

## What Is the Continental Mission?

1. Pope Benedict XVI, in his message to CAM 3 (Third American Missionary Congress), put forth the following points:
  - a. Initiated in CAM 3, the Continental Mission will be an opportunity in which the particular churches in Latin America and the Caribbean “will intensify their work” by “combining pastoral efforts and evangelization initiatives” so that the Lord is “better known, loved, followed, and praised in those blessed regions.”
  - b. The Continental Mission is an opportunity to share with all people this treasure: “there is no greater richness than enjoying Christ’s friendship and walking by his side.”
  - c. “The most important service that we can offer our [brothers and sisters] is the clear and humble proclamation of Jesus Christ who came into this world so that we might have life, and have it abundantly (see Jn 10:10).”
  - d. “It is worth the effort to dedicate our best energies to this great task, knowing that divine grace precedes us, sustains us, and accompanies us in the fulfillment of our mission.”
  - e. We pray that the glorious Christ awakens in each baptized person the missionary who lives within, so that “the hesitation or mediocrity that often assails us is overcome.”

*Source: Pope Benedict XVI, Message to Cardinal Antonio José González Zumárraga, President of the Central Commission of the Third American Missionary Congress, August 12, 2008 (www.vatican.va)*

2. The *Concluding Document* from the 2007 Conference in Aparacida, Brazil, talks about the Continental Mission:
  - a. “This Fifth Conference, recalling the command to go and make disciples (see Mt 28:20), wishes to awaken the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean toward a missionary impulse. We cannot let this hour of grace slip by. We need a new Pentecost! We need to go out to meet individuals, families, communities, and peoples to communicate to them, and share the gift of encounter with Christ, who has filled our lives with “meaning,” truth and love, joy and hope! We cannot passively and calmly wait in our church buildings, but we must move out in all directions to proclaim that evil and death do not have the last word, that love is stronger, that we have been liberated and saved by the Lord’s paschal victory in history, that He calls us into the Church, and wants to multiply the number of his disciples and missionaries in building his Kingdom in our continent. We are witnesses and missionaries: in large cities and the countryside, in the mountains and jungles of our Americas, in all the areas of shared social life, in the most varied “Areopagus” settings of the public life of nations,

in the extreme situations of existence, assuming *ad gentes* our concern for the Church's universal mission" (no. 548).

- b. "*Mission*: As they get to know and love their Lord, disciples experience the need to share with others their joy at being sent, at going to the world to proclaim Jesus Christ, dead and risen, to make real the love and service in the person of the neediest, in short, to build the Kingdom of God. Mission is inseparable from discipleship, and hence it must not be understood as a stage subsequent to formation, although it is carried out in different ways, depending on one's own vocation and on the moment in human and Christian maturation at which the person stands" (no. 278e).

*Source: V General Conference of the Bishops of Latin American and the Caribbean, Concluding Document, Aparecida, Brazil, May 13-31, 2007 (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2008)*

3. The document *The Continental Mission for a Missionary Church*, from CELAM (the regional Latin American bishops' conference, Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano), stresses that the main objectives of the Continental Mission are as follows:

- a. To be docile to the impulse of the Holy Spirit in order to awaken the consciousness and the permanent missionary action of the disciples by means of the Continental Mission
- b. To promote a deep personal and pastoral conversion of all the pastoral and evangelizing agents so that, with the attitude of disciples, all can re-commence from Christ a new life in the Spirit connected with the Church community
- c. To communicate the full life in Christ like a gift and service that is offered to society

*Source: CELAM, La Misión Continental para Una Iglesia Misionera (Colombia: CELAM, 2008)*

4. A good example is the episcopal conference of Honduras, which pursued the following points of discussion and action in its Continental Mission:
  - a. The Continental Mission in Honduras seeks to "wake up among the baptized faithful in Honduras, the joy and fecundity of being disciples of Jesus Christ in order to celebrate with real joy 'being-with-Him' and being able to 'love-with-Him' in order to be sent to the mission."
  - b. "The mission to be realized in Honduras as a result of the Encounter in Aparecida, must first of all, inspire the missionary vocation of all Christians, strengthen the roots of their faith and awaken their responsibility so that all our Christian communities place themselves in a 'permanent state of mission.'"

- c. “A ‘permanent state of mission’ implies a disposition to rethink and reform many of our pastoral structures, while having as a guiding principle the ‘spirituality of communion’ and the missionary audacity. The main thing is the personal conversion.”
- d. “We are all challenged to revitalize in Honduras our way to be Catholic and our personal [commitments] to the Lord, so that the Christian faith takes root more deeply in the heart of the people.”
- e. The purpose of the Continental Mission in Honduras is “to share the Life that comes from Jesus. Since Love is what gives life, the Church has been sent to irradiate and transmit in the world God’s Love so that our people will have Life in Him (Jn 10:10).”

*Source: Conferencia Episcopal de Honduras, Grant Application for 2009*