignity and experiences, to give women a fair participation in decision-making in the Church and in the exercise of their citizenship" (*SN*, p. 94). It is urgent that "in the Church and in society, the steps for the recognition of women's leadership abilities and their incorporation into their lives at different institutional and decision-making levels should be accelerated" (*SN*, p. 94).
135. In the ecclesial sphere, it is necessary to begin by "fostering the protagonism of the laity, especially women, moving towards a synodal Church, and less patriarchal in those places where this is still very present" (*SN*, p. 94). It is necessary to "include as a transversal axis of all pastoral ministry the perspective of gender equity and the work of women in different areas, to seek greater equality and the promotion of women" (*SN*, p. 94). It would be very helpful to organize "the pastoral of women, with the purpose of accompanying diverse gender equity tables and strengthen productive projects and accompaniment to peasant, afro-descendant, indigenous and gi- tane women" (*SN*, p. 94). This implies "having stronger joint pastoral lines for the accompaniment of women" (*SN*, p. 94), especially "valuing the richness of the vision of women in decision-making in pastoral life, as an example of inclusion and justice" (*SN*, p. 94).
136. There is an urgent need to "incorporate women into decision-making positions in the Church" (*SN*, p. 94), as well as to "call for changes in canon law and in the ecclesial structure

for women to assume ecclesial ministries" (SN, p. 94). It is time to "seriously re-flex and open ourselves to the possibility of ordained ministries for women, at the service of the Church of the poor" (SN, p. 94). Providing them with theological formation is a duty of the Church and a right of women in it. It is also important to "work more strongly in the prevention of abuse and violence and also to offer professional accompaniment to abused women, without covering up cases, without judging, without isolating, but accompanying" (SN, p. 94).

137. In conclusion, just two pearls from the listening process: "the absence of women in decision-making and ministries slows down the necessary changes in the Church, the renewal of its structure"; "to include women once and for all in the liturgy, in decision-making, in the management of theology, that is, in the government of the Church and its communities with equal rights and obligations" (SN, p. 95).

Questions for reflection:

4.6 Clericalism, an obstacle to a synodal Church

What expressions of patriarchalism and male chauvinism need to be overcome in society?

138. *What changes are needed in the Church for women to be protagonists in the necessary conversion to the passage from a clerical Church to a synodal one, in which no bureaucracy, self-sufficiency or abuse of power can overshadow the action of the Spirit that summons to unity from the awareness of the diversity of vocations and the common dignity of which we are all bearers by Baptism, since in Baptism we have all received the Spirit.*
139. Pope Francis repeatedly invites us to move from a clerical Church to a synodal Church: "[...] it is impossible to imagine a conversion of ecclesial action without the active participation of all the members of the People of God.

Moreover, every time we have tried to supplant, silence, ignore, reduce the People of God to small elites, we have built communities, plans, theological accents, spiritualities and structures without roots, without memory, without a face, without a body, in short, without life. This is clearly manifested in an inadequate way of understanding authority in the Church - so common in many communities where there has been sexual abuse of power and conscience - such as clericalism, an attitude that not only nullifies the personality of Christians, but also has a tendency to diminish and devalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit placed in the hearts of our people. Clericalism, favored either by priests themselves or by the laity, generates a rupture in the ecclesial body that benefits and helps to perpetuate many of the evils that we denounce today. To say no to abuse is to say energetically no to any form of clericalism "²⁴.

140. Closely related to the phenomenon of abuse, the listening process testifies to the widespread perception that clericalism represents a significant obstacle to living evangelical forms of relationships, in accordance with God's will, and that it contradicts the proposal of a synodal Church. Several factors have been mentioned in this regard: the clerical mentality and the misuse of power that favors vertical, abusive and discriminatory relationships; the fact that priests and bishops do not sufficiently share discernment and decision-making processes with their communities; the need for affective formation and for new ways of relating.
141. It is also noted that in some contexts there is a clericalized laity, the fruit of a pyramidal model of Church. Pope Francis himself has highlighted this perspective on several occasions: "the temptation of clericalism, which does so much harm to the Church in Latin America, is an obstacle to the development of the maturity and Christian responsibility of a good part of the laity" ²⁵.
142. There is also a certain consensus that clericalism, sometimes combined with a certain cultural elitism, represents a very relevant factor when it comes to

24 FRANCISCO. *Letter to the People of God*, August 20, 2018.

25 FRANCISCO. *Videomessage on the occasion of the pilgrimage and meeting "Our Lady of Guadalupe, star of the New Evangelization in the American continent"*, November 16, 2013.

The causes that have favored the phenomenon of abuse of minors and its subsequent cover-up must be assessed. Many theological and canonical studies, as well as some international reports, also confirm this reading about the negative effects of these events on the life of the People of God. It seems necessary to review the theology and the pastoral and juridical practices within the Church that favor these painful experiences.

143. The transformation in the exercise of power from a pyramidal to a synodal manner must be assumed at the various levels of the Church's life. In this way these issues could be openly discussed as a community of faith. The ecclesiology of the People of God taught by the Second Vatican Council is the principal theological basis for the reformulation of all ecclesial services, including that of the ordained ministry, in harmony with the tradition of the Church and the demand for its actualization or *aggiornamento*. The listening process points us decisively in this direction and calls us to action, to take concrete, visible and verifiable steps in the service of a better witness to the Gospel in our contexts.

Questions for reflection:

The "temptation of clericalism," as Pope Francis calls it, challenges all believers to renew our commitment to co-responsibility in the service of the witness and mission of the Gospel.

- What would be some of the attitudes to correct in the laity, religious life and priests?*
- What healthy practices and actions should be promoted for a synodal Church?*

It is especially incumbent upon us leaders, at the different levels of the Church's life, to question our ways of proceeding, whether in our personal attitudes or in our institutional practices.

- In what behaviors and practices is our clericalism most visible?*
- Reviewing the observations made during the listening process, what steps should be taken in order to*
What can we offer to the communities we serve?

4.7 Abuse cases in the Church: voices calling for listening and action

144. In the listening process, several voices have expressed sadness and indignation at the sexual abuse of conscience and power by some members of the Church. These voices express indignation, rage and pain at the harm done to innocent people, especially children and adolescents, harm that causes deep traces of destruction and dejection for life in the victims.
145. These voices insistently affirm their dismay at the way in which some sectors of the Church, in various places, showed a perverse indifference to the people affected. There was a tendency to pay more attention to taking care of institutional prestige than to seeking measures of prevention, attention and reparation for the suffering caused to the victims. It is also surprising the slowness in the recognition of the errors and in the attention to the innocent, even in some circumstances there were no sanctions or investigative and penal processes that deserved it. With all the effort that is being made today, we must insist on transparency to investigate these abuses and implement clearer and more effective policies of integral reparation. The credibility of the Church as a witness to the Gospel has been strongly criticized and questioned because of the cover-up of victims. These facts and the concealment of these acts alienate believers, especially young people, from the ecclesial processes.
146. The listening process also detected the inadequate formation and accompaniment of priests, especially in the psycho-affective maturity and the implications of their vocation to the celibate life. There is a need for an integral formation that covers different fields, such as sexual, conscious, power management, economics and leadership.
147. These voices acknowledge with sorrow that abusive practices are deeply rooted and widespread in our societies, but they warn that the existence of evil in other environments does not lessen the specific responsibility of the Catholic Church in some circumstances. In the midst of this saddening and disenchanting panorama, the voices of the People of God also stand out.

with expressions of hope, due to processes already underway of recognition, purification, implementation of justice and reparation in the universal Church and in many particular Churches. In the midst of all this, it is recognized that there is a long way to go.

148. The people directly affected, the victims-although not all survivors of abuse and specialists consider this word to be an appropriate way of naming them-must be at the center of the concerns of the whole process of recognition, truth and justice. They must take an active part as a priority in any process of listening and investigation, reparation and prevention. Because of their traumatic experience, they provide key knowledge that is essential for understanding what happened and for finding paths to transformation and solution. Every measure that is adopted, every concrete step that is proposed, every regulation that is implemented, every commission that is set up, every truth and justice process that is carried forward, must inevitably count on the contribution and the light offered by the personal point of view of the victims. If in recent times particular attention has been paid to the abuse of minors, with a significant number of children and adolescent boys, it is necessary to broaden our gaze to other forms of abuse in which women frequently suffer sexual assaults, assaults of conscience or due to the misuse of power.
149. Integral reparation is a key action in the way of responding to the damage caused. Individual reparation measures (public acts of recognition, concrete forms of medical and psychological support, compensation) are necessary actions. Structural reparation measures such as publication of sentences, changes in regulations to facilitate the processing of complaints, transparency in the processes and training of the personnel involved are some of the requirements for comprehensive reparation for victims, families and communities. It is clear that the responsibility for justice in our countries lies primarily with the national States. It is our duty as the Catholic Church to collaborate in these processes in good faith, with concrete initiatives, making decisions that are motivated only by the search for greater truth, justice and reparation. We should not wait for public opinion or the mass media to urge us to

The initiative in the transformations that are required must come from ourselves, from the entire ecclesial community.

150. Within the actions, prevention policies for the whole Church, carefully studied and wisely applied in each context, should focus, among others, on three important factors:
 - a. Education, so that all persons in the ecclesial spaces may be able to identify inappropriate situations.
 - b. Situational prevention models, as existing data indicate that opportunity plays an important role in the choice of victims.
 - c. Oversight and accountability, providing adequate follow-up and transparency in all procedures adopted personally and institutionally.
151. Dioceses and religious congregations in our continent have dealt with these realities of abuse in different ways. For this reason, it is also necessary to share the work already done and the knowledge already acquired in the churches, to learn from one another. This is a somewhat new field of work, not only for the Church, for which there are no easy and pre-established recipes, and which requires a broad social dialogue and fraternal ecclesial collaboration in order to take charge of the complexity of these situations that touch the human, the spiritual, the juridical and the social.
152. From the year 2000 onwards, in particular, international reports have been published that have offered reflections on the Church, its ways of proceeding, the idea of authority that is transmitted, the canonical procedures in force, etc., in order to point out the causes of what has happened. From various perspectives and sciences - sociology, psychology or psychiatry, or also from a more juridical perspective - the Church has been examined in various aspects of its life and necessary actions have been generated, such as: the selection and formation of candidates for the priesthood; the ordinary life of priests in their ministerial service; the challenge posed by celibacy in the present conditions of life; the limited participation of the laity and, especially, lay people in the processes of discernment, pastoral planning and decision making. To reform inadequate mentalities,

In addition, these reports often offer many proposals that converge with reflections already made in theological spaces that envision concrete steps in the "perennial reform" (UR 6) of the ecclesial community. On the other hand, in each country of our region, an adequate discernment should be made regarding the possible creation of independent truth and reparation commissions, as has already happened in several places. The expert and external viewpoints of the institution seem irreplaceable and their adoption indicates the seriousness and transparency with which the task of renewal is assumed.

153. Universities, study centers, faculties of theology and canon law must ensure their contributions to these processes through various initiatives: theological reflections, field work, research projects, concrete reform proposals that help the Church to take steps forward in this challenge. There are already institutional initiatives in several of our countries that show a path to deepen. Think, for example, of the Center for the Protection of Minors (CEPROME) of the Pontifical University of Mexico, with its multiple initiatives of education and prevention, or, on another level, the important multidisciplinary research published in 2020 by the Catholic University of Chile: *Understanding the crisis of the Church in Chile*. New initiatives animated by sensitivity for the victims and a passion for justice must be born in our educational centers and in our ecclesial communities.
154. In the same listening process, actions have been formulated with precise, timely and verifiable proposals, called to take shape in each local Church, in each religious or lay congregation or institute, in each movement or parish community. For example, the recommendation to define protocols, mechanisms and adequate structures for denunciation, reparation and, above all, prevention of abuse. The need to develop specialized pastorals to deal with abuse and to provide pastoral accompaniment to communities, involving specialized laity and experts from various disciplines, has also been emphasized. In particular, the multiple limitations already identified in the current canonical processes deserve precise and urgent attention. The need for greater celerity and transparency in

The selection of new candidates for the presbyteral ministry, the formation and quality of accompaniment throughout the pastoral life of priests, also calls for concrete, systematic and verifiable interventions. The selection of new candidates for the priestly ministry, formation and the quality of accompaniment throughout the pastoral life of priests, also calls for concrete, systematic and verifiable interventions. The Holy See, through its responsible bodies, our own Episcopal Conferences and many religious congregations, has drawn up criteria and norms for action that should be well studied, zealously applied and even further improved.

155. In general, it can be said that a dynamic of renewal of the whole Church in a synodal key, which is expressed in the most varied aspects of ecclesial life in this document, operates in a positive sense to promote a culture of mutual care, of the responsible participation of all believers, of the promotion of safe spaces for all people in our Christian communities.

Questions for reflection:

In the process of listening, we detected hard experiences lived in these years within the Church, with regard to abuses, which pose multiple tasks for this People of God.

4.8 The Evangelical movement – pentecostal

156. The Evangelical Pentecostal movement has already reached in many regions of the continent: Brazil, Central America and the Caribbean, a dimension of recognition of abuses?
- *Would it be possible to determine the next steps to be taken as a church community? to deal with the different aspects of this complex issue?*

The challenge that we as the Catholic Church must address, sensing its 'urgency and drama', through a new missionary approach that is creative, ecumenical, inclusive and based on dialogue, encounter and collaboration in the social sphere, is relevant and meaningful. The question to begin with is: what is missing for people who have been part of our Catholic Church and are going to look for it in other churches? In reflecting on this question, Aparecida states: "According to our pastoral experience, many times sincere people who leave our Church do so not because of what the 'non-Catholic' groups believe, but, fundamentally, because of what they live; not for doctrinal reasons, but for experiential ones; not for strictly dogmatic reasons, but for pastoral ones; not because of theological problems, but because of the methodological problems of our Church. They expect to find answers to their concerns" (*DAP* 225). This is a question that we must face and we can no longer postpone it in the hope that things will calm down and everything will go back to the way it was before. This is an illusion.

157. The First Ecclesial Assembly is a propitious occasion to question ourselves as a community of believers, in communion with our pastors, on what are the 'new pastoral practices', 'new educational and catechetical paths', 'gestures and actions', 'choices of charity and justice' to stop this hemorrhage of the Catholic faithful towards these other religious movements and, at the same time, as a Catholic Church, to become 'fascinating and attractive' again. Some modest suggestions can, at this level, help us in our reflection.
158. It is necessary to make all our local communities 'communities of relational life' and not just places where 'religious or cultural practices' without vitality, lacking in participation, in anachronistic and distant language. This means going to visit the sick, looking for ways to support those who lose their jobs, being close to families in difficulty, involving everyone in the most important decisions, not being afraid to let people express themselves freely. On the occasion of Advent and Lent we put forward the hypothesis of home visits, a kind of 'popular mission', by proposing prayers in condominiums that allow us to meet people and not wait for them to come to the parish or elsewhere.

159. We are called to be "evangelizers with the Spirit who pray and work" (*EG* 262) and who proclaim with their lives what they have already experienced and take to their hearts, "the joy of the Gospel" (*EG* 1). This demands openness and readiness to explore new paths of evangelization by going out to meet people in very diverse contexts. It requires pastoral creativity to initiate new ways such as, for example: opening our churches, chapels, places of worship, especially in the hours when people do not work: in the afternoon and at noon, organizing festive, popular and song-filled 'Eucharistic liturgies', actively inserting the laity as 'servants of the word and of charity'. Do not center worship only on priests; promote more celebrations of the Word by deacons and catechists. Deploy lay ministries to multiply the offer of simpler celebrations, even in homes, squares.... Many of our catechists and pastoral workers have academic training superior to that of some self-constituted pastors, but they lack audacity and passion.
160. Rethink our presence in rural or peripheral environments, ignored or disregarded for too long, without fearing that the laity will be the ones to take initiatives, to show the close face of being Christians. We need to help children to study, to visit the elderly, to be present both in places of pain - hospitals, institutes - and in the many places of suffering. We need to make people feel that when they need it, they can turn to the Catholic Church.
161. Involve women in a particular way by not relegating them to subordinate or secondary roles, allowing them to freely express the 'affective and maternal face'.
162. It is also important to know the diversity of the evangelical movements that we encounter in our daily lives. With some it is important to establish relationships of friendship and collaboration, within the framework of a 'new ecumenism' that we must creatively invent, overcoming pre-conceived visions that only lead us to make judgments or condemnations, and with others it is necessary to distance ourselves. It is very important to make a careful 'discernment' of the diversity that exists among the multiple faces of contemporary Pentecostalism. Even among the faithful of some of these

In the case of the movements, many 'suffer' from the anti-Catholic proselytism practiced by some of the most radicalized fringes of this great religious galaxy.

163. The *Aparecida Document* clearly expresses the desire, the will and the willingness that in this 'new' evangelizing stage "dialogue and ecumenical cooperation should be directed towards the fostering of new forms of discipleship and mission in communion" (*DAP* 233).

Questions for reflection:

- *What are the faithful looking for when they join other religious expressions that do not we are offering in the Catholic Church?*
- *Many abandon the practice of faith in general, living a gradual process of de-Christianization and religious indifference. What challenges does this reality present us with?*
- *What should we improve or change in our communities?*



In the Spirit, with Mary of
Guadalupe, we are in assembly



164. May we be inspired and encouraged by the example of Mary, who "knows how to transform a cave of animals into the house of Jesus, with a few poor swaddling clothes and a mountain of tenderness" (*EG* 286). As in her apparition in Guadalupe, the Virgin says to us today: "Am I not here, who am your mother? Do not be afraid. Let us be open to the newness of the Spirit!"

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, continue opening roads to the Spirit
and among us actualize unity. Let no
difference diminish love.
Enkindle in us a passion for your Son, for his
Kingdom, and may our trusting yes
grow, like yours, in contact with need.*

*He continues to build bridges and whisper synodal symphonies to us.
Expand the table and invite us daily
to a party where wine is available to everyone,
no one is denied the floor, and
in which all feel that they participate and are then sent out,
as missionary disciples.*

