

**MESSAGES OF THE SYNODAL CONFERENCES OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA, 1995 AND 2004**

**MESSAGE OF THE 32<sup>ND</sup> SYNODAL CONFERENCE TO THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA; NUEVA HELVECIA, URUGUAY, OCTOBER 18<sup>TH</sup> TO 22<sup>ND</sup>, 1995**

*LWF and AIPRAL*

Dear sisters, dear brothers,

As Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata we have gathered for five days to reflect on the reality which we live in and in the places where God has put us to mutually bear witness to our faith; to encourage, console, strengthen and to give support among ourselves; to deepen our faith in the Word of God, in order to find paths that permit our Church to follow the task which it has been entrusted by God the Father of our Savior Jesus Christ with the constant aid of the Holy Spirit. We feel the need to share with each member, sympathizer and friend of our Church, our joys and concerns.

While preparing this Synod the reports, evidence, letters and reflections of the congregations and districts were already talking about hard times to come for most of us. They are times of pain, impoverishment, and uncertainty for the populations of Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay with whom we share our fortune and fate.

The distressing socio-economic situation is a factor that acquires an ever greater meaning in the everyday life of the families of our churches. Unemployment, sub employment, marginality, are no longer just words used for our diacony, they also reflect the everyday pastoral reality. We are aware that these serious situations are out of range of the individual, institutions, or even of just one country. Similar crisis are being experienced in all Latin America. That is why in this Synod we would like to express our energetic condemnation of the unjust, sinful, and demonic order that oppresses us, stating that:

- It is not true that progress must be paid for with the misery of the weak and defenseless.
- It is not true that consumption justifies destroying the nature and goods which God created for every living being, God's sons and daughters
- It is not true that the foreign debt, taxing policies or usury should be more important than human beings.

In as much as we articulate these statements in our congregational practice, our faith communities will be true spaces of resistance to the system.

But the magnitude of the task, due to the seriousness of the problems that have been established in our countries, demands that we join forces with brothers and sisters of other churches in the search for a testimony which is joint and coherent with the will of our Lord and God. He summons us to keep claiming the good news in spite of the difficulties. We feel that to remain silent or to resign ourselves to the new situations would be to betray the command to announce that the Kingdom of God is near.

As a Church with its roots from the Reformation, we must re-establish the principle of universal ministry of believers, within the framework of a community of mutual faith, hope, consolation and support. This is why we think that the training of lay ministers is a priority for the life of our community in order to motivate the renewal of our Church, a stronger evangelical commitment and a life full of meaning.

We also restate our conviction that the Lord of history invites us to permanently reform ourselves. This means, among other things, that the structures of our Church must be placed at the service of the mission to which it was entrusted, to announce the will of God, proclaiming it in words and deeds every day of our lives.

Brethrens, we greet you in the Lord with the motto of our Synod:

*For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; yet my unfailing love for you shall not be shaken nor my covenant of peace removed,*

*Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

(Isaiah 54:10 and Hebrews 11:1).

Nueva Helvecia, Uruguay, October 18<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1995.

**MESSAGE OF THE 36TH SYNODAL CONFERENCE AND THE 13TH GENERAL REGULAR ASSEMBLY OF THE EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA AND ITS CONGREGATIONS; HOHENAU, PARAGUAY, OCTOBER 9<sup>TH</sup> TO 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2004**

From the different Congregations of our Evangelical Church of the Río de la Plata we have gathered in Hohenau, Paraguay under the motto of “Faith and economy....two sides, one outlook” in order to celebrate the 36<sup>th</sup> Synodal Conference and the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. In spite of the particular fears and taboos of this issue, the consequences of which we suffer daily in our communities of faith, families and all structures and socio-economic status, we have held this synod with joy and where there has been no shortage of music and song and prayer and the Word of life.

The generalized impoverishment that the neo-liberal globalization has produced is the result of a socio-economic model that only sees the person as a “consumer” and that, therefore causes whoever who cannot access the system, to be excluded. In this sense, we are aware that the effects have also reached “the way we feel as a church”, in the sense of the body that we should be and in our walking together –as brothers and sisters- in the search for a common course.

Throughout all of the lectures, reports and group tasks we have proven that **“the church is the only institution that cannot be destroyed by neo-liberal globalization, because it is part of a body”**. It is, therefore, this spirit that we must preserve, strengthen and defend, seeking for a way to think and search together, as brothers and sisters, for our own genuine alternatives that would help us to grow in that direction. Maybe one of these alternatives is to loosen the rigidity of our systems of contributions and support, which are a heavy load in the life and faith of many of our community members, especially for our retired women and men.

We must accept and be happily grateful also for all other types of contributions and offerings, such as the time dedicated to the mission, the different capacities of each person, and the different creative gifts that emerge from the community. We must encourage and be honest with each other, along this road together and feel that each and every one in their search is part of the same church, the same body and wants to confront what we have already condemned in the 1995 Synod, in other words, the perverse system contrary to the Gospel and to Christ

Thus motivated, we encourage our sisters and brothers and all of our communities to follow together in this course, uniting our efforts and creativities, convinced that not all is lost; that it is possible to announce and live the true gospel of service to God and not to riches, to see the humanity in every person, as Jesus did. Finally, to fight for a globalized system free from the neo-liberal ties and in which each and every one of us has a place, without exclusions, social marginations, or discriminations.

Brothers and sisters: we return to our homes with the conviction that the Word of Christ commits us to announce a new heaven and new earth for each creature. We have a lot left to do, to talk about, and to change. **Being part of the body of Christ, we are a sign of hope for this desperate world.**

May God bless us on our road.

*Translated by Carla Schmidt, Argentina*