

Colombian Church denounces 'triangle' of drugs, subversion, injustice

On July 14, the Colombian Bishops' Conference issued a major document describing the threat of narco-terrorism and calling upon all sectors of society to fight it. The document is notable for its unequivocal description of the relation between drug trafficking and terrorism; for its denunciation of narcotics as the world's biggest business, a point first made in EIR's best-selling English and Spanish language book Dope, Inc.;

dering drug dollars without asking questions through the banking system, an institution which had been outlawed, and was revived by Colombia's current President, Virgilio Barco. The document also makes clear that the Church's only purpose in participating in a "dialogue" with subversives, is to try to convert them to Christianity—not to accept them as a viable political force, as many are proposing. In that regard, the document roundly condemns accepting contributions from subversives.

Excerpts follow, from an unofficial English translation:

1) . . . In 1984 our pronouncement was an alarm bell; today it is the appeal for decisive life-saving. Narcotics traffic, subversion, and social injustice make up the triangle of misfortunes which destabilize the national situation and make it almost desperate, which abuses and confuses everybody.

2) The data and information given us by specialized agencies are hair-raising and bring us close to facts that define today's society as dangerously sick and in need of radical treatment. The drug-trafficking phenomenon is concretized today in a process of production, trade, and consumption of narcotics.

3) The money produced by the international drug trade surpasses world petroleum sales; drug trafficking is one of the biggest multinational companies. . . .

5) Total narcotics consumption in Colombia has reached alarming figures: Besides being a producer country, we have become a consumer country.

6) Causes of narcotics traffic. Unbalanced and unjust social structure in which unemployment, lack of housing, hunger, and marginality are found; high demand by consumers abroad; the opportunity for easy and rapid enrichment; enormous economic advantages derived from this business; reversal of values in a humanity which evades every norm and every law.

14) Human life is sacred, as it is God's gift, and man is called upon to realize His image and likeness. The human person's dignity is glorified when the Word of God is made flesh and assumes a living body.

15) Man is not the absolute owner of his life, and on receiving it acquires the duty of fully developing it, and giving growing quality to it, since all life is the vocation to development, to progress, as Paul VI taught in his *Populorum Progressio*.

16) To poison the body or the mind with drugs is a grave moral disorder: It is the sin of the addicts and of those who experiment with [drugs], who, by ruining their physical, psychological, and moral life, end up as social parasites.

17) The drug traffickers, for their part, sin against life, by destroying it and ruining whole generations. They are truly responsible for disguised and slow genocide. Pope John Paul II called them "traffickers in death."

18) The sin of drug trafficking does not end there. To protect their infamous trade, of life. They set up schools of crime, of soulless assassins. They sacrifice distinguished authorities, valuable representatives of society, and humble people made into the tools of evil. Retaliations and vendettas among people and groups are a bloodbath which cries to Heaven, as did Cain's fratricide. . . .

21) Assault on social economy. This is not the end of the dark culpability of all those who devote their lives to "the death business" of drug trafficking. The poverty in which many of our communities live, which often includes dramatic scenes of absolute misery, in the face of excessive resources being concentrated in the hands of the few, is aggravated by the opulence and scandalous overabundance of the possessors of the so-called "cartels" of Medellín, Cali, and apparently other [places].

22) The national economy is caused grave social harm by the so-called "sinister window," concentration of lands in drug traffickers' hands, artificial real estate price increases, inflation which hits the poorest the hardest, "dollar laundering," and takeovers of previously prosperous, unencumbered, and socially beneficial businesses. Even sports clubs, which should be the oxygen and health for the nation, have been contaminated.

23) Normal and progressive agricultural production of

legitimate consumer goods is being disrupted, with grave social damage, by cultivation of plants which generate the false marijuana and coke bonanzas, which end up ruining persons and the crops needed for the community's development and prosperity.

24) These problems created for the economy of an abused and poor society are not minor sins. Morality has justly revised its criteria and principles to teach that social types of sin are very grave inasmuch as they cause irreparable social imbalances and cause growing misery to the most needy, as John Paul II has indicated in his latest encyclical [*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*]. . . .

25) Sin of complicity. The sin of complicity is a new oppression against the nation and against social well-being. The association called "narco-guerrilla," and arms trafficking, self-defense groups, financed by drug traffic itself, make up a pernicious conspiracy of enemies of the peace and public morals, with a horrendous accumulation of crimes, which identify them as a total disgrace and a total threat to the public well-being.

26) The sin of complicity takes on extreme gravity and brings with it social corruption when it reaches the public authority layers, without whose concurrence the drug trade could not prosper so amply and impudently. When he who exercises public power, who should be crime's enemy, becomes its accomplice, he is socially more criminal and more dangerous than the professional criminals.

27) Another crime of complicity is suppression of individual's or community's freedom by imposing or buying their forced silence to hide the string of crimes which narcotics trafficking entails. However, persons and entities cannot consider themselves exempt from responsibility because of threats, because culpable silences or omissions stimulate the spiral of crime.

28) Authorized moral denunciations. Denunciations of the evil of narcotics traffic are not improvised judgments, but invitations, with prophetic vigor, to the conversion of the guilty.

29) During his visit to Colombia, Pope John Paul II correctly warned, "Today, as in the 17th century . . . the ambition for money takes possession of many people's hearts and turns them, by means of drug traffic, into traffickers in the freedom of their brothers, whom they enslave with a slavery often more terrible than that of the black slaves. The slave traders prevented their victims from exercising liberty. The narcotics traffickers lead theirs to the very destruction of their own personalities. . . ."

30) The Holy Pontiff himself tells us: "Drug use and the abominable crime of narcotics trafficking is preventing this people from bringing forth its greatest reserves of faith and of humanity. . . ."

31) We also have rendered our verdict when we affirm: "The drug traffickers, which enrich other people with their

physical and spiritual ruin, commit an abominable crime which bears the characteristics of genocide."

III. Actions

32) Faced with a social problem of such magnitude, which threatens our people's fundamental values, the national community, its leaders in particular, must make the decision and have the effective political will to solve it.

33) Nobody can keep himself out of it, because everybody is affected. One cannot be simplistic nor unilateral. In the face of the complexity of the problem, each should make maximum commitment of his competence and potential. . . .

On the international level:

35) Inasmuch as the phenomenon overflows the national scene, the solution has to be through international agreements, in which the criteria of the powerful do not prevail, but those of equity and justice among nations. . . .

On the national level: civil authorities' responsibility.

36) Law 30 of 1986 and annexed norms seem to be an adequate statute to control drugs, but they require political will by the Executive to arrange firm, constant, and responsible action, to suppress complicity, and to overcome bureaucratic inertia which renders the best laws nugatory. There is no room for vacillation, nor for false fears; total commitment to the health of the nation is required.

37) The present conjuncture demands from the Judiciary more valor to put an end to unchecked crime. The cases of accommodating decisions rendered out of fear or venality which lead to impunity must be overcome. It is up to the Republic's other authorities and all the community to surround judges with the necessary assistance for them to carry out action which today requires a bigger budget and more security. . . .

The Church's responsibility.

45) The only possible Church dialogue with the drug traffickers is on leading to their conversion and salvation, in the deepest realm of conscience and perdition. As the prophet Isaiah recalls: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and let the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." (Isaiah 55: 6-7). . . .

47) The State's action and obligation in law enforcement and in the analysis of formulas leading to handling extreme economic, political and social situations is different.

Pastoral call.

65) So long as narcotics traffic persists, no work of charity or piety would decontaminate its life and actions. Its donations and alms would never be morally acceptable in such a situation, and the sentence of the Apostle will inexorably weigh upon them: "Perish your money and you with it." (Acts 8: 20).