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Summary

News..... 7

CELAM communiqué on the death of Pope Francis.....	7
Farewell to Pope Francis, the first Latin American Pope.....	9
Francis' legacy to CELAM.....	15
Moment of prayer in thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Pope Francis.....	21
Conference: "Francis' legacy in working with migrants and refugees".....	23
Continental synodal team advances in the reception of the Final Document.	24
CELAM shares material for the dissemination and deepening of the Final Document of the Synod.	25
CEBITEPAL inaugurates Bachelor's Degree in Pastoral Theology 2025.....	27
CELAM in solidarity with the people of the Dominican Republic.	28
Church organizations meet at CELAM for COP30.....	29
Synodal Network of Socio-Pastoral Observation approves process of incorporation of new members.....	31

CELAM's journey in April..... 32

Meeting of the Commission of Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Garifuna Peoples of Honduras and El Salvador.	32
Bibliographic tribute to Pope Francis.....	33
"Life Hangs in the Balance" Campaign Committee.....	34
Document for COP 30, meetings during the month of April.	34
Meeting of Women in Synodality. Mesoamerican Region.	35
Indian Theology Advisors Network.....	36
Meeting of the Global Education Pact Steering Committee.	36
The CELAM archive participates in the Network of Ecclesiastical Archives of Bogota.....	37
CEILAC Executive Secretariat meeting.....	38
Visit of the Colombian Military Seminary.....	38
CEBITEPAL Director participates in the Theological Week in Guatemala.	39

Publications.....	40
Episcopal appointments.....	42
Upcoming courses and diplomas	44
Upcoming meetings	47
Agreements signed	49
To see and participate again	49

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Newsletter each month in
four languages at:**



https://revistas.CELAM.org/index.php/boletin_CELAM_ne

Acronym

CEAMA: Ecclesial Conference of the Amazon.

CEBITEPAL: Center for Biblical, Theological and Pastoral Formation of CELAM.

CGC: CELAM Knowledge Management Center.

CEILAC: Commission for Integral Ecology of Latin America and the Caribbean.

CELAM: Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council.

CPC: Center for Communication of CELAM.

CEPRAP: Center for Pastoral Action Programs and Networks of CELAM.

ECOSOC: United Nations Economic and Social Council.

LACAM: Red de Lideresas Afrodescendientes Católicas de las Américas.

ODUCAL: Organization of Catholic Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean.

OSMECA: Socio-pastoral Observatory of Human Mobility in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean.

PAGAICEYNA: Pastoral Garífuna Inculturated Central America and the Caribbean.

PCAL: Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

PCN: Child Centrality Program.

PEG: Global Education Pact.

PLAPA: Pastoral Latinoamericana de Acompañamiento y Prevención de las Adicciones.

RECLAC: Ecclesial Network of Communicators of Latin America and the Caribbean.

RECOR: Red de Comunicades Organizadas de América Latina.

REGCHAG: Ecclesial Network Gran Chaco Guaraní Aquifer.

REMAM: Ecclesial and Ecological Network of Mesoamerica.

REPAM: Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network.

RETEIS: Territorial Ecclesial Networks.

UNIAPAC: International Union of Christian Business Leaders.

News

CELAM's communiqué on the death of Pope Francis



P. /No. 0051 of 2025

Bogotá, D.C., April 21st, 2025

The Latin American Episcopal Council joins the sorrow of the Holy Faithful People of God for the departure to the Father's House of Pope Francis at 7:35 a.m. this Monday, April 21st, 2025, and thanks the Lord for his life and ministry during these twelve years of pontificate.

Pope Francis has been a gift to our Church as the successor of Peter, renewing the missionary impulse, reminding us that God is mercy, placing at the center those who are on the peripheries, urging us to live as brothers, encouraging us to welcome everyone, to be a synodal Church, and to care for the common home.

The first Latin American Pope also suffered the cross of incomprehension and rejection; however, he gave us an example of patience and

spiritual fortitude, seeking the unity of the Church amid the diversity of charisms and outlooks, welcoming everyone, while decisively assuming his universal pastoral mission.

His legacy is immense, and his teachings and witness will continue to guide the Church's journey, helping us to discern God's will. He reformed the structures of the Vatican, tirelessly promoted a culture of encounter to foster interreligious dialogue and Christian unity, promoted policies to protect against abuse, committed the Church to the poor, migrants, and those who suffer any form of exploitation, opened spaces for the participation of women, and became close to young people, children, and the elderly. But we will always remember him as the Pope of Mercy.

Pope Francis visited Latin American lands eight times, traveling to ten countries, opportunities in which he delivered clear messages that inspired us to be a Church that goes out, engaging the realities that today affect our peoples, to be the presence of Christ who gives us full life. He encouraged us to put into practice the conclusions of the Aparecida Conference and to undertake unprecedented processes, such as the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean.

We always found in him someone who listened to us, who advised us, encouraged us, and called us to work with passion and to be daring. Inspired by him, we will continue to be pilgrims of hope.

Today, your brothers in the episcopate, your bishop sons, we say thank you, Lord, for the life of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, our Pope Francis, and we ask you to receive him with indulgent love in his holy dwelling place.

Signed:

Card. Jaime Spengler, Archbishop of Porto Alegre, Brazil, Chairman

Archbishop José Luis Azuaje Ayala, Archbishop of Maracaibo, Venezuela, First Vice-President

José Domingo Ulloa, O.S.A., Archbishop of Panama, Panama, Second Vice-President

Santiago Rodríguez Rodríguez, Bishop of San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic, President of the CAE,

Lizardo Estrada Herrera, O.S.A., Auxiliary Bishop of Cusco, Peru, Secretary General.

Farewell to Pope Francis, the first Latin American Pope



The Latin American and Caribbean Church is in mourning. This April 21st, Easter Monday, at 7:35 a.m. (Rome time), Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the first Latin American Pope, passed away at the age of 88. The announcement was made by Cardinal Kevin Farrell, who entrusted “the soul of Pope Francis to the infinite and merciful love of the Triune God. He has taught us to live the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage, and universal love, especially towards the poorest and most marginalized.”

In his brief message, Cardinal Farrell also expressed his gratitude for the pontificate of the Argentine Pope: “His whole life has been dedicated to the service of the Lord and His Church. He has taught us to live the values of the Gospel with fidelity, courage, and universal love, especially towards the poorest and most marginalized.”

266th successor of Peter



On the day of his election as the 266th successor of Peter, more than 12 years ago, on March 13th, 2013, his first words were, *“You know that the duty of the conclave was to give a bishop to Rome. It seems that my brother cardinals have gone to look for him almost at the end of the world...”*

At that time, Cardinal Bergoglio had been the Archbishop of Buenos Aires for 15 years. Before traveling to the conclave, following the resignation of Benedict XVI, he was preparing for his retirement from public and ecclesiastical life. He had already reserved, for some time, room 13 at the Monsignor Mariano Espinosa Priests’ Home in the Flores neighborhood, the same place where he was born and raised.

So, before entering the conclave at the age of 76, he was fully aware of his imminent retirement and that he would soon become archbishop emeritus. In fact, his return ticket was booked for March 23rd, the eve of Holy Week, and he had asked Daniel del Regno, a news vendor in Plaza de Mayo, to deliver the newspaper to the Curia during his absence. Clearly, his plans for the final stage of his life pointed to his native Buenos Aires, 11,345 kilometers from Rome, in the Southern Cone of the continent... at the *“end of the world.”*

But God's ways are mysterious. Bergoglio was elected Pope on the fifth ballot of the conclave. At that moment, Brazilian Cardinal Cláudio Hummes embraced him and whispered, "*Don't forget the poor.*" When asked what name he would take, he replied, "*I will call myself Francis.*" He became the first Jesuit Pope and the first to adopt the name Francis, in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, a servant of the poor and a Church reformer who called for a return to its roots: "*a poor Church for the poor,*" as Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the first Latin American Pope, also envisioned.

The Argentine Pope



The son of a family of Italian immigrants, Jorge Mario was the eldest of five children born to Mario Bergoglio and Regina Sívori. He was born in Buenos Aires on December 17th, 1936. Eight days later, on December 24th, he was baptized in the María Auxiliadora Basilica in the Almagro neighborhood.

His grandmother Rosa was a woman of “deep faith and political acumen,” as journalist Austen Ivereigh recalls. In the 1920s, she had even participated in the Italian Catholic Action movement. She also instilled in him a love for literature.

From a young age, he showed a keen interest in studying. He spent his days reading, but this did not diminish his passion for soccer and his loyalty to his favorite team, San Lorenzo, the most modest of the Buenos Aires clubs, founded in 1907 by Salesian Father Lorenzo Massa.

The Jesuit Pope



After graduating as a chemical technician, he entered the diocesan seminary of Villa Devoto, and on March 11th, 1958, he joined the novitiate of the Society of Jesus. During his early years as a Jesuit, he completed his studies in the humanities in Santiago de Chile, which included classical sciences, history, literature, Latin, and Greek. Upon returning to Argentina, he earned a degree in philosophy in 1963. Between 1964 and 1966, he taught at the Colegio de la Inmaculada in Santa Fe, where he also had the opportunity to meet the great writer Jorge Luis Borges, who in 1965 led a seminar at the school on *Martín Fierro and Gaucho Literature*.

From 1967 to 1970, he obtained a degree in theology at the Colegio Máximo de San José, where he was a disciple of the Jesuit Juan Carlos Scannone (1931-2019), one of the leading exponents of the *Theology of the People*, a theological perspective that deeply shaped his pastoral approach.

He was ordained to the priesthood on December 13th, 1969. Between 1970 and 1971, his superiors sent him to Alcalá de Henares, Spain, where he underwent his *third probation* to become a fully professed Jesuit.

Upon his return to Argentina, he was appointed novice master (1972-1973), a role he balanced with teaching at the faculty of theology and other responsibilities. During this period, he was elected provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina, a position he held from 1973 to 1979, a time that coincided with the harsh dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla. These were extremely challenging times, which he faced with a spirit of discernment, always siding with the most vulnerable.

In 1980, he took on new responsibilities within the Society of Jesus as rector of the Colegio Máximo de San Miguel (1980-1986), which included overseeing the faculties of theology and philosophy, while also serving as pastor of San Miguel.

In 1986, he was sent to Germany to finalize the details of his doctoral thesis. Upon his return, he took on various pastoral roles before moving to the city of Córdoba, where he served as a spiritual director and confessor from 1990 to 1992. During these years, he authored several works, including *Meditations for Religious* (1982), *Reflections on the Apostolic Life* (1986), and *Reflections of Hope* (1992).

Pastor of the Latin American Church

On May 20th, 1992, St. John Paul II appointed him Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires. His episcopal ordination took place on June 27th, 1992, with Cardinal Antonio Quarracino as the principal consecrator. The motto he chose as bishop, *Miserando atque eligendo* (“he looked at him with mercy and chose him”), would later inspire his pontificate.

Bergoglio succeeded Quarracino in the pastoral leadership of the Archdiocese of Buenos Aires on February 28th, 1998, becoming the Archbishop Primate of Argentina and Grand Chancellor of the Catholic University of Argentina. Later, on February 21st, 2001, Pope St. John Paul II elevated him to the rank of cardinal.



His role in the Argentine and Latin American Church was highly significant. He served as president of the Argentine Episcopal Conference for two consecutive terms, from 2005 to 2011, and as president of the drafting committee for the Concluding Document of the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, which took place in 2007 in the city of Aparecida, Brazil. This *Document of Aparecida* would later become foundational and inspirational for his papal magisterium.

As a Latin American pastor, he deeply understood the major challenges facing the Church in the *continent of hope*, as he expressed during his apostolic visits to various Latin American countries and in numerous addresses to CELAM. “*If we want to serve our Latin America from CELAM, we must do it with passion*,” he said in Bogotá during his visit to Colombia in 2017.

Before his election as the successor of Peter, Cardinal Bergoglio was a member of several bodies within the Roman Curia, including the Congregations for the Clergy, for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, and for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

He was also a member of the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. Additionally, he had served as the General Relator for the 2001 Synod of Bishops, which reflected on the mission of bishops, and participated in the 2005 conclave that elected Benedict XVI as the successor to John Paul II.

Francis' legacy to CELAM



Since Pope Francis was appointed as the leader of the Catholic Church in 2013, he has maintained constant communication with CELAM, delivering speeches, sending messages, and offering greetings, always expressing his closeness and addressing fundamental issues for the Church in the region.

The Pontiff's call for the Church to be synodal and outward-looking, close to the most vulnerable communities, and committed to the pro-

cesses of evangelization in a socially and culturally changing continent, was clear and powerful.

In light of his recent passing, the legacy he leaves behind resonates with particular force. In this context, we highlight three significant encounters with CELAM leadership that remain a guiding framework for the pastoral mission of this institution.

Meeting in Rio de Janeiro (2013): a Church on the Way Out



During World Youth Day in Brazil, Pope Francis met with the CELAM Coordination Committee at the Sumaré Study Center on July 28th, 2013, where he reminded them of the importance of promoting a change in the dynamics of the Church's evangelizing mission.

On this occasion, the Pontiff urged the Latin American bishops not to fall into the "*psychology of princes*" but instead to be shepherds with the "*smell of the sheep*." He emphasized that the Church's mission requires a pastoral conversion, a shift away from outdated structures toward a more incarnate and close-to-the-people approach to evangelization.

“We cannot be mere administrators of the faith, but servants of the people of God,” he said on that occasion. His words set the tone for his pontificate in relation to Latin America, calling for a Church that walks alongside the poorest and most excluded, engaging deeply with the realities of its people.

***Apostolic Journey to Colombia (2017):
Towards an open and inclusive Church.***



During his apostolic visit to Colombia on September 7th, he reaffirmed to the leaders of CELAM the importance of being a Latin American Church in a state of permanent mission. He emphasized the urgency of avoiding the temptation to ideologize the Gospel message and reduce the Church to a functionalist or clerical structure. He insisted that the Church must be guided by communion and mission, promoting a missionary discipleship that transforms structures—a joyful Church with the capacity to encounter others.

He also spoke of a Latin American Church as a sacrament of unity and hope. In the face of differing perspectives, he said the Church must help

build bridges, tear down walls, and integrate diversity. Additionally, he highlighted the fundamental role of popular religiosity and the mestizo identity of Latin America as a sign of divine creativity, calling on the Church to foster a culture of encounter as a central pillar for consolidating a stable future in the region.

Finally, the Holy Father emphasized youth, women, and the laity as pillars of hope in Latin America. He encouraged the bishops to form and make room for young people, acknowledged the essential role of women in the faith, and called for overcoming clericalism to empower the laity.

Ecclesial Assembly in Mexico (2021): Synodality and listening to the People of God



In November 2021, Pope Francis sent a message to the leaders of CELAM, who were responsible for organizing the first Ecclesial Assembly of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Mexico City. He reminded them of the importance of synodality, that is, walking together as a Church, listening to the voice of the people, and promoting greater participation among all the faithful.

The Bishop of Rome offered them two fundamental criteria to guide the Assembly: to always remain close to the people of God and to strengthen prayer. *"It is time to listen, discern, and act,"* said Francis, encouraging the leadership of this institution to deepen a process of renewal that involves greater inclusion and co-responsibility in the ecclesial mission.

Pope Francis reminded them that this event should not be mistaken for just another episcopal conference, like Aparecida or others already held. Rather, he emphasized that it is an unprecedented gathering, open to bishops, priests, religious, and laity, in a joint effort to discern the future of the Church in the region. *"We still have much to learn,"* he added, noting that the Church is the People of God in its entirety and not an elite separated from the reality of the faithful.

Pastoral legacy for Latin America and the Caribbean



With his departure, a pontificate deeply connected to Latin America and CELAM comes to an end. In his meetings with this ecclesial body, Pope Francis issued a firm call to build a synodal Church, a Church that goes out to serve the people. He insisted on breaking down walls, embracing diversity, and walking with the most vulnerable. He proposed

a Church that listens, discerns, and acts from a faith incarnated in the reality of the continent. His legacy marks a living roadmap for the present and future pastoral mission of Latin America.

The Pope from the “*end of the world*” was also the Pope of the peripheries. From his first gestures, when he renounced the luxurious Papal Palace and chose to live in the Casa Santa Marta, to his first apostolic journey to the island of Lampedusa in southern Italy, where he stood in solidarity with the victims of the Mediterranean and championed a commitment to the policies of welcome and integration for migrants.

Francis was the shepherd “*with the smell of the sheep*” who risked everything to take the Catholic Church to the geographical and existential frontiers where life cries out.

“*I prefer a Church that is bruised, wounded, and stained because it has gone out into the streets, rather than a Church that is unhealthy from being confined and clinging to its own security,*” he said in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, in which he outlined the “*programmatic plan*” of his pontificate.

He was the Pontiff of mercy who, for more than a decade, insisted time and again that the Church should be “*poor for the poor,*” a “*field hospital*” to heal the wounds of the people, a Church open to all, without distinction.

As Bishop of Rome, he championed fraternity and social friendship, as emphasized in his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* (2020), and called for an end to wars through dialogue, because for him, “*every war is a defeat.*”

He was the Pope who vehemently denounced socio-environmental crimes and advocated for the care of Creation in his encyclical *Laudato si'* (2015), and highlighted the need for multilateral action in the face of the climate crisis through his apostolic exhortation *Laudate Deum* (2023). He also turned his attention to the Amazon, dedicating an extraordinary Synod “*for a Church with an Amazonian face and heart.*”

He was the pontiff who upheld hope in times of pandemic, reminding world leaders that *“you do not emerge from a crisis the same way: either we come out better or we come out worse.”*

He was the spiritual leader who confronted the scourge of abuse in the Church without delay, listening to the victims and asking for their forgiveness.

He was also the Pope who spared no effort to maintain unity and communion among Catholics, guiding the Church along the paths of synodality, grounded in communion, participation, and mission.

Above all, he was the Pope of hope, who encouraged us to live the Jubilee Year 2025 as pilgrims of hope, because *“hope does not disappoint,” it is “the anchor of the soul.”* Hope is the title of his autobiography, published just a few weeks ago as a living testimony to his enduring legacy.

CELAM thanks God for the gift of Pope Francis to society, to the universal Church, and in a particular way, to the Latin American and Caribbean Church.

Shine your perpetual light! Rest in peace, Pope Francis!

Moment of prayer in thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Pope Francis.

On April 25th, more than 800 people from across the continent connected to participate in an emotional tribute of prayer and gratitude for the life and ministry of Pope Francis, who departed to the Father’s house, leaving behind an indelible testimony of mercy, humility, and love for the most vulnerable.

The continental team responsible for the animation of the Synod, composed of the Latin American and Caribbean Episcopal Council (CELAM), the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious Men and Women (CLAR), Caritas Latin America, the Inter-American Confedera-

tion of Catholic Education (CIEC), and various networks and ecclesial organizations in the region, convened this gathering.

From the beginning, the atmosphere was filled with deep emotion. On one hand, there was sadness over the farewell to Pope Francis, but there was also gratitude and hope—a legacy of a man who, even in his passing, left the fire of a lived faith burning in the peripheries.



The proclamation of the Word centered on the heart of the message that Francis himself embodied: the parable of the merciful Father. In light of this text, Monsignor José Luis Azuaje, first vice-president of CELAM, offered a reflection that mirrored the soul and life of the Pope. *“Francis was like that father in the parable: he welcomed without judging (...) he was mercy made person.”*

The Archbishop of Maracaibo recalled that Francis did not demand perfection in order to love, but embraced fragility like Jesus, walking with the poor, the migrants, vulnerable women, small communities, indigenous peoples, and all who suffer. *“He sowed the gratuity of forgiveness (...) he asked that confession not be a room of torture, but of sweetness.”*

After the reflection, silence turned into prayer—a fertile silence where every heart present thanked God for a teaching, a gesture, a closeness experienced with Francis.

From different parts of the continent, voices rose in gratitude for the actions and processes inspired by the late Pope. From Brazil, a decade of the Rosary was prayed. Then, a prayer written by Pope Francis himself for the deceased was read. Before concluding, Monsignor Lizardo offered the responsory and the final blessing.

To watch the meeting again: https://youtu.be/O_wczvF2PIM

Conference: “Francis’ legacy in working with migrants and refugees”.

On April 30th, a virtual discussion was held on the legacy of Pope Francis in working with migrants and refugees. The event was jointly organized by the shared knowledge area of the CGC, the Socio-Pastoral Observatory of Human Mobility of Mesoamerica (OSMECA), and the Formation and Reflection Commission of the Clamor Network. It highlighted how the Pope’s magisterium and his deep connection with migrants have been a consistent theme throughout his pastoral work, marked from the beginning of his pontificate by his visit to the island of Lampedusa.

The participants in the discussion included Bishop Moisés Atisha Contreras, from the Clamor Network in Chile; Sister Leticia Gutiérrez Valderrama, executive director of the Migrant Hospitality Ministry (MHM) in El Paso; Father Gustavo Meneses Castro, director of the Socio-Pastoral Observatory of Human Mobility of Mesoamerica (OSMECA); and Master Gerardo Cruz González, from the Formation and Reflection Commission of the Clamor Network. The conversation was moderated by Francisco Campos, coordinator of the Knowledge Sharing area of the CGC.

On this occasion, participants were encouraged to stay connected and share their experiences and lessons learned from accompanying migrants through upcoming knowledge-sharing roundtables to which they will be invited.

The talk is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/live/g33KZnh36q-Q?si=Hs5vTP8FdOjAgdKz>

Continental synod team advances in the reception of the Final Document



The Continental Animation Team for the Reception of the Synod in Latin America and the Caribbean held a new meeting on April 3rd, during which it reviewed the letter sent by the Secretariat of the Synod outlining the itinerary for the implementation and evaluation of the Final Document.

The participants agreed on the importance of this path, which will culminate in a World Ecclesial Assembly in October 2028 and includes similar meetings at the diocesan, national, and continental levels during 2027. This approach aims to provide a common perspective for work,

similar to the experience already developed and projected by Latin America and the Caribbean.

During the meeting, a report was presented on how the document has been received so far in each Episcopal Conference. This report emerged from the dialogue with the General Secretaries during the four regional meetings organized by CELAM in March. It indicates that, in most countries, the bishops have already reviewed the text in their plenary assemblies, and several have delegated the task of follow-up to already established commissions.

Additionally, a pedagogical version of the Final Document and a special monographic issue of the *Medellín* Magazine will be published, in which a group of theologians will address each chapter of the text. The Pastoral Theological Reflection Team of CELAM will also prepare material on the “*synodalization of ecclesial structures*.”

The need to work on a synodal spirituality that promotes hope and conversion was emphasized, along with the need for reflection that encourages the revision of structures to make them true facilitators of communion and participation.

Finally, a prototype of a web page was presented, which will primarily collect “*synodal footprints*.” These are pastoral experiences that can serve as examples to inspire other communities. The website will also offer resources on the Final Document, including videos and other materials for synodal formation and animation.

CELAM shares material for the dissemination and deepening of the Synod’s Final Document

On April 24th, CELAM sent two publications to the Episcopal Conferences and made them freely available for pastoral dissemination and a deeper understanding of the Final Document of the Synod.

On the one hand, this includes a monographic issue of the *Medellín* Magazine, featuring “*A Hermeneutic of the Final Document of the Synod*

of Synodality Based on Its Central Themes.” It contains texts written by members of the Pastoral Theological Reflection Team of CELAM, offering a significant contribution for a more profound comprehension of the document.



It can be downloaded here: <https://revistas.CELAM.org/index.php/medellin/issue/view/463/239>

On the other hand, an informative edition of the Final Document has been published, containing the fundamental content for community use. It provides a straightforward approach to the central themes, along with key ideas and reflection questions, allowing for more direct work in groups and communities. This text was prepared by the CELAM Knowledge Management Center.

These materials are also the result of the coordination efforts of the Continental Animation Team for the Reception of the Synod, which in-

cludes the production and dissemination of various pedagogical and in-depth study resources as part of its lines of action.

The document, intended for community use, may be reproduced with proper credit to the author. Printed copies can be requested free of charge.

It can be downloaded here: <https://documental.CELAM.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-retrieve-file.pl?id=c99879423ad13e6885e5b2383418f249>

CEBITEPAL inaugurates Bachelor's Degree in Pastoral Theology 2025



On April 28th, the CELAM Formation Center - CEBITEPAL launched the Canonical Licentiate in Pastoral Theology during a ceremony held at its headquarters in Bogotá, Colombia.

The opening event was attended by professors, students, and representatives of various ecclesial organizations. The ceremony was presided over by Monsignor Lizardo Estrada Herrera, Secretary General of CELAM, who emphasized the institutional commitment to ongoing formation and academic excellence in the service of a Church on the move.

This academic program responds to the need to strengthen the theological formation of pastoral agents in Latin America and the Caribbean, from a critical, contextualized perspective, oriented toward ecclesial action. The program aims to form leaders capable of interpreting the signs of the times and energizing pastoral action with a solid theologi-

cal foundation, a sense of community, and openness to dialogue with social reality.

The degree program is offered in a hybrid format, combining virtual and face-to-face activities. The in-person phase will conclude in June.

CELAM in solidarity with the people of the Dominican Republic



Bogotá, D.C., abril 11 de 2025

P. /No. 0049 de 2025

Monseñor
Héctor Rafael Rodríguez Rodríguez
Arzobispo de Santiago de los Caballeros
Presidente del Episcopado Dominicano

Querido hermano en el episcopado:

Recibe un cordial saludo desde el Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, esperando se encuentre bien.

Con gran tristeza seguimos las noticias de lo ocurrido en Santo Domingo en la madrugada del martes último, en la discoteca Jet Set, donde perdieron la vida 225 personas y muchas otras resultaron heridas.


Queremos hacernos cercanos a ustedes, sus comunidades y todo el pueblo dominicano, que llora a estos hermanos y hermanas, asegurándoles nuestras oraciones por su eterno descanso, en la esperanza de que Cristo Resucitado los reciba en su infinita misericordia.

En estos días que se avecinan, donde contemplaremos a Cristo vencedor de la muerte, los tendremos muy presentes y seguiremos elevando nuestra oración por quienes han sobrevivido a esta tragedia, para que pronto recuperen completamente su salud física y emocional.


Le pedimos haga extensivo este saludo a todos los hermanos obispos de República Dominicana y sus comunidades, especialmente aquellos que más se han visto afectados por esta situación.


Los encomendamos a María de Altagracia y por su intercesión al Señor de la Vida que los consuela y fortalece.

Fraternalmente en Cristo.


Mons. Jaime Spengler
Arzobispo de Porto Alegre, Brasil
Presidente


Mons. José Domingo Ulloa, O.S.A
Arzobispo de Panamá, Panamá
Segundo Vicepresidente


Mons. José Luis Azuaje Ayala
Arzobispo de Maracaibo, Venezuela
Primer Vicepresidente


Mons. Santiago Rodríguez Rodríguez
Obispo San Pedro de Macoris, Rep. Dom.
Presidente CAE


Mons. Lizardo Estrada Herrera, O.S.A.
Obispo Auxiliar de Cusco, Perú
Secretario General

PRESIDENCIA

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The Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM) expressed its sadness and solidarity with the people of the Dominican Republic in response to the tragedy that occurred at a nightclub in the capital city of Santo Domingo.

“With great sadness, we follow the news of what happened in Santo Domingo in the early hours of last Tuesday morning at the Jet Set discotheque, where 225 people lost their lives and many others were injured,” said the CELAM presidency in a letter addressed to the head of the Dominican episcopate, Bishop Héctor Rodríguez Rodríguez.

“We want to be close to you, your communities, and all the Dominican people, who mourn these brothers and sisters, assuring them of our prayers for their eternal rest, in the hope that the Risen Christ will receive them in his infinite mercy,” they added.

“In the days ahead, as we contemplate Christ, the conqueror of death, we will keep them very much in mind and continue to raise our prayers for those who have survived this tragedy, so that they may soon fully recover their physical and emotional health.”

“We ask you to extend this greeting to all our brother bishops in the Dominican Republic and their communities, especially those who have been most affected by this situation. We commend them to Mary of Altagracia and, through her intercession, to the Lord of Life, who consoles and strengthens them.”

Church organizations meet at the CELAM for COP30

Christian-inspired organizations met from April 1st to 3rd at the CELAM headquarters in a process of formation and articulation, with the clear purpose of influencing the climate agenda for the upcoming COP30, which will be held in November 2025 in Belém do Pará, Brazil.

Under the slogan *“Pilgrims of Hope towards COP30,”* Caritas Latin America and other Church entities addressed the need to strengthen their

advocacy capacity and develop a regional position document that reflects the voice of the communities most affected by the climate crisis.



Nicolás Meyer, Caritas coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, who led this meeting, explained that this space for dialogue and listening aimed to prepare Church actors to participate effectively and forcefully in COP30.

“We met with various organizations linked to social and environmental pastoral work, such as the Franciscans, Justice and Peace, the ecclesial networks REPAM, REMAM, REGCHAG, the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious (CLAR), among others, with the intention of making our impact more serious, forceful, and in line with the magnitude of the event,” said Meyer.

One of the main challenges discussed was understanding the technical and political language used in these international spaces. *“In the Church, we are used to speaking from the reality of the territories, but we need to translate these community experiences into technical and political terms so that our voice is heard in decision-making spaces,”* added the coordinator.

Synodal Network of Socio-Pastoral Observation approves process of incorporation of new members.

The Synodal Network of Socio-Pastoral Observation approved the procedure for joining the Network during a virtual meeting held on April 10th.

It was agreed that groups or organizations linked to the Catholic Church, whether already active or seeking to engage in processes of analysis of the social, cultural, economic, political, and religious realities of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, and/or the reality of the Church on the continent, with the aim of identifying challenges and opportunities for the evangelizing mission, may join the Network.

Interested groups and organizations should send the following documents to the email **cgc.observatorio@CELAM.org**:

1. A letter expressing their interest in joining and confirming their acceptance of the identity, objectives, and governance established in the Constitutive Declaration of the Network. This letter must be endorsed by the corresponding ecclesiastical authority.
2. A brief description of the organization.

The Network's coordinating team will review the request, make a decision, and communicate it to the Network plenary and the interested parties.

In the same session, it was also decided to schedule a series of colloquiums as a space of accompaniment for those episcopal conferences, dioceses, and pastoral instances interested in forming observatories. This initiative responds to an interest identified in the recent Regional Meetings organized by CELAM in Camex, the Caribbean, the Bolivarian zone, and the Southern Cone.

CELAM's journey in April

Meeting of the Commission of Indigenous, Afro-descendant and Garifuna Peoples of Honduras and El Salvador

Convened by the Mesoamerican Ecological Ecclesial Network (REMAM), a meeting was held from April 7th to 9th, 2025, bringing together 12 representatives from pastoral organizations in Honduras and El Salvador, the Secretary of Cultures, Arts, and Heritage of the Peoples of Honduras, the Executive Secretary of REMAM, and the Archbishop of San Pedro Sula, Monsignor Miguel Leniham, who shared experiences, challenges, and hopes.

The purpose of this pastoral action is to develop a coordinated approach among the three pastoral sectors, building on the themes of interculturality and inculturation that emerged from the recent networks and platforms meeting of CEPRAP.

During the gathering, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to these foundational processes and identified several key challenges:

- The influence of dominant cultures that weaken ancestral worldviews and spiritual practices.
- The integration of language, spirituality, and worldview within family, educational, and religious environments.
- The need for legal frameworks that recognize and protect the cultural rights of indigenous peoples.
- The politicization of territories and the lack of coordinated efforts for their defense.
- The cultural delegitimization that occurs through academic, state, and religious prejudice.

These reflections will serve as the basis for the next meeting of the Afro-descendant, Native, and Garifuna Pastoral Coordinating Councils, scheduled for July 2025.

Bibliographic tribute to Pope Francis



The CELAM library paid a bibliographic tribute to Pope Francis through an exhibition that featured the books and documents he authored during his pontificate, as well as publications produced by CELAM that reflect his teachings and pastoral vision.

Additionally, the exhibition included works by other authors who have deeply reflected on the pastoral and evangelizing legacy that Pope Francis has left to the Church.

For those visiting the library virtually, a dedicated link has been created to provide more information on the bibliographic resources available in the CELAM catalog.

- Writings of Pope Francis:

https://documental.CELAM.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-search.pl?i-dx=au&q=papa+francisco&limit=&weight_search=1

- Writings, biographies, teachings about Pope Francis:

https://documental.CELAM.org/cgi-bin/koha/opac-search.pl?idx=ti&q=papa+francisco&limit=&weight_search=1

Life Hangs by a Thread Campaign Commission

The commission met this April and reported that four emblematic cases have been received, reviewed, and approved. These cases need to be made visible, and the situation they are facing must be brought to light, while ensuring that this process does not expose the community to additional risks.

Ways of providing accompaniment are being analyzed, including an effort to understand the legal frameworks in each country, as some nations do not have laws for the protection of human rights defenders.

The Center for Communication will produce several podcasts based on these cases.

Document for COP 30, meetings during the month of April

An advocacy document was prepared with the contributions of organizations from the Commission for Integral Ecology (CEILAC), which has been submitted to the continental conferences of Africa and Asia to become a unified text representing the Global South. This document will serve as the foundation for the development of two additional texts, one for “*political advocacy*” and the other for “*technical guidance*.”

Additionally, coordination efforts with the CNBB (National Conference of Bishops of Brazil) and its organizational structures have been maintained in preparation for the ecclesial presence at COP30.

Meeting of Women in Synodality. Mesoamerican Region



The objectives of this meeting were to continue and deepen synodal reflection (listening, dialogue, and prophetic action) on the reality and challenges faced by women, to plan joint actions as a region to advance common goals, and to strengthen the processes of the Episcopal, ecclesial, and social conferences promoted by and for women.

There were 45 participants from Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Honduras, representing 20 ecclesial processes, including bishops' conferences, dioceses, social pastoral ministries, Caritas, and REMAM.

These women of Mesoamerica, gathered during the Easter season of Pope Francis, as women of the Resurrection of Jesus, renewed their commitment to his legacy, embracing their call to serve the peoples, communities, and the Common Home, as well as the existential and geographical peripheries. They shared their hearts regarding their personal and community realities, identified aspects that foster unity, and developed strategic lines of action at the regional level:

- National, regional, and Latin American integration and organization.
- Coordination around the promotion and strengthening of women's pastoral ministries.
- Advocacy for recognition, participation, and decision-making with equality and real equity of rights.

- Comprehensive training for transformation.

Within the framework of these proposals, each country, along with the Afro-Garifuna and Garifuna pastoral groups, advanced work agreements and committed to developing the initiatives that emerged from the meeting.

Indian Theology Advisors Network

During a meeting of the Network of Indian Theology Advisors, the participants emphasized the need for a Church that stands with them, one that is committed, in solidarity, and present among indigenous peoples, providing space for the active participation of indigenous women.

They also made progress in organizing and consolidating the program for the VIII Symposium, which will focus on the theme “*Church and Indigenous Peoples*” and will take place from October 6th to 11th in Riobamba, Ecuador.

Meeting of the Education Pact Steering Committee

On April 29th, the PEG Steering Committee met as a follow-up to the face-to-face meeting held in Buenos Aires at the end of March, to review the agreements reached during that gathering.

It was reaffirmed that this committee’s objective is to promote the Global Education Pact (PEG) within the framework of the CELAM Global Plan 2023-2027, focusing especially on aspects that are not being addressed by other bodies.

The following lines of work were ratified:

- PEG, Cultures, and Territories: Within the framework of popular and non-formal education, focusing on the contributions of the pastoral care of Indigenous Peoples, Garifunas, and Afro-descen-

dants, and the Territorial Networks of Integral Ecology, based on the principles of inculturation and interculturality.

- Dialogue with Theology Professors from Non-Theological Disciplines: A discernment exercise carried out at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo.
- Knowledge Sharing Roundtables: Focused on the lessons learned and challenges faced in implementing the PEG.
- PEG Dictionary Update.
- Participation in the Jubilee of Education.

CELAM's archive participates in the Network of Ecclesiastical Archives of Bogota



Our Archive and Library team participated in the first training meeting of 2025, organized by the Network of Ecclesiastical Archives and Libraries of Bogotá. The event took place at the facilities of the Universidad Santo Tomás and was led by the Archives of the Archdiocese of Bogotá and the University Archives of the Universidad Javeriana.

The purpose of the meeting was to define a regulatory framework that meets the needs of the network in Colombia, establishing common guidelines to promote good practices in document management and to serve as a reference for all participating institutions.

The working agenda included four main topics for presentation and reflection:

- Ecclesiastical Archives: A Millenary Legacy in Need of Protection.
- National Legislation and Canonical Norms on Archival Matters.
- Presentation of the Publication: “The Cathedral of Bogotá: Theology, History, and Art. An Example of Research in Ecclesiastical Archives.”
- Aligning Ecclesiastical Archives with Archival Theory.

CEILAC Executive Secretariat Meeting

The Secretariat of the Integral Ecology Commission met on April 30th with the Taproot Network and the Water Vicariate.

Taproot is a network of community organizations dedicated to the care of the Common Home, responding to the cries of the poor and the earth. They aim to advance decolonizing ethics and promote the spiritualities of Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, ensuring that their cultures are recognized. At COP30, they will focus on supporting issues related to water protection, resisting extractivism, and fostering the necessary synergies to present a united front.

The Water Vicariate is an initiative of the Apostolic Vicariate of Iquitos, whose bishop, Monsignor Miguel Ángel Cadenas, has requested the support and accompaniment of CELAM.

The meeting also made progress in the preparation and organization of the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the publication of *Laudato Si'*, which will take place within the framework of the 40th General Assembly of CELAM in Rio de Janeiro.

Visit of the Colombian Military Seminary

The rector and seminarians from the Colombian Military Seminary visited the CELAM library to learn about the information resources available, both in its physical and virtual collections.



This visit is part of a broader initiative, as several seminaries in the region have been offered the opportunity to access specialized databases in religion, theology, and human sciences. This new library service aims to provide updated materials to the entire ecclesial community.

CEBITEPAL Director participates in Theological Week in Guatemala

Fabio Antunes, director of CEBITEPAL, was one of the guest speakers at the *Theological Week: Current Latin American Theology*, held at the National Major Seminary of the Assumption in the city of Quetzaltenango, Guatemala.

The academic event brought together seminarians, professors, and pastoral agents with the objective of deepening their understanding of the current directions in Latin American theology, in dialogue with the contemporary challenges facing the Church and society.

During his participation, Fr. Fabio addressed three main topics:

- Current Latin American theology.
- Theology in the magisterium of Pope Francis.
- Urban pastoral work as a new horizon for evangelization.

Publications

Itinerary of preparation for the Jubilee of Catechists 2025



This itinerary is a formative and spiritual resource for Catechists in preparation for the Jubilee 2025, convoked by Pope Francis under the motto “*Spes non confundit*” (Hope does not disappoint).

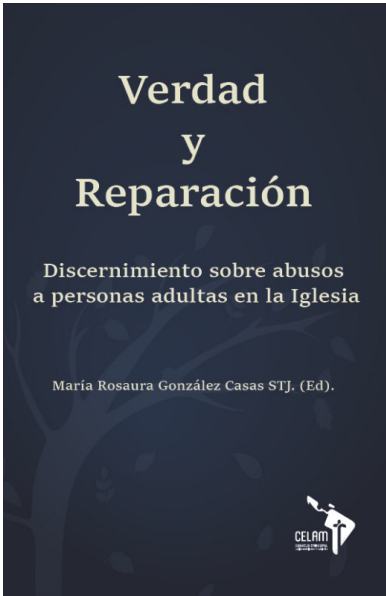
The text is structured in six essential chapters, each one delving into key aspects to live the Jubilee fully, offering an opportunity to reflect, grow and prepare for this Jubilee celebration.

- Author: E. Marcial Riveros Tito.
- Edition: 1st Edition 2025.
- Pages: 105.

Available in print or EBook format here: <https://editorial.celam.org/>

Truth And Reparation. Discernment on abuse of adults in the Church.

This itinerary is a formative and spiritual resource for catechists in preparation for the Jubilee 2025, convoked by Pope Francis under the motto “*Spes non confundit*” (Hope does not disappoint).



The text is structured into six essential chapters, each one exploring key aspects to fully live the Jubilee, offering an opportunity for reflection, growth, and preparation for this celebration.

- Author: María Rosaura González Casas
- Edition: 1st Edition 2025
- Pages: 346.

It can be purchased here: <https://editorial.CELAM.org/producto/verdad-y-reparacion-discernimiento-sobre-abusos-a-personas-adultas-en-la-iglesia/>

Forthcoming publications:

Decolonial Thought: Blacks in Catholicism. Author: Fr. Venanzio

Practical Theology and Synodality Practices. Authors: Antonio Ernesto Palafox, Geraldo Luiz De Mori, Marcela Mazzini, Olvani Sánchez.

Theology of conversation in the Spirit. An interdisciplinary exploration. Marcela Mazzini and Fernando Soler (Eds).

Contributions of School Religious Education to the culture of peace. Co-published by USTA

Episcopal appointments

- April 5th: Pope Francis appointed Fr. Osmar López Benítez, until now pastor of the Immaculate Conception of Mary Cathedral in Carapeguá, as bishop of the Diocese of San Juan Bautista de las Misiones (Paraguay).
- Antônio Carlos Paiva, of the clergy of the Diocese of Patos de Minas, until now pastor of Nossa Senhora da Piedade in Lagoa Formosa-MG, has been appointed coadjutor bishop of Oliveira (Brazil) by Pope Francis.
- April 8th: Pope Francis appointed Fr. Wilder Alberto Vásquez Saldaña, O.S.A., until now parochial vicar of San José Obrero, as bishop prelate of the Territorial Prelature of Chuquibambilla (Peru).
- April 9th: Pope Francis appointed Bishop Francisco de Assis Gabriel dos Santos, C.Ss.R., Bishop of Cajazeiras (Brazil), transferring him from the Diocese of Campo Maior.
- April 9th: Pope Francis appointed Bishop Luis Manuel López Alfaro, until now titular bishop of Garba and auxiliary bishop of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, as bishop of the diocese of Tapachula (Mexico).
- April 9th: Pope Francis appointed Fr. Evandro Luis Braun, of the clergy of the Diocese of Ponta Grossa, until now pastor of Santa Rita de Cássia, as bishop of the Diocese of Campo Mourão (Brazil).
- April 10th: Pope Francis appointed Bishop Luis Albeiro Maldonado Monsalve, until now bishop of Mocoa - Sibundoy (Colombia), as bishop of Santa Rosa de Osos (Colombia).

- April 15th: Pope Francis appointed Fr. Miguel Fritz, O.M.I., until now Apostolic Administrator of the Apostolic Vicariate of Pilcomayo, as Vicar Apostolic of the same Apostolic Vicariate.

Deaths

- April 1st: Bishop Miguel Angel Aguilar Miranda, military bishop of Ecuador.
- April 13th: Bishop Geraldo de Souza Rodrigues of Januária, Minas Gerais, Brazil.
- Angélico Sândalo Bernardino, bishop emeritus of Blumenau, Santa Catarina, Brazil.
- Patricio Infante Alfonso, bishop emeritus of Antofagasta, Chile.
- April 30th: Bishop Zeno Hastenteufel, bishop emeritus of Novo Hamburgo, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

Upcoming courses and diplomas

Financial Education for Life

The course will provide a space to deepen the relationship between finance and spirituality, promoting the sixth commitment of the Global Education Pact, based on the Social Doctrine of the Church and the magisterium of Pope Francis.

Date: June 2nd to July 14th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4jx3Ih6>

General Norms and People of God: Canon Law

The virtual diploma course aims to analyze and apply the norms of canon law in practical pastoral contexts, developing critical skills to interpret legal texts, resolve conflicts, and provide guidance on matters related to ecclesiastical life.

Date: June 2nd to 30th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4cXm0Wi>

Ethics, a near horizon

This virtual course offers an introduction to Christian ethics based on its biblical and theological foundations, guiding believers in their moral decision-making and in living their faith in the contemporary context.

Date: June 2nd to 26th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/3GEfLLe>

Prison Pastoral without borders

Offered free of charge in a synchronous virtual format, the *Prison Pastoral Without Borders* diploma course provides comprehensive training for this essential dimension of pastoral work.

Aimed at those who accompany people deprived of their liberty, the course will cover topics such as active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution — key tools for an evangelizing and humanizing presence in prison contexts.

Date: June 2nd to 27th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/42oADxc>

Social Doctrine of the Church

In a world marked by injustice, poverty, and inequality, this course responds to the urgent need to form students in ethical and moral principles that enable them to interpret and transform social reality in the light of the Gospel.

Date: June 2nd to 30th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4klwBx1>

The Person of Jesus Christ: An Introduction to the New Testament in Latin American Perspective

This course offers a general introduction to the texts of the New Testament, aiming to recover the memory of the historical Jesus as preserved by the authors and communities involved in the formation of these texts.

Date: June 3rd to July 2nd.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/4jxbYOd>

Missionaries of the Common Home

Christian ethics is based on the principles and teachings of faith, guiding believers in their daily lives and moral decision-making. This course aims to deepen the biblical and theological foundations of Christian ethics, as well as its practical application in the contemporary context.

Date: June 5th to July 10th.

Registration: <https://bit.ly/3SorShL>

**See the complete schedule of courses
offered by CEBITEPAL:**



https://bit.ly/CEBITEPAL_2025

Upcoming meetings

- May 1st to 4th: Assembly of the Latin American and Caribbean Confederation of Religious - CLAR (Ecuador).
- May 12th to 19th: Meeting of networks of street people in Venezuela.
- May 19th to 23rd: Meeting of the Network for the Protection of Life in Latin America and the Caribbean. Guayaquil (Ecuador).
- May 26th-30th: 40th Ordinary General Assembly of CELAM.
- June 4th to 6th: ODUCAL Assembly (Dominican Republic).
- June 10th-14th: Meeting of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network.
- June 21st and 22nd: Meeting of pastoral care of addictions. Paraguay
- June 22nd to 29th: BONH-COP30 Meeting
- July 1st to 3rd: Ecumenical Encounter Nicea 1700 (Guatemala)
- July 7th to 11th: Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Catechetical Society (SCALA). Paraguay
- July 12th to 14th: Assembly Congress of the Platform of Economies. Brasilia.
- July 13th to 18th: REMAM meeting in Belize.
- July 17th and 18th: Meeting of the Presidency at CELAM
- July 17th to 19th: Networking meeting organized in New York.
- July 21st-23rd: Meeting of the CELAM Coordination Committee.

- July 21st to 25th: Face-to-face meeting of the coordinating commissions of the Pastoral Coordinating Committees of Indigenous, Afro and Garifuna Peoples.
- July 30th-August 1st: Meeting of popular movements. Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- July 31st and August 1st: Libraries Network Meeting (CELAM).
- August 11th to 14th: Catholic TV Meeting (Brazil).
- August 11th-15th: Meeting of educational pastoral ministries. CELAM.
- August 25th to 30th: REPAM Human Rights School in Bolivia.
- September 2nd to 4th: Prevention Commissions Meeting.
- September 7th to 14th: Red Clamor Assembly.
- September 8th to 12th: REMAM Assembly (El Salvador).
- September 15th-19th: Assembly of the Justice and Peace Network of the Patria Grande (CELAM).
- September 17th-19th: Meeting "Hopeful Jubilee Discernment on the Future of the Family in Latin America and the Caribbean. And launching of the School of Social Thought (Rome).
- September 24th to 26th: II Meeting of ALyC of the PCN (El Salvador)
- October 26th to November 1st: Catechetical commissions meeting (Mexico)
- November 1st to 7th: XVI EPA - Pastoral Afro (Argentina)
- November 10th to 21st: COP 30 (Brazil)
- November 18th to 20th: Coordination Committee face-to-face meeting

Agreements signed

Institution	Object
OtherYes to the cooperation agreement between Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios - UNIMINUTO and the Latin American Episcopal Council - CELAM	Joint development of the Diploma in Kerigmatic Prediction, structured in three (3) modules with a total duration of 80 hours.

To see and participate again

CELAM, through the Center for Communication, makes available the RECORDings of the events and material produced during the month of February:

Conversations

You are not alone! Francis' Legacy Conversation on Migrants and Refugees: <https://youtu.be/g33KZnh36qQ>

Thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Pope Francis: https://youtu.be/O_wczvF2PIM

Video tribute to Pope Francis

CELAM Special: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Ir6TEVrZtME?feature=share>

Digital Missionaries Special: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/Pe-BK4x4bBPg?feature=share>

CELAM Specials

Reflections for the road: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/7i9rRUD-7j4Y?feature=share>

ADN CELAM News

Latin America and the Caribbean welcomes the Synod: Here is a balance of the regional meetings: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7i9rRUD-7j4Y>

In memory of the Pope of the peripheries, voices from Latin America: Así lo red: <https://youtu.be/fV3kL9CLl0Y>

Latin American Polyhedron

Broadcast April 9th: <https://youtu.be/gqJfun3LnNo>

Jubilee 2025 Anthem Karaoke Challenge

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1I9x_HICyA&list=PLQp-j1Ix2-2IS13N4jAizr19PBZkfnX4iH

Interview

Telefides talks to Assistant Secretary General, Fr. Pedro Brassesco: <https://youtu.be/a7PTyxgyvDo>



