

XVI Latin American Meeting, Arequipa Perú

REPORT FOR THE MIAMSI INTERNATIONAL BOUREAU

It took place in the “Manresa” retirement home, in Arequipa (at more than two thousand meters of altitude) from October 6 to 10, 2022.

Delegates attended from all the countries where the Movement is present: Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. We got to be about fifty members in the meeting, with a large turnout of Peruvians and Peruvians, as is logical to expect.

We were summoned by the call to build fraternity that Pope Francis launched in his encyclical “Fratelli Tutti”. We also celebrated in this Meeting the fifty years of foundation of the MIAMSI in Arequipa and this occasion colored all the activities with the party and the entertainment.

Faithful to our method, in the first instance we stopped to **SEE** the contributions of the different movements regarding the issue that brought us together, and marvelous initiatives that promote and defend fraternity, communion and life were unraveled, many times in the midst of situations of violence and corruption that we live in our different realities. The situations are not all homogeneous, because our continent is very vast and varied, and we always respond to each particular context, but we do have in common our Christian hope that a world of sisters and brothers is possible where we can build effective signs of the Kingdom that Jesus brings us. In addition, a communicator brought us valuable reading clues about this reality.

There were relevant contributions related to **DISCERN** that helped us illuminate the challenges encountered (two rereadings of the encyclical, from the point of view of theology and philosophy and from the anthropological point of view). A summary of the presentations is provided in an annex to this document.

For **ACT**, the delegations of each country present met to outline paths that put into practice some of the calls that the Lord clearly made to us at the Meeting.

In addition to this time of reflection and sharing so rich, during these days we have celebrated the opening Eucharist presided over by the International Advisor with very good participation from all and, on Saturday we went to a parish in the center of the city to celebrate the mass that The Bishop of Arequipa, Monsignor Javier

Augusto Del Río Alba, presided. In an atmosphere of great brotherhood, he received us and encouraged us along the way.

The morning prayers were animated by different delegations from countries that helped us each day to place all our work in the hands of the Lord of Life.

We also visited, as a moment of 'immersion' in the social reality of Arequipa, a project that MIAMSI members have carried out in this city for years. It is the 'Hogar de Cristo', a project inspired by another of the same name, in Chile, which works for the benefit of children at social risk. There they develop different prevention and protection programs for working children, trying to reintegrate the children into the family and social nucleus and raising public awareness of this problem, especially the conditions in which these children live.

The meeting was also decorated with two dinners, one for the 50 years of the movement in Arequipa and another in which we shared typical dances, music and food from there. On the other nights, we enjoyed a concert of music and percussion typical of Peru in which we were invited to participate with the execution of some native instruments and dances, and then, among us, we also had very fraternal and lively occasional meetings.

Last but not least, we elected the new Secretariat Service Team for Latin America. The Team was made up of four members: Eriqueta ('Ketty') Arce (Ecuador), Nuria López (Bolivia), Ana María Zúñiga (Peru), Jacinta Rodríguez (Brazil).

Annex

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AT THE MEETING

There were three more "technical" contributions that helped us to name different situations:

1. **Pascual Rubiani**, lay, member of MIAMSI Paraguay, graduate in communication, entrepreneur in the communication area. Member and director of ADEC (Association of Christian Entrepreneurs) of Paraguay, and member of UNIAPAC (International Christian Union of Business Executives), in addition he has been consulted several times by the Episcopal Conference of Paraguay. He provided us with elements of analysis of current reality from the point of view of communication and for a more orderly socio-political analysis.
2. **Marcela Morilla**, consecrated Verbum Dei missionary, graduated in Philosophy and Theology, professor at the seminary of Arequipa, advisor to the Movement in Peru. She helped us to read the encyclical, with elements for the discern.
3. **Rogelio Quiñones**, executive secretary of the (outgoing) Service Team for the Secretariat of Latin America (ESSAL). He made a synthesis of the previous contributions and spoke, from an anthropological vision, of the human being as a social being.

Let's look at it in more detail:

Pascual helped us to see the socio-political situation of the moment, in a context in many of our countries of corruption and infiltration of drug cartels in some areas of government, together with the challenge of human trafficking. The Christian commitment to fraternity goes through sustaining the hope of those who continue to contribute their "grain of sand" so that the most fragile are cared for and also happens by not getting carried away by the bombardment of false news, unfounded denunciations, superficial and quick judgments that only bring more disorder and chaos (perfect terrain for those who abuse the weakest).

He proposed some simple but profound priorities:

1. Accept the *uncertainty and volatility* in which we live, with all the impact this has on the economy and the political system (we live, he told us, in a time of

economic recession and also of democratic recession). Our democracies are at risk.

2. He also mentioned everything related to *digitalization* as a new information regime. It is, he said, a new form of dominance that *can determine social, economic and political processes* that does not have a sinister character behind it that seeks the evil of the world, but works automatically, through algorithms and the dynamics of Social Media. Before, it was the means of production that generated the distribution of power and the impact on the way of life of others... Now it is no longer the means of production, but the means of communication.

3. He spoke about the passage from *the regime of the sovereign*, to *the regime of discipline*, finding us now in *the regime of information*.

The regime of the sovereign refers to a power that is dramatized (it is likely that the last of the examples we will see will be the past funeral of the Queen of England): the exercise of control was public with lynchings in the square, with public punishments, etc.

The regime of discipline passes from the old visibility in the rulers, to the visibility of the governed. It matters the enclosure within which the governed are, those scenarios are the ones that are monitored. The proper functioning in those precincts of the distribution and exercise of power was the priority.

Today we live in the information regime. The previous visibility no longer occurs in the closed and isolated enclosure, but through the networks, they are a means of surveillance. We live in Huxley's Brave New World, where the sense of freedom ensures domination. Freedom and surveillance coincide in cities; Transparency is the systemic imperative of information. But it is an illusion, because we are not free, only information is free. It is a regime that reveals totalitarian traits, but that privileges whispering, not command or shouting. The ideological narrative becomes obsolete and Artificial Intelligence can become the new dictator.

4. *Psycho-politics*. It points to the meritocracy that governs us, and of an "infodemic", an information pandemic. Digital media has horizontal roots (rhizomes) that encompass all realities and dimensions of life. The public is in crisis and individualism wins, the private and the fast. Knowledge, experience,

knowledge, consume time. Information requires surprises and novelties, impact and speed. Information is ephemeral and volatile; Knowledge is what remains in the social.

5. *Rational discourse is threatened by affective communication* and this makes dialogue, community building, the construction of citizenship, the construction of fraternity very difficult. No more arguments, but the excitement of attention. Along with this, the pragmatic is exacerbated: the action is oriented to a certain success that is never made explicit, but that can end up opposing stable relations to power in the short term. In other words, it is a violent action.
6. Finally, he quickly spoke of populism, polarization and post-truth. **Populism** has to do with revenge against the powerful of the day, with the seizure of the Social Media and with countless exceptions to govern, which are corroding the political-social structures of the countries. The **polarization** we live in puts us Catholics in a complicated situation that affects us even within our own community experiences. There is an increase in the phenomenon of tribalism. Polarization feeds on the fear of the different and above all the fear of change. Finally, **post-truth** refers to the dismantling of the structures of truth that we have had for a long time.

He ended his reflection by proposing some *exit tracks*.

- a) *Do not lose the sense of the other*. Political thought is representative if it takes into account the other, if it considers the perspective of the other: the perspective of the other is the true revolution.
- b) *Be more responsible with those we share in the networks* so as not to foster the climate of distrust and polarization in which we live.
- c) Another clue, which emerged in the subsequent reflection, is to *consider the importance of faith*, including faith as remaining in the conviction that active and loving waiting can prepare the ground for clearer choices that future generations will make, in small groups. Faith as resistance, as permanence.

Marcela left us her reading of the encyclical, the theological and philosophical foundation of fraternity, a reading full of hope: she reminded us that at the root of

our being is fraternity, that we are ontologically fraternal, since Creation. That is why God creates us male and female, "of the same flesh and the same bones." It reminded us of the poetic image of God himself who, walking through the Garden of Eden in the afternoon, also becomes close to us. Sin is that which prevents us from seeing each other as a gift from God. It is a serious wound in fraternity... But wounds heal.

From the point of view of philosophy, he spoke to us of the solidarity we live among all human beings. Solidarity in good and also solidarity in evil. We are all members of the human family and have a shared humanity that makes us unable to live alone and isolated. Therefore, it is vital to get out of the "I-your" and strengthen the "we".

He also told us about the art of not always having the absolute reason to be able to build the ability to dialogue. Dialogue, which can be summarized (from the reflection of fraternity) as "do not hurt me, help me". It is not a question of not having convictions, but of accepting that my position can never be the last word. It is about letting in the horizon of the other in order to build an "us", under the risk of something new, unprecedented coming out.

Accept that we all carry a clearly visible sign, although many times we want to hide it, which says: "I need you". The navel itself is a scar that we all wear, which reminds us that we have needed our mother to be able to live... That is our condition. Finally, he collected the quotation from the parable of the Good Samaritan, which the Pope comments on in the encyclical.

He comments that he is an impure (the Samaritan) who approaches a burst, half dead, also impure. This encounter, in the Jewish mentality, causes each one to "catch" the impurity of the other. It seems to be a situation that we have to be willing to be willing to build fraternity. Love leaves traces.

He also quoted John's first letter (1Jn 4), reminding us that love comes from God and that if we do not love, we go to death. It is about always loving, loving when love is not deserved, or when we are not able to respond to the love received (especially if that love is what God offers us).

This contribution, although in the meeting was before Pascual, was thought as part of the inputs for discernment.

Finally, **Rogelio contributed the anthropological vision**: human beings are beings in relationship: we need each other. On the one hand, each one is an individuality, but, nevertheless, we are made for and realize ourselves as full human beings when we manage to live in community.

He highlighted how these elements are present in the Encyclical Letter that occupied us at the meeting. Walk together in unity, not what I have planned and nothing else; Generate links and then build together something new but collective. The human being is not such if he does not meet the other.

He contrasted the conception of this dynamic from the concepts of Rousseau, Marx, and, finally, our Christian gaze.

It's about putting love at the center. Love understood basically as seeking the good of the other, conceiving myself as a generator of that good. If I seek the good of the other, I build myself as a person.

From this principle can spring political lines of action, since there is a political love at the service of the community that makes it possible for everyone to grow.
