

ON COURSE FOR MEDELLIN, 50 YEARS OF THE OPTION FOR THE POOR

INTRODUCTION

In 1968, from 26th August to 6th September, there took place, in Medellin, Colombia, the 2nd General Meeting of the CELAM (Conferencia Episcopal Latinoamericana = Latin American Bishops Conference). Its conclusions became known as the “Medellin Documents”, and they brought about a new stage in the life of the Latin American church. They consisted of a re-reading of the II Vatican Council in our reality and from that moment “were formalised” the Grassroots Church Communities, the theological/pastoral method of seeing, judging and acting, the option for the poor... that were already being enhanced by several progressive sectors of the Church. Medellin became the driving force for a new Church, more prophetic and with the people. Then began a difficult stage of misunderstandings and tensions within the same Church and, outside it, a time of persecution and martyrdom, namely of daring, heroism and grief.

For this reason, the 50th anniversary of this historical fact must not pass unnoticed and therefore, a group of persons and organizations (coming from 15 countries) have wanted to meet to reflect on a process that, over the next months, places us on the route for that event, in August 2018.

We have made the first meetings in the framework of the activities of the “petition for forgiveness” that sectors of the Church of Colombia and other countries held in Bogotá on 3rd and 4th September 2017, where they asked for forgiveness to God and to the victims for the responsibility of our church in the many violent abuses of the past. (See: <https://colombiaplural.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Espan%CC%83ol-pedido-de-perdo%CC%81n.pdf>). Another text that was read at the same time was contained in the link: [The 7 Deadly Sins of the Church in Colombia](#)

Furthermore, our meetings have been framed in the dialogue and peace processes between the Government of Colombia with the FARC-EP and the ELN, which are reaching final results and, the beginning of a process of reconciliation and democratization that we hope will satisfy the desires for peace of the people of Colombia.

Another important fact has been the very recent visit of Pope Francis to Colombia. We have been attentive to the inspiring and motivating words of Pope Francis, for example, in his invitation, opposite the Narino Palace, to listen to and look at the poor: *“And, please, I ask you to listen to the poor, to those who suffer. Look at their eyes and ask yourselves at all times why their faces are harrowed by suffering and why their hands are supplicant. In them you can learn real lessons of life, humanity and dignity. Because they, who groan in chains, do understand the words of he who died on the cross, in the words of your national anthem.*

—” (http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco_20170907_viaggioapostolico-colombia-autorita.html) (Click on EN for the text in English)

The Pope’s words are consistent with the option for the poor of Medellin.

We want to make this commemoration in the spirit of what Pope Francis said to the Steering Committee of the CELAM, referring to Aparecida and the anniversary of Medellin: *“Aparecida is a treasure whose discovery is still incomplete. I am sure that each one of you discovers how much its richness has penetrated in the Churches that you carry in your hearts. Like the first disciples sent by Jesus on their mission, we can also relate with enthusiasm everything we have done (see Mk 6,30). We must be alert. The essential realities of human life and of the Church are never just a monument but a living asset. It is much easier to transform them in memories when we celebrate their anniversaries: 50 years since Medellin, 20 since Ecclesia in America, 10 since*

Aparecida! Instead, this is different: We must cherish and pour forth the riches of this patrimony... to the Church of our continent. (Meeting with the CELAM Steering Committee, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/speeches/2017/september/documents/papa-francesco_20170907_viaggioapostolico-colombia-celam.html).

We have held three different meeting to socialize and enrich our proposal:

- The Javeriana University (Bogotá), Monday 4th September.
- The Emaus Lutheran Community (Medellin), Saturday, 10th September.
- The Madre Laura Educational Centre (Medellin), Sunday, 11th September.

1. PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

This list is open for the registration of new organizations that want to take part in the process.

- COLOMBIAN ORGANIZATIONS

- 1) Mesa Ecuánica (Ecumenical Table)
- 2) Comisión Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz (Interchurch Justice & Peace Committee)
- 3) Fe y Territorios (Faith and Territories)
- 4) El Diálogo Intereclesial por la Paz de Colombia (DIPAZ) (Interchurch Dialogue for Peace in Colombia)
- 5) Comunidades construyendo paz en los territorios (CONPAZ) (Communities building peace in the territories)
- 6) Congregación Hermanas Misioneras de la Madre Laura (Lauritas) (Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Mother Laura)
- 7) Universidad Javeriana
- 8) [CIDEP CIRCULOS INTEGRALES DE DESARROLLO DE LA EDUCACION PREESCOLAR](#) (Integrated Circuits of nursery schools) (Javier Giraldo works in CIDEP)

- CHURCHES & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- 9) Servicio Internacional Cristiano de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de América Latina – SICSAL (International Christian Solidarity Service with the Peoples of Latin America) (Representatives of México, El Salvador, Ecuador, Argentina, Australia and Colombia were present at these meetings)
- 10) Justicia y Paz de la Congregación Claretiana (Justice & Peace of the Claretian Congregation)
- 11) Mennonite Church (Medellin)
- 12) Lutheran Church (Medellin)
- 13) PAX CHRISTI (Medellin)

- OTHER COUNTRIES:

- 14) Fundación Pueblo Indio, Ecuador (Indian People Foundation (of Bishop Proano)
- 15) Comunidad Santo Tomás de Aquino, Spain
- 16) DePaul University, USA
- 17) Swedish Church

Summarising: 25 persons, from 17 institutions and 10 countries: Colombia, United States, Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Argentina, Spain, Australia and Sweden.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Medellin Documents with a process of historical memory, education, celebration and engagement to understand its historical significance in the Church and in society to enable us to discover the signs of the times **(and the current challenges)** through which God calls us to build his Kingdom today.

2.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1- Construct a **process of historical memory** that allows us to witness the preparation (the Movements that led up to the Council: liturgical, biblical, ecumenical, secularist, worker-based on the Social Doctrine of the Church; the 2nd Vatican Council, the Pact of the Catacombs...) during and after the Medellin Documents so as to transmit it to the new generations and create a better understanding of the existing situation of the Latin American **(and global)** Church.

2- **Discern**, in the framework of the thoughts and testimony of Mgr. Romero and Francis's papacy (a poor Church for the poor, *a welcoming Church of open doors...*), **the present signs of the times**, to enlighten them from the Medellin options and locate pastoral insights that lead us to valid answers.

3- **Share and celebrate pastoral, ecumenical, educational, popular and liberating experiences**, enjoyed over 5 decades, brought forth under the inspiration of Medellin, to mutually enrich and encourage us facing the future with audacity, hope and optimism.

4- **Celebrate the lives and martyrdom** of the women and men who lived the evangelical spirit of Medellin up to the ultimate consequences so that, by following in their footsteps, we may also be faithful to the people and to the poor Church for the poor.

3. CRITERIA FOR THE REALIZATION OF THIS INICIATIVE

- We want to establish a **process**, we will promote activities that are not simply isolated events, but which mark progressive stages.

- We are searching, with all the participating organizations, to **interact, participate and share** all the possible organizational levels throughout the whole process.

- The **specific theme** will be centred **(inspired)** on Medellín and on the Latin American social, religious and political process but the **participation** of persons and organizations will be **open** to all interested countries, of whatever continent.

- On the religious/church level, the vision and participation will be **ecumenical** (a protestant - and other denominational – reading of the Documents and experience of Medellin) and **macroecumenical** (the spiritualities of the original inhabitants and of other religions).

- We recommend making special efforts to ensure that the **young people** of our organizations play an important part in this process.

- We will employ the liberation theology and pastoral in-house **methodology**: see, judge, act, celebrate and evaluate; demanded by Pope Francis in Medellin: "*Brothers and sisters, the Church in Colombia is called to engage with greater audacity in the training of missionary disciples, as we pointed out to the assembled bishops in Aparecida in the year 2007. Disciples who know how to see,*

judge and act as stated in that Latin American document that was born in these lands (see Medellín, 1968). Missionary disciples that know how to see, without inherited short sight; that examine the reality from the eyes and heart of Jesus, and then judge it. And that they take risks, act and become fully committed" (Sermon of Saturday 9th September in Medellín).

(<http://www.noticiasrcn.com/nacional-visita-del-papa-colombia-medellin/video-y-texto-homilia-misa-del-papa-francisco-medellin>)

- Interaction between the pastoral and the academical, practice and *doxia* (sorry, I can't find a translation) (doctrine, theory).

4. ORGANIZATION & LOGISTICS

- Proposals for **subject matters**: "Medellín: 50 years of the option for the poor"

"Theological and Pastoral Challenges 50 years after Medellín"

"The cry of the poor, cries for life, positive and negative points 50 years after Medellín"

- **To exchange and combine our own institutional spaces with those the visiting organizations.**

The organizations or networks that want to have their **own space** to discuss specific subjects corresponding to their own reality, can do so; the method could be: in the morning, there would be **work in common**, liturgical celebrations and cultural activities. each institution organizes its time, its methodology and its subject matter and, in the afternoon, there would work sessions together, shared liturgical celebrations and cultural activities.

- Envisage a full day or half day for a **field visit**, share an experience with a community in Medellín or nearby.

- **Public closure open to all**: Conclude with a **public open** cultural, liturgical **event** or by a demonstration/pilgrimage

- In the themes, **axes and workbenches** we should assume the major challenges facing Latin America with reference to new topics and social themes (of the option for the poor):

Women, gender and sexualities; youth; indigenous peoples and their struggles; Afrodescendants, their contribution to the Latin American identity; the Rights of Mother Earth: the defence of water and the fight against mining; new political, socioeconomic alternative or paradigms; Grassroots Church Communities; Liberation Theology today; a Latin American articulation; An economy of solidarity against the exclusionary economic Model and its structural victims... **(Taking into account that, apart from the specific local dimension of these challenges, many of them have a global, universal dimension, that is to say, they affect all of us).**

- Taking into account the information, analysis and solidarity with the **countries that are undergoing special circumstances**: Venezuela, attacks by US imperialism in combination with the Latin American Right; Colombia, peace and the reconciliation process; Mexico, the situation of violence and a country of passage for migrants; Honduras, vulnerability and risks for Environmental Defenders...

- Reconciliation: specific actions demanding acts of contrition... asking again the institutional Church to ask for forgiveness, reparation by the multinational agroindustrial companies... extending the situation of complicity in other Latin American countries, depart as ambassadors of reconciliation to our own countries **(The official request for forgiveness affects many other countries apart from Latin America).**

- It is proposed to make a special mention of the **memory of the female and male martyrs**, especially those whose major anniversaries are commemorated in 2018, for example, April will be the 20th anniversary of the martyrdom of Mgr. Juan Gerardi Conedera (Guatemala) and 30th anniversary of the pasch of Mgr. Leonidas Proaño (Ecuador) in August; Gerardo Valencia Cano (bishop of Buenaventura), the Review Vida Nueva (New Life), Mgr. Tulio Botero Salazar; the work of José Comblin... the Melgar meeting and document organized by the CELAM's Missions Department whose president was Gerardo Valencia Cano... (See the "Most important anniversaries in 2018" of the Spanish version of the Latin American Diary, pp 12-13).
- Start a proceedings before, during and after the Medellin meeting. The testimony of Olga Lucía Alvarez for her experience in the Medellín Council, contact Cecilio de Lora... Letter (case) of Goyconda... (Vicente Mejía, Luis Carlos Bernal)
- Employ **Social Media** for follow up and feedback to the proceedings. Website, Blog, Facebook, Youtube...
- Beforehand: Preparation of study primers, on a monthly serial, with challenging questions (prepared by REPAM (*Red Eclesial PanAmazonica* (Pan Amazon Church Network) on Laudato Sí) and upload it to the cloud...
- It would be ideal to **replicate the commemorations of Medellin in each community, country, region...** Propose open or virtual chairs in the universities.
- A **Colombia Team**, especially from **Medellín** for the logistics, An **International Team** to mobilize: interactions of the communication, contents, methodology, logistics... See below the Committees you can join.

5. SCHEDULE

5.1. MOTIVATION & PREPARATION PHASE:

- Monday, 4th September: 1st meeting for consultation and motivation in the Bogotá Javerian University.
- Saturday 10th September, meeting for consultation and motivation with the Lutheran and Mennonite Churches in Medellin
- Sunday 11th September; meeting for consultation, motivation and training of preliminary Committees:

Although the spirit of the work, as indicated above, will be interaction, participation and sharing at all possible organization levels and at all times in the process, we consider it would be convenient to form some committees so kindly propose your contributions for any one of them including your name, your organization and your country.

| | COMMITTEE | FUNCTIONS/TASK | PARTICIPANTS |
|---|----------------------|---|---|
| 1 | ANIMATION | Articulation of the group, themes, methodology, elaboration of invitations, programme, special invitations | - Abilio Peña (Fe y Territorios. Colombia) - |
| 2 | SECRETARIAT | Sistematization of proposals, list of participating organizations and their data, sending out invitations... | - Armando Márquez Ochoa (SICSAL. El Salvador) - |
| 3 | COMMUNICATIONS | Organization of email, Web, Social Media, radio slots... | - Gerardo Duré (SICSAL. Argentina) - Sean Cleary (SICSAL. Australia) - |
| 4 | EDUCATION | Preparation and development of educational contents, preparation of teaching matter, y elabora los contenidos formativos, prepara material didáctico, proposal for counselors | - |
| 5 | LOGISTICS | Prepare a centre for the event, transport, board and lodging | - Sister Ana Ruth (Lauritas. Medellín) - |
| 6 | INTERNATIONAL LINKS | To contact and follow up with organiations, institutions of other countries... | - Evaristo Villar (Comunidad Sto. Tomás de Aquino. España) - Gloria Cavanna (Comunidad Sto. Tomás de Aquino. España) |
| 7 | MANAGEMENT & FINANCE | Budgets, project, presentation and follow up with Cooperation Agencies | - |

- Monthly Internet meetings of each committee
- Meeting on the ground of the Logistics Committee in Medellin on 3rd week of September

5.2. LAUNCH AND INVITATION PHASE

- Friday 27th October 2017 Internet meeting of the Committees
- Tuesday 31st October: 500th anniversary of the Reformation of the Church (What do we propose?)
- **Public launch:** Thursday 16th November: on the anniversary of the martyrdom of the Jesuits and their lay assistants, Celina and Elba, and in the framework of the International Day for Non-Violence Against Women: publication and distribution of a Proclamation of Convocation and instruments for participation and registration... Internet press conference from Medellin (we could think of a greeting by Jon Sobrino -as it is the anniversary of the Jesuits-, participation of SOA Watch for their work against the School of the Americas, other possible invitees: for example, Mgr Raul Vera, Elsa Tamez, Gustavo Gutierrez...from their countries)

ORGANIZATIONS TO INVITE:

1. KAIR-ED (Colombia)
2. Sociedad de Teólogos de América Latina (Society of Latin American Theologians) (José María Vigil)
3. The LATIN AMERICAN DIARY & Koinonia (Jorgi Planas)
5. REDES CRISTIANAS (Spain)
6. Conferencia Latinoamericana de Religios@s – CLAR (Latin American Conference of Nuns)
7. Revista de Interpretación Bíblica Latinoamericana – RIBLA (Latin American Biblical Interpretation Review)
8. AMERINDIA
9. Departamento Ecuménico de Investigaciones DEI (Ecumenical Department of Research DEI)

10. Asociación de Teólogos Juan XXIII (Spain) John XXIII Association of Theologians
11. Red Pan Amazónica (Pan Amazon Network)
12. Federación Luterana Mundial (Worldwide Lutheran Federation)
13. Consejo Latinoamericano de Iglesias – CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches)
15. Centro Diego de Medellín (Chile)
16. (kindly, make other suggestions)

5.3. Management Phase

- Monday 6th November 2017: Presentation of the final Project to the group and the start of arrangements with the cooperation agencies
- Invitations to female and male theologians & sociopolitical analysts

5.4. CONSOLIDATION

- January 2018: Final presentation for the detailed programme of the event
- January 2018: Invitations for invited female and male theologians
- January 2018: Reservations of buildings and infrastructure for the event
- March 2018: Final date for registrations

5.5. IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

- Monday 27th to Friday 31st of August 2018, in Medellín, Colombia

5.6. EVALUATION & FOLLOW UP PHASE

6. BUDGET & FINANCE

DAILY COST PER PERSON: \$37.55

- Board and lodging per person: \$25
- Local transport and materials per person per day: \$12.50

REGISTRATION: COST PER PERSON FOR 4 DAYS: \$150

THE COST OF AIR OR LAND TICKETS TO ARRIVE AT THE EVENT SITE AT YOUR COST

I received this text from CCBM a few days ago and since Global Council Network's Aparecida Conference is to celebrate Medellin at Aparecida, I wanted to translate it quickly so that GCN members can also optionally participate in the workshops of the Medellin Conference in August 2018

4th March 2018, Hugo Castelli Eyre, Sto. Tomas/CCBM/Redes Cristianas/EN-RE