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UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

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**PONTIFICIA COMISIÓN  
PARA AMÉRICA LATINA**

## **BUILDING BRIDGES NORTH-SOUTH: A HISTORIC SYNODAL ENCOUNTER BETWEEN POPE FRANCIS AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

Pope Francis will gather with university students from North, Central, and South America to address salient challenges of our times. During this historic encounter, the Pope will dialogue with university students, highlighting migrants and children of migrants who are committed to developing processes that justly transform environmental and economic realities related to human migration and displacement. Pope Francis will discuss concrete projects that seek to recognize and empower the existential peripheries to pursue and lead the way toward social justice and the common good.

**When:**                **February 24, 2022**  
                              **12:00 P.M. CST (6:00 P.M. UTC)**

**Event Website and Livestreams in Spanish, English, and Portuguese:** <https://www.luc.edu/popefrancis>

**Organized/Hosted By:** [Institute of Pastoral Studies](#), [Hank Center for the Catholic Intellectual Heritage](#), and [Department of Theology](#) at Loyola University Chicago

**Collaborators:** [The Pontifical Commission for Latin America](#) at the Holy See

### **Organizers:**

Dr. Peter Jones (Loyola University Chicago)

Dr. Felipe Legarreta (Loyola University Chicago)

Dr. Michael Murphy (Loyola University Chicago)

Dr. Miguel Diaz (Loyola University Chicago)

Dr. Emilce Cuda (Pontifical Commission for Latin America)

### **Structure**

There are **7 regional working groups** of university and college students across the Americas: USA/Canada (3), Mexico (1), Caribbean/Central America (1), Brazil (1), and South America (1). Each group includes approximately 20 students from many different universities and studying diverse fields across the humanities and sciences. These groups are meeting in the weeks leading up to the February 24 event. They are listening, sharing their stories, reflecting on their common interests, and discerning concrete projects together on which to focus their collaborative work.

Each group will select a student representative to be in dialogue with Pope Francis. The Central USA/Canada group is a larger group and will select two representatives, bringing the total number of students from the North to 4, matching the 4 student group representatives from the South in the movements explained in the meeting outline below.

## The Encounter:

Those participating directly in the event will meet with Pope Francis in Zoom. The encounter will be interpreted and captioned live in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. These livestreams will be accessible to all on the event webpage: <https://www.luc.edu/popefrancis>.

## The Program:

- 1) Introductions
- 2) Blaise Cardinal Cupich, Archdiocese of Chicago
- 3) Dr. Emilce Cuda, Opening remarks
- 4) Pope Francis: A Reflection
- 5) Student Dialogues: Students representing their regional working groups share their work with Pope Francis
  - a. **There will be four of these dialogues**, each lasting approximately 12 minutes
  - b. For each dialogue there will be two students and Pope Francis (one student from a group in the North and one student from a group in the South)
  - c. In each of the dialogues, each student speaks for 2 to 3 minutes and then Pope Francis responds and engages them in dialogue
- 6) Conclusion

## Values – Priorities – Goals

- 1) To address the gaps and overcome the walls separating the peoples and cultures of South, Central, and North America we need **bridges: sites of authentic encounter, mutual concern, and shared leadership and work**. The goals of the Feb. 24 event and the **Building Bridges Initiative** it sets in motion are:
  - a. **to facilitate** authentic encounters and constructive dialogues between university students in both regions, *especially among students who have crossed geographic, cultural, and social borders*,
  - b. **to empower** these students and support their agency to build durable bridges and relationships that lead to mutual understanding, compassion, and shared wisdom, and
  - c. to use these bridges and relationships **to discern and work together** now and in the future on concrete solutions and projects related to human migration and displacement, for example: environmental sustainability, economic justice, education, health, and integral human development.
- 2) **We proceed in a synodal manner:** “Encounter, listen, discern.” [Pope Francis, 10 Oct 2021](#).
- 3) **We center the experiences, perspectives, wisdom, and voices of student participants**, especially those who are migrants and from migrant families and communities. We seek the wisdom of those working to improve the environmental and social conditions that often force people to migrate and those who accompany and serve migrants, immigrants, and their families. Organizers and others are here to facilitate and support.
- 4) We make a Preferential Option with students. **We also make a Preferential Option with those at the peripheries and margins**, those in liminal and interstitial spaces and moments, those with experiences of migration, those who know unemployment, poverty, violence, and environmental contamination, and those who are immersed in, study, and work for justice in these areas.

- 5) **The primary “Synodal Encounter”** is among the students. To be synodal requires us first and foremost to relate and listen to others, especially to those who reside on the margins. The encounter among students is the foundation for the interdisciplinary and intercontinental bridges being built. The meeting and dialogue with Pope Francis is also an ecclesial and synodal event: he seeks authentically to encounter students and to strengthen, affirm, and guide. The students are the agents of this synodal moment, as they “walk together” and initiate a process of mutual accompaniment and collaboration around their areas of interests and expertise.