

CLADE V Pastoral Letter

Final Declaration of CLADE V

As Christian sisters and brothers we participated in the Fifth Latin American Congress on Evangelization (CLADE V), held in San José, Costa Rica, July 9–13, 2012, sponsored by the Fraternidad Teológica Latinoamericana (FTL, Latin American Theological Fellowship). We are grateful to God for the opportunity to gather together around the theme “Following Jesus in God’s Kingdom of Life. Guide us, Holy Spirit!”, and we would like to share the following reflections.

Following Jesus in the Path of Life

Faced with false, commercialized, esoteric, and spiritualized images that allude to religious conceptions of Jesus, we recognize the urgent need to follow Jesus fully in his path of life. One of our urgent tasks is to rediscover the biblical Jesus and what it means to walk with him. This will lead us to consider our contexts, to transcend mere theory, and to actively identify with our communities. Our varied realities demand biblical answers to our human needs, answers that will produce a just transformation that will be inclusive regarding gender, ethnic origin, age, differing physical and mental abilities, and minority groups that have traditionally been marginalized, such as immigrant communities. Following Jesus means incarnating his call to transformative mission.

Recommendation

In light of CLADE V, we recommend that local chapters of the FTL in every region encourage dialogue and biblical-theological-contextual reflection, and the subsequent publication and dissemination of such, regarding the meanings and practice of following the biblical Jesus today in his path of life.

The Kingdom of Life

Faced with reductionistic, commercialized, and mystical concepts of the kingdom of God, we recognize the lack of coherence between our verbal commitment with the mission of God's kingdom and our praxis. We urge an open exploration of this kingdom that takes into account diversity, a sense of community, and solidarity, as we make it part of our task of reflection. We need to promote spaces for dialogue and renewal that are inclusive and pluralistic and that connect the presence of God's kingdom with the social realities of our contexts. To achieve inclusivity, we propose taking seriously every human being with his or her unique diversity and creation as the places where this kingdom is manifested. We recognize that God's reign is also demonstrated in movements that struggle for life, for the care of creation, for equality of treatment of men and women of all ages, and for social justice. Therefore, as active agents of this kingdom, we need to involve ourselves in these struggles and, at the same time, to assume a prophetic role that promotes the values of God's kingdom.

Recommendation

In light of CLADE V, we recommend that local chapters of the FTL in every region encourage dialogue and biblical-theological-contextual reflection, and the subsequent publication and dissemination of

such, regarding the meanings and practices of the kingdom of life today as we face so many manifestations of death.

The Spirit of Life

Faced with attempts by certain megalomaniac leaders to limit and appropriate the Spirit of life as their own personal property, we recognize that discriminatory and patriarchal practices grieve the Spirit of life. The moving of the Spirit goes beyond ministerial limits by working sovereignly throughout the entire world and inviting us to participate in the kingdom's signs of life. To that end, we need to assume our responsibility as agents of hope in all of the areas of death in our society. We need the Spirit of life to guide us to discern the times and to confront the powers that marginalize our people and that promote environmental destruction, fear, and death. The Spirit gives us power to, with a prophetic voice, denounce the many manifestations of darkness and announce the hope of the utopian¹ kingdom of God and God's justice as revealed in Jesus Christ.

Recommendation

In light of CLADE V, we recommend that the local chapters of the FTL in every region encourage dialogue and biblical-theological-contextual reflection, and the subsequent publication and dissemination of such, regarding the meanings and practices of the Spirit of life's guidance today.

¹ Translator's note: The word "utopia" in Spanish does not mean a non-existent place as it might mean in English, akin to a pipe dream. Here it does not mean "unrealistic" but rather a powerful vision which, though not totally achievable in this life, does indeed inspire people to live out their lives here on earth with greater hope and at a higher ethical level.

The Trinitarian Community

Faced with ecclesiastical models that are dominated by business or commercial models or have sold out to the culture of “show business” and that reproduce an individualistic spirituality isolated from our social realities of poverty, individualism, and despair, we recognize that we are frequently seduced to egotistical power that limits the possibility of life for others and promotes closed and apathetic communities. We reaffirm the model of the trinitarian community that celebrates dialogue, encounter, interculturality, and the mission of God. Our communities should promote love instead of human domination, forgiveness instead of revenge, the justice of the kingdom instead of corruption, peace instead of violence, reconciliation instead of discrimination, the restoration of dreams and the utopia of God’s kingdom instead of despair. We should promote communities that follow Jesus in his reign of life and that are passionate for the redemption of all creation by the resurrected Jesus. We urge all followers of Jesus to participate in communities of faith as equals where equality, justice, celebration, freedom, and mutual responsibility flourish as concrete evidence of transformed lives.

Conclusion

Faced with these challenges, we extend a call:

Follow Jesus in his kingdom of life, with all that this entails, faced with the opposing reality, in total dependence on the guidance of the Spirit, even when this pursuit means that our trinitarian communities go against the grain and that with our lives we challenge the expressions of death and darkness in our societies.

Jesus encourages us with the words: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21).

Recommendation

In light of CLADE V, we recommend that the local chapters of the FTL in every region encourage dialogue and biblical-theological-contextual reflection, and the subsequent publication and dissemination of such, regarding:

- The meanings and practices of following the biblical Jesus today in the path of life.
- The meanings and practices of the kingdom of life today when faced with so many manifestations of death.
- The meanings and practices of guidance by the Spirit of life today.
- The meanings and practices of being a community today modeled after the life of the trinity.

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