

“Daily Bread” and HIV & AIDS

Video reflection on the theme of the LWF Eleventh Assembly

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When we speak about our daily bread for persons with HIV in the Nicaraguan context, I believe that it is God’s love for them, that the love of God receives them too as human beings.

And so, in Nicaragua, the struggle of the church and of the young people’s church is to restore their dignity and remove the idea that illness is the result of sin; that is not the case. The illness they have is so that God’s glory can be revealed. Since God is love, it is not right for us to think of God as a chastiser. For this reason, we feel we must include persons with HIV. We are working in this direction and have for a long time been involved in a long process, at least in my experience as a young person, of HIV prevention. But now we are also working with persons who have HIV, not necessarily church members. There is a group of people with HIV who have attended out activities and liked the approach we have of not seeing them as objects of pity, because that is not our purpose; our purpose rather is to restore their dignity, to include them in society and to show them that the love of God welcomes all of us—men, women and, above all, those who are the least in the sight of God. In the eyes of society, they may be the most marginalized, the most singled out, the most judged, and we do not want that.

The Lutheran Church of Nicaragua was the first to launch this effort to prevent the illness spreading and at the same time to welcome persons who have HIV. So I believe that our daily bread is just that, to demonstrate the love of God which also includes them, also welcomes them, and especially them, because they are the most vulnerable to anything.

Perhaps the bread is the word, the word of the Lord that we bring to persons with HIV. Because our churches, although they do not prohibit them from entering the churches to listen to the word of God, always judge them. So perhaps, the bread is the word of consolation they can hear, conveyed or shaped by the love of God.

The church is very, very much present, not only at the community level but also beyond. We participate in working on the issue of HIV/AIDS and these organizations invite us to join in their activities. Our church also organizes public meetings on the human rights of persons affected by HIV and AIDS. The church is the host at these meetings. Some of the panelists are members of the church and others come from other organizations. So the debate on all this is beginning and the church’s vision in this regard is very clear. Also, the church, through Bishop Victoria, has identified some biblical and theological bases related to illness and the fact that it is not the product of sin, and this work is being done together with other churches. This work paves the way for other churches that have not

begun to deal with the issue. We young people produce plays which include the subject— plays that we perform on the streets or as part of the activities of other organizations. We also make videos and these videos are also helpful when we organize workshops for other churches which are beginning to tackle the subject as well.

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