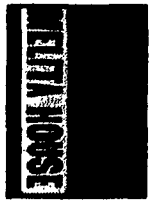


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Arturo Mari/CNS

Pope John Paul II signs the apostolic exhortation for the Synod of Bishops for America during a ceremony in Mexico City Jan. 22.

Pontiff: Proclaim Jesus

MEXICO CITY — In a final document on the Synod of Bishops for America, Pope John Paul II urged a fresh program of evangelization in the Western Hemisphere, built on the twin pillars of conversion to Christ and solidarity with the suffering.

The church must keep reaching out to the poor with spiritual and material programs, the pope said. But it must also evangelize the rich and powerful — a group that has sometimes been pastorally neglected, he said.

The pope's guidelines, in the form of an "apostolic exhortation" addressed to all Catholics in North and South America, endorsed virtually all the proposals made at the close of the synod, held at the Vatican in late 1997.

The pontiff signed the letter shortly after his arrival in Mexico City Jan. 22 and celebrated its publication with a Mass in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe the next day. The pope entrusted the future of evangelization to Mary and declared Dec. 12 as an Americas-wide feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Titled, "The Church in America," the 139-page document covered a wide range of pastoral and social issues, from prayer to the relationship between the church and politics.

Its strong call to economic justice was framed in an equally forceful reminder that the heart of the church's mission is evangelization — proclaiming Christ — and that the church's social activities stem from personal conversion.

"For this service of the poor to be both evangelical and evangelizing, it must faithfully reflect the attitude of Jesus, who came to proclaim the Good News to the poor," the pope said.

"The vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ," he said.

The letter touched upon several themes the pope has emphasized in talks to U.S. and other bishops in recent years:

- An emerging "culture of death" threatens the family and society, evidenced by growing acceptance of abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty. It is a model of society, he warned, in which the powerful predominate and even eliminate the powerless

- The "Christian identity" of the Americas, including its heritage of basic moral values,

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STORY BY JOHN THAVIS, CNS



Nancy Wiechec/CNS

Pope John Paul II, against the backdrop of stained-glass windows, gives the final blessing at a Jan. 23 Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City.

Local priest, nun, share synod views

Lee Strong
Associate editor

Father Curt Cadorette, MM, was not feeling optimistic Jan. 21 about what Pope John Paul II would say in Mexico City in his apostolic exhortation in response to the concluding report of the Synod of Bishops for America.

"He's basically given a script," observed Father Cadorette, the John Henry Newman Associate Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the University of Rochester, and a part-time resident of Peru since 1974. "It depends on who writes the script."

In addition, the pope was stepping into a complex situation in Mexico in light of ongoing conflict in the State of Chiapas and division in the Mexican church's hierarchy.

"John Paul II is really walking a tightrope," he said in the interview before the pope arrived in Mexico.

But after reading portions of the exhortation the pontiff actually signed Jan. 22, Father Cadorette was pleased to see the pope's own views reflected.

"I'm almost amazed it's as incisive as it is," he said in a follow-up interview Jan. 25. "One of my impressions is that he's trying to apply the synod to the real

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