

CATHOLIC INTER-AMERICAN COOPERATION PROGRAM
1300 South Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Contact: Byron Rouse
(Area Code 312) 427-5443

Cicop

ADVANCE FOR RELEASE

JANUARY, 1964

199

7/8

261(0613)

28196

ADDRESS BY
Abbe Francois Houtart,
Director Centre de Recherches
Socio-Religieuses, Brussels

(To be delivered 2:45 P.M., Monday, January 20, 1964 at the First Annual Conference of the Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program, Edgewater Beach Hotel, Chicago, January 20-21, 1964)

NEW PASTORAL PLANS IN LATIN AMERICA

In several Latin American countries pastoral plans have been prepared, elaborated and put into application. They are among others the pastoral plans of Chile (1961), the emergency plan of the Brazilian episcopate (1962), the apostolic plan of the regional bishop's conference of the North East of Brazil and several diocesan plans, like the one of Natal in Brazil, Riobamba in Ecuador, San Jose de Mayo, in Uruguay, Giradot in Colombia, etc. It would be impossible to quote all the experiences. They are already numerous. But we could not omit to give account also of more particular plans, on a city, a region or even an urban section, like the South of Bogota, forming a parochial union, since already 7 years.

1. What is a pastoral plan?

We all have heard about economic planification. These are particularly necessary in a developing situation. It means a pre-

add one Address by Fr. Houtart

vision of the different elements of an economic development and the organization, by all the possible means, of the harmonization of the different economic forces in presence, in order to make them contribute on the most adequate way possible to the development. But one may ask if such a perspective is also valuable for pastoral care. It is not possible to put this activity on the same level as a economic or social action.

A pastoral plan consist, in a region, a diocese, a country, in a thought on the elements disponible to realize the task of evangelization and on the orientation they must take in order to answer better to the needs of the time and of the place.

A pastoral plan request at first an inventory of all what is existing: number of priests, religious, nuns, church's institutions, like parishes, Catholic Action, movements, etc.; lay people engaged in the different sectors of a missionary action or of the temporal action; para-ecclesiastical organizations, like schools, hospitals, social action, etc.

Once the inventory established, of course in parallel with the social and economical situation of the region, the precise aims of the action must be defined with a special accent on the most important points.

However, at the contrary of what many people have thought till now, the elaboration of pastoral plans is not possible only from an office desk. To fix the aims of the pastoral plan request a profound theological thought, but applied on the sociological realities of the place. The pastoral plans we have quoted before have all followed such a line. Some of them, which have been

add two Address by Fr. Houtart

elaborated with formed personal, in theology and in sociology have been able to go deeper in such a thought. Others, because of the urgency of the problems and of the absence of enough people able to collaborate with such an approach, have been obliged to go more rapidly in the theological and the sociological work. But all have been based on this double vision.

Once that the aims have been determined, we must envisaged the means to get the aims. The inventory allowed to know what we are disposing. We must concretize the aims, indicating who will be able to realize them and in how much time. This means the need of a very great realism, in order not to make mere theoretical plans. A timing of realization must be established at the same time as a mechanism of revision and control.

It is useless to say that a pastoral plan must be elaborated not only from upstairs but also from the base. It is useless to fix aims and even to determine the persons who will be obliged to realize that, if those persons are not persuaded of the value and of the necessity to collaborate in such a plan. This is the reason why a pastoral plan takes time to be prepared. It is necessary to associate all the elements of the base, from the parishes too the specialized Catholic Action movements and the nuns. It is a real mobilization of all the responsables of a apostolic action.

Finally, a pastoral plan cannot be imposed by decrees. In several places, the clergy have been perfectly free to accept or not to realize his particular plan, integrated in the general plan. It is the only solution to avoid psychological oppositions.

2. Why is a pastoral plan necessary?

add three Address by Fr. Houtart

The thought on the action of the Church in the present world and several recent pontifical declarations, among others of Pope John XXII have showed the necessity in the whole world of elaboration of pastoral plan. More and more one speaks of "Pastorale d'ensemble", word which is used in the schemes of the Council. As a matter of fact, the problems of the evolution of the society in which we are living are now so complex that it is not possible anymore to perceive them without a systematic thought. The same thing is true for the solution. We have been used to an apostolic individualism, heritage of the liberal age. Each pastor is an absolute "boss" in his parish, each bishop in his diocese. Sectors of parallel action have been progressively established on the school level in the workers movements, in the family movements, etc.. The integration between the different sectors of action is not sufficient. Only through the means of such an integration it will be possible to discover better adapted forms of actions. It is necessary to be convinced that the "Pastorale d'ensemble" or the elaboration of pastoral plan does not mean only the coordination of what is existing, but well the fixation of new aims and ways of action better adapted to the present problems.

If this is necessary in the whole Church, how much more in a Continent like the Latin American one! The global and rapid social change indeed, request the rapid determination of the key-points of the action to be taken. The means we are disposing of are so limited that it is indispensable to utilize them on the most rational possible way.

Like we see, there is no question of planifying the action of the Hcly Ghost, but of bringing at the disposal of this action all

add four Address by Fr. Houtart

the means of human intelligent collaboration, following the will of the Lord.

3. What is the content of the pastoral plans?

We have seen how those pastoral plans were prepared. In Chile, a group of theologians and sociologists have met during several months very regularly, totalizing 30 days of full time work in common. They started from the socio-religious reality of Chili, which had been studied, thanks to a general work realized in Latin America, on the initiative of Msgr. Ligutti financed by the Homeland Foundation. The theologians, put in front of those realities, have elaborated, with the pastors and the sociologists, the aims of the action of evangelization of Chili.

Among these precise aims, they determined the need of a general mission for the whole country, which would be realized in the time of about three years. This mission would be made following complete new methods, integrating all the responsables of the pastoral action and with the aim of provoking a renewal of the spirit and the methods of the pastoral work. A second aim was to reinforce the means of diffusion. There were two aspects: to concentrate the press action on the catholic weekly: "La Voz" and to prepare a great number of radiophonic programs, to be distributed to the different stations. A third aim has been the apostolic action among the teacher of the public schools. These three aims were national ones. More precise aims, for different regions and on a local basis have also progressively been elaborated.

In Brazil, the plan of emergency of the Bishop's conference has been elaborated also with a view on the concrete situation of Brazil. This has been less precise, because the means of knowledge

add five Address by Fr. Houtart

were not yet as developed as in Chili. Because it was a much more general plan, covering an enormous country, the great orientations were also more theoretical. It has been among other things, decided to divide Brazil in seven regions, with regional bishop's conferences. Each region has been invited to elaborate also his particular pastoral plan.

The plan of Brazil started especially from the need of a common action, of the development of apostolic action of the lay-people and of the transformation of the spirit of the catholic education.

Father Cloin will explain the plan of action of the regional secretariate of North Eastern Brazil. This allows me to speak immediately about the regional and local plans. In the diocese of Natal (Brazil), since several years, the elaboration of a pastoral plan has been realized in a very detailed way. In 1963, vg, the plan has 3 sections; the diocese, the city of Natal, and the 5 rural zones of the diocese. Each great sector of action is envisaged and a program has been elaborated for each one, month per month. So, for example, for the diocesan sector of the secondary education, the first three months of 1963 had to be dedicated to, at first a survey of the situation in the diocese, than to the creation of a provincial secretariate of the catholic education; to the study of the renovation plan established by the national conference of the bishops; to prepare meetings with the teachers of the secondary education and to prepare a plan of action for spiritual renovation in each school.

The months of April, May and June, were consecrated to the realization of a course of the "Letter World", a course of formation for leaders of students movements; the creation or the vital-

add six Address by Fr. Houtart

ization of the association of parents, etc. So each sector of pastoral action had his own plan.

In the diocese of Riobamba, (Ecuador) a plan had been elaborated since 1958, in order to answer to the action of social and cultural elevation of the Indians, realized by the Indian Mission (ILO, UNESCO, etc.).

The aim of this plan was to renew progressively the spirit of the pastoral work, with a special action on the renewal of the religious feasts, which were very often quite paganized. Several pilot experiences would be organized in different parishes. Then, a particular action has been planified for the collaboration of the nuns in a region particularly difficult. Regular meetings have been organized with the clergy on the pastoral renewal. At the same time a social action was planified, in collaboration with the Indian Mission. An organic collaboration was the result of it. Each week a delegate of the diocese, action is assisting to the meetings of the Andian Mission and vice versa. The pastoral plan of 1959 has been consecrated to the amelioration of the Sunday pastoral work, on the continuation of the effort of reforms of the religious feast, on the multiplication of the catechism in the small rural centers, on the continuation of the meetings for the whole clergy, dioceses and religious and on the contacts between the seminarians and the Indian problems.

4. What are the results.

The pastoral plans are still very young, but yet very remarkable results can be noted. It is certain that in Latin America one has been able to go much further than in the majority of the other regions of the Church. Perhaps the so urgent needs have re-

add seven Address by Fr. Houtart

sulted in a better comprehension of the problem. In Chile, for example, the three aims we have quoted, have been realized on an extraordinary way. The general mission is now almost finished and the participation of the lay-people and of the religious at this work has been very great. The transformation of the mentality of pastoral is almost unexpected. The Catholic weekly "La Voz" is now one of the most important of Chile and is technically one of the best. The radio programs have been realized and the apostolate among the teachers of the state schools is well advanced. It was more important to make this than to multiply the Catholic schools in a situation of demographic explosion.

In Brazil the results of the emergency plan of the Bishops are also very encouraging. The regional Conferences have been established and several have elaborated very precise pastoral plans, region per region. The results in the different specialized sectors are also positive. The progressive transformation of the mentality of the Catholic Education is really happening. It is sufficient to know the realizations of the North Eastern Brazil and of Natal, to have an idea of the efficiency of the method, in regions where however the problems have a tremendous dimension and where the pastoral change is a fundamental necessity.

5. Conclusions

Before this pastoral planning, some conclusions must be made:

1. At first we come to the conclusion that it is necessary to help the Latin American Episcopate to realize such a planification. We have seen that this request the utilization of precise

add eight Address by Fr. Houtart

technics. One of the most efficient form of cooperation from outside will be to furnish men and means, able to elaborate and prepare pastoral planning, especially on the theological and sociological field.

2. The outside help to Latin America should be oriented by preference, or even almost exclusively to the places where a pastoral plan exists. Only then, a cooperation, which remains always limited, will be more sure of being oriented toward aims, at the same time precise and integrated in a global action.

- 0 -

EDITORS: CAUTION NOTE RELEASE DATE AND TIME