

in a

Word™

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The Pact of the Catacombs

or

What Pope Francis is saying today was said 50 years ago by Bishops of Vatican Council II

Photo by Father James Pawlicki, SVD

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The following information of the Pact of the Catacombs is found at the Sedosmission.org website.

<http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/news/137-the-pact-of-the-catacombs-domitilla>

AS VATICAN COUNCIL II drew to a close in 1965, 40 bishops met at night in the Domitilla Catacombs outside Rome. In that holy place of Christian dead they celebrated the Eucharist and signed a document that expressed their personal commitments as bishops to the ideals of the Council under the suggestive title of the Pact of the Catacombs.

The only place we have found its complete text transcribed is in the Chronicle of Vatican II by the Franciscan bishop Boaventura Kloppenburg. He titled the document Pact of the Servant and Poor Church. It is known that the bishops were led by Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife, Brazil, one of the widely respected 20th century champions of justice and peace. Later on, Cardinal Roger Etchagaray, who served as honorary president of the Pontifical Council, Justice and Peace, also signed it.



We, bishops assembled in the Second Vatican Council, are conscious of the deficiencies of our lifestyle in terms of evangelical poverty. Motivated by one another in an initiative in which each of us has tried avoid ambition and presumption, we unite with all our brothers in the episcopacy and rely above all on the grace and strength of Our Lord Jesus Christ and on the prayer of the faithful and the priests in our respective dioceses. Placing ourselves in thought and in prayer before the Trinity, the Church of Christ, and all the priests and faithful of our dioceses, with humility and awareness of our weakness, but also with all the determination and all the strength that God desires to grant us by his grace, we commit ourselves to the following:

* We will try to live according to the ordinary manner of our people in all that concerns housing, food, means of transport, and related matters. See *Matthew 5, 3; 6, 33ff; 8, 20*.

* We renounce forever the appearance and the substance of wealth, especially in clothing (rich vestments, loud colors) and symbols made of precious metals (these signs should certainly be evangelical). See *Mark 6, 9; Matthew 10, 9-10; Acts 3.6 (Neither silver nor gold)*.

* We will not possess in our own names any properties or other goods, nor will we have bank accounts or the like. If it is necessary to possess something, we will place everything in the name of the diocese or of social or charitable works. See *Matthew 6, 19-21; Luke 12, 33-34*.

* As far as possible we will entrust the financial and material running of our diocese to a commission of competent lay persons who are aware of their apostolic role, so that we can be less administrators and more pastors and apostles. See *Matthew 10, 8; Acts 6, 1-7*.

* We do not want to be addressed verbally or in writing with names and titles that express prominence and power (such as Eminence, Excellency, Lordship). We prefer to be called by the evangelical name of "Father." See *Matthew 20, 25-28; 23, 6-11; John 13, 12-15*.

* In our communications and social relations we will avoid everything that may appear as a concession of privilege, prominence, or even preference to the wealthy and the powerful (for example, in religious services or by way of banquet invitations offered or accepted). See *Luke 13, 12-14; 1 Corinthians 9, 14-19*.

* Likewise we will avoid favoring or fostering the vanity of anyone at the moment of seeking or acknowledging aid or for any other reason. We will invite our faithful to consider their donations as a normal way of participating in worship, in the apostolate, and in social action.

See *Matthew 6, 2-4; Luke 15, 9-13; 2 Corinthians 12, 4*.

* We will give whatever is needed in terms of our time, our reflection, our heart, our means, etc., to the apostolic and pastoral service of workers and labor groups and to those who are economically weak and disadvantaged, without allowing that to detract from the welfare of other persons or groups of the diocese. We will support lay people, religious, deacons, and priests whom the Lord calls to evangelize the poor and the workers by sharing their lives and their labors.

See *Luke 4, 18-19; Mark 6, 4; Matthew 11, 4-5; Acts 18, 3-4; 20, 33-35; 1 Corinthians 4, 12; 9, 1-27*.

* Conscious of the requirements of justice and charity and of their mutual relatedness, we will seek to transform our works of welfare into social works based on charity and justice, so that they take all persons into account, as a humble service to the responsible public agencies.

See *Matthew 25, 31-46; Luke 13, 12-14; 13, 33-34*.

* We will do everything possible so that those responsible for our governments and our public services establish and enforce the laws, social structures, and institutions that are necessary for justice, equality, and the integral, harmonious development of the whole person and of all persons, and thus for the advent of a new social order, worthy of the children of God.

See *Acts 2, 44-45; 4, 32-35; 5, 4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; 1 Timothy 5, 16*.

* Since the collegiality of the bishops finds its supreme evangelical realization in jointly serving the two-thirds of humanity who live in physical, cultural, and moral misery, we commit ourselves: a) to support as far as possible the most urgent projects of the episcopacies of the poor nations; and b) to request jointly, at the level of international organisms, the adoption of economic and cultural structures which, instead of producing poor nations in an ever richer world, make it possible for the poor majorities to free themselves from their wretchedness.

We will do all this even as we bear witness to the gospel, after the example of Pope Paul VI at the United Nations.

* We commit ourselves to sharing our lives in pastoral charity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, priests, religious, and laity, so that our ministry constitutes a true service. Accordingly, we will make an effort to “review our lives” with them; we will seek collaborators in ministry so that we can be animators according to the Spirit rather than dominators according to the world; we will try to be make ourselves as humanly present and welcoming as possible; and we will show ourselves to be open to all, no matter what their beliefs.

See *Mark 8, 34-35; Acts 6, 1-7; 1 Timothy 3, 8-10*.

* When we return to our dioceses, we will make these resolutions known to our diocesan priests and ask them to assist us with their comprehension, their collaboration, and their prayers.

May God help us to be faithful.

<http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/news/137-the-pact-of-the-catacombs-domitilla>



Catacombs of St. Domitilla

<http://www.sedosmission.org/web/en/>

in a word or two



An old African proverb says, **“a person is never gone from us as long as we hold them in memory.”**

Our Catholic tradition believes those words and that is why we remember not only to give thanksgiving during the month of November but to remember those who have gone before us. As Catholics we pause to offer prayers for loved ones and through prayer we stay connected with them in the communion of saints.

Beginning with All Souls Day we here at St. Augustine’s will offer the All Souls Novena from November 2 to 10.

You have been so supportive of our ministry here at **IN A WORD** and if you wish we will include your loved ones who have passed away in the Novena of masses here in Bay Saint Louis. We will also remember them in the daily prayers and masses of our community throughout the entire month of November.

You can join us by going directly to the Society of the Divine Word website at <http://www.svdsouth.com> and follow the links to send us your prayer requests. (go to <http://www.svdsouth.com/poor-souls.html>)

On a form provided you may write the names of those for whom you wish us to pray. Your list of names or intentions will be placed in a basket before our altar. This way we keep your intentions and your departed loved ones at the center of our prayer throughout the month of November.

Your prayers and any donations are greatly appreciated and make the continuation of our ministry here possible. We appreciate your support of our work as Divine Word Missionaries. May God bless you and all your loved ones and strengthen you and renew your faith in the power of God’s Love.

In the Word,
Rev. James Pawlicki, SVD
Rector of St. Augustine and Editor of **IN A WORD**

A MISSIONARY PRAYER

Father of all, you sent your Son to carry out your mission of redeeming the world. Many still have not heard his message of truth, love and forgiveness.

Our world is torn by war and conflict, poverty and injustice, intolerance and division. Let the light of your Gospel of love so shine in the world that it may be transformed into a worthy home for all your children of every race and country.

Bless all missionaries throughout the world that their work may bear fruit. Together with them, may we too share in your missionary work so that your Kingdom of justice, love and peace may come into all hearts and nations.

We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We are all called to be Missionaries. We are to be living examples of God’s love and mercy not only on Mission Sunday but every day. Pray the Missionary prayer seen here each and every day.



Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 7,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among African Americans in the Southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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Correspondence to Media Production Center, 199 Seminary Drive, Bay St. Louis, MS 39520, Phone: 228-344-3166..

Electronic messages to our Internet address, editor@inaword.com. IN A WORD is not published during July and August.

Web page can be found at <http://www.inaword.com>