



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 240627e

Thursday 27.06.2024

Audience with participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

The following is the Holy Father's address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters,

I am happy to meet the members and counsellors of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America which is holding its Plenary Assembly. I thank Cardinal Robert Prevost for his words. I cordially greet the members, guests, and the team that works daily from the Holy See at the service of the Church in the region.

The three questions that you will try to answer in these days of work are very relevant: *what practices should be promoted in relation to development in the region, "touching the suffering flesh of Christ in the people"? How can the social sphere be evangelized while promoting fraternity in the face of the phenomenon of polarization? What service should the CLA provide to the Episcopal Conferences, to CELAM and to the dicasteries of the Holy See?*

If we look closely, all of these questions not only deal with issues that the current reality forces us to face, but are part of the synodal reform that the whole Church must embrace in order to make the true face of Jesus Christ increasingly visible.

Indeed, the Second Vatican Council has called us to a profound renewal. This is expressed in the speeches delivered by Saint John XXIII and Saint Paul VI at the beginning of the first and second periods of the Council's work. The former spoke of *updating* (Saint John XXIII, *Address at the opening of Vatican Council II*, 11 October 1962, 4), the second of "flourishing renewal of the Church" (Saint Paul VI, *Allocution at the Opening of the*

Second Session of Vatican Council II, 29 September 1963). Even the Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council itself courageously affirms that "Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth" (6).

In the same vein, I like to recall the incisive words of Cardinal Ratzinger when he thought of the "true reform" of the Church: "Reform," I quote, "is always an *ablatio*: a removal, so that the *nobilis forma*, the face of the Bride, and with it also the face of the Bridegroom, the living Lord, may be made visible. Such *ablatio*, such a 'negative theology', represents a way to a very positive goal. Only in this way does the Divine penetrate and only in this way does a *congregatio*, an assembly, a gathering, a purification, that pure community for which we long: a community in which one 'I' is no longer against another 'I'" (*Being Christian in the Neopagan Era*, Madrid 1995, 19).

Through the Constitution *Praedicate evangelium*, I wanted precisely to collaborate in this "ablatio" to renew the Roman Curia and, among other things, to make the CLA a "diakonia" that would allow the Church in Latin America to experience the pastoral attention and affection of the Successor of Peter (cf. *Video Message to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America*, 27 May 2022).

However, the CLA today is not only a case of the renewal of the Roman Curia, but is called to be an active subject that promotes the necessary transformation that we all need, that is to say, to help with discretion, prudence and efficacy so that we live synodality, a dynamic dimension of communion (cf. *Ibidem*), to walk together moved by the Spirit of the Lord in Latin America.

I mention the words *discretion*, *prudence* and *efficacy* to underline that CLA is not called to replace any actor in Latin American ecclesial life. Rather, it is called to encourage them all, with the *simplicity and depth* of one who trusts more in missionary outreach and service than in mere activism. In this way, the CAL must promote with all its interlocutors, both in the Holy See and in CELAM, CEAMA, CLAR, the Episcopal Conferences and all the ecclesial bodies that directly or indirectly serve the Church in Latin America, *a synodal style of thinking, feeling and doing*.

In this respect, providentially, the CLA and the Church in Latin America can find a source of profound inspiration in Saint Juan Diego. As we know, he was an extremely modest and simple indigenous man. Our Lady did not choose him for his erudition, for his organizational capacity, or for his relations with power. On the contrary, Holy Mary of Guadalupe was moved because he knew he was very small: "I am a tail, I am a wing, I need to be carried, to be carried on the back" (*Nican mopohua*, 55). The awareness of his incapacity, accompanied by the discovery of the great love and closeness that the Virgin Mary had for him, allowed Juan Diego to go to the bishop and helped him to speak to him with *charity* and *clarity* about what the Lady of heaven is asking of him. The bishop, who also had a ministry to fulfil, asked for a sign so that he could believe him. Saint Juan Diego obeyed and found the sign on the hill of Tepeyac.

In these scenes we can see with simplicity and depth simultaneous *synodality and communion*. The lay faithful proclaim the good news, trusting fundamentally in the ecclesial and supernatural dimension of their mission, and not so much in their own strength. This is a beautiful experience of synodal conversion! This same confidence also allows him to accept, without complication, the responsibility that the bishop has within the community. The result of this exercise of *synodality and communion* is not only the roses that appear in front of everyone, not only the miraculous image printed on the saint's tilma, but also the beginning of a process of fraternal reconciliation between peoples at enmity. A process that was never perfect, but which undoubtedly helped the birth of a new reality in Latin America. In other words, synodality *ad intra* gives fruits of fraternity *ad extra*.

This is the *inspirational* style that CLA must foster throughout the Latin American region and, when necessary, even beyond it. To *inspire*, not to impose. *Inspire*, *motivate* and *promote* freedom so that each ecclesial and social reality may discern its own path, also following the motions of the Spirit, in communion with the universal Church. CLA must build bridges of reconciliation, of inclusion, of fraternity! Bridges that allow "walking together" to be not a mere rhetorical expression but an authentic pastoral experience!

Finally, I would like to remind you that we are already close to the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025. In the Bull *Spes non confundit*, I noted: “Through Juan Diego, the Mother of God brought a revolutionary message of hope that she continues to bring to every pilgrim and all the faithful: ‘Am I not here, I who am your Mother?’. That message continues to touch hearts in the many Marian shrines throughout the world, where countless pilgrims commend to the holy Mother of God their cares, their sorrows and their hopes. During the Jubilee Year, may these shrines be sacred places of welcome and privileged spaces for the rebirth of hope” (24).

I trust that all the members of CLA will actively participate in inviting the people of God to go on pilgrimage and to announce the message of hope that the whole region urgently needs to hear and rediscover.

May Holy Mary of Guadalupe, “Mother of the very true God for Whom we live” (*Nican mopohua*, 26), sustain us and encourage us to persevere in the joint effort to make the Church a community increasingly in the style of Jesus. And please do not forget to pray for me.
