

SYNODAL RESOLUTIONS OF THE WALDENSIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH OF THE RIO DE LA PLATA, 1997, 2000, 2002, AND 2006

1997 SYNOD, ACT 24: JUSTICE, PEACE, AND THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION

The Synod, in the framework of the Church's concern for and interest in the justice, peace, and integrity of creation; having seen the numerous engineering megaprojects like Panamá Medio, Puente Colonia Buenos Aires, and Hidrovia among others; and considering: a) that these projects cause anxiety and anguish for large portions of our population, b) the biased information that exists in the media, c) the unscrupulous use that is made of the real necessity for work that exists in our towns in order to promote these projects and their social acceptance, d) that the origin of these projects is not based on real necessities in our towns but on transnational economic interests, e) that works of this type greatly impact the environment, putting in danger the survival of invaluable animal species, vegetation, and entire ecosystems, f) that it imposes significant threats to the way of life and survival of vast segments of the population, g) that they require enormous economic investments that jeopardize the future of our children; Resolves: 1) to express its support to communities and presbyteries of our Church, communities of sister Churches of the regions involved, and movements and social organizations that are working to expose and publicize the real aims and highly negative consequences of these projects; 2) To disseminate by all possible means this information in all areas of our Church and society; 3) To demand full information in all the instances in our countries where a decision is being made; 4) To promote in many different ways democratic deliberation and consideration of these issues, urging our communities to promote and/or support initiatives that aim to bring about referenda about the issues; 5) Entrusting the Waldensian Board with contacting national and international organizations—ecclesiastical or secular—in order to inform them of the local, regional, and global consequences of these projects, and soliciting international solidarity through the appropriate channels.

SYNOD 2000, ACT 40: CRISIS AND COMMITMENTS OF CHRISTIANS

The Synod of the Waldensian Evangelical Church, meeting in Colonia del Sacramento from the 6th to the 10th of February of the present year, has undergone a series of days of intense work in relation to its mission to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ through the word, through diaconal service in their homes and neighborhood centers of service, and through the active presence of its members in the societies of Argentina and Uruguay, where they live and work.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our concern for the different social problems that require our attention, embedded in a process of globalization and commodification, not only of economic activities, but also of human relationships, the valuation of people, and even the manifestations of culture. Habits, customs, and consumerist tendencies are driven by sophisticated systems of communication dictated by power centers, all of which entails a kind of colonization of the culture and the most beloved customs that make up our identity. Economic maneuvering, the flexibility of labor, foreign control of the land and the agricultural and other industries, of public services, and subsidies of agricultural production in industrially developed countries, carry with them a decrease in the final price of products, which works as an element that expels our farmers from their farms. The depopulation of our countryside and the resulting agglomeration of families in the urban and suburban corridors of the large cities completes the cycle of structural injustices. Small groups of investors benefit from this, creating a return of rural producers who are devoid of the foundations of their work, their land, and their own identities.

If we do not produce food, how will we provide for ourselves? If through this apparently irreversible system they take away the tools of our work, what will become of the producers and their families? Will we content ourselves with serving the occasional tourist and housing foreign investors who have solely economic interests in mind, shutting off all possibilities for those who have worked the land and have left their imprint on our culture and the culture of all agricultural countries?

The members of the Synod, united here, with a significant component of its members involved in agricultural production and/or related activities, affirm, however, that the historical and economic processes are not blind and autonomic forces, but can be oriented using different criteria. And furthermore, we have confidence in the capacity of our towns, together with governmental authorities, to, with a sense of justice and solidarity, take measures that lead to gradually correcting this situation. Governmental programs that favor production, tax policies that benefit dominant social groups and low-income groups; searching in this way for greater justice in the distribution of the goods that the whole

society produces; support in the areas of health and education as ways of valuing and maintaining those aspects that most contribute to the fullness of life.

As followers of Jesus Christ, who “came not to be served but to serve,” we offer our cooperation in order to give momentum to these expressions of commitment to life and to service to the most vulnerable sectors. But we do not want to reduce our ministry to simply serving the less fortunate; we also hope to be builders, along with other groups of society, NGOs, and officials who have similar concerns, of a society that is more just and is capable of giving opportunities to each and every one of its children.

SYNOD 2002, ACT 25: MESSAGE TO CHURCHES

The Synod makes its own the content of the reflections contained in the Report of the North Presbytery of Argentina in relation to the difficult situation through which our countries are passing, and urges its churches to dedicate the greatest amount of attention to it and to publicize it as widely as possible through the means within their reach.

Today the Church is called to fulfill its Evangelistic, Priestly, and Prophetic roles; in this last, we must keep watch for justice, and develop a critical attitude. This turns inward to the community itself, in search of constant renovation and transformation, and also looks toward the outside, toward what we call the secular, to fight evil in the society around us.

Besides assuming, each day and as opportunities arise, a commitment to service to the people that our society most excludes or fails to protect, manifest in the work of guiding and supporting groups of poor farmer families, families that have been evicted from the cities, children, the elderly, and battered women, among others, we would like to point out, with a critical spirit but also with a desire to contribute to bettering the quality of life of our brothers and sisters who suffer most, some unjust realities that should be transformed, as the Word of God itself indicates.

The difficult economic situation of our country generated by the ruling class—politicians as well as union officials—united with national and international economic sectors that enjoy an impunity “protected” by justice, places extreme emphasis on and prioritizes the problems caused by payment of the Foreign Debt. This is completely false and illegal, since the debt was contracted by de facto rulers and later “accepted” by corrupt ones, and which, by paying only interest and services—as they are doing—, makes the development of the country impossible. Meanwhile we observe as the First World countries apply measures, like subsidizing production or bankrupt companies, that other countries could not carry out under any circumstances even if these measures were proposed, because “they” would not allow it (closing lines of credit, raising interest, or directly invading other countries). Workers are “required” to receive low salaries and to submit themselves to jobs with fewer benefits than labor laws should require, and that carry with them the fear of being dismissed.

As firsthand observers, we see among the how poverty extends among the chaos and confusion, how jobs for men and women continues to be lost, how our young people begin to cede what once were their ideals, how our elderly—and not-so-elderly—are deprived of the rights that they have acquired with a life of work, a life that has not been exempt from effort and sacrifice, who today discover, horrified, that they have a lean pension or retirement—in the best of cases—and that their health insurance has been taken away.

According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census, there are almost 500,000 children in Argentina who work; they work in trade, peddling, rural labor, and waste collection. 70% of them have abandoned primary school; half of the total number belong to extremely poor families. More than 65 children die each day from lack of food and health care; not to mention the lack of homes and jobs, which the latest known “official figures” place at around 19%, a rate that is impossible to lower in the near future...and we cannot remain silent about what we see.

All of this paints a picture of human indignity that we as Christians cannot accept, let alone become accustomed to. We are called to proclaim God’s truth over the global lie that serves to justify terrorism and wars against terrorism and that encompasses marginalization and contempt for human life.

For this reason we say with the prophet: “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals.”(Amos 2:6-7) and we add, “O you that put far away the evil day, and bring near a reign of violence! Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory, and lounge on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock, and calves from the stall; who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp, and like David improvise on instruments of

music; who drink wine from bowls, and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!”(Amos 6:3-6)”.

On the other hand, we are called to comfort and to give hope. We are called by God to substantiate our hope, because having hope does not mean denying the problems or difficulties, but confronting them with the conviction that we can overcome them and that another reality is possible.

Hope is a dream that with faith, confidence, and dedication we can make into a reality. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world...if we will be provide salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). This means we cannot forget the missionary meaning of the gospel. To be the salt and light: there is the challenge for the prophetic Church”.

SYNOD 2006, ACT 23: THE CARE OF CREATION AND THE DEFENSE OF LIFE

The representatives of the Waldensian Evangelical Churches that live and give testimony in Uruguay and Argentina gathered in their 2006 Assembly in Parque XVII de Febrero, Playa Fomento, Dpto. de Colonia, Uruguay, would like to communicate their message to their communities and to society in general by making the following specifications:

Our Churches try to serve the God of life who has given us this abundant and harmonious world and has placed us here so that we can assume our responsibility as good administrators in our care, use, and sharing of its resources, with the aim that all creatures may achieve fullness of life (John 10:10).

We do this as we become conscious that egotism corrodes human relations and also damages the relationship that people have with the environment. This is exemplified in the wars that continue to be present in human history and in the deterioration of creation expressed in the deforestation of rainforests, indiscriminate exploitation of other resources, and the contamination of the atmosphere, rivers, and the earth itself.

We recognize that the implantation of large industrial enterprises and the development of plantations with large areas devoted to single-crop farming, with the pretext of offering labor and the idea of progress and development, commit a grave offense against all life by polluting and eliminating biodiversity, with the sole aim of profit for a few and with injury to many.

That recently this has come to our attention: the clamor of many of our families who have been displaced from their place of origin and from their work with the land; the inquietude of environmental groups and sister Churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), about the advancement of certain monopolistic enterprises that will irrevocably affect our environment and even our lifestyle.

That recently we have perceived the clamor of creation itself, which suffers and expresses it by meteorological phenomena never seen before, and which calls for our reflection.

From these specifications we affirm our commitment:

- To the care of creation, encouraging our communities and sister communities so that in the environments in which they act, they can incarnate the Christian responsibility that comes to us from the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- To establish contacts with social groups with the aim of remaining highly informed and preventing situations in which the use and abuse of natural resources threatens life in any of its forms.

- To avoid futile confrontations among brothers and to search together for the paths that will strengthen our ties, since we are summoned to a fight that must embrace its own cause, especially taking into account that some of these enterprises are developing in our countries of the Plata region.

- To not renounce, in this and other issues that affect the lives of our towns, our right to demand transparent information from our governments, so that the opinion of the people may always be heard.

Translated by Anna Jensen, USA