



Council 50 Declaration

Towards a Church inspired by the Gospel for a world of peace, justice and solidarity **A pact of disciples of Jesus**

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches. Matthew 13, 31-32

We, disciples of Jesus, faithful Catholic members of the people of God, assembled in Rome on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council, aware of the many challenges posed by our changing world, being sensitive to the 'signs of the times', considering the present situation of our Church and its difficulties in meeting these challenges, conscious that any behaviour of Christians and of our Church contrary to the evangelical message diverts the world from the Spirit of Jesus and prevents it from recognizing the strength of the Gospel, recognizing our own weaknesses and deficiencies, but confident in the strength which faith in Jesus gives us and furthermore being responsive to the appeals made by Pope Francis, who is strengthening consultation processes in the Church, after praying to the Holy Spirit, in following Jesus and with the spirit of Vatican II and of the Pact of the Catacombs in mind,

commit ourselves

- (a) to work for the further renewal of our Church so that she testifies to the Spirit of Jesus and the strength of the Gospel to meet the challenges of our time, and
- (b) to contribute to the reorientation of our world especially by giving a voice to the poor and the marginalised, so that it may become a world of peace, justice and solidarity, a world that respects our planet as our common home, and allows every person to blossom in their individuality and deepens the value accorded to their humanity.

1.1 PEACE AND WAR

Aware

- of the current proliferation of wars and acts of violence; a deteriorating situation in international relations, and signs of a new cold war; rearmament, especially in nuclear arms; antagonistic developments around religious fundamentalisms; and the conflict in the middle East in particular;

Encouraged

- by a growing consciousness of human equality, solidarity and interconnectedness,

We commit ourselves

- to condemn every act of war unequivocally
- to promote active non-violence globally and locally in our societies ; and
- to advocate that the Catholic Church should ratify and promote internationally accepted documents on human rights (e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the European Convention on Human Rights).

1.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Aware

- of growing global inequality, and the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people
- of global and local economic systems and practices (including neoliberal capitalism) that are indifferent to ethical values and human rights, impoverish large numbers of people, and degrade and destroy the natural environment
- of positions, attitudes and practices contrary to Gospel values in many ecclesial structures, particularly in a disregard of human rights and the spirit of poverty taught by Jesus;

Encouraged

- by the new direction Pope Francis is giving to the Church in many ways, especially in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*,

We commit ourselves

- to be actively engaged in addressing socio-economic issues in the light of the Gospel not only at the level of individual or charitable action, but by seeking to analyse, understand and transform oppressive and unjust structures and systems
- to promote 'a new model of development' clearly mentioned by Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* in the light of integral human development interconnected with peace and ecological justice
- to work in solidarity with poor people at the margins of the economy
- to engage with all Christian churches and other religions to promote the aims of peace founded on justice locally and globally, and
- to work for the transformation of our Church as a poor church, for the poor and of the poor.

1.3 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Aware

- of the urgent necessity to build an environmentally sustainable global society
- of insufficient sensitivity to the social and economic reasons contributing to the environmental crisis, and
- the fragmentation of educative and cultural initiatives in this regard;

Encouraged

- by the growing awareness of the environmental crisis among the peoples of the world, and
- a new sensibility among the Christians that we must 'care for our common home',

We commit ourselves

- to practice a sober, simple and responsible style of life
- to contribute spiritually, ethically and practically to the construction of a society that respects God's creation, and
- to participate in projects and movements that promote social and environmental sustainability.

1.4 GENDER, SEXUALITY and FAMILY

Aware

- of the demand for, and progress towards, equality of women and men, together with the continuing prevalence of patriarchal domination of women in many societies and in many forms
- of the need to recognise the rights of LGBTQI people in secular society and in the Church
- of the marginalization of divorced and remarried people within the Church, contradicting the loving message of the Gospel
- of the diversity of family structures in different cultures worldwide, including polygamy, single-parent-headed and extended families, and the Church's normative model of the family as a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman with children;

Encouraged by

- growing activism and support for people who have been marginalised in their societies and in the Church

- the increasing visibility and social acceptance of LGBTQI people, and the worldwide intercultural networks that are being developed, and
- the work of progressive theologians and human rights activists,

We commit ourselves

- to help to make known the experiences of those whose voices often go unheard, and those whom the Church finds hardest to hear, such as women, LGBTQI people, and divorced and remarried people
- to share the experiences of marginalized and rejected people with fellow members of the Church, so that they may gain in understanding and compassion
- to work for the decriminalisation of homosexuality in all countries, and for the abolition of other forms of legal and social discrimination, and
- to press for changes in society to be reflected by changes in canon law, regarding gender, sexuality, matrimonial and family structures, so as to be more inclusive of the people of God.

2.1 MINISTRIES AND GENDER EQUALITY

Aware

- that every person, regardless of gender, reflects God and that all baptised members of the Church should have a voice in its governance;

Encouraged

- by growing calls for a renewed ministry for women to serve our Church and the needs of our people,

We commit ourselves

- to develop the vision of a church constitution based on human rights and democratic values (including wide participation in decision making, a separation of powers, and due process)
- to work towards the renewal of Church ministries, based on the Gospel teaching that all gifts and vocations are given to us by the Spirit, and therefore that women are equally called to full participation in ministry, and
- to call at this point in time in particular for the restoration of women to the diaconate.

2.2 BASE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

Aware

- of secularization processes in the modern world
- of Pope Francis's call for all the faithful to be involved in the Church's evangelical mission, and
- of the need to replace the model of the church presently organized as a hierarchical pyramid;

Encouraged

- by the growing numbers of lay people all over the world who are engaged in building a more horizontal and inclusive church, and
- by the growing relationships of dialogue and friendship among Christians ecumenically and with other religions,

We commit ourselves

- to build a church that embraces base ecclesial communities as its fundamental model for being Church
- to focus our communities on action for justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- as Church to ask publicly for forgiveness from all who seek to be recognized as members of the people of God but who have been marginalized or rejected and hurt by our doctrines or practices, and
- to work actively for ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue, collaboration and friendship.

2.3 DIALOGUE WITHIN THE CHURCH AND WITH THE WORLD

Aware

- of increasing pluralism and diversity in many contemporary societies, often accompanied by mutual ignorance and hostility among religious and social groups;

Encouraged

- by the spiritual resources and qualities of people of different religions and value systems

We commit ourselves

- to recognise and proclaim the equal dignity of each and every human person
- to develop educational systems that accommodate and celebrate difference and diversity
- to promote the development of an open and accessible theology,
- to initiate and develop the process of institutionalizing a structure for internal dialogue between lay people and clergy at the levels of diocese, nation and continent, as well as in the Vatican, and
- to promote and create spaces where people of different religions, value systems and world views can meet and work together.

2.4 CHURCH OF THE POOR

Aware

- of the frequently close and collaborative relationship of the Church with the rich and powerful in global society, through members of the hierarchy, religious congregations, and many lay people who are leaders in society, politics and the economy;

Encouraged

- by demands being made by people all over the world for a life of dignity and greater justice in society and
- by the Church's growing 'special pastoral attention' to indigenous peoples (IPs), refugees, migrants and their family, women and girl children, youth and displaced people as well as to ecology

We commit ourselves

- within the Church, to actively promote Pope Francis's call to be a poor Church for the poor
- to remember and keep alive initiatives and movements for change and renewal in the Church, as witnessed in the Second Vatican Council and the Pact of the Catacombs, and in liberation theology and feminist theology - such memories free us from any idea that everything is as it always was and that nothing can change; and
- to form alliances with all people of good will regardless of religion, and with popular social and political movements, in the struggle for the liberation of all humanity and a more just global order.

Another Church for another world is possible!

Returning to our countries, we shall make known our commitments to our communities, our associations, our parishes, so that they may lend us their support and prayers, and we shall invite them to join us in the realisation of these commitments.

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