



TOPIC 6 FROM AMERICA TO THE WORLD AND FROM THE WORLD TO AMERICA



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FROM AMERICA TO THE WORLD AND FROM THE WORLD TO AMERICA

I. INTRODUCTION

In this theme we wish to propose some contents that allow us to deepen our understanding of the **universal dimension of the missionary Church in terms of cooperation.**

In this experience of CAM6, we wish to **promote the Church's mission ad gentes with new ardor, walking together as we listen to the Spirit, to be witnesses of faith in Jesus Christ in the reality of our peoples to the ends of the earth.**

Mission corresponds to the Church's deepest identity, inasmuch as she is called to participate in the divine life of a God who is mission. In fact, God is like this: he goes out of himself, his love is not contained, his love overflows, he goes out to meet everyone so that everyone can live life to the full. The Church cooperates with God's mission: "In every form of evangelization the primacy always belongs to God, who willed to call us to collaborate with him and to impel us with the power of his Spirit" (EG 12).

II. DEVELOPMENT

To the ends of the earth

From this call, how do these words from the Acts of the Apostles resonate in us today: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8)? The contemporary globalized world seems to have erased all borders by interconnecting us through markets, communications, and technologies: where are the ends of the earth in today's world? Let us take up again some aspects addressed in the theme "Evangelizers with a spirit to the ends of the earth".

The peripheries

Pope Francis points us to a clue when he speaks to us of the "existential peripheries": the places of struggle for life, exclusion, marginalization, precariousness, transgression, informality, violence, like Galilee where Jesus lived, and where today live the victims and survivors of "a social and economic system that is unjust at its root" (EG 59).

Mission, yesterday as today, needs to situate itself prophetically in these contexts. To speak of mission is to speak also, and essentially, of territories, of contexts, of places on the margins of a system, where the Church experiences a fundamental shift in its perception of the world and an evangelical commitment to a project of a global world that is more just and in solidarity.

Borders

Beyond the peripheries are the borders. Borders are no longer margins, but boundaries

between one territory and another, thresholds between two identities, two peoples, two cultures. Although we live in a world without borders, for the poor these borders represent insurmountable barriers.

Borders are real and cruel for millions of migrants and refugees, but they are also symbolic and imaginary for millions of other excluded people: (in)visible fences are erected to separate social classes, ideological segments, interest groups, cultures, races, genders, generations and all kinds of fragmentation and difference.

But it is also true that these vertical fences, once torn down, can become bridges: borders thus become a place of communication and reciprocity, a passage to come and go and build new links and new relationships.

The confines

The confines themselves go beyond the peripheries and borders: they are not within the perimeters, nor on the dividing lines, but beyond the horizons we know. The confines impel us to enter as pilgrims into the homes of others.

For the missionary disciples, “nothing human can seem strange to them” (Dap 380). This impulse impels us to go out of our worlds, not out of a desire for conquest, nor out of an adventurous whim, but out of the simplest spirit of service to life.

The Spirit of Christ gives birth to a “heart without borders, capable of overcoming distances of origin, nationality, color or religion” (FT 3), capable of abandoning “every desire to dominate others” (FT 4) and of dreaming together “as one humanity, as walkers of the same human flesh, as children of this same earth that shelters us all, each one with the richness of his faith or his convictions, each one with his own voice, but *fratelli tutti*” (FT 8).

The mission today

Our ecclesial tradition offers us very rich elements that help us to face a mission to the ends of the earth in prophetic terms of insertion, proclamation, witness, option for the poor, liberation, inculturation, dialogue, participation and service to the Kingdom of Life. The “how” we go to the ends, to the frontiers, to the peripheries, concerns the evangelical quality of our mission, its coherence in terms of capacities and competencies, and the deepest motivations of our faith.

Ad Gentes: going to the villages

First of all, we must go out and go set out without delay and without hesitation (Mt 4:21-23)! There is no encounter with the poor and with others if there is no approach, if the missionary Church does not take the risk of “fearlessly taking the initiative, of going out to meet them” (EG 24). This “going out to others” (EG 46), this “ad gentes”, “not so much to rich friends and neighbors, but above all to the poor and the sick, to those who are often despised and forgotten” (EG 48), is crucial for the Kingdom to be realized in the transformation of a more human society.

The mission is this: we cannot wait for people to come to us, we have to go out to meet them and announce the Good News where they are. This principle seems almost obvious. However, in practice, the Church has always been tempted to wait for people to come to her, sending her delegates to call these people, without getting involved in an outreach movement and inserting herself in the situations she wanted to evangelize.

Inter gentes: encounter between peoples

After the approach, the second challenge is to make the encounter happen: this encounter is always a great learning experience. Mission as learning is born of the conviction that the proclamation of the Gospel takes place in reciprocity with our interlocutors, because the grace of God is also at work in them. We do not know everything about the mystery of God, and the message of Jesus is always something below our understanding. The role of each interlocutor in the context of missionary dialogue implies the circularity of communication, welcome, discernment, witness, praise, where all the subjects involved learn and are evangelized from the life experiences of each one.

Our churches need to go to the frontiers of their knowledge, their understanding, their certainties, their way of being, and seek new ways of evangelizing themselves and others: "Every time we encounter a human being in love, we are enabled to discover something new about God" (EG 272).

The Document "Dialogue and Proclamation" of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1991) states the following:

"The fullness of the truth received in Jesus Christ does not give individual Christians the assurance that they have fully assimilated that truth. Ultimately, truth is not something we possess, but a person by whom we must allow ourselves to be possessed. It is, therefore, a never-ending process. Keeping their identity intact, Christians must be willing to learn and receive from and through others the positive values of their traditions" (DA 49).

Cum gentibus: living with the people

After the approach and the encounter, the mission calls us to inhabit the confines. To inhabit means more than to stay: it means to weave bonds of belonging, to think from the ground of the other, to heart the reality of the other, to live intensely the daily life of the other, to render some kind of service to the other. In other words, to let the confines dwell in us.

To inhabit also means to immerse ourselves, to touch with our hands the disenchantment, the divisions, the conflicts and the lacerations produced by the border diaspora, rooted in the history, in the body and in the daily life of abused women, of dispossessed migrants, of exploited workers, of neglected elderly, of hopeless young people, of homeless families, of millions of people aggrieved for reasons of gender, race, ethnicity, social class who live in the flesh the colonial violence.

For this reason, the confines, as well as the frontiers and the peripheries, are not an easy place to live, because in these extremes those sent by Jesus are penitentially called to take off their shoes and disappear, living and learning to approach conditions of oblivion, injustice, and inhumanity.

Omnes gentes et omnes creaturae: all peoples and all creatures.

A mission to the ends of the earth cannot be adequately promoted without a connection to a universal mysticism, which arouses compassion for humanity as a whole, for all peoples and all living beings:

“The world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships (...) This not only invites us to admire the multiple connections that exist between creatures, but also leads us to discover a key to our own fulfillment. For the human person grows, matures, and becomes more mature and sanctified to the extent that he enters into relationship, when he goes out of himself to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. Thus, she assumes in her own existence that Trinitarian dynamism that God has imprinted in her since her creation. Everything is connected, and this invites us to mature a spirituality of global solidarity that springs from the mystery of the Trinity” (LS 240).

It is not a question of promoting a false abstract universalism, as an alleged pretext for homogenizing, leveling, and dominating (cf. FT 100). The foundation of this universal mysticism is simply the human and the cosmic: “to realize how much a human being is worth, how much a person is worth, always and in every circumstance” (FT 106), and to nourish “the awareness that every creature reflects something of God and has a message to transmit to us” (LS 221).

Every mission incarnated in a reality must be connected pluriversally with the greater causes: care for Mother Earth, solidarity with other peoples and integration with the most diverse dimensions of life. In this sense, mission always seeks an insertion in the local in communion with the global (cf. FT 142), and an interconnection between the dimensions: personal, relational, social, and cosmic (cf. LS 91, 117, 138, 240).

Missionary Cooperation

Mission is an eminently ecclesial identity and action, never individual or voluntary. It is always a communitarian sending and a participation-communion-articulation among diverse persons, entities, and organizations.

Today, the mission to all peoples is basically presented as “missionary cooperation”: a pluriversal, synodal and inter-ecclesial outgoing mission.

Cooperation with God’s mission

God is the first missionary: whoever is reborn in him becomes a missionary. Every baptized person, therefore, is called to enter into this “stream of supernatural activity” (CM 2):

mission inserts our whole being in the divine mystery and the divine mystery, deeply lived, makes us truly missionary.

This means that the concept of “*missio Dei*” wants to reveal a Trinitarian God who is really active and effectively present in the history of humanity. The Church does not continue the mission of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: the Church cooperates with the mission of God (cf. EG 12).

St. Paul affirms that “we are God’s co-workers” (1 Cor. 3:9), while the last verse of Mark’s Gospel says: “They went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord cooperated by confirming the word with the signs that accompanied it” (Mk. 16:20). There is a reciprocal cooperation between God and us because God too - Paul VI said - needs missionaries, since evangelizing is essentially human contact (cf. General Audience, August 6, 1969).

Cooperation between local churches

The greatest novelty of Vatican II was the recovery of the local Church in its fundamental essence and apostolic protagonism. In it is “the whole Church”, even if it is not the whole Church. The Church exists concretely only from the local Churches (LG 23).

The so-called universal Church is not a Church above the others, nor a sum of local Churches, and even less the totality of the Church, but a communion of Churches, united by the spirit of catholicity and, therefore, of cooperation among them.

The Council also places the local Churches as protagonists of the mission, because in fact the mission *ad gentes*, although defined in its characteristic activity of first proclamation, is always the primary task

of every Church, both in its socio-cultural context (AG 20a) and outside it, cooperating with other Churches (cf. AG 20h; LG 23). This defines a Church in a permanent state of mission within and outside its territory.

Cooperation between partners

In the past, “foreign missions” were actions planned by the universal Church from abroad. They consisted of sending “professional” missionaries from Europe to pagan lands, with the task of founding churches with a European face and culture.

In this sense, mission *ad gentes* was in fact the spiritual arm of colonialism. Pope Francis often insists on overcoming colonial missionary practice. Mission must not become an accomplice in the theft of peoples’ souls (cf. FT 14). Moreover, mission must establish a dialogue with the “interlocutors” and not with the “addressees” of the Gospel. The guidelines for an authentic Christian mission are the following: to be pilgrim guests in the homes of others, to learn from our interlocutors, to listen, to ask permission, to recognize them as protagonists of their faith journey.

Synodal cooperation

The theme of synodality - walking together - is intimately linked to that of the missionary spirit. It is crucial to understand mission as the basis of the Christian proposal, where the essential is not a life shared among us, but a mission assumed in common.

“Walking together” is important because the contemporary world demands from us a witness of communion, fraternity, and dialogue, and we also need to ensure greater effectiveness in our actions with greater coordination and synergy.

But it is not only for this reason: the mission

is called in the present times, not so much to place itself in the sphere of activity and great works, but above all in the sphere of relationships, because the fundamental task that we have to fulfill is to open new ways of listening and closeness, weaving bonds of trust and friendship, in alliance with the diverse life projects of the peoples, so that all may have life, and life in abundance.

Missionary synodality is an invitation to walk together with all peoples.

Universal cooperation

“The world expects from our Latin American and Caribbean Church a more significant commitment to the universal mission in all the continents. In order not to fall into the trap of closing in on ourselves, we must form ourselves as missionary disciples without borders” (DAp 376).

Each American church must find its own way without worrying too much about comparing itself with other churches that are more structured and have more resources. However, we need to find these paths, we need to work hard so that our communities deeply cultivate that Catholic spirit that is convinced that: “the grace of renewal cannot grow in communities if each one does not expand the field of its charity to the ends of the earth and care as much for those who come from afar as for those who are its own members” (AG 37).

Institutional cooperation

Certainly, to think of inter-ecclesial cooperation at the world level, looking at the needs of the Churches spread over the five continents, is to think of the need for coordinating and articulating organisms

such as the Pontifical Mission Societies. These ecclesial organisms in charge of “directing and coordinating everywhere the initiatives and activities of missionary cooperation” (CM 3), inserted in the People of God, are called to encourage the ecclesial communities towards a co-responsibility with the universal mission of the Church through prayer, the communion of goods and the sending of missionaries.

The mission in its most challenging frontiers, where the local community is exposed to many difficulties, where it needs to help in countless situations, where it has minimal resources for its own subsistence, is always a burden to be assumed with the wider community. The Church, therefore, which chooses to be close to the poor and the excluded in the peripheries and in global existences, needs to have the minimum conditions necessary to make its presence and services viable, guaranteed by institutional missionary cooperation.

Cooperation as a life project

However, the most significant contribution to this ecclesial dynamic is the sending and commitment of missionaries from one Church to another. There is nothing more expressive than the witness of the gift of life.

In the Catholic tradition, consecrated religious life has always shone in history for its missionary dedication in the most difficult situations, which demanded a high degree of insertion and inculturation.

Today, it is not excluded for all people and all states of life to participate in the mission ad gentes and beyond borders, even for short periods, and thus have the opportunity to share the faith and love of God with other people of other peoples, participating in the

journey of other Churches.

“Each of the baptized, whatever his function in the Church and the degree of enlightenment of his faith, is an evangelizing agent, and it would be inadequate to think of a scheme of evangelization carried out by qualified actors where the rest of the faithful people are only receptive to their actions” (EG 120).

III. CONCLUSION

From America to the world and from the world to America

The Encyclical *Redemptoris missio* of John Paul II insists on missionary cooperation as an inter-ecclesial participation of the whole People of God in the universal mission of the Church, a right and duty of all the baptized, promoting also a circular dynamic of reciprocity, so that the mission is not a one-way street between a benefactor and a beneficiary:

“Cooperating in mission means not only giving, but also knowing how to receive. All the particular Churches, young and old, are called to give and receive from the universal mission, and none should be closed in on itself” (RMI 85).

This reciprocity and exchange are typical elements of mission understood as cooperation. But this means much more: mission is realized only in a joint, eminently ecclesial and synodal work.

Our America needs missionaries from other continents, not only because the mission *ad gentes* and the ends of the earth are in our midst, but also because the presence of others enriches us greatly.

Our America also needs to send its missionaries to other continents, because there are Churches much more in need than ours and peoples who deserve all our attention, our affection, and our collaboration.

This circularity allows each local church not to close in on itself, but to collaborate in the realization of an effective universal communion and synodality, learning to work together, giving to itself, and receiving from others:

*“Faced with the temptation of communities to close in on themselves - it is a very frequent temptation, too frequent to close in on themselves -, preoccupied with their own problems, the task of missionary organizations is to exhort to the mission *ad gentes*, to witness prophetically that the life of the Church and of the Churches is mission, and it is universal mission” (Francis, Address of the Holy Father to the participants in the General Assembly of the Pontifical Mission Societies. Rome, May 17, 2013).*

WORKSHEET 6: FROM AMERICA TO THE WORLD AND FROM THE WORLD TO AMERICA

I. GUIDING ELEMENTS OF CAM6

- **Biblical text:** Jesus said to his disciples: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). (Acts 1:8).
- **Theme:** Evangelizers with Spirit to the ends of the earth
- **Motto:** America, with the power of the Spirit, witnesses to Christ
- **Objective:** To promote the Church's mission ad gentes with new ardor, walking together in listening to the Spirit, in order to be witnesses of faith in Jesus Christ in the reality of our peoples to the ends of the earth.
- **Hymn:** Witnesses of the Living Christ
Let's sing the chorus together...
Look how they love each other! Look how they walk!
America, with the power of the Spirit.
America, witnesses of the Living Christ.

II. OBJECTIVE FOR THIS SIXTH WORKING MEETING

Specific Objective: To deepen the new paradigms of mission: ad gentes, inter gentes, cum gentibus, omnes gentes et omnes creature, while recognizing that mission is a circular dynamic of reciprocity.

III. PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONGRESS

We unite ourselves to the prayer that Pope Francis gave us for this Sixth American Missionary Congress highlighting what it implies for us in this meeting. In the highlighted fragments we can have a brief moment of silence to deepen the prayer. During or after the prayer, you can share some resonance that has touched your heart.

O merciful Father,
that you revealed in your Son the "Good News",
announced in these lands of America
by so many missionaries, with words and
deeds;
help us to rediscover our vocation as
baptized people
to give a new impetus to our missionary
action proclaiming, like them, the joy of the
Gospel.

Oh my,
that you pour out your Holy Spirit to renew
the face of the earth,
hurt by injustice and suffering;
give us strength to walk as God's people,
in synodality and mutual listening,
towards the next American Missionary
Congress, witnessing together the love that
conquers the world.

O God and our Father,
that you chose Mary as a model for
evangelization to offer Christ to all
mankind;
imitating his example of dedication, let us
and sustained by her maternal and
provident care,
**LET US ALWAYS BE YOUR MISSIONARY
DISCIPLES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.**

Amen.

IV. ILLUMINATING TEXT

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will receive his power, so that you may be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (1:8).

“Cooperating in mission means not only giving, but also knowing how to receive. All the particular Churches, young and old, are called to give and receive from the universal mission, and none should be closed in on itself” (RM 85).

V. BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

“In every form of evangelization, the primacy always belongs to God, who willed to call us to collaborate with him and to impel us by the power of the Spirit” (EG12). Starting from this primacy and from the fact that mission corresponds to the deepest identity of the Church, insofar as she is called to participate in the divine life of a God who is mission, it is important to let the words of the Acts of the Apostles resound: “You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In a contemporary globalized world, the borders, frontiers, and peripheries, which still exist for certain marginalized groups, must be reinterpreted. Pope Francis, for example, speaks of “existential peripheries”, those places of struggle for life, exclusion, marginalization, precariousness, transgression, informality, violence, like the Galilee where Jesus lived, and where today live the victims and survivors of “a social and economic system that is unjust at its root” (EG 59).

Mission, yesterday as today, needs to place itself prophetically in these contexts, not waiting as perhaps for people to come to us, but going out to meet them. If we search a little in our ecclesial tradition we can find there very rich elements that help us to face this call to go to the ends of the earth in prophetic terms of insertion, proclamation, witness, option for the poor, liberation, inculturation, dialogue, participation and service to the Kingdom of Life.

Let us delve a little deeper into the elements that the mission must consider today in order to respond to the challenges of our world:

Ad gentes: Going to the villages

(Mt 4:21-23) There can be no encounter with the poor and with others if there is no approach, if the missionary Church does not take the risk of “fearlessly taking the initiative and going out to meet them” (EG 24).

Inter gentes: Encounter between peoples

After the approach, the challenge is to make the encounter happen, an encounter is always a great learning experience. Mission as learning is born of the conviction that the proclamation of the Gospel is done in reciprocity with our interlocutors, because the grace of God is at work in them as well. We do not know everything about the mystery of God and the message of Jesus is always something below our comprehension. “Every time we encounter a human being in love, we are enabled to discover something new about God”

(EG 272).

Cum gentibus: Dwelling with the people

After the approach and the encounter, the mission calls us to dwell with the confines. To dwell means more than to stay: to weave bonds of belonging, to think from the ground of the other, to heart the reality of the other, to live intensely the daily life of the other. In short, let the confines dwell in us.

For this reason, the confines, as well as the peripheries and frontiers, are not an easy place to live, because these extremes those sent by Jesus are penitentially called to take off their shoes and disappear, living and learning to approach conditions of oblivion, injustice, and inhumanity.

Omnes gentes et Omnes creaturae: All people and all creatures

Finally, a mission to the ends of the earth cannot be adequately promoted without a connection to a universal mysticism, which arouses compassion for humanity as a whole, for all peoples and all living beings:

“The world, created according to the divine model, is a web of relationships (...) This not only invites us to admire the multiple connections that exist between creatures, but also leads us to discover a key to our own fulfillment. For the human person grows, matures, and becomes more mature and sanctified the more he enters into relationship, when he goes out of himself to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures... (LS 240).

It is also important to emphasize that mission is an eminently ecclesial identity and action, never individual or voluntary. It is always about a communitarian sending and a participation-communion-articulation among diverse persons, entities, and organizations, that is why it is currently presented as a “missionary cooperation”, cooperation with the mission of God, among the local churches, among the interlocutors, synodal, universal and institutional cooperation. Pope Francis tells us: “Faced with the temptation of communities to close in on themselves, a very frequent temptation, too frequent, to close in on themselves, preoccupied with their own problems, the task of missionary organizations is to exhort to the mission ad gentes, to witness that the life of the Church and of the Churches is mission, and it is universal mission”.





VI. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Exhorting the disciples to be his witnesses, the Risen Lord announces to them where they are sent: "to Jerusalem, and to all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth," Pope Francis tells us (cf. Acts 1:8).

Ad gentes: Going to the villages

1. Are we aware of the need for mission within and outside our ecclesial communities?

Inter gentes: Encounter between peoples

2. Have we become aware that mission today cannot be seen as a process of "colonialism" but as a mutual richness that invites us to give and at the same time to receive from the other, in a spirit of reciprocity?

Cum gentibus: Living with the people

3. Listening to the current news of wars, immigration, injustice, exploitation, and poverty.

Are we aware of the importance and necessity of announcing the Good News to the people and of being able to "inhabit" those confines and peripheries from a total immersion?

VIII. MARIAN PRAYER

The Birth of Jesus (3.er Joyful Mystery)

The birth of Jesus not only represents a joy for the family of Nazareth, Mary, and Joseph, but is at the same time Good News for an oppressed people, the poor and excluded, which centuries ago had been announced by the prophets.

Prayer to Mary, Queen of Missions

○ Mary, Queen of the Missions,
pray for us and for all the children of the world.
Help us to know and love Jesus,
Help us to follow Him and to always trust in Him.
Help us to be attentive to the needs of our brothers and sisters.

Mary, Queen of the Missions,
we ask that your Son Jesus Christ guide us to be true missionaries,
praying for, sharing with, and learning from our brothers and sisters around the world.
Amen.



PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH AMERICAN MISSIONARY CONGRESS

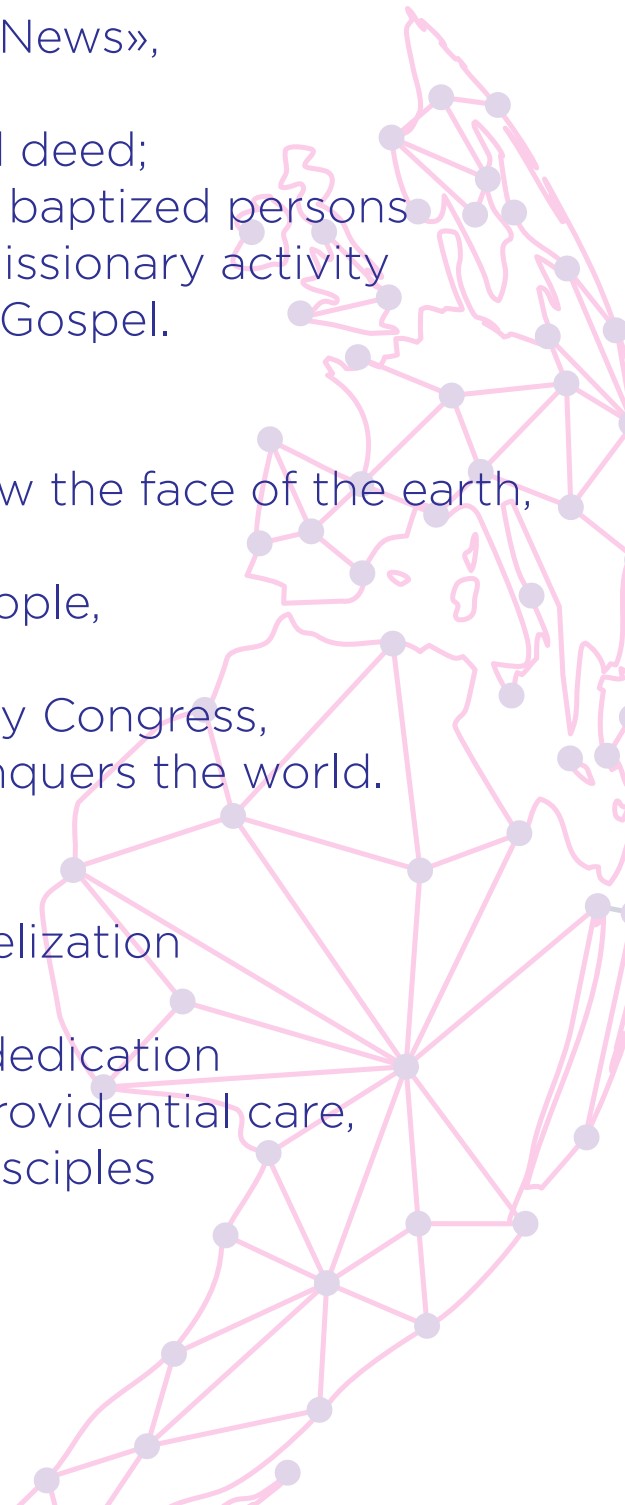
Puerto Rico, November 19-24, 2024

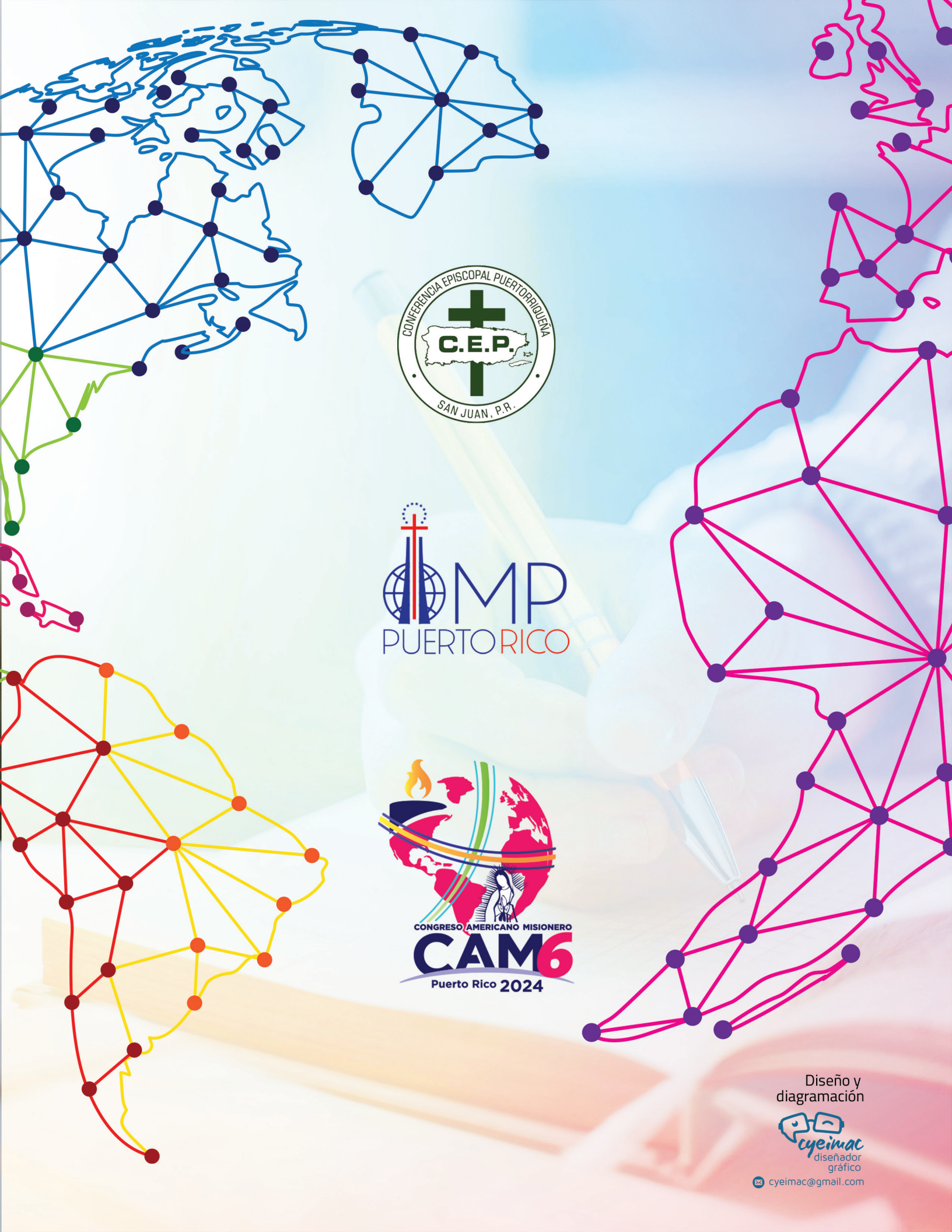
O merciful Father,
who revealed in your Son the «Good News»,
announced in these lands of America
by so many missionaries, in word and deed;
help us to rediscover our vocation as baptized persons
in order to give renewed life to our missionary activity
proclaiming, like them, the joy of the Gospel.

O God,
you pour out your Holy Spirit to renew the face of the earth,
wounded by injustice and suffering;
give us strength to walk, as God's people,
in synodality and mutual listening,
towards the next American Missionary Congress,
witnessing together the love that conquers the world.

O God and our Father,
you chose Mary as a model of evangelization
to offer Christ to all humanity;
grant that, imitating her example of dedication
and sustained by her maternal and providential care,
may we always be your missionary disciples
to the ends of the earth.

Amen.





Diseño y diagramación



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