



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 161105e

Saturday 05.11.2016

To Popular Movements: be sowers of change, do not let yourselves be confined

This morning the Holy Father received in audience five thousand participants in the Third World Meeting of Popular Movements, which took place in Rome from 2 to 5 November.

Before the Pope's arrival there was a series of testimonies, interspersed with hymns. Francis was greeted by Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and after the presentation of a video of the conference and a document by the Popular Movements, he pronounced a discourse in which he reminded the members of the Movements that inequity is at the root of all social ills and warned them against the fear, fomented by tyranny, that leads us to consider the other as an enemy and to raise walls, exhorting them finally to engage in dialogue with political groups and not to let themselves be confined.

The following is a summary of the Pope's discourse:

In our last meeting, in Bolivia we listed various indispensable tasks for journeying towards a human alternative faced with the globalisation of indifference. 1. Place the economy at the service of the people; 2) to build peace and justice; and 3) to defend Mother Earth. That day ... at the conclusion, the ten points of Santa Cruz de la Sierra were read: dignified work for those who are excluded from the job market; land for peasant farmers and indigenous populations; dwellings for homeless families; urban integration for working-class neighbourhoods; elimination of discrimination, violence against women and new forms of slavery; the end of all wars, organised crime and repression; freedom of expression and democratic communication; and science and technology at the service of the people. We have also heard how you are engaged in embracing a project for life that rejects consumerism and recovers solidarity, love between us and respect for nature as essential values.

The real solutions to current problems do not come out of one, three, or a thousand conferences. They must be the fruit of a collective discernment that matures throughout territories together with our brothers, a discernment that becomes transforming action according to the places, times and people. ... Ideological colonialism tries to impose super-cultural recipes that do not respect the identity of peoples. You take a different route that is both local and universal. A road that reminds me of how Jesus asked the crowd to be divided into groups of fifty for the distribution of bread.

I would like to consider some specific themes, which are those I have received from you and which have caused me to reflect.

First, terror and walls

There are powerful forces that can neutralise this process of maturation of a change able to dislodge the primacy of money and place the human being, the man and woman, at the centre again. That 'invisible thread' ... that unjust structure that connects all exclusion ... can be consolidated and transformed into a scourge, an existential scourge that, as in the Egypt of the Old Testament, enslaves. ... Who governs then? Money ... with the scourge of fear, inequality and with economic, social, cultural and military violence that generates more violence in a descending spiral that never seems to end.

Almost a hundred years ago, Pius XI foresaw the rise of a global economic dictatorship that he called the 'international imperialism of money'. ... All the social doctrine of the Church and the Magisterium of my predecessors rebels against the idol of money that reigns rather than serves, tyrannising and terrorising humanity.

No tyranny sustains itself without exploiting our fears. ... This means that every tyranny is terroristic. And when this terror, sown in the peripheries with massacres, sacking, oppression and injustice, explodes in the centre with different forms of violence, including hateful and cowardly attacks, the citizens who still retain some rights are tempted by the false security of physical and social walls. Walls that close in some and exile others. ... Fear is fed and manipulated. ... Because fear, aside from being good business for the traders in arms and death, destabilises us, destroys our psychological and spiritual defences, and numbs us before the suffering of others, making us cruel in the end. When we see that war is favoured over peace, when we see the spread of xenophobia, when we see that intolerant proposals gain ground; behind this cruelty that seems to be normalised, there is the cold breath of fear. ...

The second point I would like to make relates to love and bridges.

Jesus prioritised the dignity of the children of God over a formalistic interpretation. ... Jesus reminds us that God wants love and not sacrifices, and explains that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. ... He faces hypocritical and presumptuous thought with the humble intelligence of the heart that always gives the priority to man and does not accept that certain forms of logic may impede his freedom to life, love and serve his neighbour.

At times I think that when you, the organised poor, create your work ... reclaiming a piece of land to cultivate to nourish those who are hungry, when you do this you are imitating Jesus. ... It does not surprise me that you too are watched and persecuted, nor does it surprise me that the haughty are not interested in what you say.

The '3 Ts' [three Ls – land, labour and lodging], your cry that I make my own, has something of that intelligence, humble but at the same time strong and healing. A bridge project for peoples, as opposed to the wall project of money. A project that aims at holistic human development ... that is not reduced to consumption, that is not reduced to the wellbeing of the few, that includes all populations and people in the fullness of their dignity, fraternally enjoying the wonder of creation.

Another point is bankruptcy and salvage.

I know that you have dedicated a day to the drama of migrants, refugees and homeless. What can be done to face this tragedy? ... What is happening in today's world, so that when a bank goes bankrupt, scandalous sums immediately appear to salvage it, but when there is this bankruptcy of humanity there isn't even a thousandth of this to save those brothers and sisters who suffer so much? And in this way the Mediterranean has become a cemetery, and not only the Mediterranean.

Fear hardens the heart and is transformed into blind cruelty that refuses to see the blood, the pain, the face of the other. Those who are afraid ... forget that dignity and freedom transcend fear and transcend division. They forget that migration is not a problem of the Middle East and northern Africa, of Europe and Greece. It is a world problem. ... No-one would wish to be forced to flee his or her homeland. But the evil is redoubled when, faced with these terrible circumstances, the migrant falls into the clutches of human traffickers in order to cross borders, and is tripled when, upon arriving in the land where he hopes to find a better future, he is instead reviled, exploited or even enslaved. ... I ask you to do all that is possible, and never to forget that Jesus, Mary and Joseph also experienced the dramatic condition of being refugees. I ask you to exercise that special solidarity that exists between those who have suffered.

Giving an example and reclaiming are a way of doing politics, and this leads me to the second theme you have debated during your meeting: the relationship between the people and democracy. ... The gap between the peoples and our current forms of democracy is increasingly widening, as a consequence of the enormous power of economic and media groups that appear to dominate them. Grassroots movements .. are not political parties, and allow me to say to you that, for the most part, your wealth resides herein, as you express a different, dynamic and vital form of social participation in public life. But do not be afraid of entering into great discussions, in Politics with a capital 'P'.

I would like to underline two risks that are linked to the relationship between popular movements and politics: the risk of being pigeonholed and the risk of being corrupted.

First, do not allow yourselves to be bridled. ... While you stay within the pigeonhole of 'social policy', while you do not call into question economic policy or politics with a small 'p', they tolerate you. That idea of social policy conceived as policy regarding the poor, but never with the poor, or of the poor, and far less inserted in a project for uniting peoples, it seems to be at times to be a sort of masked wagon for containing the waste of the system. When you ... from your daily reality ... from the organisation of community work ... dare to call into question the 'macro-relations', when you shout out ... then they no longer tolerate you so much, as you are coming out of your pigeonhole and entering the domain of major decisions that the few claim to monopolise in limited castes.

We know that ... inequity is at the root of social ills. Therefore, I have said before and I repeat, the future of humanity is not only in the hands of great leaders, of great powers and the élite. It is, most of all, in the hands of the people, in their capacity to organise themselves.

The second risk is ... to allow oneself to be corrupted. Just as politics is not a question of politicians, so corruption is not a vice exclusive to politics. It is right to say that there is a corruption rooted in some areas of economic life, especially in financial activity. ... But it is also right to clarify that those who have chosen a life of service have a further obligation in addition to the honest with which every person must act in life. ... It is necessary to live the vocation of service with a strong sense of austerity and humility. This applies to politicians, but also to social leaders and to us as pastors.

Faced with the temptation of corruption, there is no better remedy than austerity, this moral and personal austerity: and practising austerity is, in addition, preaching by example. I ask you not to underestimate the value of example, as it is more powerful than a thousand words, than a thousand 'likes' or retweets.

Dear sisters and brothers: the corruption, pride and exhibitionism of leaders diminishes collective credibility, increases the sensation of abandonment and feeds the mechanism of fear that sustains this iniquitous system.

I would like, in conclusion, to ask you to continue to combat fear with a life of service, solidarity and humility in favour of the peoples and especially those who suffer. You can make many mistakes: we all make mistakes, but if we persevere along this path, sooner or later we will see the fruit it bears. And I insist: against terror, the best remedy is love. Love heals all".

