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| <b>THE MEDELLIN DOCUMENT</b> |
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**FOCUS OF THE SUBJECT**

We are starting a process of reflection and catechesis to follow the path towards the 50th anniversary of the 2nd Latin American Bishops' Conference that took place in Medellín, Colombia in 1968. Given the historical, theological and pastoral importance of this event, some Christian organizations and churches of the (Latin American) Continent have already set out on this road and we want to offer you these Study Guides that provide an itinerary of catechesis and engagement to distinguish and respond to the signs of the times of today..

We begin by reflecting on the methodology of “see, judge and act” because this was undertaken in the Medellín Meeting, because it had been put into practice by many communities, and because, it is in line with the recommendation given by Pope Francis in his sermon in Medellín, and it is what we want to adopt in this learning process.

We hope you will find it useful and that we can achieve the proposed targets. Kindly send us your comments on your own catechetical method to help us enrich this material by emailing it to: [infomedellin18@gmail.com](mailto:infomedellin18@gmail.com)

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| <b>Date</b>           | 26th August to 6th September 1968   |
| <b>Central Topics</b> | Human advancement<br>Evangelization & the Growth of Faith<br>The Church and its structures              |
| <b>Place</b>          | Medellín, Colombia  |
| <b>Convened by</b>    | Pope Paul VI  |
| <b>Theme</b>          | The Church in the current transformation of<br>Latin America in the light of the<br>2nd Vatican Council |

## INTRODUCTION:

This short introduction exists to assimilate some points of the text of the Medellín Document to detail in depth its axes and objectives.

It is more of an approach to the document to explain its meaning and how it questions us today 50 years after its conclusions.

So therefore we are going to mention some words of the theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez about it:

**“The main importance of the Medellín Bishops’ Conference in the year 68 is that the Latin American Church began to look at its problems face to face.**

**And what if found was that although poverty was not the only question it was, however, the greatest challenge to the announcement of the Gospel.**

**I think it is the maturity of a Church, the sign at least, that gives rise to its own theological reflection, not with any desire to compete with European theology but with the intention of enriching the whole of the universal Church with distinct and coincidental opinions because it is the same Christian message about which we all reflect”.**

What Gutiérrez wants to tell us is that it was necessary, given the Latin American context of the moment, a local reflection coming from our own realities. The evangelical message is the same for the whole universal Church but the realities were different. Therefore it was necessary to produce a greater approach of the Gospel given the characteristics of the Latin American reality.

Medellín is one of the most important documents for the Latin American Church. The context in which this document was developed is very important when reading and studying it and therefore it is worthwhile to make a brief exercise of historical memory to contextualize:

What was happening in Latin America in the sixties?

Indeed, Paul VI in his opening discourse made this public recognition: **“there exist in the Church, persons who already experience the inherent deprivation of poverty, due to sometimes insufficient bread and often of resources”.**

And the Bishops themselves in their Message to the Peoples of Latin America that, recognizing

**that “our peoples aspire to their liberation and to growth in humanity” will ask for a first engagement: “to inspire, enhance and urge a new order of justice that incorporates all men in the management of their own communities”.**

This is why Medellín had a great echo not only in the Church of Latin America, but also its message reached Europe and other continents, that see the commitment of a Church, strong in spite of its limitations. Above all, the documents of “Justice” and “Peace” with a clear prophetic denunciation of the situation had a voice which was heard on the other side of the frontiers and which today remains vibrant.

Research briefly and annotate the processes that draw your attention in the decade and which for your criteria were important in these items:

1. Poverty
2. Economics
3. Politics
4. Culture
5. Church

#### THE CONCLUSIONS

**The Medellin Document** contains the conclusions of the 2nd General Conference of the Latin American Bishops that took place in Medellin from 26th August to 8th September 1968. The conference was divided into sixteen committees and subcommittees and its conclusions were approved by his holiness Pope Paul VI, when the president of the CELAM was Avelar Brandao Vilela and the secretary general, Eduardo F. Pironio.

The conclusions are focussed on the presence of the Church to transform Latin America in the light of the 2nd Vatican Council. The pastoral care covered three areas:

1. Firstly, the advancement of mankind and the peoples to the values of justice, peace, education and family;
2. Secondly, it focussed on the need for evangelization and maturity of the faith by means of catechesis and liturgy;
3. Thirdly, a Visible Church in its structures: it took into account the problems related to the community so that the unity and pastoral activity could be stronger.

It tries to encourage lay people to dedicate themselves professionally to tasks of human advancement. Its sources are the Bible and the Magisterium of the Church and the encyclicals: *Gaudium et spes*, *Populorum progressio*, *Pacem in terris*, *Gravissimum educationis*, *Lumen gentium*, *Sacrosantum concilium*, amongst many others.

This forms part of the Christian Social Doctrine and its task is to announce the Gospel and denounce injustice using the method of “see, judge and act”. (see introduction in: [www.sicsal.net](http://www.sicsal.net))

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| 1 Human advancement and that of the peoples to the values of justice, peace, education and family |
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**Read carefully this Area, underlining the most important aspects and reflect on the current situation using those criteria:**

What does Human advancement mean today?

What are the values today of Justice, Peace, Education and the Family?

What is my responsibility in all this?

How do you live and practice human advancement in your community?

## 2 Area of Evangelisation and Growth of the Faith

**In this Area, the Document portrays four findings:**

1- The first reflection is the huge difficulty and complexity of preserving or transmitting the faith. "in the great mass of baptised persons of Latin America, the conditions of faith, beliefs and religious practices are very diverse, not only from one country to the next, but even between the regions of the same country and between the different social levels. To this you must add the process of cultural and religious transformation, the internal migrations, the socio-cultural changes, the lack of apostolic personnel, the deficient adaptation of the church structures".

2- The second reflection is that "up to now we have considered only a pastoral of preservation, based on sacramentalization with very little emphasis on the evangelization, which might have been at one time, due to the similarity of structure... could have been adequate, but today it no longer is".

3- The third is to call to mind our popular religiosity: "It is a religiosity of vows, promises, pilgrimages and countless devotions. It is based on the reception of the sacraments, above all baptism and the first communion, which have primarily social repercussions instead of a real influence in the exercise of a Christian life".

4- A fourth finding is much more positive. "we observe in the expression of the religiosity an enormous popular reserve of authentically Christian virtues, especially with respect to charity, even when there are deficiencies in moral conduct".

**Reflection:**

What does Evangelization mean today? How do we approach our neighbour with the good news?

Is our Pastoral still sacramentalist or does it take into account other elements of the daily life of the persons in my community?

What do the people of my community believe? How do they live their religiosity?

What do I believe? How do I live my religiosity?

## The Area of the Visible Church and its structures

Thirdly, the problems that encompass the community were taken into account so that its unity and the pastoral action could be stronger.

**Read this Area in detail and reflect on the following:**

**Movements of Lay People:**

What does it mean to be a Lay Person? What is the role of the Lay Person today in the Church?

**Priests:**

What is the role of the Priest? What engagement does he have today in the community and what are his qualifications with respect to today's reality?

**Religious:**

What function do the religious undertake in the pastoral of your community? What more should they do?

**Poverty of the Church:**

What does the Document mean with "Poverty of the Church?" What does it mean to be a poor Church?

**Pastoral for All**

By pastoral for all, we understand an articulated integral pastoral (corresponsible for all the People of God (that encompasses the four dimensions of the Church: communion, announcement, mission and celebration) and that reaches all the sectors (by ages) and (sociological) environments. In other words, pastoral for all is the implication of the whole of the Diocese in one same communion for the mission. Taking into account this definition, describe briefly how your community works with respect to this.

How do you plan the pastoral of your community? With what criteria and objectives?

Does it correspond with the pastoral lines of your diocese?

What elements would you include and why?

**Social Communication Media (SCM)**

What is your opinion about the SCM?

How do they influence your Pastoral task?

What pastoral uses could they have?

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| To Finalize: |
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**Write on one side your opinions about what we have reflected:**

What things mobilized you and called your attention in the Document in general?

Based on that, what things do you think you should study in depth to better assimilate the teachings of the document?

Finally:

A few brief words of Pope Paul VI in the Context of the Second Medellin Conference:

**Jesus himself has told us in a solemn page of the gospel, where he proclaims that each suffering, hungry, sick, unfortunate, need of compassion and of help is Himself, as if He were that unhappy person, according to this mysterious and powerful sociology, (See Mt 25, 35 ss) according to the humanism of Christ.**

Sources:

Source: [http://www.mercaba.org/Pastoral/C/celam\\_documentos.htm](http://www.mercaba.org/Pastoral/C/celam_documentos.htm)

Source: <http://vincentians.com/es/celam-documento-de-medellin-1968/>