

Greeting to Lutheran CORE Convocation

Pastor Eddy F. Perez
Iglesia Luterana San Pedro, Miami, Florida

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the 1st Book of Kings, Chapter 18, we find the prophet Elijah confronting 400 false prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. It was a dark time of apostasy in Israel. It was a time when many in Israel abandoned their faith and their God. It was a time of confusion. It was a time when many compromised their faith by hesitating between two opinions.

We read in the story that the prophet came near the people and admonished them saying: *“How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”* 1 Kings 18:21

My dear friends, the Word of God prophesied by Elijah, are still relevant and alive for us and the church today. As in the time of Elijah, we are living in difficult times. Many are hesitating between two opinions. Many have followed heretical doctrines. Many have been misled.

We have seen the Churchwide Assembly of the largest Lutheran body in the United States denying –with their actions- the authority of Scripture. We have been witnesses to the saddest and darkest time in the history of the ELCA.

After the decisions reached in Minneapolis, this church is not the same anymore: there is a different emphasis, a different Gospel message, different standards for ministers, and a different approach to Scripture.

Last August, Hispanic Pastors serving in Florida signed a powerful response to the 2009 CWA decisions. The response states our renouncement and repudiation to the new policies, declaring them to be incompatible with Christian teaching, the tradition of the

Christian Church, and our consciences. It states our rejection to the idea that ANY human being, prelate, council, or Assembly, can rightfully vote to invalidate the teachings of Holy Scripture.

As expected, we have received different kinds of reactions... from compliments and words of encouragement to insults.

We know, and accept the fact that our response will bring consequences. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy- "... *everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*" (1 Timothy 3:12)

Some of our Hispanic Pastors, for instance, who serve as Mission Developers, could be in jeopardy of losing their mission funding, compensation... and even their buildings.

Many of our prospective candidates for Ministry have decided not to start their candidacy process in the ELCA. In turn, they are now in an odd situation: feeling the call from God, having the vocation and the desire of responding to the call, but at the same time they are not willing to accept the resolutions adopted by the ELCA at Minneapolis.

One of them, namely, Emerio Diaz, was one of the candidates who, following the Assembly decisions, renounce his application for the Candidacy process in the Florida Bahamas Synod.

But my friends, in the middle of this uncertainties, we are glad to see that God is using these times of darkness to manifest the light (1 Corinthians 11:19). God is using this time *as a time* when we, as men and women of God, are called to define ourselves by taking a stand on the basis of our beliefs, on the basis of our convictions _ on the basis of our conscience... bounded to the Word of God.

In the middle of this uncertainties, we are glad to see that God is lifting up men and women of faith who have decided to stand on the Rock of His Word... moreover, God is using these times of trouble to transform and empower our lives. In turn, many who were

perhaps discouraged are now being encouraged... many who perhaps were afraid are now courageous... many who were perhaps spiritually paralyzed are now fighting the good fight ... the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12)

On the other hand, my advice to the ELCA members is this: the time for hesitation is now over. God is demanding a response from us... through the prophet Elijah, God keeps saying to the members of the ELCA congregations... "*How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.*" (1 Kings 18:21)

It is my prayer, and it should also be our prayer, that every single ELCA member may decide to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord. It is my prayer, and it should also be our prayer, that every single ELCA member would protest the 2009 CWA decision - and would decide to uphold the Scriptures as the infallible rule of faith and conduct.

- On behalf of the Hispanic Pastors of Florida, I would like to thank all of you for allowing us to be part of this historical moment.
- Our gratitude also goes out to Lutheran CORE for all the work that you have done.
- Thank you for conveying the Message.
- Thank you for being a prophetic voice.
- Thank you for your exhortations.
- Thank you for staying behind us throughout these difficult times,
- And finally thank you for helping us confess in the words of Martin Luther: "*Here we stand... God Help us!*"

AMEN!