

Protestants to Be Active in CELAM Meeting

By Religious News Service

The historic visit of Pope Paul to Latin America in August, along with continuing meetings of Catholic, Baptist and Lutheran Church leaders scheduled for the next 12 months, is indicative of the continuing concern of Christian leaders for the future of these troubled lands.

The meeting of the Catholic Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), to open with an address by Pope Paul Aug. 26, will have Protestant observer-delegates participating with the cardinals and bishops for the first time.

What is of particular importance is that these Protestant observers will not be silent spectators at a Catholic event, but will function as real delegates with an active voice in the deliberations of the Catholic hierarchy.

Earlier this year Rome-based reports indicated that the Vatican backers of CELAM were anxious to have the conference avoid controversial topics and concentrate on strictly ecclesiastical matters. However, the recently published agenda of the Bogota meeting reflects a victory for those who wanted a socially oriented meeting, probably due to the Pope himself, the presence of several outspoken prelates in Latin America, and the location of the conference in Bogota.

Pope Paul will open the sessions with an address expected to express the Church's concern for Latin America. Rome-watchers believe the talk will be general in content leaving the prelates free to handle the specifics. However, the same people who predict this type of a talk hasten to add that it is really impossible to predict what the Pope may say.

The very location of the meeting is certainly bound to exercise a strong though perhaps subtle influence on the deliberations. Colombia is a nation beset by leftist guerrilla forces as well as by a powerful right-wing power structure.

One participant at the meeting, Archbishop Mario Casariego of Guatemala, was kidnapped and held by right wing terrorists in his own country. The kidnapping in March increased Vatican concern over the possibility of the Pope being "compromised" by extremists on his visit to Colombia.

Observers of the complex Latin American scene point out that the dominant figure at the CELAM meeting is not likely to be Pope, cardinal or bishop, but a leftist priest shot two years ago in the Colombian highlands not very far from where the prelates will meet.

Father Camilo Torres was chaplain of the students at the National University in Bogota. Active in attempts at political reform in Colombia, he soon became disenchanted with the possibility of social reform other than by violent revolution. Leaving the priesthood he joined guerrilla forces in 1965 and was slain by government forces Feb. 15, 1966.

The troubled spirit of Father Torres, like a ghost in an English castle, still agitates the lands. He has become the hero of many priests and laity throughout the continent where numerous Camilo Torres clubs are being established. Even a number of progressive prelates have been inspired by his example and speak openly of the possibility of revolution.

The Latin American Lutheran Council, an inter-church agency representing some 40 Lutheran bodies, will be established next July at the fifth Latin American Lutheran Congress in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Though the agenda of the Congress is not yet available, Lutheran spokesmen said that both the Council and the Congress would manifest Christian concern for the social order.

Of particular importance over the years has been a Protestant organization called ISAL (The Church and Society in Latin America), which for the past two and a half decades has focused its attention on the need for Christian social reform.

Hopeful as these signs of religious concern with social reform are, no one believes that individual efforts by any one Church will be sufficient to effect the broad changes necessary.

This was recognized by Archbishop Brandao Vilela of Brazil, the president of CELAM and one of the three copresidents of the Bogota meeting. In June when he announced the theme of the conference as the Problem of the Integral Development of Man, he praised other churchmen "engaged in a common attempt to develop and integrate the South American Continent."

Family Rosary

The Family Rosary for Peace program is broadcast each evening at 7 p.m. by Rochester radio station WSAW, WMOB-FM in Auburn, television cable companies Channel 5 in Hornell, Channel 8 in Elmira and 88.75 mc. in Corning. Those who will lead in recitation of the Rosary this week are:

Friday, Aug. 23—William Kramer of St. James.

Saturday, Aug. 24—Mass will be celebrated.

Sunday, Aug. 25—Fred Imo, Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Monday, Aug. 26—Anthony Annunziata, St. James.

Tuesday, Aug. 27—Leo Zeller, Holy Family.

Thursday, Aug. 29—Rev. Mr. William Endres, St. Salome's.

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