**PASTORAL SOCIAL/CARITAS**

**MESSAGE FROM THE 28TH CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN PASTORAL SOCIAL - CARITAS**

**“WITH JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY, THERE'S ROOM AT THE TABLE FOR EVERYONE”**

***Introduction***

1. From 20 to 24 October 2014, 180 delegates from almost all the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the United States, met in the municipality of Guarne, Antioquia, Colombia, in the La Rondalla meeting hall, for the 28th Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Caritas and the 5th Continental Meeting of Pastoral Social. We were also accompanied by Caritas Internationalis and *Cor Unum*, and the Caritas of Spain, Germany, France, Norway and England and Wales, as well as the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), in seeking to meet the challenge of joyfully and enthusiastically living the Gospel of fraternity and justice at this time on our continent. To this end we reflected on and shared the Apostolic Exhortation *Joy of the Gospel* by Pope Francis.

***What we have seen and heard***

1. On our journey through the continent with the People of God we saw and heard a reality in which wheat, which gives rise to hope, and tares, which cry out for justice, are mixed:
2. The painful and shocking poverty in which millions of people live, whose suffering faces were identified at Aparecida (no. 65). But we have also seen the efforts and processes of many groups to achieve decent living conditions.
3. The inconsistency between faith in Jesus and the everyday lives of the baptised has contributed to a largely Catholic continent registering the highest rates of inequality. However, the efforts of grassroots ecclesial communities, evangelising missions, spaces for training and strengthening faith, the witness of martyrs, and experiences of communion of goods are on the increase.
4. Growing mistrust has weakened the social fabric of our peoples, making them vulnerable to violent conflict. To counter this, processes of peace building and civic development, as well as prevention of fresh outbreaks of violence, are being promoted.
5. The low level of citizens' awareness widens the gap in their relations with institutions, making them permeable to corruption, violence and impunity. However, the prominent role played by young people, efforts aimed at training leaders and the emergence of new social movements are also present.
6. Faced with the consolidation of economic models that generate unequal development and exacerbate the poverty and exclusion of our peoples, experiences of sustainable development have also emerged as signs of the possibility of building a more human, participatory and egalitarian development model.
7. Despite the increasing lack of foundations, principles, identity and ideology in political action that seeks to keep itself in power at the expense of reducing freedoms, which fragments democracy and exacerbates conflicts, social movements and networks have emerged that foster the hope that another world is possible.
8. On the one hand, multiculturalism generates conflicts, and on the other, the experience that there may be opportunities for meeting and development in an interculturalism that also includes the risk of popular expression of faith by our peoples.
9. The culture of immediate and selfish consumption leads to contempt for life in all its manifestations, overexploitation and plundering of the resources of creation, thus threatening the food, water and cultural purposes of the earth and generating new conflicts between peoples; extractive industries, associated with its use, also encourage illegal economic activities connected with organised crime. Alternative development initiatives, aimed at protecting life and creation, have also emerged.

***What we have experienced in depth and valued***

1. We recognise the potential of transformation when people love, believe in and are committed to the cause of decent life, justice and the common good.
2. We contemplate signs of the Kingdom via experiences we have shared regarding food security, integral human development and solidarity, and peace building, among others, which like mustard seed and leaven in dough are seeds of transformation from the small and from within.
3. The construction of a new social order requires a new model for human, economic, political and cultural relations along the lines of the Trinitarian community: *"our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us"* (cf. EG no. 179).
4. Together with Pope Francis, we dream of a missionary option that is "*capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation"* (cf. EG no. 27)*.* As a pastoral social family – Caritas – we feel called on to be part of this transformation of the Church and, from her, of society.
5. “*The service of charity is also a constituent element of the Church’s mission and an indispensable expression of her very being*” (cf. EG no. 179).

***What we have decided***

1. As an outcome of this space of communion and exchange, we have found lights and certainties that commit us to:
2. Continue working on renewal and greater awareness of our identity and spirituality as missionary disciples in the service of the option for the poor, as a theological category (cf. EG 198).
3. Train and build the capacity of pastoral workers at all levels of social action of the Faith, and the commitment of missionary disciples as agents of change.
4. Work as the Church in the creation of active, resilient and welcoming communities, with open doors and the capacity to turn conflictual relations into fair and fraternal ones.
5. Continue reflection on and commitment to building fairer and more inclusive relations between men and women, in societies where ethnic minorities are present, and between generations, among others, as Pope Francis proposes in the Joy of the Gospel.
6. Promote recognition of the vital contribution of women in society and the Church, and claims for their legitimate rights (cf. EG 103,104).
7. Work on the capacity for relations and dialogue with the world, and on coordinating efforts with actors outside and within the Church.
8. Promote civic and public ethics, as well as a culture of social dialogue through participation, advocacy and social monitoring, aimed at defending the dignity of the person, peoples and the common good in public policies.
9. Promote a culture of caring for life in all its forms through risk management, food security and a commitment to building an integral human development and solidarity model.
10. Continue strengthening ourselves by drawing up strategies to tackle common problems based on sharing of experiences and joint learning, with a regional vision and from a Church perspective.

***We feel we have been sent to***

1. Communicate the Joy of the Gospel in our particular situations in the service of charity:
2. By living our faith and in the exercise of dignifying, transforming and mobilising civic responsibility, from familiar community spaces and platforms we belong to, by encouraging social monitoring and dialogue spaces with various social, economic and political actors in local areas, and by taking on the promotion and defence of the common good, human rights and the care of creation.
3. By encouraging those who represent us in the various political decision-making scenarios at local, regional, national and international level – whether legislative, judicial or executive – to promote the drawing up of agendas and public policies in keeping with these principles, from standpoints of permanent dialogue with communities, especially those most victimised by violence, poverty and social exclusion.
4. By renewing and strengthening interregional, intersectoral, intergenerational, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, in order to activate and strengthen our transforming network action from a faith perspective.

***Action of thanks***

1. In communion with Pope Francis and his call to live the Joy of the Gospel in the task of making the Kingdom present in our material world, we feel a deep need to give thanks to God:
   1. For his unconditional, free and inexhaustible love that saves and liberates us and that, as servants of charity in the encounter with Jesus in the poor, renews and permanently communicates joy (cf. EG 1).
   2. For the vast richness of everyone in our countries, for their diversity that invites and constantly challenges us in striving to build a supportive, fair, democratic and pluralist society for everyone.
   3. For the generous dedication of so many men and women who promote social transformation initiatives in various areas of human life consistent with the dignity of the person and the care of all creation.
   4. For the witness of martyrs from our continent who encourage us to share the cross of Christ to the point of giving one's life (cf. DA 140).
   5. For the poor who bring us closer to the suffering and paschal Christ.
   6. For being Mary our mother, a model of a woman of faith who lives and walks with our peoples, and teaches us to let ourselves be led by the Holy Spirit to a destination of service and fruitfulness, thus imbuing our charitable action with a style that shows us the revolutionary nature of tenderness and affection as a virtue, which strengthens us in the complex quest for justice (cf. EG 288).

Municipality of Guarne, Antioquia, Colombia, 24 October 2014.

Participants,