To all the companions of the apostolic body of the Society of Jesus in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The provincials of the CPAL, (Conference of Jesuit Provincials of Latin America and the Caribbean), meeting in Asunción - Paraguay in the framework of the 20th anniversary of the Conference, want to share with you our deep concern and some considerations in the face of the serious socio-political crisis that the continent is going through.

We understand that this situation is an expression of structural injustices that have led the population to become disenchanted with their governments, to legitimate citizen protest and to demand for profound structural changes. Latinobarometer studies show that dissatisfaction with the current “democracies” went from 56% in 1991 to 71% in 2018; and, in this last year, only 46% of the population says it supports democracy as a form of government. It is a reality that concerns both governments called capitalists and those who proclaim themselves socialists.

The causes of the current crisis are closely linked to the existing inequality, as we continue to be the most unequal continent on the planet; to the economic and political exclusion of the majority of the population, to the privatization of the State by the economic or political elites, to the mastery of authoritarian forms of government that are placed above legality and the common good, and to a culture undemocratic that permeates the vast majority of the institutions of our society.

People feel not only that their governments do not respond to the fundamental problems of access and exercise of their social rights and to the growing insecurity, but are in many cases a product that promotes impunity, lies, abuse of power, concentration of wealth, as well as public and private corruption. These and other realities explain, in part, the protests, demonstrations and mobilizations that occur in several of our countries, but in no way justify the use of violence as an instrument of pressure or resolution of social conflicts.

We are particularly concerned and pained by the socio-political situations of Haiti, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras and Venezuela. The most critical current situations are found in these sister countries, but we find that it is the entire continent that is dominated by unjust structures that produce suffering, exclusion, marginalization and aggression against life in all its forms, especially that of the poorest and most vulnerable.

Faced with this unfair, challenging and painful reality, as members of the Society of Jesus - people and institutions - we are called to “a mission of reconciliation and justice” that our faith demands of us. Our Universal Apostolic Preferences invite us to accompany and walk alongside the excluded and violated populations in their rights. They are a call from God to promote the change of structures that generate injustice and participate together with other
people and institutions - especially with young people - in building a future of hope for everything created.

We firmly believe that the construction of truly democratic societies is a task that concerns all social actors regardless of the political tendencies they represent through an ethical and committed exercise of citizenship; we affirm that the broadest and most transparent popular participation is necessary for the consolidation of true democracies; we celebrate solidarity among the Latin American peoples, while rejecting any intervention that violates the sovereignty of the nations of the continent; and we are convinced that the actions that use violence as a means of protest or as a form of resolution do not lead to the construction of the societies we desire.

We greet in particular the people who are in a situation of serious socio-political and environmental conflicts. We feel close to all the victims and their families. We assure you of our prayer and our heartfelt solidarity.

We want to send a special message of closeness and support to colleagues Ismael Moreno, SJ, director of the ERIC / Radio Progreso in Honduras, José Alberto Idiaquez, SJ, rector of the Central American University of Managua, and José Domingo Cuesta Cañate, SJ, rector of the Central America College in Managua, Nicaragua, as well as all the collaborators of those beloved institutions, who are today continually besieged and continuously attacked by groups linked to government powers because of their clear defense of freedom, justice and democracy in its work of education, communication and social action that we recognize as an expression of a genuinely evangelical and fully ecclesial commitment.

We confirm to all the collaborators in the mission our firm commitment in the non-violent struggle for a dignified life for all, following the example set by San Romero de América and the martyrs of the UCA of San Salvador, on this day as we celebrate 30 years of their supreme testimony.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, because they will be satisfied. Blessed are those who work for peace because they will be called children of God” (Mt 5, 6.9).

Jesuit Provincials and Regional Superiors of the CPAL
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