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# THE CHURCH'S ADVANCE TOWARD FULLNESS

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## INTRODUCTION:

The general subject with which we have been dealing in the AFI since 2004 (Spain, Argentina, Thailand, Italy) is: **The Church's Advance Toward Fullness.**

The Holy Spirit has placed this subject before us from the following perspective or vision: Prior to the end times, the church will continue to grow here in the earth until she reaches her fullness in three fundamental dimensions: UNITY, QUALITY AND QUANTITY.

Over the last forty years the Holy Spirit has brought about in the church throughout the world a strong movement of spiritual renewal, of which we are all a part. In many of us the word 'restoration' has been a key word, for it helped us to see that the church needed to recover important truths, ministries and gifts that had been ignored through the centuries. However, the concept of 'restoration,' although we did not realize it, had the effect of conditioning or limiting us as regards the vision of the church's fullness which God has purposed to accomplish here in the earth prior to the end times.

Jesus did not say: "I will restore my church", but rather, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16.18). If by "restoration" we mean the recovery of the biblical principles which as a church we had lost or ignored in past centuries, that is quite correct. However, in speaking of the restoration of the church, if we propose to return to the life of the churches in the first century, it is not entirely correct. Let us remember that many of the churches in the times of the New Testament had significant problems. The Corinthians were carnal. The Galatians were returning to the Law. In Ephesus there was a threat of division. Among the seven churches of Asia Minor, few were a good example for us. Even the church of Jerusalem had little interest in moving beyond Jerusalem, and only preached to the Jews.

When we study the first epistles written by Paul, we get the impression that at the beginning of his ministry he had the idea that in his generation the edification of the church would be completed, and that Christ would return quickly. But a study of his later epistles, such as Ephesians, indicates clearly that Paul could see that in the future centuries, and prior to Christ's return, the church would reach a historic fullness:

*"...in order than in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (2.7).*

*"...until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (4.13).*

*"...to present to himself a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless" (5.27).*

## I. OUR TWO ABSOLUTE REFERENCE POINTS FOR THE EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH

## **1. God's eternal project (Our first point of reference is in the remote past)**

Our absolute reference point for the edification of the church is not the church of ages past, nor even the first century church. Our initial reference is the church before all time, the church that God purposed to have before the foundation of the world. That project God revealed in its fullness to the apostles and prophets of the first century, of which Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians is the most complete exposition (Eph 3.1-11).

This entire eternal project of God can be summed up in one word: CHURCH.

The church was not born in God's mind two thousand years ago when he sent his Son to the world. The church was in God's mind and heart from ages past, "*before the foundation of the world*".

The church was not God's 'Plan B' following the fall of man. The church is God's 'Plan A' since before the existence of men or demons. The fall was a detour, an attack against God's eternal project. Redemption was simply a return of things to the original plan.

The church is the family that God purposed to have according to his good will and pure love, since before the foundation of the world.

THE FATHER OF JESUS CHRIST PURPOSED TO BE THE FATHER  
OF A GREAT FAMILY (**UNITY**)  
OF THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF CHILDREN (**QUANTITY**)  
CONFORMED TO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON (**QUALITY**).  
(Ephesians 1.4-5; Romans 8.29)

In truth, God has only one eternal project. The creation of man and woman, the institution of marriage, procreation, the incarnation of the WORD, the redemptive sacrifice of the Son, his resurrection and exaltation, the coming of the Holy Spirit, are all in the same line, pointing to the same objective: the realization of God's eternal purpose.

## **2. The finished work at the end of time (Our second reference point is in the remote future)**

In Revelation 21.9ff, the angel tells John: "*Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb*". Then he took him to a great and high mountain "*and showed him the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*". That extraordinary city which is then described is not heaven, but the church. (Verse 2 of the same chapter confirms this.) It is the concluded project, the church fully edified (or built). It is the promised bride, the wife of the Lamb. Jesus Christ finally presents to himself a glorious and holy church, without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Halleluia!

The three characteristics of this church-city:

QUALITY: "*It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal*" (v.11). "*...The city of pure gold, as pure as glass*" (v.18).  
The entire description speaks of holiness, purity, light, transparency and glory.

UNITY: It is one city alone, surrounded by a great wall of 65 meters in height. Jesus Christ has only one bride, only one church.

QUANTITY: This city is gigantic, larger than any other city of the world and it is tri-dimensional. It measures 2,160 km. in length, 2,160 km. in width, and 2,160 km. in height (v.16). (Mount Everest is less than 9 km. in height!). It is made up of thousands of millions of persons.

Here we see the end of history. He that said: *"I will build my church"* is seated on the throne of the universe and has all power to bring it about. *"The will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied"* (Isaiah 53:10-11).

Where and when is the church to be built?

It is here in the world and prior to the coming of Christ. Following that there will be no more evangelism or conversions; that is, no further numerical growth of the church. There will be no more discipleship, nor pastors nor teachers to edify the church.

- According to 1 Corinthians 3, the building of the church with gold, silver and precious stones takes place here on earth.
- Jesus, through the washing of water, which is his word, prepares the church here, so as to present it to himself both glorious and holy (Eph.5.26-27).

## II. NATURE AND IDENTITY OF THE CHURCH

### What is the church?

- It is not a physical building; but rather men and women who have been redeemed by the Lord.
- It is not a legal institution, but rather a family, God's family.
- It is not made up of clergy alone; but all of God's people.
- It is not a congregation, although the church meets regularly. When we are dispersed during the week, we continue to be the church; we are the church 24 hours of the day, every day of the week. We do not go to the church; we are the church.

### The church derives its identity from God's identity, from his character.

- Why should the church be holy? (**Quality**). > Because GOD IS HOLY.
- Why should the church be only one? (**Unity**). > Because GOD IS ONE.
- Why does God want many? (**Quantity**) > Because GOD IS LOVE. He created every human being out of love. All were created by God and for God (Col 1.16). All were included in his eternal project. All men have been created to be adopted as children of God through Jesus Christ. God wants all to be saved and to be a part of his eternal family (1Tim.2.4). Hell was not created for men, but for the devil and his angels (Mt 25.41). Although all will not be saved, for God does not impose his will on anyone.

The church is the expression of God's character: Holiness, Unity and Love.

### III. THE CHURCH'S REASON FOR BEING AND ITS MISSION IN THE WORLD

#### Why is the church in the world?

"...To the praise of his glorious grace" (Eph 1.6).

"...for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1.12).

"...To show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2.8).

#### The church exists to show God's glory to the world.

#### What is glory?

In the Bible, the word 'glory' generally has to do with manifestation, revelation, visibility. Thus Psalm 19 states: *"The heavens declare the glory of God"* (19.1).

'Glory' is the visible manifestation of God's invisible attributes. *"Since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen"* (Rom 1.20). Creation, in a most eloquent way, reveals to all humanity the existence, the greatness and the power of God.

But the full manifestation of God in the world was in Jesus Christ. The invisible God became visible in the incarnation of his Son. *"He is the image of the invisible God"* (Col 1.15). John tells us: *"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth"* (John 1.14). And Hebrews 1.3 affirms that Christ *"is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being"*.

But today Jesus Christ is not present in the earth physically and visibly, but rather through his body, which is the church.

Through the Holy Spirit, Christ is today present in the church.

Jesus said to the Father: *"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one"* (Jn 17.22).

Paul declares: *"For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ"* (Col 2.9,10). All the Father's attributes and virtues are in him.

And Christ, filled with the Father's fullness, is in us: *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1.27).

Paul explodes in praise because the Father *"blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ"* (Eph 1.3). In his prayer he does not request more blessing, but rather greater revelation that we might know fully what are *"the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints"* and what is *"his incomparably great power for us who believe"* (Eph 1.18-19).

Why did God place such glory, blessings and power in us? So that his glory might be known in the earth through his church.

Prophecy tells us: *"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea"* (Hab 2.14; Isa 11.9). How will that happen? Through the manifestation of Christ in his church.

The invisible God became visible in Jesus Christ two thousand years ago; and today, the glory of Jesus Christ is made visible in the world through the quality of the church.

#### 1. The church will manifest to the world the glory of God through her UNITY

The church as a community reconciled with God and with men, is God's visible proposal before all the divisions of humanity: as salt and light, the model of what God proposes to all the nations.

In a divided world in conflict, where individualism, selfishness, injustice, competition and wars reign, the church is that part of humanity which is again united with Christ in God and with their brothers and sisters. In its essential nature, the church is synonymous with forgiveness, peace, reconciliation, love and service. The church is the end of individualism, of divisions and wars, of the unjust distribution of riches.

The church is God's "Shalom" installed among men to show to the world the greatest of all miracles: that Jews and Arabs are one in the Messiah. (At this moment, Jewish Christians in the north of Israel have provided lodging in their homes to Arab believers from southern Lebanon, whose homes were destroyed in the recent war.)

When the nations that call themselves Christian understand what it means to be Christian, instead of killing, dominating and exploiting the poorer nations, they will place their riches and all their capacity for service at the disposition of the poorer nations. They will understand that to be Christian is to be like Jesus Christ who, being rich, made himself poor to enrich many. That day will come, and the world will see the glory of God through his church. *"The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed"* (Rom 8.19).

## **2. The church will reveal God's glory to the world through its HOLINESS**

The term "holy" is used some sixty times in the NT with reference to all the redeemed, the children of God.

HOLY means separate from sin and consecrated to God.

In practice, to be holy means to not lie or pronounce evil words, to not insult anyone, to not steal or take home anything that does not belong to us, to neither give nor receive bribes, to not speak evil of our neighbor nor complain, to not have sexual relations outside of marriage nor before marriage, to not harbor revenge, to not be greedy or selfish.

Holy is the employer who pays the best wages he can, it is the worker or employee that works with diligence and excellence, it is the one who governs but is not corrupted, the legislator or judge who does not sell his services for a sealed envelope, it is the business man or professional that uses his ability to promote development and progress of all persons and families.

Holiness means families that live in peace and harmony. Wise and loving husbands. Submissive wives, who are loving and peaceable. Respectful and obedient children. Boys and girls that reach marriage as chaste and virgins. Older people who are respected and venerated by the younger generation. Children raised in love and the fear of the Lord. Responsible, diligent and faithful workers. Virtuous women, who are happy and full of good deeds.

A glorious church means a people made up of disciples that learn to be humble, patient, kind, generous, sincere, good, happy and honest. Disciples whose life style is loving, forgiving, serving, confessing their sins, obeying, being subject to the authorities, paying their taxes. Men and women that trust in God, that love their neighbor, that help others, that weep with those who weep, that rejoice with those who are happy, that are united with their brothers and sisters. Disciples that return good for evil, that stand firm under injustice, that give thanks to God for all things, that overcome temptation, that live in the joy of the Lord, that pray without ceasing, that bear witness to Jesus, that make disciples, that make their money available to serve their brothers and, above all, that love God with all their heart.

To be holy does not mean to be perfect, but to desire perfection. If one who is holy sins, he confesses it; if he offends, he requests forgiveness; if he is offended, he forgives; when he is wrong, he recognizes it; if he steals, he repents and returns what has been stolen.

Holy is the person who loves God and obeys him out of love. He loves his neighbor as himself. He helps the needy. He shares his possessions with those who lack. He feels the pain of others as his own. He comforts the sad. He does not mock others, and certainly not those who are less fortunate. Holy is the one who in life most wants to be and live like Jesus.

THIS IS THE CHURCH THAT GOD WANTS, A HOLY CHURCH WITHOUT STAIN OR WRINKLE, NOR ANY OTHER BLEMISH, A CHURCH THAT SHOWS TO THE WORLD THROUGH ITS LIFE AND BEHAVIOR THE LOVE AND HOLINESS OF GOD.

This is the kind of church that God is calling us to be and to labor with him to build.

### **3. The church will show the world God's glory through its NUMERICAL GROWTH**

- The promise of Abraham: Gen 12.1-3;
- The vision of Habakkuk: Hab.2.14
- The prophecy of Joel: Joel 2
- **The vision of Isaiah and Amos: Isaiah 2**
- **The affirmation of Jesus Mt 24:14**
- **Jesus' command: Mt 28.18-20**
- **World revival as the root of Israel's conversion Rom 11**

#### **HOW WILL WE ACHIEVE THIS QUALITY?**

The answer is in Ephesians 5.25-27:

***"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as A RADIANT CHURCH, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but HOLY and blameless."***

1. **The redemptive sacrifice of Christ**
2. **The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh**
3. **The integral fulfillment of the Great Commission: Mt 28.18-20**
4. **The powerful action of the word of God: Kerygma and Didache.**
5. **The functioning of the church and of all the ministries in a single body, in each city – nation – region – world.**
6. **The consecration and mobilization of all the members of the church in the fulfillment of their mission**
7. **The sovereign action of Jesus Christ among the nations as the Lord of history**
8. **Persecution as an instrument of God's sovereignty to sanctify, unite and empower the church for the fulfillment of its mission.**

*(All Scripture quotations are from the NIV.)*

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# THE KINGDOM OF GOD, THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY

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Gen 1.27-28 Gen 3	God handed over the government of the earth to a viceroy (representative of the King): Adam. He failed because he surrendered to Satan. Sinful humanity then rebelled against God.
Psa 2.1-3	Psalm 2 describes the nations and those who govern as uniting against the Lord and his Anointed One (Christ)
Psa 2.4-5	God laughs at them, and then speaks to them in his fury.
Sal. 2.5-8 Acts 13.32-34	According to this messianic Psalm, interpreted by Paul in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch, the Father, on the day of Christ's resurrection, says to him: <i>"You are my Son, today I have become your Father; ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession"</i> . The Son, always obedient to the Father, requests the nations as his inheritance.
Phil 2.9-11 Eph 1.20-22 Matt 28.18 Psa 110.1 Acts 2.34-35	The Father exalts him to the highest place, above all power and dominion, and gives him all authority in heaven and earth. And then, seating him on the throne to his right, he says to him: <i>Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool</i> .

## OUR MISSION IS SIMILAR TO THAT OF CHRIST

	Jesus also said to his disciples that in their mission in the earth they were to follow his example:
John 20.21 Jn 8.12 / Matt 5.14 Matt 20.25-28	- <i>"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you"</i> . - <i>"I am the light of the world" - "You are the light of the world"</i> - <i>"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many"</i> .
Isa. 53.7 / Matt 10.16 John 18.36	- <i>"He was led like a lamb to the slaughter" - "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves"</i> . - <i>"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place"</i> .
Eph 6.12	- <i>"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"</i> .

## WHAT THE LORD SAID THAT WE ARE

Matt 5.13-14	- The salt of the earth and the light of the world.
Matt 5.16	- A city set on a hill that cannot be hidden; so that men who see our good words might glorify God.
1 Tim 3.15	- The church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

## WHAT THE LORD EXPLICITLY COMMANDED US TO DO

Matt 6.10	- Pray each day that his kingdom come, and his will be done in the earth as it
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- is done in heaven.
- Matt 22.37-39 - Love God with all our being, and our neighbor as ourselves.  
 Matt 28.20 - As his disciples we are to keep all his commandments. We should put into  
 Matt 7.24 practice everything he taught us in the Sermon on the Mount ("Didache of the  
 Mar 16.15-16 kingdom").  
 Matt 28.18-20 - Go into all the world and preach the gospel to everyone; make disciples of all  
 John 17.21-23 people of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to keep all his  
 1 Tim 2.1-4 commandments.  
 - He prayed that we might be one, so that the world might believe...  
 - Pray for all men and for those in eminence.

#### WHAT THE LORD PROMISED TO DO IN THE WORLD IN THE FINAL DAYS

- Joel 2.28-32 - Pour out his Spirit upon all flesh with great signs.  
 Eph 4.11-16 - Raise up apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, until the  
 church reach its fullness in unity, holiness and quantity.  
 Eph 2.7 - Reveal in the coming ages the abundant riches of his kindness toward us in  
 Christ Jesus.  
 Matt 24.14 - Worldwide evangelization with the gospel of the kingdom prior to his  
 Hab 2.14 coming...  
 Rom 11.15 y 25-26 - Fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory.  
 - A worldwide revival through the conversion of Israel.  
 Heb 12.26-28 - The shaking and removal of all things moveable in earth and heaven, so that  
 that which is immovable might remain: the kingdom of God.

#### OBSERVATION

- John 6.15 - At no time do we observe in Christ's mission any attempt to be a political  
 ruler. When others wanted to make him king, he refused and fled.  
 - At no time did he give a single explicit commandment to his disciples that  
 they as the church should seek to conquer the nations in a political career or  
 by their own might. (Although I understand that any particular disciple in his  
 condition as a citizen could become politically involved – in the best sense of  
 the word – and occupy a function of government in the world.)

#### THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE CHURCH

We should never confuse the kingdom of God with the church.  
 The church is under the kingdom of God, but it is not the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is his government, his reign.  
 In himself God has all knowledge and power; the church does not.  
 God is perfect, absolute and infallible; not the church.  
 The church is made up of men with flaws and imperfections, in the process of  
 being perfected.

- Matt 18.15-18 Jesus Christ delegated many things to his disciples, even the responsibility to  
 excommunicate a member of the church who does not repent of his sin; but he  
 never delegated to anyone the function of being head of the church, or the  
 Lord or history. The one who continues to be seated on the throne is the Lamb,  
 and not the church. He is alive and continues to be the only head of the church  
 and Lord of the universe.

- Rom 13.1-7 God has the authority to raise up and put down kings; not the church.  
 Psa 24.1 God is the owner of the earth and its fullness; not the church.

#### THE CONQUEST OF THE NATIONS

Though he was a king, Jesus Christ became a slave. Though he owned the universe he became poor. Though he was God, he emptied himself. He came to serve, to love, to forgive and to give his life. Though he was omnipotent he became weak, vulnerable, meek. He allowed himself to be killed. He came to show that the cross is the pathway to universal conquest; that evil is to be conquered with good, hate with love. He came to teach us that the meek will inherit the earth. The Father is pleased to give the kingdom to those who are poor in spirit; to show to children the mysteries of the kingdom. Jesus showed to the church of all ages that in order to effectively fulfill his mission in the earth, she should follow the model of Servant, in the spirit of the Lamb.

#### THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST CENTURIES

This is the path the church followed during the first three centuries of her history. It was a persecuted church, with hundreds of thousands of martyrs; a poor church, yet powerful in God. A church that grew and grew, and nothing and no one could detain its growth. They were not evangelicals nor Roman catholic, but true disciples. Under persecution, only the authentic Christians prevailed.

With the conversion of Constantine (in the year 311) the church experimented, apparently, her greatest victory, and at the same time, the beginning of her greatest deterioration.

The great emperor of Rome, in his desire to help the church, did what he never should have done:

- He imposed Christianity as the official religion of the empire.
- He transformed the pagan temples into Christian temples.
- He imposed by decree that every Roman citizen should be baptized and become Christian.
- He dignified the bishops to the heirarchy of princes.

Although this appeared to be a great advance of the church in history, it became its greatest loss. The church lost her simplicity, humility, her dependence on God and, consequently, her spirituality.

The worldly values and heirarchies were progressively installed in the church: power, honor, fame, money, convenience, dominion... Some leaders of the church sincerely believed that the kingdoms of this world had become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ...

Evidently, the church, accustomed to over 280 years of being poor and persecuted, was not prepared to reign. Instead of a lamb, it became a lion, and later began to eat up the other animals in the forest.

#### THE CHURCH IN OUR DAYS:

*"Those who ignore their history are condemned to repeat the same errors"*

It would seem that the Catholic Church understands history better than the evangelical church. It would seem that they have learned from the errors of the past, and today they have a clearer posture concerning the church and society than many evangelicals.

Traditional and historical evangelicals have been rather active at the level of theological reflection on social and political subjects, although due to their limited spiritual vitality and slight numerical growth they have not been able to make a significant contribution in a practical sense.

The churches that have a dispensationalist or fundamentalist orientation have not developed a missiological proposal for social transformation due to their eschatological focus, (I would also call it an "eschatological" focus).

Many of the neo-Pentecostal or charismatic churches under the influence of materialism and prosperity theology, have incorporated the world's values: fame, power, money, luxury, success, numbers, status, position, a sumptuous and grandiose approach. In countries where the number of evangelicals has grown considerably, there are pastors who present themselves as candidates for the presidency of the nation, or other important roles without previously developing a socio-economic proposal in accord with the values of the kingdom of God. And in the cases where they reach the seat of power, they use the formulas that have already been shown to be a failure, whether they are of capitalistic or socialistic tendencies.

## **Second part: THE CHALLENGE AHEAD OF US**

I suggest that, in addition to all that has been said in this apostolic consultation, we need to advance along two lines of action:

- 1) Integral and diligent obedience to the GREAT COMMISSION
- 2) 'Ora et Labora', i.e., Pray and work: Pray the Lord's Prayer each day and begin – from this point forward – an INTELLECTUAL PROJECT UNDER THE LORD'S INSPIRATION in collaboration with PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION MORE IN ACCORD WITH THE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

### 1 – THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matt 28:18-20

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

This was the specific command that Jesus gave to his disciples before ascending into heaven.

These simple Galileans, men without much education, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, launched into this task in the midst of a world completely adverse, as regards the iron dominion of Rome, Greek philosophy, paganism, mythology and idolatry.

However, after some 250 years there were in the Roman empire vast regions in which more than half the population were followers of Jesus\*, to the point that the Roman emperor himself, Constantine, in the year 312 was converted and established Christianity as the official religion of the empire. We do not know whether his conversion was genuine or strategic in order to assure his remaining in power in an empire in which the number of Christians was growing greatly. Only God knows.

Returning to our central point, we ask: How did those disciples of the Lord accomplish such growth in the midst of such adverse conditions? They did not have the advantages we have today: printing press, radio, TV, automobiles, airplanes, telephones, cellular phones, computers, Internet, etc.

What did they have? THEY HAD THE POWER OF AN ABSOLUTE CONVICTION. They were totally convinced that JESUS WAS THE ONLY AND THE COMPLETE SOLUTION FOR ALL MEN IN ALL NATIONS. Empowered by that conviction, with determination and faith they launched into the task of making disciples of all nations.

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\* *Armenian history registers that of the twelve apostles, those who reached that country with the gospel were Thaddeus and Bartholomew. Armenia was a pagan nation. By the end of the third century, more than half the population of Armenia were disciples of Christ, and under great persecution. In the year 301 the king of Armenia, Dertad II, became a Christian and established Christianity as the state religion. (Armenians boast that theirs was the first nation that accepted Christianity as their national religion).*

Do we have the same conviction? In order to strengthen our faith and our conviction I ask the following question: **What would our country be like if all the inhabitants, from the president of the nation to the last inhabitant, should all live according to God's will?**

I have asked the same question in different parts of the world and in the most diverse auditoriums, and the answer is always the same: "IT WOULD BE A PARADISE."

Could this not be the proposal that Jesus made when he taught us to pray: "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven*"?

### **The watchword**

It is basic that we give much attention to the watchword of Jesus. He did not say: 'Go and have meetings, campaigns, encounters, temples, not even cell groups. He said: "GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES". There is nothing wrong with having meetings, campaigns, cell groups, or building temples... We do all that and will continue to do so; they are good and useful, but we need to understand that such things are not the essence of our MISSION; for we can have meetings, campaigns, temples and cell groups... WITHOUT MAKING TRUE DISCIPLES TO JESUS CHRIST.

The solution for the nations is not to make them evangelicals, but disciples. That is the essence of the great commission.

### **How does Jesus define a disciple?**

#### **Luke 14.26, 27, 33**

**1.** V.26: "*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —yes, even his own life— he cannot be my disciple*".

**Disciple is a person in whose life Jesus takes first place.**

**2.** V.27: "*And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple*".

For Jesus, the cross means being obedient to death.

**Disciple is a person willing to obey the Lord, even to the point of death.**

**3.** V.33: "*Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple*".

**Disciple is a person who recognizes that all he has belongs to Christ:** His life, his time, his body, his family, his home, his money, his goods and property, his projects, his abilities, everything.

### **In a practical sense, what is a disciple?**

Today, a child who goes to school is called a student; in ancient times he was called a disciple. A student is one who learns. Usually, students are children. A child is docile, like soft clay; he is teachable, he can be corrected. He has the virtue of learning. He is a disciple.

### **What should a disciple of Jesus learn?**

He should learn to live according to God's will. This is the greatest need in today's society. People do not know how to live. And there are no schools that teach people to live, much less to live according to God's will. Families have failed in this basic responsibility. The Catholic church failed. Evangelicals are also failing.

JESUS CHRIST says: "*Come to me... take my yoke... learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" (Matthew 11.28-30).

Clearly, a student, a disciple, is teachable, is meek and humble, willing to be corrected. This is what Jesus commanded us to do in the great commission: Make disciples, baptizing them, and then teaching the disciples to keep all of the Lord's commandments and thus live according to God's will in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We have the solution. The unique and total solution for all of mankind. The world is ours, because it belongs to the Lord. All have failed, and will fail again. All the ideologies, all religions, even the evangelicals, as long as they dedicate themselves to just have meetings. In this crucial hour of history, God tells us: GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS... I AM WITH YOU.

## 2 - 'ORA ET LABORA' (Pray and work):

Pray the Lord's Prayer every day, in which we say: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. At the same time let us initiate - from now on - an INTELLECTUAL WORK UNDER THE LORD'S INSPIRATION in the preparation of PROJECTS FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE NATION THAT ARE MORE IN LINE WITH THE VALUES OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

### REFLECTION:

How should we act in a country if we are a small minority? (For instance, Belgium: 0,6% evangelicals - not disciples)

- We should understand the value of a mustard seed (Matt 13.31-32).
- We should be leaven (Matt 13.33).

We should determine as our objective that all evangelicals and Catholics become disciples of Jesus.

Carlos Mraida told us that we can also read history FROM THE FUTURE TOWARD THE PAST:

- How should we act in a country where 30% of the inhabitants are disciples?
- How should we act if we reach 70% disciples?
- How would the labor laws, tax laws, civil and penal laws, economic norms look?
- What would the constitution be like?
- What would be the economic system?
- How would the riches be distributed? How about the involvement in the international order, the health system, local and national security? Would it be proper to impose the moral norms of the kingdom upon those who are not disciples?

In light of the current vacuum and crisis, in order to experience a true transformation of society, three things are required of those who govern:

1. Integrity >< Corruption
2. Capability, professionalism >< Ineptitude
3. A socio-economic system more in line with the principles and values of the kingdom of God.

We need to create groups for reflection and work to elaborate proposals in the following categories:

- PROJECT FOR SOCIETY
- PROJECT FOR THE NATION
- PROJECT FOR GOVERNMENT: EXECUTIVE, LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL
- PROJECT FOR MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY
- PROJECT FOR WORK
- PROJECT FOR EDUCATION
- PROJECT FOR HEALTH
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN FORMATION: VALUES, CHARACTER, MORAL AND ETHICAL

- PROJECT FOR MACROECONOMICS
- PROJECT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE
- PROJECT FOR SAVINGS
- PROJECT FOR RETIREMENT
- PROJECT FOR HUMAN ENRICHMENT
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR ECOLOGICAL CARE AND DEVELOPMENT
- PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL ASSISTANCE
- PROJECT FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION
- PROJECTS FOR HONORABLE LIVING QUARTERS
- PROJECT FOR CITIZEN'S AND NATIONAL SECURITY
- ETCÉTERA...

...while we continue to pray each day: ***"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."***

**An example in the history of social transformation was the result of revival in England through the ministry of John Wesley.**