

Red Laical Latinoamericana

Letter to Our Cardinals

With deep love for the Church, we write to you from the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean—lay women and men who live our faith with hope, embodied in the everyday. We address you, the ones charged with discerning who will be the next Bishop of Rome, to express our gratitude, our longings, and our prayers.

Pope Francis has left a profound mark on our hearts and communities. His pastoral approach—close, humble, and prophetic—revealed to us a human Church: poor with and for the poor, open to dialogue, Samaritan, and missionary. His coherence of life, his simplicity, his clarity of speech, and his commitment to the excluded, to the Earth—our Common Home—to social justice and to the reform of the Church rekindled our hope. He reminded us that the Church can proclaim and bear witness to Jesus, who is mercy.

We are grateful to Francis for setting processes in motion: the path of synodality, the deepening of interreligious dialogue, the revaluation of the laity, and the inclusion of those historically marginalized or excluded from ecclesial and social life—women, Indigenous peoples, grassroots and social movements, and sexual minorities.

We also deeply appreciate his unwavering attention to the most vulnerable: migrants, victims of trafficking, those suffering from addiction, and survivors of violence. He was a Pope who showed up—not only in words but in concrete gestures: visiting refugee shelters, denouncing corruption, and courageously confronting abuse within the Church.

We thank him for affirming women's ministries, for promoting a co-responsible Church, and for his constant invitation to laypeople to engage in ecclesial life with love and responsibility. We remember with emotion how, as a religious leader, he spoke clearly to world leaders on behalf of children affected by war, and never ceased to call for global peace, even in the most difficult contexts.

Today, as the People of God, we feel called to share with you our concerns and our hopes:

- May the new Pope continue, consolidate, and deepen the path opened by Francis, faithful to the Gospel of Jesus and the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.
- May he be a Shepherd who walks with his people—especially the poor, the young, women, the elderly, children, peacemakers, and all who seek faith.
- May he live simply, without privilege, safeguarding the trust of God's people. Our pastors cannot live like princes, but rather dwell among their flock, like Jesus, the Good Shepherd.
- May he foster true lay participation at every level of Church life—not as a concession, but as a baptismal responsibility. This must include a serious effort to de-masculinize the Church, for the Church is also woman.
- May he strengthen a synodal Church that discerns in community, listens with the heart, and walks with everyone, everyone, everyone.
- May he carry forward the care of our Common Home through an integral, prophetic, and concrete ecology. In this time of Climate Emergency, which threatens all life on the planet, we cannot forget God's immense love for creation.
- May he listen attentively to those who suffer—including victims of abuse—and respond with justice and courage. Such crimes must never be tolerated; they must be acknowledged and repaired in full transparency.

- May he respond responsibly to the material and spiritual needs of humanity and of Catholic communities, recognizing and mending the wounds caused by clericalism and abuses of power.

- May he embrace the diversity of our humanity—cultural, social, sexual, and spiritual—not as a threat, but as a gift of God. May he continue the path of including historically marginalized groups—especially women—and promote them to positions of responsibility in the Church, for we are all baptized.

- May we be a Church of witnesses—converted by the experience of God’s mercy, and courageously open to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We also make a special appeal for progress in financial transparency throughout the Church—including dioceses, religious orders, and ecclesial assets—with clear mechanisms of accountability under the leadership of the new Pope. May mercy, justice, and truth be the pillars of his pontificate.

You Cardinals, bear the grave responsibility of responding to this historic moment. We trust that you will listen to the Spirit who speaks in the cry of the poor, in the whisper of the little ones, in the voice of the wounded Earth, in the tears of victims, and in the quiet witness of millions of faithful who keep believing, loving, and serving on the peripheries—even those who, deeply wounded, have lost faith.

Today, from the heart, we ask you: do not halt this journey. May the new Pope be chosen beyond political, economic, or ecclesial self-interest, with eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God, on His People, and on the Gospel of Jesus. May the Holy Spirit blow powerfully, surprise us once again, and inspire you to choose a Shepherd who helps us to love more and love better.

In faith, hope, and love.

Latin American Lay Network

Red Laical Latinoamericana