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WELCOMING ADDRESS

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The Most Rev. Joseph Green
Bishop of Reno
Episcopal Moderator of CICOP



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WELCOMING ADDRESS

By Most Rev. Joseph Green
Bishop of Reno, Nevada

It is with a deep feeling of community that I welcome all of you tonight to the Seventh Annual National Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program conference.

I have had the pleasure of working closely with the CICOP Planning Committee on the conceptualization and implementation of this conference and feel a certain vicarious pride of accomplishment.

The conference theme is "New Dimensions in Hemispheric Realities" which is particularly appropriate because this meeting is the embodiment of one such Latin American innovative dimension.

Dr. Paulo Freire's explanation and utilization of conscientization - an educational philosophy and technique which he pioneered and popularized - is the innovative dimension to which I refer. I will leave an explanation of conscientization to the experts but everyone here will experience this technique for stimulating social awareness during this conference. Conscientization is a process which must be experienced and cannot be passively observed.

The goals of conscientization depend largely upon the circumstances in which they are utilized and the immediate long-range objectives to be achieved. In this case we are seeking to understand and apply the religious-social perceptions formulated during the historic Second General Assembly of Latin American Bishops held in September of 1968 in Medellin, Colombia.

The Medellin conference was held to formulate pastoral initiatives

for the continental implementation of Vatican II directives throughout Latin America. However, the impact of Medellin was never meant to be restricted to that geographical area. The message of Medellin is applicable to men of good will in every land in the spirit of the "Decree On The Church's Missionary Activity" issued during Vatican II.

"Christ and the Church, which bears witness to Him by preaching the Gospel, transcend every particularity of race or nation and cannot be considered foreign anywhere or to anybody."

That document further reinforced that theme by stating, "all bishops are consecrated not just for some one diocese, but for the salvation of the entire world. . . Individual churches carry a responsibility for all the others."

Medellin speaks directly to both developed and developing nations of the world alike. It is a declaration of self-determination by the People of God who constitute the Latin American Church. It is an assertion of pastoral pluralism which necessarily differs in some aspects from the North American pastoral consensus because it responds to and serves its own indigenous reality. The Latin American Church no longer mimics foreign pastoral techniques but exercises a legitimate pastoral pluralism which complements rather than contradicts universal Church solidarity.

Pope Paul VI endorsed this type of responsive pastoral pluralism in a recent speech to the bishops of Africa delivered at Kampala, Uganda.

"A certain pluralism is not only legitimate but also desirable," the Holy Father explained. "Adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, liturgical, catechetical and spiritual activity not only is possible: the Church encourages it."

It is significant that Papal remarks so directly applicable to Latin America were voiced in Africa because it underscores the shared Third World identity of these peoples. The concept of conscientization which we are utilizing at this conference was shaped in Brazil which had direct cultural and historic links to the African continent.

Brazil's best known embodiment of conscientization, Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, recently defined the terms as "opening the eyes of the masses."

"For hundreds of years we lived with African slavery and now we are accepting a national slavery," Archbishop Camara explained. "Since Vatican Council II the Church has opened its eyes. Now we must open the eyes of the people."

The Church in the United States shares with Latin America the responsibility to open the people's eyes by awakening their dormant social consciousness. We also share with Brazil a lamentable historical tradition of African slavery which caused cultural and socio-economic inequities still in need of adequate redress. We cannot fail to realize that the conscientization of our people must have domestic as well as international consequences.

"What atonement would the God of justice demand for the robbery of black people's labor, their lives, their true identities, their culture and their history?" a U.S. black spokesman recently asked.

Medellin speaks to us of the need of culturally and socio-economically disadvantaged people throughout the world to seek liberation from such dehumanizing realities. The Latin American Church frankly admits that the

inequitable structures and attitudes which caused this dehumanization are internal as well as external. We cannot lack the courage to make the same admission.

The Church in the United States has recognized its paternalistic transgressions against the dignity and self-determination of the Third World and is now actively seeking to increase its understanding and make a more fitting Christian response. It is a difficult and uncomfortable process and one which will take time to accomplish.

But an important step has been made with the assistance of Medellin: We now see ourselves not as saviors of the world but as a people in search of our own salvation. I am reminded of a remark made by John Wesley who said, "I came to America to convert the Indians; but oh! who shall convert me?"

We came to Latin America with somewhat the same attitude that brought John Wesley to the United States. It is my sincere hope that through a sincere application of conscientization during and after this conference we can make a similar realization and begin actively seeking the conversion of all those in our nation willing and able to open their eyes.

Thank you.

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THE LATIN AMERICAN CHURCH SINCE THE MEDELLIN CONFERENCE:
EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia
Bishop of Chiapas, Mexico

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I have agreed to develop this topic here today because I am convinced that the problems of the Church today are problems that require missionary action. Vatican Council II was a missionary council which tried to project the Church, in a true incarnation, into all types of social, cultural and ideological pluralisms.

As a bishop charged in Mexico and in the CELAM with the missionary pastorate, I cannot help but see that in mission areas the critical problems we face are the same problems throughout the continent. I feel that at the center of all these problems is the mission of the Church to become wholly flesh and blood in the humanity of our Latin American people.

I. What Medellin Was

That is precisely what Medellin was: The definitive decision of our Church to accept the risk of incarnating itself totally in the culture, problems and hopes of Latin America. That is why Medellin is the point of arrival and the point of departure. It is definition but it is also a search. It is a beginning but it is also an end. It is a joyous thing for some but still a scandal to many.

1.1 Previous Trajectory

Medellin was a point of arrival because it was neither a sudden explosion nor an imposition from without. Throughout the 566 years which stretch from Pope Alexander VI to John XXIII, our Latin America knew a host of bishops, priests and laymen who lived to the full the sorrows and the hopes of the major part of the population. Toribio de Benavente, Manuel da Nobrega, Pedro de Gante, Alonso Sandoval, Pedro Claver and Vasco de Quiroga are examples of men who entered into early communion with the most miserable. Antonio de Montesinos, Bartolome de las Casas, Antonio de Vieyra, and Luis Beltran are early voices raised against oppressive aspects of the colonial system,

voices that demanded change. But in general the Church in Latin America was established under a medieval concept of Christianity and as an integral part of a special culture and a dominant system.

The political independence of our countries was linked to the disintegration of the medieval Church and of imperial establishments in Europe. The idea of liberty found support even among churchmen, some of whom became its champions: Miguel Hidalgo and Jose Maria Morelos were insurgent priests in New Spain; Canon Andres Maria Rosillo in the New Granada; Bejar y Munecas headed the rebellion in Cuzco; Felix Varela led the uprising in Cuba. But the official Church appeared, most of the time, as a support of the colonial regime. The so-called independence of our peoples destroyed only the facade of colonial society but it preserved its social organizations and its religious ethos.

Because of this, there soon developed the struggle between those who defended the political, social and religious continuism of colonial times and those who fought for a reform that would be democratic, popular and lay-oriented. In this bitter struggle, the Church emerged, even well into the twentieth century, as a traditionalist force, determined to fight against laicism, anti-clericalism, "anarchy." The Mother Church had engendered the Church of Latin America in the defensive moments of a counter-reformation and in the exalted spirit of the last crusade against Moors and Jews. The Church of that day was ill prepared for its incarnation but contrastingly was well fitted to be the refuge and the support of conquering forces in the early years and of conservative and oppressive forces later.

The Church was limited to established power (as an integral part of what is today called "The Establishment," an old English phrase); as a perfect society which contained all truth; as a

monolithic entity which imposed itself on a variety of cultures while not realizing what it was doing.

Beginning in the thirties of this century, the ideas of Catholic Action, under the patronage of Pope Pius XI, began to spread in Latin America, and with them developed a new mentality concerning the modern world. There appeared a new type of Christian, interested in getting the Church out of the sacristy. Soon the old patterns of traditional religiosity began to crack and to show distinct differences.

The Second World War made even more acute the crisis of western civilization. In 1943 the Church in the United States sponsored the First Interamerican Seminar on Social Studies to analyze the crisis. The Second Interamerican Seminar (Havana, 1946), decided "to cooperate in the restoration of the world, through the effective practice of social welfare," and established the Interamerican Confederation of Catholic Social Action. The last meeting of this confederation (the 4th) took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1956 and studied "Industrialism in the Americas." Unfortunately, all of these meetings, with too few delegates present, found no strong support either among the laity or in the respective hierarchies.

But in 1955 CELAM had been founded; and along with it had developed a growing consciousness--both among Christians and non-Christians--of the state of underdevelopment present in the continent. Little by little there was a growing perception of the profound causes of this underdevelopment: as a global phenomenon, as a by-product of the development of other regions, and of the complex connections between power groups in various countries. John XXIII opened the windows and built a friendly bridge between the Church and the world. His encyclicals, Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris

were received with warm enthusiasm and generated new thoughts about incarnation.

Pope Paul VI's encyclical On The Development of Peoples (March 28, 1967) gave a new impulse to work that had been going on in southern South America, in the Andean region, in Brazil, Mexico and Central America. The peaceful mood of ecclesiastical life began to give way to an effervescence of ideas, of polemics, of inner searchings, of audacious commitments by some.

After the close of Vatican II, the CELAM, with the dynamic Bishop Manuel Larrain, of Talca, Chile, as president, showed signs of renewed vitality. The bishop believed that the group should return to holding plenary sessions. Even the tragic death of Bishop Larrain did not cause this idea to die. In December 1966, Bishop Br ndao Vilela, the new president of CELAM, carried the demand to Rome. In July of 1967 Pope Paul approved the plan; in November of that year the theme was chosen; and in January of 1968 the first Basic Study was approved.

Throughout the Latin American episcopal meetings at Banos, (Ecuador, June 5-11, 1966), Mar del Plata (Argentina, October 11-16, 1966), Itoapan (Ciudad del Salvador, Estado de Bahia, Brazil, May 12-19, 1968) there was growing understanding of the definitive commitment which the Church would have to undertake in Medellin.

A Basic Document, revised and amended, was circulated among the Bishops in June 1968. Later on new proposals were sent in for the preparatory statement but that of CELAM proved most acceptable.

In Medellin, from August 25 to September 6, 1968, 146 cardinals, archbishops and bishops, with voice and vote, carried on the Second General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate to study "The Church in the Present Transformation of Latin America in the light of Vatican Council II."

1,2 Point of Arrival.

What was accomplished in Medellín? What was Medellín?

We believe that Medellín can be understood only through the spirit of faith. Through the light of faith we can see in Medellín a full effusion of the Spirit of Pentecost which both purifies and transforms (Introducción, p. 21). We cite the edition of the Medellín Documents published by the Secretariado Social Mexicano).

The Word of God, as criterion and fundamental calling, we have present in the living Gospel brought forth by Vatican II. The Council summoned us to a new concept of Church as "The mystery of the salvific action of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the world and in communion with man." The Council asked us to make of the Church what it is: "sensible manifestation of God's grace," "sacrament of men's salvation," "ferment and soul of society."

The Council taught us also to read the summons of God, His concrete Word, in daily happenings, in the "signs of the times." Because of this, Medellín's trajectory took off from loving attention to the crude realities of our continent.

And we see a Latin America in threatening tension, in danger of breaking up: "Tensions between classes and internal colonialism" (Paz, 2, 2-7); "International tensions and external neocolonialism" (Paz, 2, 2-7); "Tensions between the countries of Latin America" (Paz, 2, 11-13).

We do not find this out through a non-static look, like what one sees by stopping a movie film, but through a look that shows us the internal orientation of a process.

This dynamic view, in the midst of "the tragic sign of under-development," discovered "the painful birth of a new civilization,"

because it verifies the desire "of total emancipation, of liberation from all servitude, of personal maturity and of collective integration" (Introducción, p.20).

And in this desire for liberation, in the increasing development of consciousness, on the part of the oppressed, of their rights, and the urgency to obtain them, we bishops discover "the traces of the image of God in man, like a powerful dynamism" and we sense the presence of God "who wishes to save the whole man, body and soul." (Introducción.)

At Medellín the Church made these hopes and desires fully hers; and if at one time she was not the real leavening for them, at that meeting the Church declared a commitment "with the life of our peoples in an anguished search for adequate solutions to their multiple problems" (Mensaje, pasión).

What does the Church offer as its own in this liberating process?

She offers only what she has: her solidarity and "what she has as especially her own: a total vision of man and of humanity and an integral vision of man in the process of the development." (Mensaje, pasión).

In this way does the Latin American Church leave behind a magical sacramentalism and a disembodied spiritualism. Since Medellín, the Church has wholly adopted a theological vision of the salvation of Jesus Christ as a total salvation: of the whole man, body and soul, the individual and society.

This liberating task is not, then, something foreign to the Church nor is it simply an opportunistic move. Every man is called by God to develop himself, just as he is called to that ultimate, definitive and radical salvation which Christ established with His own Passover. The liberation that Christ brought is much more

than the liberation and development of man here on earth; but it includes them, assumes them and gives them an eschatological value. This is why we said in Medellín: "Every liberation is an anticipation of the full redemption offered by Christ" because "every growth in humanity brings us closer to reproducing the image of the Son, so that He may be the firstborn son among many brothers" (Educación, p. 56). In stating this we were following the teaching which Pope Paul VI had given in Populorum Progressio when he defined development as "passing from a less human condition to a more human one" (PP, 20), and when he carried the enumeration of these steps from the liberation of oppressive structures up to "the faith, gift of God . . . and the unity in the charity of Christ, who calls us to participate as sons in the life of the living God, Father of all men" (PP, 21). Therefore, we proclaimed that in the search for salvation, we should avoid the dualism that separates the temporal works from sanctification (Justicia, II, g, p. 27 and Catequesis, p. 90). This discovery and these theological principles impelled us towards a single and definitive commitment: total incarnation, complete identification with the hopes and desires of Latin American man.

From this theology arose all the commitments taken on by the Latin American Church in Medellín, with perhaps the most important commitment being that of conscientization and liberating action.

The commitment to "conscientization" is seen as part of the evangelizing mission. Preaching the Good News of the Gospel in Latin America should include not only the task of making the downtrodden understand his condition but also the talents and possibilities he possesses to help bring about needed changes. "It is indispensable," we said, "to form a social conscience and a realistic view of community

problems and social structures" (Justicia, III, 3a, p. 32). This task of developing social consciousness should be integrated into the total pastoral plan at every level" (Ibid.).

The commitment to a liberating action includes various things, among which are: a "liberating education" which will make the person being taught the subject of his own development (Educacion, p. 55); the denunciation of any act which would jeopardize peace by going against justice (Paz, p. 43); to encourage and favor the organizations of the people (Paz, p. 43); to educate consciences, inspire, stimulate and help all proposals which contribute to the formation of man in his totality and which move the laity towards a commitment favoring liberation, humanization and development (Laicos, p. 101-102); action which tends towards the growth of "a new power," the power to be found in people who are organized and aware of their rights (Paz, Mensaje).

These commitments move the Church to accept, in the first place, what the Vice President of CELAM, Cardinal Lanazuri Ricketts, called "the spirituality of change," "which is accepted in the light of faith, because in it there is the opportunity of meeting with the Lord" (Closing Speech). This spirituality should manifest itself in an act or personal purification, in the conversion of both the individual and the group: "Our most urgent commitment is to purify ourselves in the Spirit of the Gospel; to purify as well all the members and institutions of the Catholic Church," and most especially to learn to be free and responsible persons (Justicia, p. 26), ending the separation between faith and life (Mensaje, p. 16), accepting joyously the witness of personal poverty, solidarity with the poor, participation in their struggle to better themselves, and the practical recognition of the Church to be only a collaborator with and not a competitor of contemporary economic, political and social organization.

1.3 Point of Departure

"May you receive the Spirit and be My witnesses" said the Lord when he promised the first Pentecost (Acts, 1,8). This Pentecost of Latin America in Medellin cannot be anything else, then, but a point of departure for the life and witness of the Church from Tierra del Fuego to the Rio Grande.

This was the way Pope Paul VI expressed it: "With this visit today we inaugurate a new point of departure." For our part, we in our Message hailed Medellin as "the dawning of a new era."

We could see this better a year after the meeting when in various parts of the continent a balance was struck of what had been accomplished in Medellin and after Medellin. Bishop Eduardo Pironio stated that with Medellin "a new spirit has entered the Church in Latin America although it is not always possible to measure it with gestures and attitudes." And he defined this new spirit as an "insatisfaction" with the pre-Medellin Church, a "purification or conversion" which leads towards a committed Church, and a "re-creation" or, better still, a practical effort to overcome "the dualism between Church and world, faith and life, nature and grace, evangelization and human advance, the building of the Kingdom and the founding of the terrestrial city." (Criterio, Buenos Aires 42 (1579): 625-636,69,09,11).

In Argentina, on the first anniversary of Medellin, it was insisted on that Medellin is a first step; a change of attitude. (Esquin, Oct.12, 1969, No. 494).

At that time an observer said that we Latin Americans are very good at making plans and drawing up projects. We can say things movingly and precisely and can move our audiences to enthusiastic hope, but our greatest weakness, however, is our frequent inability to put our plans into effect. This natural weakness, which he considers to

be a general one, in shifting from theory to practice, is compounded, according to the same commentator by the vastness of the problems we face.

Certainly it is true that with 50% of our people illiterate, confronted by a demographic explosion, with a clergy that does not renew itself--let alone increase in numbers--with an antiquated financial organization and a population scattered over mountains, plains and jungles, it is not easy to put into practice, the letter of our Conference declarations. But a beginning had to be made. Just as Vatican II had to come about and produce plans and ideas that we do not yet understand completely; nor have they been undertaken in their totality anywhere in the world.

We are in an incubation period, a time of changes in mentality and in attitudes. Some individuals and groups have gone ahead; they were better prepared. However, for the larger mass of Christians the moment of knowledge, of conversion, of action, has not yet arrived. In any event the commitment has been accepted. The detonator has exploded. The wind of Pentecost has blown. There is a confusion of tongues, there are those among us who seem actually inebriated, but even so we can see welling up about us bright witnesses to the truth that will make us free.

The attitude of the bishops towards this point of view has been clearly expressed. Paul VI defined Medellin as "an hour of thought and of confidence in the Lord" (Cathedral of Bogota) because "we are messengers of hope" (Paul VI, Homily to newly ordained priests). And Bishop Pironio declared that in the midst of the present crisis we, bishops, march with confidence, both in our activity and our commitment, because "we calmly assume the risk of transforming the world through the power of the Gospel of salvation" (Boletin, CELAM, Marzo 1969, p.2).

II. Expectations

Before the Medellín meeting, some starry-eyed revolutionaries hoped for revolutionary declarations, violent condemnations, extremist positions. On the other hand, those who favored the status quo hoped (do they still hope?) that Medellín would pass as quickly as a summer shower and then all would be as it had been. We shall not analyze these hopes any further but shall enumerate briefly some of the serious expectations Medellín has caused, both inside and outside the Church.

2.1 External Expectations.

These are today's hopes, not yesterday's. There are, on the one hand, the hopes of the oppressed, rather hazy, if you will, but still real for all that. In the "favelas" of the Brazilian cities; in the "villas of misery" of Buenos Aires, Córdoba and Rosario; in the "ranchos" of Caracas, Bogotá, Medellín and Cali, in the "callampas" of Santiago, Arica and Valparaíso, in the "proletarian colonies" of México, Monterrey and Guadalajara, a little flame of hope has sprung up.

In my country, this is evident: when the peasant or the new migrant to the cities no longer expects anything from anyone, he still hopes for something from his priests and his Church. In the other Latin American countries it is equally true that the priest and the Church continue to be the hope of the poor.

Nevertheless, a year after Medellín, the documents produced there are not even known by the country people. It is not strange then that the destitute keep on judging, hoping, or despairing only because of what they see all around them.

The question of our intellectuals, both Christians and non-Christians, is another matter entirely. Some have accused Medellín

of being nothing but an opportunistic gambit, judging it solely in the light of politics. However, confronted with the sight of priests and laymen's groups working together in the cause of justice, they have begun to hope. Others see in the meeting a revolutionary movement but they do not know from whence it sprang. Few there are among them who recognize that the wind of Pentecost has swept our way.

In the midst of their internal divisions the Marxists are having to take seriously the will towards renewal in the Church and its new temporal commitments. Some are discovering, with surprise, that this New Church which grew out of Medellín, is not the one they learned to call purveyor of "the opium of the people." In my country they have even said that the masses will not reach the transforming revolution except by way of this new kind of Social Christianity. (Varios: *Agonía de las Tres Culturas*. México; *Tiempos Nuevos*, 1969).

It is natural that the military and economic oligarchies have seen in this New Church nothing more than dangerous demagoguery which leads straight to subversion of the established order. They feel they have lost an ally. If they are Christians, they suffer a religious crisis. Some have organized in open opposition. They probably think that they can stop and change what today seems to them to be a dangerous opportunistic deviation.

2.2 Internal Expectations

Within the Church there are still those who hope that the commitments of Medellin will not be put into practice. But the most representative bishops, priests and lay people have already begun to tread the roads laid out in Medellin. The goal is to make the Church the very soul of development and integration in our countries, starting from an authentic commitment leading to the liberation of individuals, groups and peoples.

This implies a reform of the hierarchy, one that will lead towards true collegiality, towards forms of authority which will permit ecclesial participation in decision making, towards a poverty that will be both witness and commitment to the needy, towards an evangelization that will be prophetic and a leadership that will be a vigorous encouragement of transformation.

It is hoped that there will be a series of changes in Church structures: in the seminaries, in the diocesan curiae, in territorial boundaries, in the function and structure of both rural and urban parishes, in financial systems, in the co-responsible participation of clergy and laity, in functional structures, in the life and ministry of religious of both sexes, etc.

There has been similar discussion about the role of the priest and it is hoped that there will be changes in his way of life and in his ministry. The creation of a large diaconate is expected as well as a vigorous forward movement among the laity, starting with organizations which will have fewer ties to the hierarchy and will be more immersed in the world about them. All this is seen as necessary if the Church is to respond to the Word of God, if it is to show a new way to be present in a society that grows ever more pluralistic, secularized and autonomous.

III. Accomplishments

Above all else it is important to recognize the obstacles which have prevented quicker and more numerous realizations. There are two classes of obstacles: lack of understanding and pain.

Some do not understand Medellin either because they abstract it from its Gospel context or because they cannot yet accept its theological underpinnings. One bishop has said: "My diocese is mature enough for Vatican II but it can't bear Medellin yet."

Others are "pained" by Medellin because it demands radical changes in their conduct, daily routines or points of view. They can't accept the sacrifice implied. Medellin means crucifixion for everyone because it is also the Passover for the whole continent.

Medellin has increased tensions inside the Church. The various hierarchies have taken the Documents for study and reflection as to how they affect each of the countries concerned. Some episcopates have published splendid statements, fruit of their study and reflection, but the study and implementation of ideas and plans have been carried on amidst confrontations and some polarizations. Different groups of priests or of laymen, claiming to follow Medellin, have opposed their bishops, have expressed protests, or have opposed each other. Many priests suffer in silence, others protest, and still others leave the priesthood because of what they consider sluggishness in putting into practice the reforms of Medellin. The tensions are painful and seem to get worse.

What has been accomplished? What is being worked for?

Basically we believe we are engaged in the difficult work of what can be called "mentalization" or change of mentality. The task is to change our mental outlook in accordance with the teachings derived from Medellin and thus also change our attitudes on many things. This cannot be done in a day or two; yet, it is absolutely necessary. The

changes sought will not be real, the reforms will be just legalisms or formulas if they do not spring from an effort to understand in its true depth the significance and the urgency of change.

The search for new roads today supposes the need for decision but it also supposes the need for mature reflection. The process involved in the change of mental outlook is to be sought not only at the hierarchical level but also at the levels of priests and laity. Towards this end CELAM has cooperated by divulging the Medellin documents, carrying on meetings of the Presidency and of various of its Departments in order to find the Pastoral lines that are most applicable. CELAM has collaborated in the effort to obtain acceptance for Medellin, by giving orientations from its General Secretariat, and through publications from its press office.

Worthy of special mention here is the work which is being carried on in collaboration with the Latin American Bureau of the U.S.C.C., so as to make efficient the labors of various Pastoral Institutes which now serve, or soon will serve, to train both national clergies and the foreign personnel involved with them. At various levels work is being carried on along such lines in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, America Central & Mexico.

At the lay level the efforts to change mental outlook are being carried on. Communitarian meetings of reflection have been organized and efforts are being made to apply the pastoral thinking of Medellin to personal life. There is more co-ordination, dialogue has been initiated at various levels, new paths have been opened to the laity. But unquestionably such a movement for change is slow, painful, resisted, badly understood. A new mentality requires a complete process of re-education,

something which seems to be grasped better by young people and by those in organizations already committed to temporal tasks.

In spite of all this, there is a discernible process of accomplishment which very soon will bring forth new fruits. The hierarchies are organizing their national conferences better and are looking towards "team work" in pastoral labors and planning them on a national scale. Collegiality is becoming less an idea and is passing into both attitudes and practices.

The individual national churches, like the whole Church in Latin America, are assuming their own special character, as each one becomes more identified with the special problems of its region. Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, Central America, Mexico have made good progress along these lines. The CELAM itself, since Medellin, has developed special force and new responsibilities. The restructuring of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (CAL) has tended to give more initiative to the Latin American church, in communion with the Pope, and with the Episcopal College.

As was recommended by Vatican II and Medellin, dialogue and co-responsibility between bishops and priests have begun to function. This has helped to ease frustrations on both sides, has aided initiative, and authority itself is being exercised in new and different ways. This trend was recognized by the CELAM in a recent meeting in Argentina where problems of the priesthood were treated.

At both the priestly and lay levels, groups and movements have sprung up that have taken on concrete commitments with the poor and the oppressed; and a prophetic tone in criticism of social problems is not uncommon. In this type of action some bishops have taken part but not many. However, the prophetic tone is outstanding in recent church-state clashes in Paraguay; and prophetic martyrdom is almost an everyday

occurrence for many members of the Church in Brazil.

It is only natural that the Church should be faced with the martyr's cross in this period of renewal. Those who manipulate political and economic power have found that the only way to keep that power, or to control the increasing unrest of the masses, is to use armed force. Many Christians--laymen, priests, religious of both sexes, and bishops--are labelled subversive when they raise their voices or bring about a "concientization" or liberating action. But the Church that was renewed in Medellin can never again lock itself up in the sacristies.

These more advanced nuclei of the renewal movement are those who have clearly rejected the old forms of capitalism represented by a consumer's society. Each day that passes sees a growth in strength of the alliance between students, workers and farm people who are searching for a new option of a socio-economic type, preferably one that is no longer tied to the chariot of a voracious capitalism, be this of the state type or one of free enterprise. Criticism of the system is purely humanistic, exalting as it does the integral development of the whole man and of all men. Although such criticism does not draw its inspiration directly from Marx, it does not fear to use his terminology. For the main part, arguments are based on the need for the practical application of Populorum Progressio, Vatican II documents, and the orientation received at Medellin.

At a national and continental level, little by little, the "disenfeudement" of the Church is being brought about by her liberation from traditional powers. The sale of Church property of Chile, the rejection of the Concordat by the Church of Peru, the persecution of the Church of Brazil, the prophetic independence of the Church of

Paraguay, are some of the encouraging signs of a Church that is striving for Her own liberation in order to improve Her service.

At both national and continental levels, and in increasing volume, there is evidence that the Church is honoring its commitment to work with the oppressed, the marginal groups, the abandoned, with all those whose voice needs to be heard. In the tin mines of Bolivia, in the "villas miserias" of Buenos Aires, following on the meetings held at Galconda, in northeastern Brazil, in fact almost everywhere, there are appearing not only the well-known prophetic figures but also new faces among priests and laymen who link their destinies to those of most oppressed and who accompany them in their struggles for freedom.

This Latin American Church, which for all too long a time enclosed itself in a defense of its orthodoxy, and even, in some places, took part in the persecution of non-Catholic brethren, today is discovering the channels and the sympathetic understanding necessary to carry on both dialogue and ecumenical labors. Our Church has rediscovered the Words of the Gospel, draws strength from its texts, and has found the language needed for conversation with the Protestant brethren. We can talk of Christ. Both we and they love Him and wish to serve Him even in the smallest of our brothers. Today the Protestants study the documents of Medellin and discover in them a Church, which, renewed, attracts their sympathetic interest and cooperation. Even more, they wish to help us by studying the ideas of Medellin and putting them in practice so as to further stimulate renewal in our Church.

All these accomplishments, as we have said, have been carried on in a mood of continuous study and reflection, usually in team style. Out of this has grown a new thought that is not only pastoral but truly theological as well, rooted in the problems of man on our continent. Our recent National Theological Congress in Mexico (November 24-28,

1969) was a most hopeful example of what is under way. We need a Latin American Theological Center but everywhere, it seems, people are immersed in studying God's Word so that pastoral action itself is illuminated by its knowledge and by the awareness of the daily problems of us all.

Conclusion

Our Church is in crisis in the sense found in the Greek word "Judgment." It is being judged by the events of our times and Our Lord also judges the Church through these events. It would be difficult to say if the Church is progressing or declining; we should prefer to say that it is transforming itself. The Church of tomorrow will not be the Church of today. It will be conceived in a different manner. It will find a new way to make its presence felt in the world. Our Church will go to "the heart of the matter," stripped of its ballast and giving up its old garbs. On that account it will seem to go into a decline. But through that denudation, it will find its progress and its irradiation.

Tomorrow, this Church which emerged from Medellín, purified and strengthened even in its weakness, will show itself to the world in a way that will be "poor"; not with power, but with service, certainly with witness, possibly even through the shedding of its blood in martyrdom.

It will never again be the bulwark of a system, call it what you will -- free enterprise, capitalism, society of consumption, or socialism. It will not support any of these because it will have chosen to be a pilgrim Church, prophetic, critical, eschatological.

It will no longer be the bulwark of one culture because it will have chosen to incarnate itself in all cultures. By this choice the Church will help our peoples to come to full flower, to develop all their own values, today so unhappily suppressed, so unfortunately overshadowed. And the true catholicity of our Church will serve to animate the pluralistic integration of the continent.

And this North America, rejected today whenever and wherever it appears to oppress the rights of man, all too often accepted and appreciated only for its wealth, may it not tomorrow find in our truly peer Church the inspiration to discover also its own liberation?

Medellín was a point of arrival and a point of departure; but it was also a summons to all the Churches, it was a clarion call to commitment with the oppressed of all the world, to let the People of Yahweh go forward freely to the Promised Land under the banner of God's words: "Let My people go!" (Ex. 7,16) . . . forward towards the Incarnation, towards Calvary, towards the Resurrection!