



BOSTON COLLEGE

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY



**Bogotá Declaration  
Second Ibero-American Meeting of Theology  
Group final reflection**

Committed to deepening the path initiated in the First Ibero-American Meeting of Theology held at the School of Theology and Ministry of Boston College, in 2017, Catholic theologians from different corners of the Americas and the Iberian Peninsula met at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Javeriana University, in Bogotá, Colombia from April 3 to 5, 2018. In this encounter, these scholars continued the theological-pastoral dialogue between Latin America, Spain, and the Latino community in the USA. Through this communiqué, addressed to the general public and to the ecclesial community, the participating theologians reaffirm the importance of continuing with the creative reception of the Second Vatican Council, consolidating the principle of pastoralism proposed by John XXIII, and upholding the attitude and vision promoted by the II General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate held in Medellín fifty years ago. In this sense:

1. We clearly see that Catholic theology in the Americas and in the Iberian Peninsula today faces a new stage in its scientific and ecclesial development, based on a creative continuity with the options made by Medellín, that represents a conciliar deepening with clear ecclesiological repercussions for the identity and mission of the universal Church, and for the way in which theology is done. In this phase, theology, as a faith seeking understanding, must rediscover, again, the question that must guide and endow it with a specific identity in relation to philosophy and other sciences. For this purpose, the theological communities inserted in these regions are called to recognize and promote the primacy of the unity of human history where the Reign of God inaugurated by Jesus of Nazareth and sustained by his Spirit has been poured out over all the peoples. From this clear theological path, theology elaborates the aforementioned interpretation of the signs of the times in the contexts and new scenarios of globalization, where the victims of diverse causes are the new expression of global exclusion.
2. Theology, as a reflection of and from faith, is the second act that ensues from the theological and historical praxis of the reign of God. From that horizon, we cannot stop denouncing the demeaning conditions of life to which a good part of humanity is subjected today. These realities are linked to impunity, corruption, the trafficking of people, organs, weapons and drugs, which are realities traversed by ethnic and gender violence that impose power structures favoring an unjust global world. The study of such socio-economic inequality demands a new understanding of the category "poor," in each country and in each situation, because the decompensation between poverty and wealth has been installing violence as a transversal social phenomenon whose forms we have already denounced in the Boston Declaration. It can be said that the world at this moment is a chronic patient that requires all the attention.

3. Hence, a fundamental theological question that gives identity and meaning to the theological task is the discernment of the salvific activity of God today—that is, how to experience, think, and announce the God of life who is somehow present in these processes and scenarios of death, in which liberation is expressed in the pursuit of reconciliation by means of the practice of the justice. This task is achieved within the life and the praxis of the People of God, and from an ecclesiology of communities who follow Christ and express themselves in the sharing of civilizing goods and the perpetual listening to the signs of the times in dialogue with a plurality of actors in today's public space. All this is fundamental for the elaboration of a theology of praxis arising from the capillarity of human action in dialogue with the life-giving presence of God in human history. This is a theology that recognizes the practices of dignity, resilience, and hope—from which already spring experiences, languages, and symbols of Church-community, and where the self-communication of God and his salvific design is lived and celebrated in advance.
4. In reflecting on the very nature of theology, its specificity and its place, we reaffirm that its task—as part of the following of Jesus, under the impulse of the Spirit, and as an ecclesial and social service—arises from the common everyday life of the people and needs the permanent dialogue with diverse forms of popular wisdom and knowledge. From these characteristics of theology, multiple considerations are deduced about the way of life, the place of exercise, the style of reflection, and the attention to the preferential addressees. The God of Jesus is dedicated above all to those who have no possibility of having possibilities, those left out. For this reason, a theology of open eyes is required today, which perceives reality by looking from the peripheries and margins. Without this situated lucidity, Christian theology loses its incarnational and prophetic character. But we recognize, with sadness, that in many contexts that connection with reality is not made concrete, when theologians disassociate themselves from the personal and daily treatment with their preferred addressees. The absence of this relationship compromises the very "scientific" nature of the theological ministry and converts the addressee into an object of study, rather than a subject and protagonist of his own process of integral liberation.
5. In this context we have considered the pastoral dimension of all theology, its various conceptualizations throughout history, the importance of communication as an operation that completes the theological method, and the call for an integration between the pastoral, spirituality, and theology. For this reason, we start from the so-called principle of pastorality, an expression that is not exempt from possible limitations, but which Francis himself used in 2017 when he said that "the exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* provides the framework of pastorality" that he wants to give to the current Church. In light of the pastoral intention that John XXIII desired for the Council, such expression may designate the "new way of proceeding" employed by the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. This is characterized, among other things, as a synodal discernment of the signs of the times under the authority of the Word of God received and lived in the faith of the Church. It is not possible to listen to the voice of God without hearing "the multiple voices of our time" (GS 44) through which God himself self-communicates to present humanity. These two practices -interpretation of the Bible and interpretation of the present moment- cannot be separated. In this sense, if we are faithful to this conciliar principle, today it is not possible to continue talking about a separation between an academic and professional theology, and another pastoral and practical theology, but of a fruitful interaction of diverse forms of doing theology at the service of an intelligible faith and the evangelizing mission in history.

6. We consider that Medellín represented, among other ecclesial values, a "qualitative leap" by assuming this methodology of reflection as the guiding thread not only of its texts, but of all the work dynamics of that Conference. In the following decades, with limitations in its understanding and with repeated resistance, this form of theological, historical and inductive rationality has been the basis of several of the most typical expressions of Latin American and Caribbean post-conciliar Catholicism, such as the option for the poor, the accompaniment to popular piety, grassroots communities, the popular reading of the Bible, the emergence of contextual theologies, social commitment from the faith, the permanent paradigmatic mission. These ecclesial expressions help to understand the process of pastoral conversion set in motion by the current pontificate.
7. We believe it opportune to take a renewed awareness and deepen the irreplaceable contribution that this conciliar way of proceeding, advanced in Medellín, provides to the configuration of the diverse and plural identity of the Universal Church. The pontificate of Pope Francis represents a link in this long chain of an innovative Church that stopped being mere reflection to be a source. Therefore, the ecclesial-genetic potential, which understands the identity of the church from its mission of collaboration in the construction of human communities, is shown as an appropriate instrument for a current renewal, particularly in the face of an ecclesial model that is not responding to the erosion of the community aspect in our societies. The construction of new spaces where the Christian community experience can be achieved is fundamental for the future and the credibility of the Church, as well as for the Catholic identity of the theological work.
8. We cannot hide the many limitations, and even involution factors, present in the conciliar reception processes of these past decades. Precisely, the current attempts to re-read Medellín, an irreversible milestone in the Latin American ecclesial process, unmask the seriousness of our errors: the resistance to make the necessary personal and structural reforms of the Church—already noted by the conference itself. The neglect to remove the "structural sins" that obscure the Gospel, scandalize believers, and harm the poor and the victims of our societies. The work agenda raised in Medellín and taken up in later events, until the Conference of Aparecida (2007), is well known. It is worthy here to recall the warning voiced in the introduction to the Medellín documents: "This is the time of the word, but it has become, with dramatic urgency, the hour of action."
9. One of the main experiences of these decades, which enlightens us and commits us to new deepening of this way of proceeding of Vatican II and Medellín, is the irruption of the poor in the life of the Church. When this has occurred, the ecclesial community has rediscovered the liberating character of the Good News of Jesus, the Christ, an unprecedented appropriation of the Word of God—the Bible in the hands of the people—and a new creativity in the construction of Christian communities at the service of the liberation of all forms of slavery has been achieved. There has also been a true ecclesiogenesis that leads to a responsible commitment of the ecclesial institution to the necessary changes in our societies, which, in turn, drives processes of evolution in the doctrine.
10. For all this we commit ourselves personally and institutionally, and we encourage colleagues from the Ibero-American theological community to walk together along the paths of a *teological* and historical theology, prayerful and liberating, sapiential and scientific, systematic and pastoral, contemplative and prophetic, synodal and with a spirit of service, local and universal.

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**Text of the original declaration in Spanish:**

<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/formacion-continua/proyecto-iberoamericano-de-teologia0/grupo-iberoamericano/comunicado-de-bogota.html>