**Latin American and Caribbean Colloquium of Theological Ethics - CTEWC**

**COVID-19 and the Ethical Challenges in the Region: Building Bridges between Theological Ethics, Church, and Society**

The COVID-19 pandemic has created innumerable challenges for the world. Unfortunately, the world has more than 980,031 deaths reported to WHO because of this disease. More than 540,774 deaths occurred in the Americas. These are direct and reported deaths caused by COVID-19. But the damage created by this pandemic goes beyond this already catastrophic reality. The COVID-19 pandemic has also created many problems and challenges for almost all dimensions of human existence and its organization in societies, ranging from unemployment to mental health. And, as always in a unjust world, all of these challenges and issues have disproportionally impacted and killed the already marginalized and oppressed communities, such as the poor and ethnic minorities.

Aware of these challenges and suffering from many of them in their own communities, a group of theological ethicists from the Latin American and Caribbean region of the CTEWC virtually gathered in May 14, 2020 to discuss the COVID-19 pandemic in their countries. It was an informal meeting in which all attendees could share a little about the situation in their countries and learn from each other. At the end of the meeting, they decided to expand this moment of information, learning, and solidarity to the entire region through a virtual Latin American and Caribbean Colloquium on *COVID-19 and the Ethical Challenges in the Region: Building Bridges between Theological Ethics, Church, and Society,* that happened on Zoom in September 05, 2020.

The Latin American and Caribbean Region of CTEWC prepared this Colloquium to be a moment of encounter of solidarity among theological ethicists, in which all could learn from each other, and express solidarity and love as a global community shaped by members who care for each other and for the challenges that all are facing.

The Colloquium was organized around three panels that could reflect on the ethical challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic has raised in the region, divided in three key areas of interlocution and relationship among themselves: theological ethics, Church, and society. The panelists and moderatos were invited among colleagues in a way the Colloquium could have diversity and many countries represented as much as possible. This was possible and the Colloquium had an equal balance of sex and no repetition of country among the speakers. Each panel had two panelists and a moderator, being three women and three men as panelists, and two women and one man as moderators. Together, they represent nine different Latin America and Caribbean countries. At the end, a co-chair of CTEWC concluded the Colloquium contextualizing this regional meeting in the global perspective of the network. The schedule of the Colloquium with the topics addressed and the panelists and moderators are available on the [CTEWC web site](https://catholicethics.com/who-we-are/conferences/coloquio-latinamerico/). Panelists’ presentations will be revised and published in the [Journal of Moral Theology](https://msmary.edu/academics/schools-divisions/college-of-liberal-arts/journal-of-moral-theology.html). The editorial board of the JMT happily accepted to publish a special issue in Spanish with the revised papers from the Colloquium. Video recordings of the colloquium will be available shortly.

Finally, it is worth to highlight those who attended the Colloquium. This was remarkable. Because of the Zoom account used, only 100 people could be in the conference call. 110 registered for the Colloquium and many more reached willing to participate. The demographics of the attendees was from fourteen Latin American and Caribbean Countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, México, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, Republica Dominicana, Uruguay), and CTEWC members from other nine countries (Belgium, Germany, India, Kenya, France, Italy, Philippines, Portugal, and USA). They were 63 men and 47 women. For being a virtual meeting, attendees couldn’t express their care for each other with hugs and kisses, typically in the Latin American and Caribbean cultures, and many said they missed that. But they were able to express their care and solidarity to each other through words and some mysterious ways that we don’t understand how. At the end of the meeting, there was a feeling of a real community of learning, love, and solidarity as all were together in the same physical space.

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