

The Pope in the World Meeting of Popular Movements: combat the structural causes of poverty, 28/10/2014

Vatican City, 2014 (VIS) – This morning in the Synod Hall the Holy Father met with participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements (27 to 29 October), organised by the Pontifical Council “Justice and Peace” in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences and with the leaders of various movements.

The Pope spoke about the term solidarity, “a word that is not always well accepted”, that is much maligned and almost “unrepeatable”; however it is a word that indicates much more than a few sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community, of prioritising the life of all over and above the appropriation of goods by the few. It also means fighting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, unemployment, lack of land and housing, and the denial of social and labour rights. It means facing the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced displacement, painful migration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all these situations that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform. Solidarity, in its deepest sense, is a way of making history and this is what the popular movements do”.

He went on to remark that this meeting does not correspond to any form of ideology and that the movements work not with ideas, but with reality. “It is not possible to tackle poverty by promoting containment strategies to merely reassure, rendering the poor 'domesticated' , harmless and passive”, he continued. “This meeting corresponds to a more concrete desire, that any father or mother would want for their children: an aspiration that should be within the reach of all but which we sadly see is increasingly unavailable to the majority: land, housing and work. It is strange, but if I talk about this, there are those who think that the Pope is communist”.

“Today, the phenomenon of exploitation and oppression assumes a new dimension, a graphical and hard edge of social injustice: those that cannot be integrated, the marginalised, are discarded, “cast-offs”. This is the throwaway culture ... This happens when the centre of an economic system is the god of money and not humanity, the human person. At the centre of every social or economic system there must be the person, the image of God, created as the denominator of the universe. When humanity is displaced and supplanted by money, this disruption of values occurs”.

Pope Francis mentioned the problem of unemployment, and added that “every worker, whether or not he is part of the formal system of paid work, has the right to fair remuneration, social security and a pension. 'Cartoneros', those who live by recycling waste, street vendors, garment makers, craftspeople, fishermen, farmers, builders, miners, workers in companies in receivership, cooperatives and common trades that are excluded from employment rights, who are denied the possibility of forming trades unions, who do not have an adequate or stable income. Today I wish to unite my voice to theirs and to accompany them in their struggle”.

He went on to mention the theme of peace and ecology. “We cannot strive for land, housing, or work if we are not able to maintain peace or if we destroy the planet. ... Creation is not our property, that we may exploit as we please; far less so, the property of the few. Creation is a gift, a wonderful gift that God gave us, to care for and to use for the benefit of all, always with respect and gratitude”.

“Why, instead of this, are we accustomed to seeing decent work destroyed, the eviction of many families, the expulsion of peasants from the land, war and the abuse of nature? Because this system has removed humanity from the centre and replaced it with something else! Because of the idolatrous worship of money! Because of the globalisation of indifference – 'what does it matter to me what happens to others, I'll

defend myself". Because the world has forgotten God, the Father: it has become an orphan because it has turned aside from God".

He emphasised that "Christians have something very good, a guide to action, a revolutionary programme, we might say. I strongly recommend that you read it, that you read the Beatitudes".

He concluded by highlighting the importance of walking together and remarking that "popular movements express the urgent need to revitalise our democracies, that are so often hijacked by many factors. It is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of the majority, and this role extends beyond the logical procedures of formal democracy".

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