



The final message of the Latin American Continental Migration Congress

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Organized by the Pontifical Council for Migration and CELAM

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FINAL DOCUMENT

I. The event

The Latin American Continental Meeting of pastoral care of migrations took place at the headquarters of the Permanent Secretariat of the Episcopal Conference, in Bogotá, Colombia, from November 17 to 20, 2010. Organized by the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, together with the Human Mobility Section - Department of Justice and Solidarity of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), the meeting was attended by SE Mons. Antonio Maria Vegliò, President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and Rev. Fr. Gabriele F. Bentoglio, Deputy Minister of the same Dicastery. 68 delegates also participated (Bishops, priests, religious and laity) representing 19 American countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, USA, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela) and representatives of the Human Mobility Section of CELAM. There were present Directors and Coordinators of Human Mobility of the National Episcopal Conferences or their corresponding ones at the diocesan level, all actively involved in this pastoral.

II. The topic

The theme of the meeting has been "For a better pastoral of economic and forced migration in Latin America and the Caribbean. The objective of the meeting has been to identify ways and strategies for a pastoral that responds increasingly better to the demands of migrant workers and those who are forced to leave their homes and even their country of origin, from this geographical area or who are in

it.

Through the contributions of the participants, the situation of all forms of migration in Latin America has been better known. Also, issues such as the dignity and rights of all migrants, integration, dialogue, the common good, as well as its negative aspects, including sexual and labor exploitation, denial of their rights, have been addressed; discrimination, deportations and all violence against migrants. They have shared concrete experiences aimed at offering adequate pastoral responses to the different situations, analyzing the measure of their effectiveness and identifying ways in which they could be improved.

Given the importance attributed to the various forms of collaboration in the migratory context, development in the various contexts of cooperation between the northern and southern Churches of the Continent, between the Episcopal Conferences and/or dioceses of origin, has been examined; transit and destination of migrants, and between migrants and local communities.

The analyzes and discussions have been carried out in the light of the Magisterium of the Church, especially the Instruction *Erga migrantes Caritas Christi* and other important instruments that the Church offers to serve as a guide to this specific pastoral.

III. Conclusions:

- We have found that in this geographical area there is a notable increase in both emigration and immigration, in the feminization of migration, in mass deportations and the trafficking of migrants and human trafficking, also the result of globalization, of the crisis of the liberal market and the global economy, in general. The recent phenomenon of the arrival of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from Africa and Asia, as well as forced migration due to ecological disasters, was also taken into consideration. The growing phenomenon of return migration has also been observed.

- The pain of the migrants and the displaced are reflected in the suffering face of so many brothers and sisters who travel the roads of the world, far from their home and their homeland, deprived of the affection of their own and the social support available in the society of origin, fighting for a decent life, and even for survival, for them and their families. In effect, they often endanger their own lives at the mercy of human traffickers and risk being victims of child abduction, as is often the case in particular with irregular displacements.

- We have recognized in each migrant and displaced the face of Jesus Christ, whom we must love, console and help with human warmth, to offer human and Christian solidarity. They await the proclamation of the Gospel, the Word that enlightens, comforts and saves. The Lord also referred to them when he said: "I assure you that every time you did it with one of these, my humble brothers, you did it with me (Mt 25,40).

- We have perceived the urgency of supporting migrants and all those who are displaced on this hard road, so that they feel at home in the land that offers them bread to live and in the Church where the Bread of life feeds new dreams and hopes, encouraging them also in the most difficult companies, including integration without being assimilated, and in the fight against discrimination and racism.
- Also, we have noted the grave danger in which they sometimes live and the threats to which both pastoral workers and all those who defend the person, dignity, and rights of the people affected are exposed both by economic migration and by the forces.
- Great importance has been given to the main objective of our mission, which is to accompany pastorally and integrally the migrants and the displaced to confirm them in the faith in which they must find relief and support, and in the defense of their rights, during and after that cross borders, oceans and continents.
- We have insisted on the urgency to ensure the good of the family, and especially to favor unity among its members.
- We have affirmed, due to its importance, the need to strengthen the presence of the Human Mobility Pastoral Commissions within the Episcopal Conferences, avoiding their absorption by the social pastoral or Caritas.
- We see it necessary to increase collaboration between the Episcopal Conferences of origin, transit, and destination, as is taking place between the Episcopal Conferences of the United States and Mexico, which has become a regional process, destined to become continental.

IV. Recommendations:

- We invite Christian communities and all organizations in destination countries to support initiatives that try to establish migrant organizations so that they can offer their contribution as actors and interlocutors in the society of arrival.
- Those who work on behalf of migrants and displaced people must learn to listen to them, as this is of paramount importance to restore their human dignity, offering them the opportunity to express themselves and, if necessary, become their spokespersons.
- We recommend involving the same migrants and displaced persons in the active action in favor of other people who share their condition and, together with them, act in synergy.
- We recommend the training of migrants and displaced persons, both in the life of faith and in the professional and work life, striving to help them learn the language of the country of arrival.

- It is very important to respect the rights of migrant workers and consolidate integration in the structures of existing workers' organizations.
- We invite Christian communities to strengthen organizations in the border area, thus creating solid bridges in favor of migrants and those who are forced to leave their homes, especially accompanying those deported or expelled and those who voluntarily decide to return to their origin countries.
- The Episcopal Conferences exchange information and good practices and discuss and identify together concrete ways in favor of an effective collaboration that they can later develop.
- We encourage Latin American Bishops to make pastoral visits to the communities of their nationals who are abroad and to send pastoral letters for Christmas, Easter and its most significant festivals.
- In the countries of origin, it is necessary to institute training programs to sensitize potential migrants about the risks and dangers linked to the trafficking of people, especially women and children.
- Publicizing the regular channels of emigration and family reunification, trying to prevent anyone from falling into irregular emigration. To influence politically so that there are fairer laws that favor the free movement of people.
- We must ensure that all stakeholders involved in intercontinental cooperation (churches, civil society, governments, agencies, migrant organizations, and international organizations) are involved, at the intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental levels, in favor of integration and the well-being of all migrants and displaced people.
- We must study better ways to get the message of the Church to the lay faithful, to civil society, to governments, to states, to international governmental or non-governmental organizations, so that it is better received by the interested parties and by public opinion.
- Increase, through the new means of communication, dialogue, consultations and meetings between the actors of the pastoral of human mobility.
- It is necessary to promote awareness of the migratory reality by raising awareness in all areas through modern means of communication, courses, workshops, and forums either for pastoral agents, as for the migrants themselves and other sectors of society.
- States are recommended to adopt international instruments for the protection of the rights of all migrants and their families, as well as refugees and displaced

persons, particularly the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, the Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees and the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees in Latin America.

- We recommend that CELAM, with the support of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, direct a pastoral letter on the phenomenon of economic migrations and those forced upon Bishops and faithful of the Latin American continent, including possible pastoral responses, so that the voice of the Church is heard in this matter, thus influencing political, social and ecclesial.

- Finally, we ask CELAM to prepare a strategic regional-continental action plan, with the support of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, with the aim of promoting better coordination and dialogue among the Episcopal Conferences of the North and South hemispheres when facing the challenges of the phenomenon of economic migrations and forced migration.