



World Council of Churches

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Bishop Frank De Nully Brown
Evangelical Methodist Church of
Argentina
Rivadavia 4044, 3 Piso
Buenos Aires
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Dear Bishop De Nully Brown,

We are deeply saddened by the news of the passing of Bishop Emeritus Federico José Pagura, whom I will always remember for his warm and brave wisdom.

Bishop Pagura was one of the pillars of Latin American and world ecumenism over the past fifty years, a faithful and courageous champion of human rights and an advocate for peace in Latin America and around the globe.

During his bishopric in Costa Rica and Panama, sensitive to the social and political changes occurring in the continent, Pagura talked about a "time of labor" for the Latin American people, awakening to "the dawn of a new liberation," and he preached in his parish about a kingdom of God which is embodied and manifested in human history.

As a pastor of the Methodist church in Mendoza, Argentina, Pagura received Chilean refugees fleeing the 1973 Chilean coup d'état and the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Pagura was also one of the founders of the Ecumenical Committee for Social Action (CEAS), which welcomed thousands of people from that country—actions deemed intolerable by Argentine rightist elements, who exploded a bomb in Pagura's church on the morning of 4 September 1975.

Elected bishop of the Evangelical Church in Argentina in 1977, Pagura served as an outstanding leader of the Ecumenical Movement for Human Rights (MEDH) and worked closely with the WCC's Human Rights Office for Latin America, opposing the blatant violations perpetrated by the Argentinean military dictatorship.

As president of the Latin American Evangelical Christian Education Commission (CELADEC), Pagura accompanied the development of an integral Christian education that sought to confront human beings with the revelation of God so they could assume a concrete commitment in faithfulness to the Gospel.

Between Melbourne (1980) and San Antonio (1898), Pagura participated in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, contributing to the debates on mission and the kingdom of God, Church of the Poor, enculturation of the Gospel and interreligious dialogue.

In his seventeen years as president of the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI), Pagura advocated for the need to maintain not only the call to conversion and new birth in Christ but also the demand for freedom and justice for the peoples of the continent, particularly for the poor and needy. "If by so doing some of us have suffered defamation and even persecution, not

only we are not ashamed of that, but we consider it to be the unavoidable cost of our fidelity to Jesus Christ, and a blessing no one can take away from us," he wrote.

In this ecumenical undertaking, Pagura would defend the right to self-determination, would be deeply involved in the peace processes in Central America, and would extend a fraternal hand to the Roman Catholic Church, encouraging significant moments of dialogue and cooperation in the so-called Bishops and Pastors Consultations.

In December 1998, at the Eighth Assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, Pagura was elected one of the WCC presidents and thereafter he became an active promoter of the Decade for Overcoming Violence in Latin America, accompanying victims of systematic oppression and violence, while warning that without the solution to the problems of employment, health and housing, without attention to basic needs, violence would continue to increase.

At meetings of the WCC Central Committee, Pagura promoted the theme of the eucharist and the unity of Christians around the Lord's Table, and he frequently denounced the sins of the empire. That insistence, he said, "is part of my deepest convictions, and I will not shut up until death, because I believe that in both cases there are very deep sins."

Pagura was also a member of the board of the Life and Peace Institute, based in Uppsala, another example of its universal ecumenical vocation.

A man of great sensitivity and tenderness, Pagura has given us songs and poems that speak of their rejection of injustice, of his mourning at the suffering of the poorest and helpless, of the birth pangs of a Latin America continent that yearns to be reborn to a real independence of truly free people; and of love for Rita, his lifelong companion. He especially gifted us with a song that has been appropriately titled "The Protestant Marseillaise," a song with a tango rhythm translated into many languages that lifts the spirit of congregations in many corners around the world: *Por eso es que tenemos esperanza.*

We thank God for the exemplary pastoral, ecumenical and prophetic path of Bishop Pagura, which has been a significant contribution for the discernment of Gods' Word and Action in our history.

Like the apostle Paul, Bishop Federico Pagura knew how to live by these words: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

In the love of Jesus Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olav Fykse Tveit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary
World Council of Churches