
SYNOD OF BISHOPS ON AMERICA



In his apostolic letter of November 10, 1994 on the holding of a Jubilee for the year 2000, Pope John Paul II stated his intention of holding a special Synod of Bishops on America, and he appointed a pre-synodal preparatory committee to this effect. After a study of the different proposals made to him, the Holy Father retained the following theme for this special meeting: *The Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ Who Is the Way of Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity in America*. The principle conclusions he suggests for this special meeting are several: promoting a new evangelisation of the entire continent as an expression of episcopal communion, increasing solidarity between the different diocesan Churches in different areas of pastoral action, highlight problems of justice and international economic relations between American nations, by taking into account the enormous inequalities between Northern, Central, and Southern America. These are vast objectives which cannot be reached without the generous support of all members of the Churches concerned.

PRIOR CONSULTATION

The General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops first drafted a working as a study aid to the Holy Father's theme. A questionnaire has been submitted to each bishop so that he may, along with his people, look for appropriate answers; diocesan and religious priests, religious brothers and sisters, parish pastoral councils, organisations and groups, parish communities and others, all are invited to study one or the other of the sixteen questions. I therefore invite all the above-mentioned to send me their answers before January 10, 1997. A diocesan committee will then collate the answers which I shall then submit to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops which will gather together the responses from throughout our country. All the answers must be in Rome by April 1, 1997.

THE QUESTIONS

ENCOUNTER WITH THE LIVING CHRIST

1. How is the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Evangeliser, proclaimed and presented to the men and women of the present era, so that they might have a true encounter with Him in the concrete situations of life? Describe the ways in which the Church can maintain the centrality of the living Jesus Christ in the various manifestations of the Church life: liturgy, systematic catechesis, faith formation, apostolic and charitable activities?

CONVERSION IN THE CHURCH AND IN SOCIETY

2. List and describe concrete signs of the religious awakening in the local Church. On the other hand, what are the most urgent aspects needing conversion, within the Church?

3. What elements in contemporary society in your area can be considered positive, with regards to the Gospel message? What elements of society call for conversion?

COMMUNION IN THE CHURCH

4. In your area, what are the factors causing significant divisions in the Church with regard to: bishops, priests, men and women religious, ecclesial movements, the faithful in general? How can these elements which damage communion be overcome?

5. Evaluate to what measure the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, especially in relation to ecclesial communion, have been faithfully applied in your particular Church. In what ways can all the doctrinal and pastoral richness of this Council be proposed in response to the Holy Father's invitation to make an "examination of conscience" which "must consider the *reception given to the Council*, this great gift of the Spirit to the Church at the end of the second millennium"?

ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

6. What is being done concretely in the particular Churches or at the inter-diocesan level, to promote ecumenical dialogue, prayer and cooperation in acts of solidarity with our Christian brethren? How are pastoral workers prepared to develop ecumenical activities oriented towards building up the unity of the one People of God?

7. Evaluate the relations which your Christian community maintains with other non-Christian religions.

THE CHURCH FACED WITH THE PROBLEM OF SECTS

8. Briefly describe the religious situation concerning sects, syncretistic religious movements, and other spiritual currents. What are they? What type of activities are they developing? What can the Church do to confirm believers in their faith, in light of this situation?

EVANGELISATION AND CULTURE

9. What is the Church doing to evangelise the world of culture (the arts, literature, science, etc.)? How is the Church involved through programmes of evangelisation in the various fields of education: primary or elementary, secondary or middle school, high school, university, etc.?

10. What are the most significant elements in the cultures of indigenous groups, Afro-Americans, or immigrants - found in the territories of your country or local communities - which deserve to be reconsidered or utilised as "seeds of evangelisation"? To what measure do these elements enrich Christian spirituality? To what extent must they be purified of elements which are alien to the Christian faith?

11. What are the most significant characteristics of popular piety in your area, and to what extent are those aspects taken into consideration, in pastoral planning? What place does the Blessed Virgin Mary hold, in popular devotion?

THE CHURCH AND MEANS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

12. What is the Church in your area doing at present to promote the proper use of the means of communication and to make them useful tools at the service of the new evangelisation? Describe the Church's presence in the many forms of the so-called modern *areopagus*.

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY

13. What activities are promoted by the Church in your area to offer assistance in solidarity with those most in need, and how do the faithful respond in general to these initiatives? What external collaboration, at the ecclesial and civil levels, does the Church receive for this solidarity aid? Are there programmes for forming a consciousness of solidarity in persons or groups having a significant role in society?

THE CHURCH AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS

14. In the new evangelisation, what use is being made in your area of the Church's social teaching, in light of the diverse situations which demand action, e.g., human development and promotion, migration, labour problems, etc.? What means are being used to spread an awareness of the Church's social teaching within the Church and beyond the ecclesial dimensions?

THE CHURCH AND THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN LIFE

15. How does the Church promote respect for human life in all its phases from conception in the mother's womb to the point of natural death? Give concrete examples of the sensitivity of the Christian community in your area concerning this respect.

OTHER COMMON THEMES

16. In light of the theme of the Special Assembly, make any remarks or suggestions on matters common to the whole American continent which in your opinion have not been treated sufficiently in the *Lineamenta*, or not included in the above series of questions.

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