

Lorscheider Previews Puebla

By RELIGIOUS
NEWS SERVICE

The following is an edited interview with Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider, archbishop of Fortaleza, Brazil, and president of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM). The interview was conducted in Rio de Janeiro in July by Dow Kirkpatrick, a United Methodist minister and RNS correspondent.

Dow Kirkpatrick: Cardinal Lorscheider, what are the implications of the upcoming Third Conference of Latin American Bishops meeting in Mexico Oct. 12-28 for universal Christianity beyond South America?

Cardinal Lorscheider: It is not simple to answer that. We believe our continent, since it is a Christian continent, has a special task for the near future. The Other continents of the Third World, Africa and Asia, cannot really be called Christian continents. So we have a special mission for the creation of a new society within the Christian context.

Within a few years we will have, here in Latin America, more than half of the Christians in the entire world, due to the demographic explosion. This makes it very important for the people of Latin America to be evangelized.

Q: Do you expect CELAM III to seek a centrist, unity definition of the Church - a middle of the road definition, so to speak - to the sacrifice of a radical call to commitment on the side of the poor and oppressed?

A: No, although it is clear we cannot now say how CELAM III will turn out. So far in the meetings the demand is for a clear-cut, well-defined outcome at Puebla. The Vatican has explicitly asked us for this. Therefore, I believe Puebla will make some clear, exact decisions.

Q: Is CELAM III purely a Catholic event? What kind of Protestant interrelation do you see?

A: When our Brazilian bishops met to consider the preliminary study document we had observers from some evangelical Churches - Lutherans, Episcopalians and Methodists. In general, I would say they are in accord with us, because behind all, above all, is the defense of man. This defense originates from his image, resemblance of God.

Q: I don't really think Puebla can turn the Church back to before Medellin. Medellin is a fact - permanent - regardless of the votes of bishops at Puebla. Do you agree?

A: I think, and generally



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the bishops think, that Medellin is a fact. We should now, however, not remain with our arms folded thinking about Medellin. We must move on forward. This is the expression most used by the bishops of the Southern Zone. Everything Medellin said has affected us even though it has not all been executed. We shall see if we execute it after Puebla.

At our recent CELAM coordination committee meeting it was said that, instead of talking about human rights, we should talk about the rights of the poor. The very rights which are being disregarded are the rights of the poor, of the oppressed. Therefore, instead of speaking so much about human rights, we should speak of the rights of the poor. I believe this will appear at Puebla with great force and strength.

Q: What does this mean

to North America, to the United States?

A: In North America we find a society of consumption, of abundance, and we believe, precisely this society constitutes a cause of real difficulty for a more abundant Christian experience, because it accentuates materialism. We believe that Christian austerity originates from evangelical poverty.

Those who live in a society of consumption are constantly losing more and more of the pleasure of living. Because they have material satisfactions they do not see other ideals in life. We would like to show them that there exists in life a higher ideal. That, above all, we should live in moderation, which is a mark of the Gospel. Therefore it seems to me that in North America where they have large capital resources, this very capital deserves a revision on their part.

Q: Will Puebla condemn those who use a Marxist analysis of the problem of poverty in Latin America?

A: I cannot respond to that, but the tendency of the bishops is as follows: in Puebla, the Marxist analysis will be thoroughly explained, and it will also be said whether or not it is possible to use it as an instrument toward the interpretation of the Latin American reality. So far in our regional meetings it has not been discussed. Perhaps it will be further along.

I think the problem will be exposed, but only to the extent of deciding whether it can be used or not. Therefore, at this point, I cannot say whether it will be condemned. But the generalized tendency is to not accept the Marxist analysis.

A: What about Cuba? The relation of the Church to society there is different from other parts of Latin

America. What contributions do you expect from the Cuban bishops at Puebla?

A: Generally the Church in Cuba does not say much. They are invited to meetings and they participate. They are allowed to speak, but out of prudence, they don't say very much. Because of this it is difficult to say precisely what role they will play.

Q: One short question about yourself. Lorscheider is not a Brazilian name. What's the history of your family in Brazil?

A: My great-grandfather came over from Germany in 1826. So my family has been in Brazil over a century. I also have relatives in Germany, and in the United States - in Florida, Pennsylvania, Boston and Rochester, N.Y. (Editor's Note: Cardinal Lorscheider's cousin, Helen Lorscheider, lives in Rochester.)

Friends to Aid Sheen Archives

St. Bernard's Seminary last week announced the formation of an organization called the Friends of the Sheen Archives. The group was formally convened on Sept. 20, Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's 59th ordination anniversary.

The Sheen Archives is the official depository for the personal and public archives of Archbishop Sheen and is a non-profit, incorporated, educational facility.

The new group will support the work of and promote the facility. All members will receive a membership certificate bearing a photograph of the archbishop, a newsletter detailing new archive acquisitions and public programs, and invitations to

special events slated at the archives.

Group members also may use the archives, and the entire seminary library for research.

Membership contributions and donations are tax-deductible. The schedule of membership categories in-

cludes: Individual annual, \$10; Sustaining and organizational, \$25; Patron, \$100; Student, \$2; Life, \$1,000.

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