

Aparecida Document

10. This Fifth Conference sets before itself “the great task of guarding and nourishing the faith of the people of God, and also of reminding the faithful of this continent that by virtue of their baptism, they are called to be disciples and missionaries of Jesus Christ.”⁷ A new period in history is opening up, with challenges and demands, characterized by pervasive discontent which is spread by new social and political turbulence, by the expansion of a culture distant from or hostile to Christian tradition, and by the emergence of varied religious offerings which try to respond as best they can to the manifest thirst for God of our peoples.

11. The church is called to a deep and profound rethinking of its mission and relaunch it with fidelity and boldness in the new circumstances of Latin America and the world. It cannot retreat in response to those who see only confusion, dangers, and threats, or those who seek to cloak the variety and complexity of situations with a mantle of worn-out ideological slogans, or irresponsible attacks. What is required is confirming, renewing, and revitalizing the newness of the Gospel rooted in our history, out of a personal and community encounter with Jesus Christ that raises up disciples and missionaries. That depends not so much on grand programs and structures, but rather on new men and women who incarnate that tradition and newness, as disciples of Jesus Christ and missionaries of his Kingdom, protagonists of new life for a Latin America that seeks to be rediscovered with the light and power of the Spirit.

12. A Catholic faith reduced to mere baggage, to a collection of rules and prohibitions, to fragmented devotional practices, to selective and partial adherence to the truths of the faith, to occasional participation in some sacraments, to the repetition of doctrinal principles, to bland or nervous moralizing, that does not convert the life of the baptized would not withstand the trials of time. Our greatest danger is the gray pragmatism of the daily life of the church in which everything apparently continues normally, but in reality the faith is being consumed and falling into meanness. ⁸ We must all start again from Christ,⁹ recognizing that being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.¹⁰

7. Ibid.

8. J. Ratzinger, *Situación actual de la fe y la teología*. Conference given at the Meeting of Presidents of Bishops Commissions of Latin America for the doctrine of the faith, held in Guadalajara (Mexico), 1996. Published in *L’Ossevatore Romano*, November 1, 1996.

9. Cf. NMI 28-29,

10. DCE 1.

64. Hence, faced with this type of globalization, we feel a strong call to promote a different globalization, one characterized by solidarity, justice, and respect for human rights, making Latin America and the Caribbean not only the continent of hope but the continent of love, as Benedict XVI proposed in the Inaugural Address of this Conference.

65. This should lead us to contemplate the faces of those who suffer. Among them are the indigenous and Afro-American communities, which often are not treated with dignity and equality of conditions; many women who are excluded because of their sex, race, or socioeconomic situation; young people who receive a poor education and have no

opportunities to advance in their studies or to enter into the labor market so as to move ahead and establish a family; many poor people, unemployed, migrants, displaced, landless peasants, who seek to survive on the informal market; boys and girls subjected to child prostitution, often linked to sex tourism; also children victims of abortion. Millions of people and families live in dire poverty and even go hungry. We are also concerned about those addicted to drugs, differently-abled people, bearers and victims of serious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV-AIDS, who suffer from loneliness, and are excluded from family and community life. Nor do we forget those who are kidnapped and the victims of violence, terrorism, armed conflicts, and public insecurity; likewise the elderly, who, in addition to feeling excluded from the production system, often find themselves rejected by their family as people who are a nuisance and useless. Finally, we are pained by the inhuman situation of the vast majority of prisoners, who also need us to stand with them and provide fraternal aid. A globalization without solidarity has a negative impact on the poorest groups. It is no longer simply the phenomenon of exploitation and oppression, but something new: social exclusion. What is affected is the very root of belonging to the society in which one lives, because one is no longer on the bottom, on the margins, or powerless, but rather one is living outside. The excluded are not simply "exploited" but "surplus" and "disposable."

554. Guided by Mary, we fix our gaze on Jesus Christ, author and perfecter of faith, and we tell him with the Successor of Peter:

"Stay with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent" (Lk 24:29).

Stay with us, Lord, keep us company, even though we have not always recognized you. Stay with us, because all around us the shadows are deepening, and you are the Light; discouragement is eating its way into our hearts: make them burn with the certainty of Easter. We are tired of the journey, but you comfort us in the breaking of bread, so that we are able to proclaim to our brothers and sisters that you have truly risen and have entrusted us with the mission of being witnesses of your resurrection. Stay with us, Lord, when mists of doubt, weariness or difficulty rise up around our Catholic faith; you are Truth itself, you are the one who reveals the Father to us: enlighten our minds with your word, and help us to experience the beauty of believing in you.

Remain in our families, enlighten them in their doubts, sustain them in their difficulties, console them in their sufferings and in their daily labors, when around them shadows build up which threaten their unity and their natural identity. You are Life itself: remain in our homes, so that they may continue to be nests where human life is generously born, where life is welcomed, loved and respected from conception to natural death.

Remain, Lord, with those in our societies who are most vulnerable; remain with the poor and the lowly, with indigenous peoples and Afro-Americans, who have not always found space and support to express the richness of their culture and the wisdom of their identity. Remain, Lord, with our children and with our young people, who are the hope and the treasure of our Continent, protect them from so many snares that attack their innocence and their legitimate hopes. O Good Shepherd, remain with our elderly and with our sick. Strengthen them all in faith, so that they may be your disciples and missionaries!293

**Conclusion of the Aparecida Document –
Fifth Conference of CELAM - 2007**

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