South America Regional Lecture Response

Th. Luz Amparo Chagüendo Ospina

It's a pleasure to provide this response to such a majestic lecture by Dr. Luis Rivera Pagán, I really feel privileged and admired for his work and presentation during this continental meeting of Peace. What a true joy!

It's a reality that there is any South American in any corner of the world; we start from this scenario to understand the situation of our countries in the face of migration, not counting the political and economic situations that have been generating multiple internal migrations in our countries. "The last 2019 census found that there are almost 60 million Latinos in the United States, which represents approximately 18% of the total population of the United States." (Unidos, 2019) The people of South America have historically migrated to many parts of the world, always looking for better life opportunities, with the expectation of looking for “other ways of living” that we do not have in our countries. Colombia, for example, has experienced internal and external migrations due to all internal problems such as the armed conflict.

In the last six years, countries such as Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia have experienced the massive migration of the Venezuelan population. The newspaper *El Nuevo Siglo* affirms on its website that "now we are talking about 1.6 million Venezuelans in Colombia," a figure that next year "could grow to 2.3 or 2.4 million." (2019)

This reality of Venezuelan migration led us into the world of the unknown: we were always immigrants, now we are the countries receiving migration -Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Colombia-. There is not a place in Colombia where you cannot find a Venezuelan, and I think there is not a place in South America where they are not. Colombians and Venezuelans have always been brothers and sisters, we have been close. Even at some point in the sad history of Colombia, Venezuela was the only country that opened its doors to us at the crudest moment of the armed conflict. I believe the peace process in Colombia prepared us to receive the different, the other one. This does not mean that they did not have to suffer xenophobia - and with great cruelty. Now we South Americans are the ones in charge of receive at home to whom arrive leaving everything. Today we must embody the message of love to the stranger. Today we must see Jesus in the face of every migrant, of every traveler - men, women, children, elders, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, sons, daughters, grandchildren - who today travel thousands of miles to cross the borders. Today we must move from our comforts and attend to the stranger as a one born between us, as mentioned in Leviticus 19: 33-34.