

**Dr. Guzmán Carriquiry Lecour**  
Closing Remarks  
September 23, 2018

My dear brothers and sisters, I leave this Encuentro with great joy in my heart having shared in this event with all of you. I thank each and every one of you. I look forward to sharing this with many of my colleagues and superiors at the Vatican.

Before coming to the Encuentro, I imagined it would be a national Catholic event that would bear much fruit due to its notable preparations, including vast and extensive participation according to the synodal dynamic that Pope Francis proposes in the form of pastoral conversion in order to build up the Church. But my experience of the Encuentro has surpassed all my expectations. What impresses me most is that God's providence has wanted this Encuentro to take place at this precise moment of such difficulty for the Church of God in the United States. God's providence has wanted this Encuentro to be a Kairos: a strong occurrence of the Spirit of God, full of abundant graces and gifts for the good of the whole Church in the United States during these difficult times, a balm for our wounds, an affectionate touch from God. This is such a consolation from God during these turbulent times.

During these difficult times I have not come across anyone who is like the disciples on the road to Emmaus who walked along sadly, downcast, depressed, confused, before the disgrace of the cross that they didn't understand. Quite the contrary, I have come into contact with those who are like the disciples who felt their hearts burning within them when they recognized the Lord's presence among them and his company along the path of life, and they became his witnesses, willing to proclaim that salvific event everywhere they went.

And we have truly encountered the Lord during these days! We have perceived him in all of your faces, you as participants. We have experienced him in the testimonies that have been shared. We have valued him in the presence and preaching of the bishops. We have found him in the beautiful liturgical celebrations we have participated in. I have not come across anyone who is tearing their garments, no one who has raised an inquisitive and accusatory finger, no one who has spouted off a rant of complaints, and no one hiding behind intentional indifference or ignorance regarding situations of complaisance.

I have found authentic Catholics who set forth on the path of the holy, faithful people of God with gratitude, joy, and enthusiasm and who at the same time recognize that they are a community of poor fishermen, begging the merciful grace of God for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. You are expressing to your pastors, the faithfulness, love and beauty of the people and communities that God has entrusted to their pastoral care.

It is significant that this event is happening precisely when, in a just a few years, half of the Catholics in this great country will be of Hispanic origin. It is significant that this event has not been a market niche or a religious expression of Hispanics, but rather an encounter where Hispanics see themselves as collaborators in the entire life of Catholicism in North America, of the life and purpose of the Church in this country, offering a fundamental contribution.

The presence and guidance of a great number of bishops, who have been there from the beginning of this Encuentro's preparations and are now present with us during these days, is a sign of it, and you should be very grateful for the bishops.

I also applaud you for the theme you have chosen for the V Encuentro, "Missionary Disciples: Witnesses of God's Love", which comes from the original formulation of the Aparecida document and is made universal with the Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, a key fundamental document of this pontificate, which has marked the method and the contents of our work during these days. Discipleship and mission are the two big fundamental priorities for the life of the Church and specifically for the life of the Church in this country.

Nothing and no one can separate us from focusing on these priorities, and that is why the spirit we have breathed during this Encuentro, thanks be to God and to all of you, has been one of a profound affective and effective communion with the successor of Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the Universal Pastor, the Rock of our Faith, Pope Francis, with an intelligent, active, and committed faith in his magisterium.

Lastly, I recall that after great events such as the World Youth Days, all of which I have participated in, St. John Paul II always told us that the decisive moment was "the day after", "the day after the event", "the day after the Encuentro", when we begin to live out the enthusiasm we shared here in the midst of the fatigue of the passing days and the hours of the daily hustle and bustle of our lives. That is why I now take the liberty, daring to suggest and enumerate five big issues that are very important for that "day after" in your communities and for your Hispanic leaders.

First of all, we should continue to cling to Christ in our daily lives, remain in him, and continue encountering him day after day, especially in prayer and in the Eucharist. Remain well integrated in your communities, be demanding with your own Christian formation so that our formation as disciples and missionaries does not become diluted, but rather grows with a constantly renewed commitment that is well grounded in our roots in order to bear good fruit.

Second, as missionary disciples we cannot forget that so many of our Hispanic brothers and sisters are becoming uprooted from the Catholic Tradition they have been raised in, swallowed up by our consumeristic society, abandoned by marginalization, tempted by warm communities of Evangelicals or Neo-Pentecostals. We should show them we are near, offer them company and give attractive witness. We have to learn how to listen to them and invite them into our communities.

Thirdly, we should be aware that, with what is going on in this country's national debate regarding Hispanics, which includes the grave issue of immigrants and the uncertainty and discrimination in which many Hispanics live, the soul of this nation is at stake. That is why, together with all of the experiences of solidarity and works of charity, it is very important that Hispanic voices and leaders emerge, in all the dimensions of public life in this country. We need Hispanic leaders who are coherent to their faith and the social teachings of the Church.

Fourthly, the communion of the Church in the United States is extraordinary. It is like a big laboratory with all its varied ways of enculturating the faith. It no longer remains in airtight compartments but

rather providence calls it to learn from one another. To a more and more enriching synthesis of living out that unique faith and that same communion.

And finally, you as Hispanics have also had every right, beginning 500 years ago, to say “We are Americans”. You should become bridges, making St. John Paul II’s prophetic intuition from *Ecclesia in America* more and more of a reality. The communion of the Churches on the entire American continent, the communion of the Church in the United States with the Churches of Latin America and the solidarity among our peoples and nations as a world-wide model of that ecclesial communion. You have many responsibilities ahead of you! You will never lack the grace of God and the maternal care of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Thank you so much for everything.