



AMERICA/ECUADOR - XII continental meeting: challenges and hopes of the Afro-American Pastoral

Guayaquil (Agenzia Fides) - The twelfth meeting of Afro-American Pastoral Meeting (EPA) is in progress, held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, from July 16 to 20, on "The Afro-American and the Caribbean Pastoral Care and the Document of Aparecida. challenges and hopes of the Church and Society."

The meeting includes 250 people, among Bishops, priests, operators of "afro pastoral" and lay people involved in this field. The participating countries are: Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama, Belize, Peru, Mexico, among others.

The first meeting of the "Afro Pastoral" was held in Buenaventura, Colombia, in 1980, where the question of "popular religiosity and black culture" was faced. Since then Colombia, Ecuador and the countries of the Pacific coast have participated. Since then the meetings have been conducted every 3 years, and other countries with populations of African origin have gradually been added and where the local Churches have been created giving life to the "Afro Pastoral."

Before the General Meeting in Guayaquil, each participating country worked on a "Base Document" sent in advance to the group of the meeting coordinator to the various responsables of the Afro Pastoral.

This method helps to better study the various proposals of each country for the implementation of an Afro Pastoral continent-wide.

According to information gathered by Fides Agency, the first presence of black people in the American continent takes us back to the plantations of sugar cane in Brazil: to let them grow in the absence of labor, the Portuguese went to Angola, Guinea, Sudan and Mozambique to take slaves. In the Spanish colonies the authorization to introduce black slaves dates back to 1518. The black was preferred to the South American native because of more resistance to work the lands on the coast. Even the English carried out the slave trade to the United States. It is estimated that at the end of the colonial period, about 2 million Africans were present in America. As the countries conquered a democratic and independent life, the blacks (and those who recognized their rights) were able to abolish slavery. In Argentina, for example, slavery was abolished in 1813, while Brazil was the last country to do so, in 1888. Currently there is no reliable data about the black population in the continent, but since the Church has been carrying out specific pastoral care many difficult situations so far unknown are being discovered (CE) (Agenzia Fides 19/7/2012)