

2022 Meeting of the Bishops of the Church in America

7-8 February 2022

Videoconference

Joint Statement

10 February 2022

Bishops from Canada, the United States and Latin America met by videoconference, 7-8 February 2022, for the Meeting of the Bishops of the Church in America. Held every second year, the meeting was hosted this time by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (Cccb). The meeting aims to foster relations and discussions between the Bishops of America.

The theme of this year's gathering was "Accompaniment". The following issues were discussed:

1. **CELAM – Outcome of the First Ecclesial Assembly of Latin American**

The Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean is an unparalleled experience with a genuinely synodal focus. In times of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the carrying out of this Assembly represented a living presence of the Church, taking on the challenges of the current reality and making concrete steps in missionary discipleship. Pope Francis's invitation that "no-one be excluded" was taken into account, leading to an unprecedented participation of all of the Peoples of God by means of listening in community spaces, individually and in thematic forums. This was not an isolated event, but rather this Assembly is an ongoing process which indicates the pastoral path for the pilgrimage of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean. The plenary phase carried out in a hybrid format (in person and virtual) obtained the participation of around 1000 delegates who represented a variety of vocations, peoples and cultures. The experience led to the discerning of 41 challenges which will be the basis for the pastoral orientations of our communities. At the same time, this experience allows participating in the synodal path to which Pope Francis has called us.

2. **USCCB – Impact of COVID-19 on communities of faith and on how to recover from the consequences of the pandemic**

For our discussions on the impact of COVID-19, we turned to the model of the Good Shepherd, who accompanies his sheep through good and difficult times. The Good Shepherd must smell like the sheep and be in dialogue with those whom he leads to inform prudent decisions, especially during a crisis like the pandemic. Our discussion highlighted three aspects of responding to the pandemic as a Good Shepherd: policy, stewardship, and spiritual guidance. First, we discussed some of the policy decisions and policy advocacy, both national and local, that Bishops have had to engage in throughout the last two years. Next, we examined some questions of stewardship, particularly financial stewardship, during these difficult times for dioceses, parishes, schools, and charities. Finally, we looked at the spiritual dimensions of the pandemic, with greater appreciation of the Eucharist and a renewed call to holiness. In these ways, we as Bishops have faced challenges, but also had opportunities to grow as Good Shepherds in times of trial.

3. CCCB – Indigenous Relations

The relationship between the Church in Canada with Indigenous Peoples is one of utmost importance to the Bishops in Canada, who are committed to engaging with the past and accompanying Indigenous Peoples on the path toward healing, reconciliation, and a future filled with mutual respect and cooperation. The CCCB highlighted a number of initiatives in this regard, in particular the establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Circle (a coalition of Catholic organizations to accompany Indigenous Peoples); the expansion of the membership of its own Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council; the efforts of a Bishops’ Working Group to develop a pastoral letter to Indigenous Peoples; listening circles held across the country; and a significant financial pledge toward healing and reconciliation. The CCCB also drew attention to the Indigenous Delegation which will meet the Holy Father at the Vatican this spring as well as an Apostolic Visit by Pope Francis to Canada, both of which are key steps in the path to healing and reconciliation.

More than 20 delegates took part in the meeting, including Bishops and senior staff of the CCCB, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and the Episcopal Council of Latin America (CELAM).

The next Meeting of the Bishops of the Church in America is scheduled to take place in 2024, with USCCB to host.

We give thanks to God for this experience of ecclesial communion and synodality in the entirety of the American continent.

Participants at the 2022 meeting

Representatives of CELAM

- His Eminence Cardinal Odilo Pedro Scherer, Archbishop of São Paulo, Senior Vice President
- The Most Rev. Jorge Eduardo Lozano, Archbishop of San Juan de Cuyo, General Secretary
- Father Pedro Manuel Brassesco, Deputy General Secretary
- Mr. Mauricio López Oropeza, Director of the Centre for Pastoral Programs and Networks for Pastoral Action
- Nancy Stella Sanabria, Assistant Secretary General

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- The Most Rev. José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles, President
- The Most Rev. Allen H. Vigneron, Archbishop of Detroit, Vice President
- The Most Rev. Timothy P. Broglio, Archbishop of the Military Services, Secretary
- The Most Rev. Gregory L. Parkes, Bishop of St. Petersburg, Treasurer
- The Most Reverend Paul S. Coakley, Archbishop of Oklahoma City, Member at Large
- Father Michael J.K. Fuller, General Secretary

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

- The Most Rev. Raymond Poisson, Bishop of Saint-Jérôme and of Mont-Laurier, President
- The Most Rev. William T. McGrattan, Bishop of Calgary, Vice President
- The Most Rev. Pierre Goudreault, Bishop of Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, Co-Treasurer
- The Most Rev. Gerard P. Bergie, Bishop of St. Catharines, Co-Treasurer
- Father Jean Vézina, General Secretary
- Dr. Robert Di Pede, Ph.D., Assistant General Secretary