



ANTILLES EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE

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Trinidad & Tobago, West Indies

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The 63rd Annual Plenary Meeting of the Antilles Episcopal Conference held in French Guayene, May 4 - 11, at the St. Therese Spiritual Centre in Cayenne, French Guyana. The experience was highlighted by two spirited and vibrant Liturgical Celebration, the Opening Mass at the Cathédrale Saint-Sauveur de Cayenne, and the Confirmation of 622 young people an Arena, which was filled to capacity.

Our Retreat with the theme: St. Oscar Romero, Option For The Poor, was directed by Mr. Julian Filochowski, had a faith transforming effect on the Bishops. We were led in a moving review that gave us an intimate encounter with the Saint whose life was crowned with martyrdom. We were led to embrace a profound understanding of the Cross and Discipleship as indispensable features of our Episcopal ministry.

Our deliberations continued exploration of making our Pastoral Letter on the New Way of Being Church in the Digital Milieu. This exploration will gain momentum and practical application as we make plans for our Episcopal ministry to be characterized by a synodal approach. We are committed to an intentional partnership in realizing the mission of the Church with all the Baptized members of our Church, with a special emphasis on accompanying young people. This commitment will be marked by activities in all our Dioceses in preparation for the 1st Mission Congress of the Antilles Episcopal Conference, September 19-22, 2019, in Trinidad & Tobago. This momentous event will be followed by the Universal marking of the Extra Ordinary Mission Month with the Theme: Baptized and Sent. The process in preparation for these events are to be launched with ceremony and splendid display at Pentecost 2019 in each of our Dioceses.

During our meeting the Bishops expressed solidarity with the Church of Venezuela and the many Venezuelans who are now migrants throughout our region. Solidarity was expressed for the diocese who are following the call of Pope Francis to welcome, protect, promote and integrate migrants and refugees into their countries.

Another highlight was the brief reflections we had on the Motu Proprio, "*You Are The Light of the World*", that our Holy Father, Pope Francis, promulgated on May 9, 2019, addressing the abuse scandal. We noted the need for each Bishop to carefully read note, the instructions of the document as it indicates that no one is above the law, there is no immunity for stakeholders of the Church who are complicit with crimes of sex abuse against children, vulnerable adults, and abuse of power. The present guidelines and procedures are to be reviewed, taking into consideration directives of the latest Motu Propia of the Holy Father. The Bishops renewed their commitment to safeguard and protect the young and the vulnerable from abuse, while taking steps to ensure that our ministers and stakeholders perform and manifest the values of the Gospel as agents of the Church.

The meeting in Cayenne ended with a trip to Kourou where we got a most enlightening tour of the European Space Centre where rockets are launched into space to deploy Satellites. A pleasant end to our Conference.