

THE PASTORAL CONSEQUENCES IN AMERICA DUE TO THE

COLLEGIALITY OF BISHOPS

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By: Agnelo Cardinal Rossi
Archbishop of Sao Paulo, Brazil

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The Second Vatican Council has brought to the Church a new Spring, And the most beautiful flower of this Spring is the Collegiality of Bishops. United and yet subject to their Chief, the Holy Father, the Bishops, successors of the Apostles, form this Collegiality. not only when they are solemnly gathered in Council, but even while scattered over the world, when they teach and act in their respective churches, united they form the Universal Church, of which the Holy Father is the representative. While the Diocesan Bishop has jurisdiction over a certain number of God's people entrusted to his care, he must also nourish and be solicitous for the whole Church of Christ, helping fraternally those other churches, especially those which are near and in greater need. As Lumen Gentium, the central document of the Council points out for us the example of our venerable predecessors. It is the overall Catholic concern that inflames and opens the heart of the apostolate to help not only the traditional mission fields or the Church of Silence but also brings this apostolic help to those other parts of the world, where, because of the lack of priests, the faithful are in danger of losing their faith. This is the case of Latin America. Among the means indicated by the Council to help those other parts of the Church, the following stand out:

1. Formation of the faithful so that they will willingly and with every effort support the apostolic works of evangelization.
2. The formation of good priests, religious helpers and laymen to work in the above mentioned fields.

3. The generous effort on the part of diocesan priests so that, where possible, some of them may work for a determined period of time, even permanently, in this field.
4. The right use of Church possessions to help the needs of other churches, not only in unexpected periods of hardships, but also to promote and extend this help in normal times.
5. To make known those ideas that can increase and foster better understanding and mutual help among the people in the social and economic field.

As we read in the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul gives us the example of collecting donations in the rich parishes in Greece and Galatia to favor the poor Mother Church in Jerusalem. (Acts 2:29; Gal. 2:10) St. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, seeing the Church of Numidia being invaded by barbaric people and the Christians imprisoned by the pirates who overran their lands, called upon his priests and people to think of their brethren and martyrs and collected in popular donations the fantastic amount of 100,000 cestericios, which he sent to the Bishops of Numidia asking for their blessings upon the generous donors. In modern times, the late Archbishop O'Hara of Kansas City, planned the unification of the three Americas, based not on unstable politics nor on

the dollar, but on the Catholic faith, the faith common to the United States Catholics and to almost all the population of Latin America. In the Council Documents of Bishops, emphasis was laid on the fraternal help that the National Conference of Bishops can and should promote. Happily this already exists; we can cite here a few examples, such as: "Work of the Spanish American Sacerdotal Cooperation," of the Spanish Episcopate; "Collegium for Latin America," of the Belgian bishops; "Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary," of the Italian bishops; "Adveniat," of the German bishops; "Caritas International," of the American bishops. We profoundly recognize this tremendous help and Our Blessed Lord will not fail to bless our generous benefactors, still our needs are great and urgent. At the other CICOP meetings stress was laid on the social and economic problems of Latin America. We are a people baptized in the Catholic faith, but find ourselves, in this condition, due to the historical reasons and vast growing population that we urgently need an intense evangelization project to confirm our people in their faith. We lack the apostles and the funds necessary to undertake such a tremendous task which lies heavily on the consciences and hearts of the Latin American bishops. Furthermore, it is with deep sorrow that we see in Latin America, a great number of Catholics that leave the Church each year, a number that is greater than all the conversions to the Catholic faith in all the territories of the missionary world. This is the great Latin American problem, which has preoccupied the past popes and which assumes a character of extreme responsibility, firstly for us Latin American Bishops,

secondly for our brethren of the Faith in the United States and if you can understand the gravity of the situation, I am sure you will help us substantially elaborating a generous and well thought out program to help out these key points, especially for the Church in Latin America, which has been, by the way, the preoccupation extremely praiseworthy of the Latin America Bureau of N.C.W.C., by means of CICOP. We are, therefore, well on the road, anticipating the Council. But this synod explaining the Episcopal Collegiality, has projected a new light on this providential and brotherly help; and it not only comforts but inspires us to see the efforts of the American bishops trying to interest the North American Catholics, especially of the United States, in the gathering of funds, in favor of their Latin American brethren, for which we are deeply grateful. This would be a good time to acquaint the American people with Latin America, which up to now has been only poorly known, but has had its negative and pessimistic aspects enlarged, forgetting there is a promising and hopeful side for the Church, thanks to their loyalty to the Church and their Catholic character. A visit of illustrious representatives of North American Catholicism to understand "in loco" the variety and gravity of our problems would be most useful and would bring about a greater understanding among the peoples of the Americas as was shown by the spirit of love which characterized the Council. Our economic situation is such that the help in money, which would not even be

sufficient to build a High School in a North American Diocese divided among the countries of Latin America, this same amount of money would represent an appreciable contribution to the completing of many charitable works. I do not wish to analyze nor try to point out the responsibility for our complex situation in the socio-economic field, but it is a fact that is of utmost importance to our Catholic family. But it is a situation we must face and try to solve for the good of the Church as the spirit of the Second Vatican Council urges us. Personally, I am more preoccupied with the collaboration of personnel. Besides the priests and religious who have come to our Latin American countries, and permit me here to say that Brazil is the country of greatest importance in Latin America. It is greatly desired and strongly to be requested that we have lay helpers. I wish to make known to you my feelings regarding the lay apostles who will come to help us. They should be of extraordinary capacity to help the formation in Latin American countries, of local apostles, who can produce to a greater advantage, because the local apostles are better acquainted with the mentality of our people and know the language and would dedicate themselves completely to the Church if given sufficient financial backing. In Latin America, special emphasis must be placed at this time in the application given by the Council, to the formation and work of lay apostles as well as lay deacons, who would not only alleviate the work of the priests, but would also help to promote the renovation called for by the Council. I am thinking of a new type of Papal

Volunteers for Latin America, which would bring a greater fervor and a special enrichment to the lay Catholics in the U.S. These lay Catholics in the U.S. would assume either singly or in groups the obligation of sustenance of Latin American persons who would work as lay apostles, chosen by the local bishop, so that their full time could be used for the apostolate. This is the same thing as is now being done here in the U.S. for the Papal Volunteers, who come from the U.S. to our country and give extraordinary proof of their Catholicity. This, by the way, is absolutely necessary, for up until now we had only known North Americans through Protestant laymen. I believe that we should maintain the Papal Volunteers because their exceptional value to the Church and they can awaken the local lay apostles. Other means could favor the multiplying of the local volunteers, especially where the local dioceses are ready to pay half the cost. Thus PAVLA, which normally gets a relatory of the activities of the volunteers in a wider manner in Latin America to help the Church. Allow me to speak a word of special praise for the splendid "Operation Relocation" of the Mankato Catholic High School, by means of which your young people are mobilizing themselves enthusiastically to help solve the excruciating housing problem for the slum dwellers of Latin America.

Forgive me for these suggestions which come forth from the heart of an overworked bishop with the responsibilities of a tremendous archdiocese: 5,500,000 people, a bishop who is the president of the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil,

who has benefited and continues to benefit with the actual help of American priests, religious and laymen; a bishop who knows, appreciates and is very happy with the vitality of Catholicity in your beloved land. These are a few suggestions brought about by the love for the Church which we spoke of in the Council. Let us meditate at this hour of extraordinary importance that you may give your generous and happy collaboration as we say together, God Bless America.

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