

# 1965 PACT OF THE CATACOMBS

## **The Catacombs' Pact of the Poor and Servant Church**

We, bishops,

- gathered at the Second Vatican Council;
- recognising the inadequacies of our lives with respect to evangelical poverty;
- encouraging each other to avoid any appearance of exceptionalism or presumption;
- united with all our brothers in the Episcopate;
- counting above all on the grace and strength of Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the prayers of the faithful and the priests of our respective dioceses;
- placing ourselves in thought and prayer before the Trinity, before the Church of Christ and before the priests and faithful of our dioceses;
- humbly conscious of our weakness, but equally determined and fortified by the grace that God gives us, commit ourselves to the following:

1) We will seek to live according to the ordinary manner of our people, in the current sense of the term, with respect to housing, food, means of transport and everything else that springs from this. Cf. Mt 5,3; 6,33s; 8,20.

We definitively renounce both the appearance and the reality of wealth, especially

- in our way of dress (sumptuous fabrics, loud colours)
- in marks of distinction made from precious materials, which should in reality be evangelical signs made from “neither gold or silver.” Cf. Mc 6,9; Mt 10,9s; Acts 3,6.

3) We will not possess real estate, goods, bank accounts etc. in our own names; to the extent that this may be necessary, we will place everything in the name of the diocese, or of charitable and social works.. Cf. Mt 6,19-21; Lk 12,33s.

4) Whenever possible, we will entrust the financial and material administration of our dioceses to a commission of competent laity, conscious of their apostolic role, so that we may become less administrators and more pastors and apostles. Cf. Mt 10,8; Acts 6,1-7.

5) We refuse to be addressed, orally or in writing, by names or titles which signify prestige and power (Eminence, Excellency, Monsignor...). We prefer to be called by the evangelical title of Father. Cf. Mt 20,25-28; 23,6-11; Jn 13,12-15.

6) In our behaviour and social relations, we will avoid anything that may seem to confer privilege, priority or any preference for the rich and powerful (including banquets, offered or accepted, class distinction during religious services Cf. Lk 13,12-14; 1Cor 9,14-19.)

7) In the same way we will avoid fostering or pampering the vanity of anyone in order to seek reward or solicit donations, or for any reason whatsoever. We will invite our faithful to consider their donations as a normal participation in worship, the apostolate and social action. Cf. Mt 6,2-4; Lk 15,9-13; 2Cor 12,4.

8) We will dedicate whatever is necessary of our time, reflection, heart, means etc to the apostolic and pastoral service of people and groups of workers and the economically weak and underdeveloped, without prejudice to other people and groups in the diocese. We will support those laity, religious, deacons and priests who the Lord calls to evangelise the poor and the workers, sharing the work and life of labourers. Cf. Lk 4,18s; Mk 6,4; Mt 11,4s; Acts 18,3s; 20,33-35; 1Cor 4,12 e 9,1-27.

9) Conscious of the demands of justice and charity, and their mutual relationship, we will seek to transform aid activities into social works based on justice and charity, which take into account all that this requires, as a humble service to the competent public organs. Cf. Mt 25,31-46; Lk 13,12-14 e 33s.

10) We will do our utmost to ensure that those responsible for our government and for our public services make, and put into practice, laws, structures and social institutions required by justice and charity, equality and the harmonic and holistic development of all men and women, and by this means bring about the advent of a new social order, worthy of the sons and daughters of humankind and of God. Cf. Acts 2,44s; 4,32-35; 5,4; 2Cor 8 e 9 ; 1Tim 5, 16.

11) Convinced that the collegiality of the bishops finds its greatest evangelical significance in meeting the challenges faced by the human masses, who suffer the effects of physical, cultural and moral misery – two thirds of humanity – we commit ourselves:

– to participate, according to our means, in the urgent investments of the episcopates of poor nations;

– to call on the international organisations, while bearing witness to the Gospel, as Pope Paul VI did at the United Nations, to establish economic and cultural structures that no longer create cause poor nations in an increasingly wealthy world, but which will enable the poor masses to overcome their poverty

) We commit ourselves in pastoral charity to share our lives with our brothers and sisters in Christ – priests, religious and laity – in order that our ministry will become a genuine service.

Therefore,

– We will strive to “review our lives” with them;

– We will seek out collaborators who will aim to become animators in the way of the Spirit, rather than in the ways of the chiefs of this world;

– We will seek to be more humanly present, more welcoming...;

– We will show ourselves to be open to all, whatever their religion. Cf. Mc 8,34s; Acts 6,1-7; 1Tim 3,8-10.

13) On returning to our respective dioceses, we will make this resolution known to our people, asking them to help us through their understanding, collaboration and prayers.

“MAY GOD HELP US TO BE FAITHFUL.”

## SOURCES

<http://www.konzilsvaeter.de/referenzen/englisch/index.html>

<http://iglesiadescalza.blogspot.fr/2010/03/dom-helder-camara-monsignor-romero-and.html>

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