How the Church Should Answer Globalization
First Honduran Cardinal Gives His View

ROME, FEB. 23, 2001 (Zenit.org)- In face of the challenges posed by globalization, especially in Latin America, the Church's answer must be to "globalize solidarity."

So says Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga, archbishop of Tegucigalpa, and the first cardinal in this nation's history.

The 58-year-old cardinal is a Salesian with a solid formation in theology and human sciences, and a great love for classical music. He leads the Church in a country with just over 6 million inhabitants, 5.67 million of whom are baptized.

His naming last month as a cardinal was a surprise; he is among the very few archbishops chosen by the Pope whose See is not traditionally a cardinalate.

"It is as if Brazil had won the world soccer championship," the cardinal said. "Honduras felt that the Pope's eyes rested upon our land." In fact, the Honduran Congress has named the cardinal a "Favorite Son." Popular celebrations for his appointment have lasted a month.

In this interview, he began by referring to the Holy Father's appeal to the cardinals to help Peter's Successor, particularly in promoting Church unity.

Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: "The Pope underlined this aspect throughout the Jubilee, highlighting the concept of unity. As archbishop of Tegucigalpa, I have opened the doors to separated brethren, talking with Episcopalians, Orthodox and a small Jewish community. Only the sects told me that dialogue was dangerous."

--Q: In "Novo Millennio Ineunte" John Paul II forcefully relaunches the topic of communion. What do you think of this?

--Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: I believe that communion and collegiality are the strength of the Church. The Synods have been, and are, very important, also because of ... [the need] to surmount the geographic limits of the diocese and exercise ecclesial co-responsibility over a region, over a continent.

From this point of view, it is important to relaunch the role of the laity, as the Pope also does in the post Jubilee letter.

--Q: Can a united Church respond better to the challenge of economic globalization?

--Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: Yes, without forgetting that the globalization of the Lord's initial plan is called catholicity. It is more than the Church's presence in all the continents and refers, precisely, to universality with the object of communion.
--Q: In what way are the effects of globalization being felt in Honduras?

--Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: The Central American countries are six dwarfs in face of a gigantic world. As cardinal, I believe I will be able to serve there by promoting the integration of the Central American countries because, taken together, the six countries have 50 million people and together we can construct a better future.

--Q: Could the cancellation of Latin America's foreign debt lead to definitive economic recovery?

--Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: A third of our GNP is allocated to what is euphemistically called "servicing the debt." Honduras, like other countries of the continent, has not been suffocated by the foreign debt but by the interest that has accumulated over the years. The hope is that the sensitization brought by the Jubilee might create a collective consciousness, which will make possible and encourage creditor countries to interrupt this painful spiral.

--Q: Do Latin America's economic difficulties weaken its democracies?

--Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga: The continent's democracies are weak because there is generalized corruption. Often presidential elections represent a business in which the candidates, supported by pressure groups of different kinds, invest for the purpose of enriching themselves, once they attain the highest state office.

However, I don't think the problem is strictly economic. Latin America's worst plague is the lack of education, and ethical and moral values. This is also the origin of the subculture of violence that has invaded the entire region.

--Q: The Church has criticized negative aspects of globalization. How can it bring about change?

--Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga: We must not only denounce but also proclaim. As the Pope has said, the Christian answer is: to globalize solidarity. There is no solidarity in our cultures. Capitalist individualism, with the temptation to "save yourself if you can," is the exact opposite of solidarity. We can all do something.

On Jan. 21 we organized a special collection for those affected by the earthquake in El Salvador; in the history of the archdiocese, there was never such a large collection of funds. This is the call: solidarity.

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