

POPE FRANCIS

The World Meetings of
Popular Movements and
our social thought

10 years of WMMP



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Pope Francis

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Libreria Editrice Vaticana Vatican City

www.libreriaeditricevaticana.va

www.humandevlopment.va

ISBN 978-88-266-0932-4

Prologue

Pope Francis

Dear brothers and sisters:

I am grateful for the publication of this book that brings together my messages to the Popular Movements. Each one of them was the fruit of a dialogue, of a back and forth that did me much good. The popular movements brought me their conclusions and I gave them back my reflections. This is how we created the slogan *Land, Housing and Work* together. We thereby enrich together the Social Teaching of the Church. It is a fresh example of synodality, of walking together.

I hope that the dissemination of the fruit of these dialogues, expressed in the documents, will encourage local Churches to become involved in the development of popular movements for the defense of our Common Home and the promotion of Integral Human Development.

Moreover, I am glad that the book includes documents of my predecessors because it is important to recall the continuity of these contributions that are a development of the treasure of our teaching for living, in our time, the teachings of Jesus.

We see that the poor and excluded do not just suffer injustice but, more importantly, that they unite and struggle against it, that they are protagonists in their history, that they search for solutions and create, in their own artistic way, the answers that the system denies them. They are social poets and collective Samaritans.

To you, men and women of the movements, I would like to tell you again not to shrink from building a human alternative to exclusionary globalisation. You, the most humble, the exploited, the poor and excluded, can and are doing much. The world needs you. Never forget that hope does not betray. Never stop loving God and others. Please, do not betray yourselves, continue working in the real, the close, from the peripheries, and love each other because you will be recognised by the love that you have for each other.

Fraternally

Francisco

Introduction: Hearing the cry, walking the path together

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Prefect

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Juan Grabois,

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'Love for the poor is at the centre of the Gospel'¹, Francis had to remind us. For when the Holy Father speaks of the problems of the excluded, their structural causes and the paths of transformation that emerge from his social thinking, he is doing nothing more than preaching and practising the way of Jesus. This action is so typical of a pastor who generates ever-increasing scandal when he does it in dialogue with the discarded persons themselves, and these do not resign themselves, they organise themselves and fight: 'The poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it!'²

His passionate defence of laws that support the poor, the need for structural change and the value of the popular struggle have earned him constant attacks and invective, especially in his homeland. However, it is not a question of *pobrismo*, communism, populism; what the Pope does is stand firm in the strict fulfilment of Christian duty and show us the way to our salvation. Francis affirms repeatedly and in diverse contexts: the Beatitudes 'are the Christian's identity card'³. They are simple and human guidelines, but absolutely counter-cultural in our times. Alongside the Beatitudes, the Supreme Pontiff points to the works of mercy in Matthew 25 as 'the protocol by which we will be judged'⁴.

It is not Francis but God made flesh who shows us how we should be: humble, distancing ourselves from pride, success, money and fame; in solidarity with those who suffer, able to weep with them and to comfort them; meek, acting without violence or boasting but with a deep thirst for justice, fighting firmly for the common good and for the rights of the oppressed. We must be merciful, showing compassion and forgiveness towards others, avoiding self-righteous finger pointing and understanding the circumstances of each one. Living with a pure heart, seeking the good with sincerity and honesty; being peacemakers, promoting reconciliation in a world torn by fratricidal wars. We must be willing to face persecution for the sake of justice, standing firm in our faith and commitment to social justice, withstanding the ugliest slanders, willing even to lay down our own lives.

It is not Francis but God who demands that we meet the basic needs of others: feeding the hungry by ensuring that no one lacks a plate of food; giving drink to the thirsty by ensuring that all people have access to water; clothing the naked so that no family is left out in the cold;

¹ Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements. Old Synod Hall (Vatican) Tuesday, 28.X.2014.

² Address of Pope Francis to the *Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*. Old Synod Hall (Vatican) Tuesday, 28.X.2014.

³ Cf. Homily of the Holy Father Francis at Casa Santa Marta, Monday, 9.VI.2014.

⁴ Francis 2018, *To the People of God on pilgrimage in Chile*.

welcoming foreigners by avoiding any form of discrimination against migrants, accompanying the sick by ensuring that they are properly cared for in their suffering; and visiting prisoners, whether good or bad, so that no one is deprived of the possibility of living with dignity and redeeming themselves.

These are straightforward teachings which, of course, present unique considerations regarding their implementation in our times, involve discernment about the ways to apply them in a structural way, expose us to making mistakes and risking permanent failure. However, the call is clear. No one who wants to live the Christian faith can dodge these obligations. They are not an option, they are an obligation. It is an obligation that, moreover, is best fulfilled in community because 'no one is saved alone'.

Ten years ago, Pope Francis received, in the Old Synod Hall of Rome, representatives of the poor who experience all forms of poverty and live on all five continents. It was the first World Meeting of Popular Movements, and like those men who broke through the roof to bring their sick friend to Jesus, the participants placed a previously unnoticed reality onto the international stage. The poor, organised, arrived to plant a banner with the Pope that would leave three slogans that were also clear, simple, Christian, prior to any ideology or political option: land and food / *tierra*, housing / *techo* and work / *trabajo*. In reinforcing the urgent need to guarantee these sacred rights to all, Francis developed the 'protocol of salvation' by adding another indispensable dimension: evangelisation.

Since then, Pope Francis has pursued an uninterrupted dialogue with popular movements, sometimes discreetly, sometimes in large meetings, sometimes through open letters or video messages. The tenth anniversary marks a decade of dialogue between social organisations and the Church that seeks to comprehensively address the new 'social question' - we should say socio-environmental - affecting the discarded, starving, oppressed, excluded, exploited... even trafficked and enslaved 'global proletariat'⁵.

In every meeting, in every homily, in every word about this reality that flails like a whip the frivolity that reigns in many of the halls of power and money, Pope Francis is lending his voice to those who cannot make themselves heard. Hope, denunciation, commitment to win 'something that any father and mother would want for their children – a desire for what should be within everyone's reach, namely land, housing and work. However, nowadays, it is sad to see that land, housing and work are ever more distant for the majority'⁶. This is the cry, the sacred right, the cry of the poor. And Francis underlines in *Evangelii gaudium*, which has also celebrated its first decade, that 'each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid' (EG, 187).

The strength of the excluded

⁵ Czerny, M., S.J., Foglizzo, P. (2014): 'La fuerza de los excluidos' in *Encuentro mundial de los movimientos populares en el Vaticano* (27-29 December 2014), RFS. ['The power of the excluded' in Worldwide Meeting of Popular Movements in the Vatican (27-29 December 2014).

⁶ Francis (2014): *Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*.

Pope Francis himself requested this meeting of the Movements; in response, a joint organising committee was created, of the Dicastery and social leaders who had some previous links with the church. The aim was to gather organisations that would bring together those affected by the different forms of exclusion from land, housing and work that are produced by destructive realities such as social injustice, environmental devastation, the throwaway culture, the crime of war.

The 3Ts *tierra* / land and food, *techo* / housing, and *trabajo* / work are therefore more than specific concrete demands; they also describe a historical theme that holds in its hands the key to future transformations. Transformation that will change the lives of workers without rights, landless farmers, homeless families, those who do not have land, housing and work in sufficient quantity and quality for a dignified life.

Concretely, the participants were cardboard collectors (*cartoneros*), recyclers, street vendors, seamstresses, artisans, fishers, builders, socio-community workers, employees in private homes, workers in recycling, cooperative workers in all activities, in other words, all workers who suffer the worst working conditions whether exploited by employers or unable to do better on their own when excluded from the labour market. Also, people living on the streets, people living in shantytowns, tenants who cannot afford their own home and people affected by mortgage loans who are at risk of homelessness. Also participating were indigenous peoples, peasant communities, small farmers, rural workers - land workers and inhabitants of the poor rural areas - who have been punished by the climate crisis, irresponsible extractivism and economic speculation.

These are people who live on the peripheries, on the margins of an exclusionary system, people who work and make connections within informal networks of labour, housing and territory. All of them have organised themselves into popular movements which, of course, have as many defects as all people have, as much ideological diversity as all people have and as much human frailty as all humans have, but who are fighting a fight that few want to fight, they are fighting 'the battle, without arrogance but with courage, without violence but with tenacity, for human dignity, for nature and for social justice'⁷.

That first meeting in 2014 was convened to contrast the suffering reality of workers without rights and excluded, precarious, temporary, migrants..., and to discuss how this perspective links with the thought of Francis. In fact, the EMMP gave the representatives of these movements an opportunity to show their way of taking the initiative, of participating and being protagonists, entering and finding a welcome in a place that is a symbol of authority and world leadership⁸.

'We want a change, a real change, a change of structures', the Pope demanded at the 3rd EMMP. 'This system is no longer bearable, the peasants can't stand it, the workers can't stand

⁷ EMMP (2024): *Symposium "Plantando bandera frente a la deshumanización."* [Planting a flag against dehumanization].

⁸ Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development (2021). *'IV Encuentro Mundial de Movimientos Populares en diálogo con Francisco'*.

it, the communities can't stand it, the peoples can't stand it. And neither can the Earth, "Sister Mother Earth", as Saint Francis used to say⁹.

The cry of the earth resounded then and still resounds, together with the clamour of the poor. The EMMP accredited popular movements as interlocutors of the Church at the institutional level, in the hope that this dialogue would also open up at the level of local ecclesial communities, helping them to begin to move to the peripheries where they can find the value of solidarity, so fundamental to their lives. It also established the Church as an interlocutor of the popular movements, who returned with the renewed hope of finding in it an ally capable of listening to them and supporting them at the institutional level, and not only in inspiration and accompaniment¹⁰.

Ten years later, we can say that this first meeting was a milestone in the process of organising and maturing of the movements in order to respond to the yearning for land, housing and work. How far have we come along this road? How far have we still to go? Because 'the poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it!'¹¹. Those who are on the peripheries, in the informal economy, surrounding the system, are not satisfied with promises of practical solidarity or altruistic donations. They do not wait with folded arms... They want to and can and must be protagonists! And the fact that the landscapes of today's society do not include them in their plans does not stop them from pursuing their desire to organise, study, work, complain and, above all, 'practice that very special solidarity that exists among those who suffer, among the poor, and that our civilization seems to have forgotten or would strongly prefer to forget'¹².

The social thinking of the Church

What paradigm frames how we think about the future as a society that, at times, seems to have globalised indifference? How do we get out - if we want to get out - of the logic of 'why should I care what happens to others as long as I can defend what's mine?'¹³

Popular and social movements around the world have always existed, but perhaps only in recent years have we seen them emerge as a real force with an urgent call and a profound message: they should not be considered only as passive recipients of palliative strategies. Their persistence as promoters of a process in which millions of large and small actions creatively interlinked - as in a poem - converge, which some want to paint as a 'nuisance', is only surpassed by their tenacious transforming capacity to sow change from below, from where life is born, where hope is cultivated.

From the very beginning, Francis has wanted to join his voice to the cry of the popular movements in the 3Ts, housing, land and work: 'No family without housing, no peasant without land, no worker without rights, no person without the dignity that comes from work.'¹⁴ An element of his magisterium is his tireless advocacy of a vision that places the poor at the centre

⁹ Francis (2015): 'Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements'.

¹⁰ Czerny, M., S.J., Foglizzo, P. (2014): 'La fuerza de los excluidos' in *Encuentro mundial de los movimientos populares en el Vaticano* (27-29 December 2014), RFS. ['The power of the excluded' in Worldwide Meeting of Popular Movements in the Vatican (27-29 December 2014)].

¹¹ Francis (2014): *Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

of social and pastoral thought, not as passive subjects, but as essential actors for the future of our society. The popular movements, in his vision, teach us to raise the banner of universal fraternity, reminding us that human dignity is not a privilege but an inherent right of every person.

In a way, with his appeal to every Christian and person of good will, the magisterial publications of the Holy Father in the last ten years have been tracing a map of global scope in which he asks us never to neutralise the social dimension of the Christian faith: the 'proclamation of the Christian faith has in itself a social content, inviting us to build a society in which the logic of the Beatitudes and of a world of solidarity and fraternity triumphs'¹⁵. He began by indicating how we find in faith the light that enlightens the whole of human existence (*Lumen fidei*). He then invited us to focus on the joy of the Gospel (*Evangelii gaudium*) in order to seek a Church that goes out to meet the most needy without marginalising the poor. Next he pointed to integral ecology as a priority for our time (*Laudato si'*) and a challenge for the inculturation of faith (*Querida Amazonia*); and in a sort of synthesis, he ended by encouraging us to deepen the consequences of the recognition of the 'common home' (there can be no land, no housing, no work if we do not have peace and if we destroy the planet), and not only at the intra-ecclesial and ecumenical level, but also for social coexistence and peace among peoples. 'God-Love, who in Jesus invites us to live the commandment of brotherly love, heals our interpersonal and social relationships through love and calls us to be operators of peace and brotherhood among ourselves'¹⁶.

If we can find the common thread running through this sequence, it is one that underlines the missionary nature of the Church; the recognition that the Church cannot remain closed in on itself, but must enter into dialogue and encounter with today's world, fragmented and battered as it is¹⁷.

Broadening the gaze, educating the heart

For the Pope, popular movements have been powerful agents for reflecting on sorely needed change: 'Do we really recognise that things are not going well in a world where there are so many landless peasants, so many homeless families, so many workers without rights, so many people whose dignity is wounded? What can I, a cardboard box worker, scavenger, waste-remover, recycler, do in the face of so many problems if I barely earn enough to eat? What can I, artisan, street vendor, transport worker, excluded worker, do if I don't even have labour rights? What can I, peasant, indigenous, fisherman, do if I can barely resist the subjugation of the big corporations? What can I do from my village, my shanty, my town, my ranch, when I am discriminated against and marginalised on a daily basis?'¹⁸ Also, and more importantly, they have become sowers of change, true ambassadors of the process of changing hearts, of faithfully watering what others will see blossom: 'You, from the popular movements, take on the work always motivated by fraternal love that reveals itself against social injustice'¹⁹.

¹⁵ Czerny, M., S.J., Barone, C (2022): *Siblings All, Sign of the Times*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Press.

¹⁶ Czerny, M., S.J., Barone, C (2022): *Siblings All, Sign of the Times*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Press.

¹⁷ Vatican News (2023) "*Evangelii Gaudium: El Papa llama a una solidaridad radical con los pobres*" ["*Evangelii gaudium: The Pope calls for a radical solidarity with the poor.*"]

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

This rootedness to the neighbourhood, to the land, to the trade, this recognition of oneself in the face of the other, is what makes it possible to exercise the mandate of love, not on the basis of ideas or concepts but on the basis of genuine encounter between people²⁰.

Popular movements have helped to promote this call to establish the culture of encounter, because neither concepts nor ideas are loved. No one loves a concept, no one loves an idea; people love each other²¹. But to love people, in many cases it is necessary to broaden one's gaze, even towards that 'stranger on the road'. In *Fratelli tutti*, the parable of the Good Samaritan does not seek to make us better, but invites us to be 'new', to allow ourselves to be touched so deeply by the pain of the other that we are completely changed and can no longer be the same as before. Although humanity has made great achievements and reached horizons that were unimaginable until a century ago, it has not yet learned the language of closeness to the other. Attitudes of disinterest and indifference reveal a widespread emotional illiteracy: we have become accustomed to look the other way whenever an event does not directly involve us (FT 61)²².

Fratelli tutti is re-presenting the Good Samaritan not as a moral parable but as a lesson in perception. It is trying to get us to recognise that all these people are our brothers and sisters. What it is saying is: 'We must be brother and sister to all those who need us'. The category is not 'out there'; the category is here. Our human family and our common home need us to be brothers and sisters to the people who need us²³.

The popular movements are also this place, a means to engage ourselves again in the face of the other, of the suffering, of the lonely. And they teach us, with their creativity, that solidarity is not a distant ideal, but a concrete way of making history. With their 'feet in the mud' and 'up to [their] elbows in flesh-and-blood reality'²⁴, they invite us to participate actively in the creation of a future where no one is left behind.

They have shown, with their community work and popular economy, that true social creativity emerges in the peripheries, where life and dignity are forged day by day. And they have shown us, in the last ten years, that the future of humanity is not only in the hands of the great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of the people, in their capacity to organise themselves and with hands that water this process of change with humility and conviction.

This Introduction is a call to stop seeing the poor as mere objects of our charity or compassion, and to start recognising them as co-creators of a more just world. It is a reminder that the cry is still there, but that if we do not pay attention we will not be able to hear it. If we do not understand that 'the starting point must be God's gaze. For "God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart.'" (FT 281), indifference and globalised individualism will become the real threats to humanity.

Today we know, exclaiming with the Pope, that 'it is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of great majorities as protagonists, and such proactive

²⁰ Francis (2015): 'Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements'.

²¹ Vatican News (2023): "Evangelii Gaudium: The Pope calls for a radical solidarity with the poor."

²² Czerny, M., S.J., Barone, C (2022): *Siblings All, Sign of the Times*. Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Press.

²³ America Magazine (2020): "Cardinal Czerny on 'Fratelli Tutti': Pope Francis addresses a world 'on the brink'"

²⁴ Francis (2014): *Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*".

participation overflows the logical procedures of formal democracy'²⁵. Therefore, let us accept the invitation to be part of the 'social poetry' that popular movements entail, where with humility, solidarity and courage, we can build together a future where what we need flourishes: a future that is human, integral, respectful of Creation - this common home - and that includes everyone.

²⁵ Francis (2014): *Address of Pope Francis to the Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*.

I World Meeting of Popular Movements: address of the Holy Father

Old Synod Hall (Vatican)

Tuesday, 28 October 2014

Good morning again, I am happy to be with you. Besides, let me tell you a secret: this is the first time I have come down here to the Old Synod Hall, I have never been here before. As I was saying, I am very happy to see you here, and I welcome you warmly.

I thank you – you who suffer exclusion and inequality in the first person – for accepting the invitation to discuss the many very serious social problems that afflict the world today. I also thank Cardinal Turkson for his welcome – thank you, Eminence, for your work and your words of greeting.

This meeting of grassroots movements is a sign, it is a great sign, for you have brought a reality that is often silenced into the presence of God, the Church and all peoples. The poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it!

You are not satisfied with empty promises, with alibis or excuses. Nor do you wait with arms crossed for NGOs to help, for welfare schemes or paternalistic solutions that never arrive; or if they do, then it is with a tendency to anaesthetize or to domesticate ... and this is rather perilous. One senses that the poor are no longer waiting. You want to be protagonists. You get organized, study, work, issue demands and, above all, practice that very special solidarity that exists among those who suffer, among the poor, and that our civilization seems to have forgotten or would strongly prefer to forget.

Solidarity is a word that is not always well received. In certain circumstances it has become a dirty word, something one dares not say. However, it is a word that means much more than an occasional gesture of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labour rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform. Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history, and this is what the popular movements are doing.

This meeting of ours is not shaped by an ideology. You do not work with abstract ideas; you work with realities such as those I just mentioned and many others that you have told me about. You have your feet in the mud, you are up to your elbows in flesh-and-blood reality. You carry the smell of your neighbourhood, your people, your struggle! We want your voices to be heard – voices that are rarely heard. No doubt this is because your voices cause embarrassment, no doubt it is because your cries are bothersome, no doubt because people are afraid of the change that you seek. However, without your presence, without truly going to the fringes, the good proposals and projects we often hear about at international conferences remain stuck in the realm of ideas and wishful thinking.

The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilize the poor and render them tame and inoffensive. How sad it is when we find, behind allegedly altruistic works, the other being reduced to passivity or being negated; or worse still, we find hidden personal agendas or commercial interests. “Hypocrites” is what Jesus would say to those responsible. How marvellous it is, by contrast, when we see peoples moving forward, especially their young and their poorest members. Then one feels a promising breeze that revives hope for a better world. May this breeze become a cyclone of hope. This is my wish.

This meeting of ours responds to a very concrete desire, something that any father and mother would want for their children – a desire for what should be within everyone’s reach, namely land, housing and work. However, nowadays, it is sad to see that land, housing and work are ever more distant for the majority. It is strange but, if I talk about this, some say that the Pope is communist. They do not understand that love for the poor is at the centre of the Gospel. Land, housing and work, what you struggle for, are sacred rights. To make this claim is nothing unusual; it is the social teaching of the Church. I am going to dwell on each of these briefly since you have chosen them as the core issues for this meeting.

Land. At the beginning of creation, God created man and woman, stewards of his work, mandating them to till and to keep it (cf. Gn 2:15). I notice dozens of farmworkers (*campesinos*) here, and I want to congratulate you for caring for the land, for cultivating it and for doing so in community. The elimination of so many brothers and sisters *campesinos* worries me, and it is not because of wars or natural disasters that they are uprooted. Land and water grabbing, deforestation, unsuitable pesticides are some of the evils which uproot people from their native land. This wretched separation is not only physical but existential and spiritual as well because there is a relationship with the land, such that rural communities and their special way of life are being put at flagrant risk of decline and even of extinction.

The other dimension of this already global process is hunger. When financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger. At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. Hunger is criminal, food is an inalienable right. I know that some of you are calling for agrarian reform in order to solve some of these problems, and let me tell you that in some countries – and here I cite the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church – “agrarian reform is, besides a political necessity, a moral obligation.”²⁶

It is not just me saying this, it is in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Please carry on your struggle for the dignity of the rural family, for water, for life, and so that everyone can benefit from the fruits of the earth.

Second, Housing. I said it and I repeat it: a home for every family. We must never forget that, because there was no room in the inn, Jesus was born in a stable; and that his family, persecuted by Herod, had to leave their home and flee into Egypt. Today there are so many homeless families, either because they have never had one or because, for different reasons, they have lost it. Family and housing go hand in hand. Furthermore, for a house to be a home, it requires a community dimension, and this is the neighbourhood ... and it is precisely in the

²⁶ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 300.

neighbourhood where the great family of humanity begins to be built, starting from the most immediate instance, from living together with one's neighbours. We live nowadays in immense cities that show off proudly, even arrogantly, how modern they are. But while they offer wellbeing and innumerable pleasures for a happy minority, housing is denied to thousands of our neighbours, our brothers and sisters including children, who are called elegant names such as 'street people' or 'without fixed abode' or 'urban camper'. Isn't it curious how euphemisms abound in the world of injustices! A person, a segregated person, a person set apart, a person who suffers misery or hunger: such a one is 'urban camper'. It is an elegant expression, isn't it? You should be on the lookout – I might be wrong in some cases; but in general, what lurks behind each euphemism is a crime.

We live in cities that throw up skyscrapers and shopping centres and strike big real estate deals ... but they abandon a part of themselves to marginal settlements on the periphery. How painful it is to hear that poor settlements are marginalized, or, worse still, earmarked for demolition! How cruel are the images of violent evictions, bulldozers knocking down the tiny dwellings, images just like from a war. And this is what we see today.

You know that in the crowded slums where many of you live, values endure that have been forgotten in the rich centres. These settlements are blessed with a rich popular culture where public areas are not just transit corridors but an extension of the home, a place where bonds can be forged with neighbours. How lovely are cities that overcome unhealthy mistrust and integrate those who are different, even making such integration a new factor of development. How lovely are cities that, in their architectural design, are full of spaces that unite, connect and foster recognition of the other. So the line to follow is neither eradication nor marginalization but urban integration. Moreover, not only must the word "integration" replace all talk of eradication; it must also supplant those projects that aim to varnish poor neighbourhoods, prettify the outskirts and daub make-up on social ailments instead of curing them by promoting genuine and respectful integration. It is a sort of cosmetic architecture, isn't it? And it is the trend. So let us keep on working so that all families have housing and so that all neighbourhoods have adequate infrastructure (sewage, light, gas, asphalted roads); and I go on: schools, hospitals or first aid clinics, sports clubs and all those things that create bonds and unite; and as I have already said, access to health care and to education and to secure tenancy.

Third, Work. There is no worse material poverty – I really must stress this – there is no worse material poverty than the poverty which does not allow people to earn their bread, which deprives them of the dignity of work. But youth unemployment, informality or underground work, and the lack of labour rights are not inevitable. These are the result of an underlying social choice in favour of an economic system that puts profit above man. If economic profit takes precedence over the individual and over humanity, we find a throw-away culture at work that considers humanity in itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away.

Today, a new dimension is being added to the phenomena of exploitation and oppression, a very harsh and graphic manifestation of social injustice: those who cannot be integrated, the excluded, are discarded, the "leftovers". This is the throw-away culture, and I would like to add something on this that I just remember now, I do not have it written down. This happens when the deity of money is at the centre of an economic system rather than man, the human person.

Yes, at the centre of every social or economic system must be the person, image of God, created to “have dominion over” the universe. The inversion of values happens when the person is displaced and money becomes the deity.

I remember a teaching from around the year 1200 that illustrates this point. A Jewish Rabbi was explaining the story of the Tower of Babel to his faithful. He recounted the extraordinary effort required to build it: the bricks had to be made, and to make the bricks one had to mix mud and fetch straw, knead the mud with the straw, then cut it into squares, then dry them, then fire them, and after the bricks were fired and then cooled, hoist them up to keep on building the tower.

If a brick fell – a brick was very costly, given all the work – if a brick fell, it was almost a national tragedy. Whoever dropped it was punished or suspended or whatever. But if a worker fell, nothing happened. That is the situation when the person is at the service of the deity money – so said a Jewish Rabbi in the year 1200 explaining such terrible incidents.

And so, thinking about throw-away matter, we must also turn our attention to what is going on in our society. I am repeating what I have already said in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Today children are disposed of because the birth-rate in many of the world’s countries has fallen, or because there is no food, or because they are killed before being born – children are thrown away.

The elderly are discarded, well, because they are useless, they are not productive. Neither children nor the elderly produce, and so, with more or less sophisticated systems, they are slowly being abandoned. And in the current period of economic crisis, now that it is necessary to regain a certain equilibrium, we are witnessing a third very painful disposal – the disposal of young people. Millions of young people — I do not want to give a precise figure because I do not know the exact number, and what I read seems somewhat inflated — anyhow, millions of young people are discarded from work, are unemployed.

In European countries where statistics are very clear, and specifically here in Italy, slightly more than 40% of young people are unemployed. Do you know what 40% of young people means? A whole generation is being cancelled, in order to restore the balance sheet. In another European country, it is over 50% and up to 60% in its southern region. These are clear counts of discarded debris. So in addition to discarding children and the elderly who do not produce, a generation of young people is to be sacrificed, people thrown away, in order to prop up and rebalance a system with the deity money at its centre and not the human person.

Despite this throw-away culture, this culture of leftovers, so many of you who are excluded workers, the discards of this system, have been inventing your own work with materials that seemed to be devoid of further productive value... But with the craftsmanship God gave you, with your inventiveness, your solidarity, your community work, your popular economy, you have managed to succeed, you are succeeding... And let me tell you, besides work, this is poetry. I thank you.

From now on every worker, within the formal system of salaried employment or outside it, should have the right to decent remuneration, to social security and to a pension. Among you here are waste-collectors, recyclers, peddlers, seamstresses or tailors, artisans, fishermen, farmworkers, builders, miners, workers in previously abandoned enterprises, members of all

kinds of cooperatives and workers in grassroots jobs who are excluded from labour rights, who are denied the possibility of unionizing, whose income is neither adequate nor stable. Today I want to join my voice to yours and support you in your struggle.

During this meeting, you have also talked about Peace and Ecology. It is logical. There cannot be land, there cannot be housing, there cannot be work if we do not have peace and if we destroy the planet. These are such important topics that the peoples of the world and their popular organizations cannot fail to debate them. This cannot just remain in the hands of political leaders. All peoples of the earth, all men and women of good will – all of us must raise our voices in defence of these two precious gifts: peace and nature or “Sister Mother Earth” as Saint Francis of Assisi called her.

Recently I said and now I repeat, we are going through World War Three but in instalments. There are economic systems that must make war in order to survive. Accordingly, arms are manufactured and sold and, with that, the balance sheets of economies that sacrifice man at the feet of the idol of money are clearly rendered healthy. And no thought is given to hungry children in refugee camps; no thought is given to the forcibly displaced; no thought is given to destroyed homes; no thought is given, finally, to so many destroyed lives. How much suffering, how much destruction, how much grief. Today, dear brothers and sisters, in all parts of the earth, in all nations, in every heart and in grassroots movements, the cry wells up for peace: War no more!

An economic system centred on the deity money also needs to plunder nature to sustain consumption at the frenetic level it needs. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity, deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in terrible cataclysms which we see and from which you the humble suffer most – you who live near the coast in precarious dwellings, or so economically vulnerable that you lose everything due to a natural disaster. Brothers and sisters, creation is not a possession that we can dispose of as we wish; much less is it the property of some, of only a few. Creation is a gift, it is a present, it is a marvellous gift given to us by God so that we might care for it and use it, always gratefully and always respectfully, for the benefit of everyone. You may be aware that I am preparing an encyclical on ecology. Rest assured that your concerns will have their place in it. I thank you, I take this opportunity to thank you for the letter on this topic that I received from members of Via Campesina (the international farmworkers’ organization), the Federation of Cartoneros and so many other brothers and sisters.

We talk about land, work, housing ... we talk about working for peace and taking care of nature. Why are we accustomed to seeing decent work destroyed, countless families evicted, rural farmworkers driven off the land, war waged and nature abused? Because in this system man, the human person, has been removed from the centre and replaced by something else. Because idolatrous worship is devoted to money. Because indifference has been globalized: “Why should I care what happens to others as long as I can defend what’s mine?” Because the world has forgotten God, who is Father; and by setting God aside, it has made itself an orphan.

Some of you said that this system cannot endure. We must change it. We must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need. This must be done with courage but also with intelligence, with tenacity but without fanaticism, with passion yet without violence. And all of us together, addressing the conflicts without getting

trapped in them, always seeking to resolve the tensions in order to reach a higher plane of unity, of peace and of justice. We Christians have something very lovely, a guide to action, a programme we could call revolutionary. I earnestly recommend that you read it: the Beatitudes in Saint Matthew chapter 5 (cf. Mt 5:3) and in Saint Luke chapter 6 (cf. Lk 6:20); and the Last Judgment passage in Saint Matthew chapter 25. This is what I told the young people at Rio de Janeiro: With these passages, you have the plan of action.

I know that you are persons of different religions, trades, ideas, cultures, countries, continents. Here and now you are practicing the culture of encounter, so different from the xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance which we witness so often. Among the excluded, one finds an encounter of cultures where the aggregate does not wipe out the particularities. That is why I like the image of the polyhedron, a geometric figure with many different facets. The polyhedron reflects the confluence of all the partialities that in it keep their originality. Nothing is dissolved, nothing is destroyed, nothing is dominated, everything is integrated. Nowadays you too are looking for that synthesis between the local and the global. I know that you work daily in what is close at hand and concrete, in your area, your neighbourhood, your work place. I also invite you to keep seeking that broader perspective so that our dreams might fly high and embrace the whole.

With all this I attach great importance to the proposal which some of you have shared with me, that these movements – these experiences of solidarity which grow up from below, from the subsoil of the planet – should come together, be more coordinated, keep on meeting one another as you have done these days. But be careful, it is never good to confine a movement in rigid structures, so I say you should keep on meeting. Even worse is the attempt to absorb movements, direct or dominate them – unfettered movements have their own dynamic; nevertheless, yes, we must try to walk together. Here we are in this Old Synod Hall (now there is a new one), and synod means precisely “to walk together”. May this be a symbol of the process that you have begun and are carrying forward.

Grassroots movements express the urgent need to revitalize our democracies, so often hijacked by innumerable factors. It is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of great majorities as protagonists, and such proactive participation overflows the logical procedures of formal democracy. Moving towards a world of lasting peace and justice calls us to go beyond paternalistic forms of assistance; it calls us to create new forms of participation that include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny. And all this with a constructive spirit, without resentment, with love.

I accompany you wholeheartedly on this journey. From our hearts let us say together: No family without housing, no farmworker without land, no worker without rights, no one without the dignity that work provides.

Dear brothers and sisters, carry on with your struggle. You do us all good, like a blessing for humanity. Here are some rosaries made by Latin American artisans, waste collectors and grassroots workers, which I leave you as a memento, as a present and with my blessing.

And in this accompaniment I pray for you, I pray with you, and I want to ask God Our Father to go with you and bless you, to fill you with his love and accompany you on the way, abundantly giving you that strength that keeps us standing tall. That strength is hope, the hope that never lets us down. Thank you.

II World Meeting of Popular Movements: address of the Holy Father

*Expo Feria, Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia)
Thursday, 9 July 2015*

Dear brothers and sisters, good afternoon!

Several months ago, we met in Rome, and I remember that first meeting. In the meantime I have kept you in my thoughts and prayers. I am happy to see you again, here, as you discuss the best ways to overcome the grave situations of injustice experienced by the excluded throughout our world. Thank you, President Evo Morales, for your efforts to make this meeting possible.

During our first meeting in Rome, I sensed something very beautiful: fraternity, determination, commitment, a thirst for justice. Today, in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, I sense it once again. I thank you for that. I also know, from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace headed by Cardinal Turkson, that many people in the Church feel very close to the popular movements. That makes me very happy! I am pleased to see the Church opening her doors to all of you, embracing you, accompanying you and establishing in each diocese, in every justice and peace commission, a genuine, ongoing and serious cooperation with popular movements. I ask everyone, bishops, priests and laity, as well as the social organizations of the urban and rural peripheries, to deepen this encounter.

Today God has granted that we meet again. The Bible tells us that God hears the cry of his people, and I wish to join my voice to yours in calling for the three “L’s” for all our brothers and sisters: land, lodging and labor. I said it and I repeat it: these are sacred rights. It is important, it is well worth fighting for them. May the cry of the excluded be heard in Latin America and throughout the world.

1. Before all else, let us begin by acknowledging that change is needed. Here I would clarify, lest there be any misunderstanding, that I am speaking about problems common to all Latin Americans and, more generally, to humanity as a whole. They are global problems which today no one state can resolve on its own. With this clarification, I now propose that we ask the following questions:

Do we truly realize that something is wrong in a world where there are so many farmworkers without land, so many families without a home, so many laborers without rights, so many persons whose dignity is not respected?

Do we realize that something is wrong where so many senseless wars are being fought and acts of fratricidal violence are taking place on our very doorstep? Do we realize something is wrong when the soil, water, air and living creatures of our world are under constant threat?

So, if we do realize all this, let's not be afraid to say it: we need change; we want change.

In your letters and in our meetings, you have mentioned the many forms of exclusion and injustice which you experience in the workplace, in neighborhoods and throughout the land. They are many and diverse, just as many and diverse are the ways in which you confront them. Yet there is an invisible thread joining every one of the forms of exclusion. These are not isolated issues. Can we recognize that invisible thread which links them? I wonder whether we can see that those destructive realities are part of a system which has become global. Do we realize that that system has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature?

If such is the case, I would insist, let us not be afraid to say it: we want change, real change, structural change. This system is by now intolerable: farmworkers find it intolerable, laborers find it intolerable, communities find it intolerable, peoples find it intolerable ... The earth itself – our sister, Mother Earth, as Saint Francis would say – also finds it intolerable.

We want change in our lives, in our neighborhoods, in our everyday reality. We want a change which can affect the entire world, since global interdependence calls for global answers to local problems. The globalization of hope, a hope which springs up from peoples and takes root among the poor, must replace the globalization of exclusion and indifference!

Today I wish to reflect with you on the change we want and need. You know that recently I wrote about the problems of climate change. But now I would like to speak of change in another sense. Positive change, a change which is good for us, a change – we can say – which is redemptive. Because we need it. I know that you are looking for change, and not just you alone: in my different meetings, in my different travels, I have sensed an expectation, a longing, a yearning for change, in people throughout the world. Even within that ever smaller minority which believes that the present system is beneficial, there is a widespread sense of dissatisfaction and even despondency. Many people are hoping for a change capable of releasing them from the bondage of individualism and the despondency it spawns.

Time, my brothers and sisters, seems to be running out; we are not yet tearing one another apart, but we are tearing apart our common home. Today, the scientific community realizes what the poor have long told us: harm, perhaps irreversible harm, is being done to the ecosystem. The earth, entire peoples and individual persons are being brutally punished. And behind all this pain, death and destruction there is the stench of what Basil of Caesarea – one of the first theologians of the Church – called “the dung of the devil”. An unfettered pursuit of money rules. This is the “dung of the devil”. The service of the common good is left behind. Once capital becomes an idol and guides people's decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socioeconomic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home, sister and mother earth.

I do not need to go on describing the evil effects of this subtle dictatorship: you are well aware of them. Nor is it enough to point to the structural causes of today's social and environmental crisis. We are suffering from an excess of diagnosis, which at times leads us to multiply words and to revel in pessimism and negativity. Looking at the daily news we think that there is nothing to be done, except to take care of ourselves and the little circle of our family and friends.

What can I do, as collector of paper, old clothes or used metal, a recycler, about all these problems if I barely make enough money to put food on the table? What can I do as a craftsman, a street vendor, a trucker, a downtrodden worker, if I don't even enjoy workers' rights? What can I do, a farmwife, a native woman, a fisher who can hardly fight the domination of the big corporations? What can I do from my little home, my shanty, my hamlet, my settlement, when I daily meet with discrimination and marginalization? What can be done by those students, those young people, those activists, those missionaries who come to a neighborhood with their hearts full of hopes and dreams, but without any real solution for their problems? They can do a lot. They really can. You, the lowly, the exploited, the poor and underprivileged, can do, and are doing, a lot. I would even say that the future of humanity is in great measure in your own hands, through your ability to organize and carry out creative alternatives, through your daily efforts to ensure the three "L's" – do you agree? – (labor, lodging, land) and through your proactive participation in the great processes of change on the national, regional and global levels. Don't lose heart!

2. Secondly, you are sowers of change. Here in Bolivia I have heard a phrase which I like: "process of change". Change seen not as something which will one day result from any one political decision or change in social structure. We know from painful experience that changes of structure which are not accompanied by a sincere conversion of mind and heart sooner or later end up in bureaucratization, corruption and failure. There must be a change of heart. That is why I like the image of a "process", processes, where the drive to sow, to water seeds which others will see sprout, replaces the ambition to occupy every available position of power and to see immediate results. The option is to bring about processes and not to occupy positions. Each of us is just one part of a complex and differentiated whole, interacting in time: peoples who struggle to find meaning, a destiny, and to live with dignity, to "live well", and in that sense, worthily.

As members of popular movements, you carry out your work inspired by fraternal love, which you show in opposing social injustice. When we look into the eyes of the suffering, when we see the faces of the endangered campesino, the poor laborer, the downtrodden native, the homeless family, the persecuted migrant, the unemployed young person, the exploited child, the mother who lost her child in a shootout because the barrio was occupied by drugdealers, the father who lost his daughter to enslavement.... when we think of all those names and faces, our hearts break because of so much sorrow and pain. And we are deeply moved, all of us.... We are moved because "we have seen and heard" not a cold statistic but the pain of a suffering humanity, our own pain, our own flesh. This is something quite different than abstract theorizing or eloquent indignation. It moves us; it makes us attentive to others in an effort to move forward together. That emotion which turns into community action is not something which can be

understood by reason alone: it has a surplus of meaning which only peoples understand, and it gives a special feel to genuine popular movements.

Each day you are caught up in the storms of people's lives. You have told me about their causes, you have shared your own struggles with me, ever since I was in Buenos Aires, and I thank you for that. You, dear brothers and sisters, often work on little things, in local situations, amid forms of injustice which you do not simply accept but actively resist, standing up to an idolatrous system which excludes, debases and kills. I have seen you work tirelessly for the soil and crops of campesinos, for their lands and communities, for a more dignified local economy, for the urbanization of their homes and settlements; you have helped them build their own homes and develop neighborhood infrastructures. You have also promoted any number of community activities aimed at reaffirming so elementary and undeniably necessary a right as that of the three "L's": land, lodging and labor.

This rootedness in the barrio, the land, the office, the labor union, this ability to see yourselves in the faces of others, this daily proximity to their share of troubles – because they exist and we all have them – and their little acts of heroism: this is what enables you to practice the commandment of love, not on the basis of ideas or concepts, but rather on the basis of genuine interpersonal encounter. We need to build up this culture of encounter. We do not love concepts or ideas; no one loves a concept or an idea. We love people... Commitment, true commitment, is born of the love of men and women, of children and the elderly, of peoples and communities... of names and faces which fill our hearts. From those seeds of hope patiently sown in the forgotten fringes of our planet, from those seedlings of a tenderness which struggles to grow amid the shadows of exclusion, great trees will spring up, great groves of hope to give oxygen to our world.

So I am pleased to see that you are working at close hand to care for those seedlings, but at the same time, with a broader perspective, to protect the entire forest. Your work is carried out against a horizon which, while concentrating on your own specific area, also aims to resolve at their root the more general problems of poverty, inequality and exclusion.

I congratulate you on this. It is essential that, along with the defense of their legitimate rights, peoples and their social organizations be able to construct a humane alternative to a globalization which excludes. You are sowers of change. May God grant you the courage, joy, perseverance and passion to continue sowing. Be assured that sooner or later we will see its fruits. Of the leadership I ask this: be creative and never stop being rooted in local realities, since the father of lies is able to usurp noble words, to promote intellectual fads and to adopt ideological stances. But if you build on solid foundations, on real needs and on the lived experience of your brothers and sisters, of campesinos and natives, of excluded workers and marginalized families, you will surely be on the right path.

The Church cannot and must not remain aloof from this process in her proclamation of the Gospel. Many priests and pastoral workers carry out an enormous work of accompanying and promoting the excluded throughout the world, alongside cooperatives, favouring businesses, providing housing, working generously in the fields of health, sports and education. I am

convinced that respectful cooperation with the popular movements can revitalize these efforts and strengthen processes of change.

Let us always have at heart the Virgin Mary, a humble girl from small people lost on the fringes of a great empire, a homeless mother who could turn a stable for beasts into a home for Jesus with just a few swaddling clothes and much tenderness. Mary is a sign of hope for peoples suffering the birth pangs of justice. I pray that Our Lady of Mount Carmel, patroness of Bolivia, will allow this meeting of ours to be a leaven of change.

3. Third and lastly, I would like us all to consider some important tasks for the present historical moment, since we desire a positive change for the benefit of all our brothers and sisters. We know this. We desire change enriched by the collaboration of governments, popular movements and other social forces. This too we know. But it is not so easy to define the content of change – in other words, a social program which can embody this project of fraternity and justice which we are seeking. It is not easy to define it. So don't expect a recipe from this Pope. Neither the Pope nor the Church have a monopoly on the interpretation of social reality or the proposal of solutions to contemporary issues. I dare say that no recipe exists. History is made by each generation as it follows in the footsteps of those preceding it, as it seeks its own path and respects the values which God has placed in the human heart.

I would like, all the same, to propose three great tasks which demand a decisive and shared contribution from popular movements:

3.1 The first task is to put the economy at the service of peoples. Human beings and nature must not be at the service of money. Let us say NO to an economy of exclusion and inequality, where money rules, rather than service. That economy kills. That economy excludes. That economy destroys Mother Earth.

The economy should not be a mechanism for accumulating goods, but rather the proper administration of our common home. This entails a commitment to care for that home and to the fitting distribution of its goods among all. It is not only about ensuring a supply of food or “decent sustenance”. Nor, although this is already a great step forward, is it to guarantee the three “L’s” of land, lodging and labor for which you are working. A truly communitarian economy, one might say an economy of Christian inspiration, must ensure peoples’ dignity and their “general, temporal welfare and prosperity”.²⁷ (Pope John XXIII spoke this last phrase fifty years ago, and Jesus says in the Gospel that whoever freely offers a glass of water to one who is thirsty will be remembered in the Kingdom of Heaven.) All of this includes the three “L’s”, but also access to education, health care, new technologies, artistic and cultural manifestations, communications, sports and recreation. A just economy must create the conditions for everyone to be able to enjoy a childhood without want, to develop their talents when young, to work with full rights during their active years and to enjoy a dignified retirement as they grow older. It is an economy where human beings, in harmony with nature, structure the entire system of production and distribution in such a way that the abilities and needs of each individual find suitable expression

²⁷ JOHN XXIII, *Encyclical Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961), 3: AAS 53 (1961), 402.

in social life. You, and other peoples as well, sum up this desire in a simple and beautiful expression: “to live well”, which is not the same as “to have a good time”.

Such an economy is not only desirable and necessary, but also possible. It is no utopia or chimera. It is an extremely realistic prospect. We can achieve it. The available resources in our world, the fruit of the intergenerational labors of peoples and the gifts of creation, more than suffice for the integral development of “each man and the whole man”.²⁸ The problem is of another kind. There exists a system with different aims. A system which, in addition to irresponsibly accelerating the pace of production, and using industrial and agricultural methods which damage Mother Earth in the name of “productivity”, continues to deny many millions of our brothers and sisters their most elementary economic, social and cultural rights. This system runs counter to the plan of Jesus, against the Good News that Jesus brought.

Working for a just distribution of the fruits of the earth and human labor is not mere philanthropy. It is a moral obligation. For Christians, the responsibility is even greater: it is a commandment. It is about giving to the poor and to peoples what is theirs by right. The universal destination of goods is not a figure of speech found in the Church’s social teaching. It is a reality prior to private property. Property, especially when it affects natural resources, must always serve the needs of peoples. And those needs are not restricted to consumption. It is not enough to let a few drops fall whenever the poor shake a cup which never runs over by itself. Welfare programs geared to certain emergencies can only be considered temporary and incidental responses. They could never replace true inclusion, an inclusion which provides worthy, free, creative, participatory and solidary work.

Along this path, popular movements play an essential role, not only by making demands and lodging protests, but even more basically by being creative. You are social poets: creators of work, builders of housing, producers of food, above all for people left behind by the world market.

I have seen first hand a variety of experiences where workers united in cooperatives and other forms of community organization were able to create work where there were only crumbs of an idolatrous economy. I have seen some of you here. Recuperated businesses, local fairs and cooperatives of paper collectors are examples of that popular economy which is born of exclusion and which, slowly, patiently and resolutely adopts solidary forms which dignify it. How different this is than the situation which results when those left behind by the formal market are exploited like slaves!

Governments which make it their responsibility to put the economy at the service of peoples must promote the strengthening, improvement, coordination and expansion of these forms of popular economy and communitarian production. This entails bettering the processes of work, providing adequate infrastructures and guaranteeing workers their full rights in this alternative sector. When the state and social organizations join in working for the three “L’s”, the principles of solidarity and subsidiarity come into play; and these allow the common good to be achieved in a full and participatory democracy.

²⁸ PAUL VI, *Encyclical Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 14: AAS 59 (1967), 264.

3.2. The second task is to unite our peoples on the path of peace and justice.

The world's peoples want to be artisans of their own destiny. They want to advance peacefully towards justice. They do not want forms of tutelage or interference by which those with greater power subordinate those with less. They want their culture, their language, their social processes and their religious traditions to be respected. No actual or established power has the right to deprive peoples of the full exercise of their sovereignty. Whenever they do so, we see the rise of new forms of colonialism which seriously prejudice the possibility of peace and justice. For "peace is founded not only on respect for human rights but also on respect for the rights of peoples, in particular the right to independence".²⁹

The peoples of Latin America fought to gain their political independence and for almost two centuries their history has been dramatic and filled with contradictions, as they have striven to achieve full independence.

In recent years, after any number of misunderstandings, many Latin American countries have seen the growth of fraternity between their peoples. The governments of the region have pooled forces in order to ensure respect for the sovereignty of their own countries and the entire region, which our forebears so beautifully called the "greater country". I ask you, my brothers and sisters of the popular movements, to foster and increase this unity. It is necessary to maintain unity in the face of every effort to divide, if the region is to grow in peace and justice.

Despite the progress made, there are factors which still threaten this equitable human development and restrict the sovereignty of the countries of the "greater country" and other areas of our planet. The new colonialism takes on different faces. At times it appears as the anonymous influence of mammon: corporations, loan agencies, certain "free trade" treaties, and the imposition of measures of "austerity" which always tighten the belt of workers and the poor. We, the bishops of Latin America, denounce this with utter clarity in the *Aparecida Document*, stating that "financial institutions and transnational companies are becoming stronger to the point that local economies are subordinated, especially weakening the local states, which seem ever more powerless to carry out development projects in the service of their populations".³⁰ At other times, under the noble guise of battling corruption, the narcotics trade and terrorism – grave evils of our time which call for coordinated international action – we see states being saddled with measures which have little to do with the resolution of these problems and which not infrequently worsen matters.

Similarly, the monopolizing of the communications media, which would impose alienating examples of consumerism and a certain cultural uniformity, is another one of the forms taken by

²⁹ PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 157.

³⁰ FIFTH GENERAL CONFERENCE OF THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN BISHOPS, *Aparecida Document* (29 June 2007), 66.

the new colonialism. It is ideological colonialism. As the African bishops have observed, poor countries are often treated like “parts of a machine, cogs on a gigantic wheel”.³¹

It must be acknowledged that none of the grave problems of humanity can be resolved without interaction between states and peoples at the international level. Every significant action carried out in one part of the planet has universal, ecological, social and cultural repercussions. Even crime and violence have become globalized. Consequently, no government can act independently of a common responsibility. If we truly desire positive change, we have to humbly accept our interdependence, that is to say, our healthy interdependence. Interaction, however, is not the same as imposition; it is not the subordination of some to serve the interests of others. Colonialism, both old and new, which reduces poor countries to mere providers of raw material and cheap labor, engenders violence, poverty, forced migrations and all the evils which go hand in hand with these, precisely because, by placing the periphery at the service of the center, it denies those countries the right to an integral development. That is inequality, brothers and sisters, and inequality generates a violence which no police, military, or intelligence resources can control.

Let us say NO, then, to forms of colonialism old and new. Let us say YES to the encounter between peoples and cultures. Blessed are the peacemakers.

Here I wish to bring up an important issue. Some may rightly say, “When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church”. I say this to you with regret: many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God. My predecessors acknowledged this, CELAM, the Council of Latin American Bishops, has said it, and I too wish to say it. Like Saint John Paul II, I ask that the Church – I repeat what he said – “kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters”.³² I would also say, and here I wish to be quite clear, as was Saint John Paul II: I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the Church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America. Together with this request for forgiveness and in order to be just, I also would like us to remember the thousands of priests and bishops who strongly opposed the logic of the sword with the power of the Cross. There was sin, a great deal of it, for which we did not ask pardon. So for this, we ask forgiveness, I ask forgiveness. But here also, where there was sin, great sin, grace abounded through the men and women who defended the rights of indigenous peoples.

I also ask everyone, believers and nonbelievers alike, to think of those many bishops, priests and laity who preached and continue to preach the Good News of Jesus with courage and meekness, respectfully and pacifically – though I said bishops, priests and laity, I do not wish to forget the religious sisters who have been so present to our poor neighborhoods, bringing a message of peace and wellbeing – ; who left behind them impressive works of human promotion and of love, often standing alongside the native peoples or accompanying their popular movements even to the point of martyrdom. The Church, her sons and daughters, are

³¹ JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Ecclesia in Africa* (14 September 1995), 52: AAS 88 (1996), 32-22; ID., *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 22: AAS 80 (1988), 539.

³² *Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 Incarnationis Mysterium* (29 November 1998), 11: AAS 91 (1999), 139-141.

part of the identity of the peoples of Latin America. An identity which here, as in other countries, some powers are committed to erasing, at times because our faith is revolutionary, because our faith challenges the tyranny of mammon. Today we are dismayed to see how in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world many of our brothers and sisters are persecuted, tortured and killed for their faith in Jesus. This too needs to be denounced: in this third world war, waged peaceably, which we are now experiencing, a form of genocide – I insist on the word – is taking place, and it must end.

To our brothers and sisters in the Latin American indigenous movement, allow me to express my deep affection and appreciation of their efforts to bring peoples and cultures together – a coming together of peoples and cultures - in a form of coexistence which I like to call polyhedric, where each group preserves its own identity by building together a plurality which does not threaten but rather reinforces unity. Your quest for an interculturalism, which combines the defense of the rights of the native peoples with respect for the territorial integrity of states, is for all of us a source of enrichment and encouragement.

3.3. The third task, perhaps the most important facing us today, is to defend Mother Earth.

Our common home is being pillaged, laid waste and harmed with impunity. Cowardice in defending it is a grave sin. We see with growing disappointment how one international summit after another takes place without any significant result. There exists a clear, definite and pressing ethical imperative to implement what has not yet been done. We cannot allow certain interests – interests which are global but not universal – to take over, to dominate states and international organizations, and to continue destroying creation. People and their movements are called to cry out, to mobilize and to demand – peacefully, but firmly – that appropriate and urgently-needed measures be taken. I ask you, in the name of God, to defend Mother Earth. I have duly addressed this issue in my Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, which I believe will be distributed at the end.

4. In conclusion, I would like to repeat: the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize. It is in their hands, which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change. I am with you. Each of us, let repeat from the heart: no family without lodging, no rural worker without land, no laborer without rights, no people without sovereignty, no individual without dignity, no child without childhood, no young person without a future, no elderly person without a venerable old age. Keep up your struggle and, please, take great care of Mother Earth. Believe me; I am sincere when I say from the heart that I pray for you and with you, and I ask God our Father to accompany you and to bless you, to fill you with his love and defend you on your way by granting you in abundance that strength which keeps us on our feet: that strength is hope. It is something important: hope does not disappoint. I ask you, please, to pray for me. If some of you are unable to pray, with all respect, I ask you to send me your good thoughts and energy. Thank you.

III World Meeting of Popular Movements: address of the Holy Father

*Paul VI Auditorium (Vatican)
Saturday, 5 November 2016*

Brothers and sisters, good evening!

In this, our third meeting, we have voiced the same thirst, the thirst for justice, and the same cry: land, work and housing for all.

I thank the delegates who have come from the urban, rural and working peripheries of the five continents – from over sixty countries - to discuss once more how to defend these rights that brought us here. I thank the bishops who accompanied them, and the thousands of Italians and Europeans who joined us today for the conclusion of this meeting. I also thank the observers and young people engaged in public life who came quietly to listen and to learn. How much hope I have in young people! I am likewise grateful to you, Cardinal Turkson, for the work your dicastery does, and I would like to mention the contribution of the former President of Uruguay, José Mujica, who is present here.

At our last meeting, in Bolivia, with a majority of Latin Americans, we spoke of the need for change, a change of structures, for the sake of a decent life. We also spoke of how you, the popular movements, are sowers of change, promoters of a process involving millions of actions, great and small, creatively intertwined like words in a poem; that is why I wanted to call you “social poets”. We also listed three tasks essential for progressing towards a humane alternative to the globalization of indifference: (1) placing the economy at the service of peoples; (2) working for peace and justice; and (3) defending Mother Earth.

That day, a cartonera and a campesino read out the conclusions, the ten points of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, where the meaning of the word “change” was filled out. It was linked to your basic demands: dignified employment for those excluded from the labour market; land for campesinos and the native peoples; housing for homeless families; urban integration for poorer neighbourhoods; the elimination of discrimination, violence against women and other new forms of enslavement; an end to all wars, organized crime and repression; freedom of expression and democratic communication; putting science and technology at the service of peoples. We also heard your commitment to embracing a life project that rejects consumerism and recovers solidarity, mutual love and respect for nature as essential values. What you are demanding is the happiness of “living well”, not that deceptive and selfish ideal embodied in the phrase “living the good life”.

Those of us here today, with our varied origins, beliefs and ideas, may not be agreed on everything, for surely we think differently about many issues, but certainly we agree on these points.

I was also aware of the meetings and workshops held in different countries, where many discussions took place in the light of each community's situation. That is very important, because real solutions to today's problems are not going to emerge from one, three or even a thousand conferences. They need to be the fruit of a collective discernment that matures on the ground, alongside our brothers and sisters, a discernment that becomes transformative action "in accordance with places, times and persons", as Saint Ignatius would say. Otherwise, we run the risk of abstraction, of those "declarationist nominalisms that are fine phrases but that are not able to sustain the lives of our communities" (Letter to the President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, 19 March 2016). Slogans. A globalizing ideological colonialism attempts to impose supracultural recipes that fail to respect the identity of peoples. You yourselves take another route, which is both local and universal. A route that reminds me of how Jesus asked for the crowd to be organized in groups of fifty each, in order to distribute the bread (cf. Homily for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, Buenos Aires, 12 June 2004).

Recently we were able to view the video that you presented as a way of concluding this third Meeting. We saw your faces in the debates about what to do about the "inequality that spawns violence". So many proposals, so much creativity, so much hope in your voices: you, who perhaps have the most reasons to complain, to get caught up in conflicts, to fall into the temptation of negativity. Yet you look to the future, you reflect, you discuss, you propose and you act. I congratulate you, I accompany you and I ask you to continue to blaze trails and to keep fighting. This gives me strength; this gives all of us strength. I believe that this dialogue of ours, which is joined to the efforts of all those millions of people who work daily for justice throughout the world, is taking root.

I would like to touch on some more specific issues, the ones I received from you. They have made me think, and now I hand them back to you.

First: terror and walls.

That slow germination which, like every process of gestation, takes time, is threatened by the rapidity of a destructive mechanism working against it. There are powerful forces capable of neutralizing this evolving process of change aimed at displacing the primacy of money and once again putting human beings, men and women, at the centre. That "invisible thread" we talked about in Bolivia, that unjust structure linking all the forms of exclusion that you experience, can stiffen and become a whip, an existential whip that, as in the Egypt of the Old Testament, enslaves and robs of freedom. Some it lashes mercilessly, while constantly threatening others, in order to herd everyone, like cattle, to wherever the god of money chooses.

What governs then? Money. How does it govern? With the whip of fear, of inequality, of economic, social, cultural and military violence, which spawns ever greater violence in a seemingly unending downward spiral. So much pain and so much fear! There is – I said not long ago – a basic terrorism that is born of the overall control of money worldwide and strikes at humanity as a whole. That basic terrorism feeds derivative forms of terrorism like

narcoterrorism, state terrorism and what some wrongly term ethnic or religious terrorism, even though no people, no religion, is terrorist. Certainly, there are small fundamentalist groups on all sides. But terrorism begins when “you drive out the marvel of creation, man and woman, and put money in their place” (Press Conference on the Return Flight from the Apostolic Journey to Poland, 31 July 2016). That system is terroristic.

Almost a hundred years ago, Pius XI foresaw the growth of a global economic dictatorship that he called “international imperialism of finance” (Quadragesimo Anno, 15 May 1931, 109). That was in 1931! We are in this audience hall named after Paul VI, and it was Paul VI who, some fifty years ago, denounced the “new and abusive form of economic domination on the social, cultural and even political level” (Octogesima Adveniens, 14 May 1971, 44). They are harsh yet accurate words spoken by my predecessors, who warned us about what was to come. The Church and the prophets for millennia have been saying things that we find scandalous when the Pope repeats them today, in a time when the phenomenon has reached unprecedented proportions. The entire social doctrine of the Church and the magisterium of my predecessors rejects the idolatry of money that reigns rather than serves, that tyrannizes and terrorizes humanity.

No tyranny can last without exploiting our fears. This is key. Consequently, all tyranny is a form of terrorism. And when that terror, which has been sown in the outskirts, whether by massacres, plundering, oppression and injustice, explodes in the centres with different forms of violence, even with despicable and cowardly attacks, citizens who still retain some rights are tempted by the false security of physical and social walls. Walls that enclose some and leave others out. Some citizens behind walls, terrorized. Others excluded, dispossessed, and even more terrorized. Is this the life that God our Father desires for his children?

Fear then is fed, manipulated... Because fear is not only good business for those who trade in weapons and death, it weakens us, throws us off balance, breaks down our psychological and spiritual defences, anaesthetizes us to the sufferings of others, and in the end makes us cruel. When we hear of people exulting in the death of a young person who had perhaps lost his way, when we see that war is preferred to peace, when we see the spread of xenophobia, when we realize that intolerant ideas are gaining ground, behind that burgeoning cruelty is the cold breath of fear. I ask you to pray for all those who are fearful. Let us pray that God will give them strength, and that in this Year of Mercy we can soften our hearts. Mercy is not easy; it is no easy thing... It takes courage. That is why Jesus tells us: “Do not be afraid” (Mt 14:27), for mercy is the best antidote to fear. It is much better than antidepressants and anxiety medication. It is much more effective than walls, grates, alarms and weapons. And it is free: it is a gift from God. Dear brothers and sisters: all walls collapse. All of them. Let us not be deceived. As you have said, “we should continue working to build bridges between peoples, bridges which enable us to break down the walls of exclusion and exploitation” (Final Document of the II World Meeting of Popular Movements, 11 July 2015, Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia). Let us confront terror with love.

The second point I would like to mention is: love and bridges.

On a day like today, a Sabbath, Jesus did two things that, as the Gospel tells us, precipitated the conspiracy to kill him. He was walking with his disciples through a field, a field of grain. The disciples were hungry and ate the heads of grain. Nothing is said to us about the “owner” of that field... underlying [the account] is the universal destination of goods. One thing is certain: faced with hunger, Jesus set the dignity of the children of God over a rigid, casuistic and self-serving interpretation of the rules. When the doctors of the law complained with hypocritical indignation, Jesus reminded them that God desires love, not sacrifice, and explained to them that the Sabbath was made for human beings and not human beings for the Sabbath (cf. Mk 2:27). He confronted their hypocritical and smug thinking with the humble understanding of the heart (cf. Homily at the I Congress of Evangelization of Culture, Buenos Aires, 3 November 2006), which always puts people first and refuses to allow certain mindsets to obstruct its freedom to live, love and serve our neighbour.

And then that same day, Jesus did something “worse”, something that irritated even more the hypocrites and the prideful who were watching him, looking for some excuse to trap him. He cured a man’s withered hand. The hand, that powerful symbol of work, of labour. Jesus restored that man’s ability to work, and thereby restored his dignity. How many withered hands are there, how many persons deprived of the dignity of work, because the hypocrites, in order to defend unjust systems, are opposed to their being healed. Sometimes I think that when you, the organized poor, create your own work – establishing a cooperative, restoring a ruined factory, recycling the refuse of the consumer society, braving the elements in order to sell your wares in a public square, reclaiming a parcel of farm land to feed the hungry – whenever you do these things, you are imitating Jesus, because you are trying to heal, even if minimally and provisionally, that atrophy of the dominant socio-economic system, which is unemployment. I am not surprised that at times you find yourselves being watched or persecuted, nor am I surprised that the proud have no interest in what you are saying.

That Sabbath, Jesus put his life on the line, because after he healed that hand, the Pharisees and the Herodians (Mk 3:6), two rival parties who feared the people and the Roman Empire, began to scheme and plot to kill him. I know that many of you lay your own lives on the line. I know – and I want to say this – that some are not here today because they did lay down their lives... But there is no greater love than to give one’s life. That is what Jesus teaches us.

The three Ts [tierra, techo, trabajo], that cry of yours which I make my own, has a touch of that understanding which is humble, yet strong and healing. The bridge-project of peoples as opposed to the wall-project of money. The project that aims at integral human development. Some of you know that our friend Cardinal Turkson now heads the dicastery with that name: Integral Human Development. The opposite of development, we can say, is atrophy, paralysis. We have to help heal the world of its moral atrophy. This atrophied system can offer a number of cosmetic implants that are not true development: economic growth, technical advances, greater “efficiency” in producing products to be bought, used and discarded, engulfing us all in a whirlwind of refuse... But this kind of world does not allow the development of the human being in his integrity, a development that is not reduced to consumption or to the well-being of a few, but includes all peoples and individuals in their full dignity, enjoying as brothers and sisters the

marvel of creation. That is the development we need: one that is human, integral, respectful of creation, respectful of this common home.

Another point is: bankruptcy and salvaging.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to share with you some reflections on two further issues that, together with the three Ts (land, work and housing) and integral ecology, were central to your discussions these last days and are central at this moment in history.

I know that you devoted a whole day to the drama of migrants, refugees and displaced persons. What are we to do in the face of this tragedy? In the dicastery Cardinal Turkson heads, there is a department concerned with those situations. I decided that, at least for the time being, that department would be directly under the Pope, because here we have a shameful situation that can only be described by a word that came spontaneously to my lips in Lampedusa: a disgrace. There, and in Lesvos too, I could feel firsthand the suffering of so many families driven from their lands for economic reasons or acts of violence of every kind, crowds of the displaced, people who have endured the painful experience of being uprooted from their homeland. As I said before the leaders of the entire world, this is the result of an unjust socio-economic system and of armed conflicts that were neither sought nor caused by those who suffer being uprooted from their native soil, but by many of those who now refuse to receive them.

I echo the words of my brother, Archbishop Ieronymos of Greece: “Anyone who looks into the eyes of those small children we met in the refugee camps can immediately recognize, in its entirety, the ‘bankruptcy’ of humanity” (Address in the Moria Refugee Camp, Lesvos, 16 April 2016). What is going on in the world today that, when a bank fails, scandalous sums of money suddenly appear to save it, but before this bankruptcy of humanity not even a thousandth part is allotted to save those brothers and sisters who suffer so greatly? The Mediterranean has turned into a cemetery, and not only the Mediterranean... there are so many cemeteries alongside the walls, walls drenched in innocent blood. During the days of this Meeting, I asked in the video: How many people have died in the Mediterranean?

Fear hardens the heart and turns into a callousness that is blind to the blood, the pain, the faces of other people. As my brother, Patriarch Bartholomew, has said: “Those who are afraid of you have not looked you in the eye. Those who are afraid of you have not seen your faces. Those who are afraid of you do not see your children. They forget that dignity and freedom transcend fear and division. They forget that migration is not an issue for the Middle East and Northern Africa, for Europe and Greece. It is an issue for the world” (Address in the Moria Refugee Camp, Lesvos, 16 April 2016).

To be sure, it is a problem for the world. No one should be forced to flee from his or her country, but the evil is doubled when, in these terrible circumstances, migrants fall into the clutches of human traffickers in order to cross borders. It is tripled if, arriving in a land where they hoped to have a better future, they are treated with contempt, exploited and even enslaved. This can be seen on any corner in hundreds of cities. Or else, they simply are not allowed to enter.

I ask you to do everything you can. Never forget that Jesus, Mary and Joseph also experienced the dramatic plight of refugees. I ask you to show that special solidarity that exists between people who have suffered. You have shown that you can rescue factories from bankruptcy, recycle other people's refuse, create jobs, work the land, build housing, integrate segregated barrios and tirelessly plead, like the widow in the Gospel, for justice (cf. Lk 18:1-8). Perhaps by your example and your persistence, some states and international agencies may open their eyes and take suitable measures to receive and fully integrate all those who for one reason or another seek refuge far from home. And to confront the deeper reasons why thousands of men, women and children are daily driven from their native land.

Giving example and advocacy are ways of engaging in political life, and this brings me to the second major topic that you discussed in your meeting: the relationship between a people and democracy. This relationship should be natural and fluid, but it risks being deformed to the point of being unrecognizable. The breach between the peoples and our current forms of democracy is growing ever greater, due to the enormous power of the financial and media sectors that would seem to dominate them. Popular movements, I know, are not political parties, and I would say that, in great measure, this is what makes them so valuable, since they express a distinct, dynamic and vital form of social participation in public life. But do not be afraid to get involved in the great discussions, in politics with a capital P, and once again I quote Paul VI: "Politics are a demanding manner – but not the only one – of living the Christian commitment to the service of others" (Octogesima Adveniens, 14 May 1971, 46). Or that phrase I like to repeat but I can never remember whether it is from Paul VI or Pius XII: "Politics is one of the highest forms of charity, of love".

I would like to point to two risks involved in the relationship between popular movements and politics: the risk of being put in a straitjacket and the risk of being corrupted.

First, don't let yourselves get put in a straitjacket, because some people say: cooperatives, canteens, agro-ecological gardens, small businesses, drawing up welfare programmes... all that is fine. As long as you are confined by the straitjacket of "social policies", as long as you don't question economic policy or politics with a P, you are tolerated. The idea of social policies being a policy for the poor, but never with the poor and never of the poor, much less part of a project which can bring people back together, sometimes strikes me as a kind of brightly-painted dust bin to contain the refuse of the system. But if, on the basis of your being rooted alongside your neighbours, your daily experiences and your barrios and regions, your organization of community work, your one-on-one relationships, you dare to question "macro-relations", when you protest, when you lift your voice and presume to point out to the powerful a more integral approach, then you become intolerable. You become intolerable because you are casting off the straitjacket and entering the realm of the great decisions that some presume to monopolize in small castes. Thus, democracy atrophies, turns into a slogan, a formality; it loses its representative character and becomes disembodied, since it leaves out the people in their daily struggle for dignity, in the building of their future.

As organizations of the excluded and many organizations from other sectors of society, you are called to revitalize and recast the democracies, which are experiencing a genuine crisis. Do not fall into the temptation of the straitjacket, which reduces you to being extras off-stage, or worse, to mere administrators of existing misery. In these times of paralysis, disorientation and destructive formulas, the active participation of peoples who seek the common good can triumph, with God's help, over the false prophets who exploit fear and despair, who peddle magic formulas of hatred and callousness, or a selfish prosperity and an illusory security.

We know that "as long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world's problems, or for that matter, any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills" (Evangeliu Gaudium, 202). That is why I have said and I now repeat: "The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of the great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their capacity to organize. It is in their hands, which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change" (Address at the II World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, 9 July 2015). The Church too, can and must, without claiming a monopoly on truth, speak out and act, especially in the face of "situations of deep hurt and dramatic suffering, in which values, ethics, the social sciences and faith all enter into play" (Address to the Judges' Summit on Human Trafficking and Organized Crime, Vatican, 3 June 2016). This was the first risk: the risk of the straitjacket, and the encouragement to get involved in high-level politics.

The second risk, I said, is that of being corrupted. Just as politics is not an affair of "politicians", corruption is not a vice limited to political life. There is corruption in politics, there is corruption in the business world, there is corruption in the communications media, there is corruption in the churches, but also there is corruption in the social organizations and popular movements. It is correct to say that there is a "naturalized" corruption in some spheres of economic life, particularly financial activity, which gets less attention in the press than corruption directly linked to social and political life. It is right to say that cases of corruption are frequently manipulated with evil intentions. But it is also right to make clear that those who have opted for a life of service have a further obligation, in addition to the honesty with which any person must act in life. The bar is set higher. One has to live his or her vocation to service with a strong sense of austerity and humility. This holds true for politicians, but it is also true for social leaders and for ourselves, religious leaders. I used the word "austerity". I would like to clarify what I mean by that word. It can be equivocal. Moral austerity, austerity in one's way of living, austerity in how I go about my life, and in my family. Moral and human austerity. Because in a more scientific field, that of the economic sciences if you will, or the sciences of the market, austerity is a synonym of adjustment. That is not what I'm talking about.

I would advise any person who is unduly concerned with material things or with appearances, who likes money, rich banquets, sumptuous mansions, expensive clothes, luxury cars, to think about where their heart is, and to pray that God will free them from these attachments. But to paraphrase the Latin American former President who is present, whoever has a taste for such things, please, should not get involved in politics, not get involved in social organizations or

popular movements, because they will cause great harm to themselves and their neighbour, and will tarnish the noble cause they want to promote. Nor should such a person enter the seminary. Faced with the temptation of corruption, there is no better antidote than austerity: moral and personal austerity. What is more, to practice austerity is to preach by example. I ask you not to underestimate the value of example, for it is more powerful than a thousand words, a thousand pamphlets, a thousand likes or re-tweets, a thousand YouTube videos. The example of an austere life of service to one's neighbour is the best way to promote the common good and the bridge-project of the 3Ts. I urge leaders not to tire of practising such moral and personal austerity, and I ask everyone to require of leaders that austerity which – for that matter – will bring them much happiness.

Dear brothers and sisters,

Corruption, arrogance and public display by leaders increases collective unbelief and a sense of abandonment, and feeds the mechanism of fear that sustains that evil system.

I would like, in conclusion, to ask you to continue combating fear by a life of service, solidarity and humility on behalf of peoples, and especially those who suffer most. You will make lots of mistakes – we all make mistakes – but if we persevere in this journey, sooner rather than later we are going to see it bear fruit. And I insist that, against terror, the best antidote is love. Love heals everything. Some of you know that, following the Synod on the Family, I wrote a document entitled *Amoris Laetitia*. The joy of love. A document on love in each family, but also in that family which is the barrio, the community, the people, humanity. One of you asked me to distribute a booklet with part of the fourth chapter of that document. I believe that they are going to hand it out as you leave. Go, then, with my blessing. There you have some “helpful tips” for practicing the greatest of the commandments of Jesus.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, I quote the late African-American leader, Martin Luther King, who constantly opted for fraternal love, even amid the worst persecutions and indignities. I want to share his words with you: “When you rise to the level of love, of its great beauty and power, you seek only to defeat evil systems. Individuals who happen to be caught up in that system, you love, but you seek to defeat the system... Hate for hate only intensifies the existence of hate and evil in the universe. If I hit you and you hit me back and so on, you see, that goes on ad infinitum. It just never ends. Somewhere somebody must have a little sense, and that's the strong person. The strong person is the person who can cut off the chain of hate, the chain of evil”. He said this in 1957 (No. 118, Sermon delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, 17 November 1957).

Once more, I thank you for your work and your presence here. I ask God our Father to accompany you and bless you, to fill you with his love and to watch over you along the way. May he grant you in abundance that strength which keeps us going and gives us courage to cut off the chains of hate: that strength is hope. I ask you, please, to pray for me, and those who cannot pray, they already know this, to think kindly of me and wish me well. Thank you.

Letter of the Holy Father to the Popular Movements

12 April 2020, Easter Sunday

To our brothers and sisters
of popular movements and organizations

Dear Friends,

I often recall our previous meetings: two at the Vatican and one in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and I must tell you that this “souvenir” warms my heart. It brings me closer to you, and helps me re-live so many dialogues we had during those times. I think of all the beautiful projects that emerged from those conversations and took shape and have become reality. Now, in the midst of this pandemic, I think of you in a special way and wish to express my closeness to you.

In these days of great anxiety and hardship, many have used war-like metaphors to refer to the pandemic we are experiencing. If the struggle against COVID-19 is a war, then you are truly an invisible army, fighting in the most dangerous trenches; an army whose only weapons are solidarity, hope, and community spirit, all revitalizing at a time when no one can save themselves alone. As I told you in our meetings, to me you are social poets because, from the forgotten peripheries where you live, you create admirable solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting the marginalized.

I know that you nearly never receive the recognition that you deserve, because you are truly invisible to the system. Market solutions do not reach the peripheries, and State protection is hardly visible there. Nor do you have the resources to substitute for its functioning. You are looked upon with suspicion when through community organization you try to move beyond philanthropy or when, instead of resigning and hoping to catch some crumbs that fall from the table of economic power, you claim your rights. You often feel rage and powerlessness at the sight of persistent inequalities and when any excuse at all is sufficient for maintaining those privileges. Nevertheless, you do not resign yourselves to complaining: you roll up your sleeves and keep working for your families, your communities, and the common good. Your resilience helps me, challenges me, and teaches me a great deal.

I think of all the people, especially women, who multiply loaves of bread in soup kitchens: two onions and a package of rice make up a delicious stew for hundreds of children. I think of the sick, I think of the elderly. They never appear in the news, nor do small farmers and their families who work hard to produce healthy food without destroying nature, without hoarding, without exploiting people’s needs. I want you to know that our Heavenly Father watches over you, values you, appreciates you, and supports you in your commitment.

How difficult it is to stay at home for those who live in tiny, ramshackle dwellings, or for the homeless! How difficult it is for migrants, those who are deprived of freedom, and those in

rehabilitation from an addiction. You are there shoulder to shoulder with them, helping them to make things less difficult, less painful. I congratulate and thank you with all my heart. My hope is that governments understand that technocratic paradigms (whether state-centred or market-driven) are not enough to address this crisis or the other great problems affecting humankind. Now more than ever, persons, communities and peoples must be put at the centre, united to heal, to care and to share.

I know that you have been excluded from the benefits of globalization. You do not enjoy the superficial pleasures that anesthetize so many consciences, yet you always suffer from the harm they produce. The ills that afflict everyone hit you twice as hard. Many of you live from day to day, without any type of legal guarantee to protect you. Street vendors, recyclers, carnies, small farmers, construction workers, dressmakers, the different kinds of caregivers: you who are informal, working on your own or in the grassroots economy, you have no steady income to get you through this hard time ... and the lockdowns are becoming unbearable. This may be the time to consider a universal basic wage which would acknowledge and dignify the noble, essential tasks you carry out. It would ensure and concretely achieve the ideal, at once so human and so Christian, of no worker without rights.

Moreover, I urge you to reflect on “life after the pandemic,” for while this storm shall pass, its grave consequences are already being felt. You are not helpless. You have the culture, the method, and most of all, the wisdom that are kneaded with the leaven of feeling the suffering of others as your own. I want all of us to think about the project of integral human development that we long for and that is based on the central role and initiative of the people in all their diversity, as well as on universal access to those three Ts that you defend: Trabajo (work), Techo (housing), and Tierra (land and food). I hope that this time of danger will free us from operating on automatic pilot, shake our sleepy consciences and allow a humanist and ecological conversion that puts an end to the idolatry of money and places human life and dignity at the centre. Our civilization — so competitive, so individualistic, with its frenetic rhythms of production and consumption, its extravagant luxuries, its disproportionate profits for just a few — needs to downshift, take stock, and renew itself. You are the indispensable builders of this change that can no longer be put off. Moreover, when you testify that to change is possible, your voice is authoritative. You have known crises and hardships ... that you manage to transform — with modesty, dignity, commitment, hard work and solidarity — into a promise of life for your families and your communities.

Stand firm in your struggle and care for each other as brothers and sisters. I pray for you, I pray with you. I want to ask God our Father to bless you, to fill you with his love, and to defend you on this path, giving you the strength that keeps us standing tall and that never disappoints: hope. Please pray for me, because I need it too.

Fraternally,

Francis

IV World Meeting of Popular Movements: video message of the Holy Father

16 October 2021

Brothers, sisters, dear social poets:

1. Dear social poets

This is what I like to call you: social poets. You are social poets, because you have the ability and the courage to create hope where there appears to be only waste and exclusion. Poetry means creativity, and you create hope. With your hands you know how to shape the dignity of each person, of families and of society as a whole, with land, housing, work, care, and community. Thank you, because your dedication speaks with an authority that can refute the silent and often polite denials to which you have been subjected, or to which so many of our brothers and sisters are subjected. But, thinking of you, I am convinced that your dedication is above all a proclamation of hope. Seeing you reminds me that we are not condemned to repeat or to build a future based on exclusion and inequality, rejection or indifference; where the culture of privilege is an invisible and insurmountable power; and where being exploited and abused are common methods of survival. No! You know how to proclaim this very well. Thank you.

Thank you for the video we have just seen. I have read the reflections from the meeting, the testimonies of those who lived in these times of tribulation and anguish, the summary of their desires and their proposals. Thank you. Thank you for including me in the historical process that you are going through, and thank you for sharing with me this fraternal dialogue that seeks to see the great in the small and the small in the great, a dialogue that is born in the peripheries, a dialogue that reaches Rome and wherein we may all feel invited and engaged. “If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue”, and how much! ³³

You felt that the current situation merited a new meeting. I felt the same. Although we have never lost contact, it is already five years, I think, since the general meeting, isn't it? A lot has happened in that time; a lot has changed. These changes mark points of no return, turning points, crossroads at which humanity must make choices. And new moments of encounter, discernment and joint action are needed. Every person, every organisation, every country, and the whole world, needs to look for moments to reflect, discern and choose, because returning to the previous mindsets would be truly suicidal and, if I may press the point a little, ecocidal and genocidal.

In these months, many things you've long been denouncing have become totally obvious. The pandemic has laid bare the social inequalities that afflict our peoples. Seeking neither

³³ *Fratelli tutti*, 198.

permission nor forgiveness, it has exposed the heart-breaking situation of so many brothers and sisters, the situation that so many post-truth mechanisms have been unable to conceal. Many things we used to take for granted have collapsed like a house of cards. We have experienced how our way of life can drastically change from one day to the next, preventing us, for example, from seeing our relatives, colleagues and friends. In many countries, governments reacted. They listened to the science and were able to impose limits to ensure the common good, and so they managed at least for a while to put the brakes on this “gigantic machine” that works almost automatically, in which peoples and persons are simply cogs.³⁴

We have all suffered the pain of lockdown, but as usual you have had the worst of it. In neighbourhoods without basic infrastructure, where many of you and millions and millions more people live, it is difficult to stay at home, not only because you do not have everything you need to ensure minimum care and protection measures, but also because your home is the neighbourhood. Migrants, undocumented persons, informal workers without a fixed income were deprived, in many cases, of any state aid and prevented from carrying out their usual tasks, thus exacerbating their already grinding poverty. One of the expressions of this culture of indifference is that this suffering one-third of our world does not seem to be of sufficient interest to the big media and opinion makers. It remains huddled together and hidden.

I also want to refer to a silent pandemic that has been afflicting children, teenagers and young people of every social class for years; and which I believe, in this time of isolation, has spread further still. It is the stress of chronic anxiety, linked to various factors such as hyperconnectivity, disorientation and lack of future prospects, which is aggravated by the lack of real contact with others -- families, schools, sports centres, parishes, centres for young people -- and ultimately the lack of real contact with friends, because friendship is the form in which love always revives. It is clear that technology can be a tool for good, and truly it is a tool for good, which permits dialogues such as this one, and many other things, but it can never replace contact between us, it can never substitute for a community in which we can be rooted and which ensures that our life may become fruitful.

And speaking of pandemics, we have stopped questioning the scourge of the food crisis. Despite advances in biotechnology, millions of people have been deprived of food, even though it is available. This year twenty million more people have been dragged down to extreme levels of food insecurity; severe destitution has increased; and the price of food has risen sharply. The numbers relating to hunger are horrific, and I think, for example, of countries like Syria, Haiti, Congo, Senegal, Yemen, South Sudan. But hunger is also felt in many other poor countries of the world, and not infrequently in the rich world as well. Annual deaths from hunger may exceed those of Covid.³⁵ But this does not make the news. It does not generate empathy.

I want to thank you because you have felt the pain of others as your own. You know how to show the face of true humanity, the humanity that is not built by turning your back on the

³⁴ Cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 22.

³⁵ OXFAM, *The hunger virus multiplies*, 9.7.2021, based on the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) of the United Nations World Food Programme, 2021.

suffering of those around you, but in the patient, committed and often even sorrowful recognition that the other person is my brother or sister (cf. Lk 10:25-37) and that his or her joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties are also mine (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 1). To ignore those who have fallen is to ignore our own humanity that cries out in every brother and sister of ours.

Christians and non-Christians, you have responded to Jesus who said to His disciples, faced with the hungry crowd: "Give them some food yourselves". And where there was scarcity, the miracle of the multiplication occurred again in your struggling tirelessly so that no one would go without bread (cf. Mt 14:13-21). Thank you!

Like the doctors, nurses and health workers in the trenches of healthcare, you have taken your place in the trenches of the marginalised neighbourhoods. I am thinking of many, in quotation marks, "martyrs" to this solidarity, about whom I have learned from you. The Lord will take them into account. If all those who out of love struggled together against the pandemic could also dream of a new world together, how different things would be! To dream together.

2. The blessed

You are, as I said in the letter I sent you last year, a veritable invisible army; you are a fundamental part of that humanity that fights for life against a system of death.³⁶ In this engagement I see the Lord who makes Himself present in our midst, to give to us His Kingdom as a gift. When He offered us the standard by which we will be judged (cf. Mt 25: 31-46), Jesus told us that salvation consists in taking care of the hungry, the sick, prisoners, foreigners; in short, in recognising Him and serving Him in all suffering humanity. That is why I wish to say to you: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be satisfied" (Mt 5: 6), "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt 5: 9). We want this beatitude to expand, to permeate and anoint every corner and every space where life is threatened. But it happens to us as people, as communities, as families and even individually, that we have to face situations that paralyse us, where the horizon disappears and bewilderment, fear, powerlessness and injustice seem to take over the present. We also experience resistance to the changes we need and long for, many forms of resistance that run deep, that are rooted beyond our strength and decisions. They are what the Social Teaching of the Church calls structures of sin; these too we are called to change, and we cannot overlook them in the moment of thinking of how to act. Personal change is necessary, but it is also indispensable to adjust our socio-economic models so that they have a human face, because many models have lost it. And thinking about these situations, I make a pest of myself with my questions. And I go on asking. And I ask everyone in the name of God.

I ask all the great pharmaceutical laboratories to release the patents. Make a gesture of humanity and allow every country, every people, every human being, to have access to the vaccines. There are countries where only three or four per cent of the inhabitants have been vaccinated.

³⁶ *Letter to the Popular Movements*, 12.4.2020.

In the name of God, I ask financial groups and international credit institutions to allow poor countries to assure “the basic needs of their people” and to cancel those debts that so often are contracted against the interests of those same peoples.

In the name of God, I ask the great extractive industries -- mining, oil, forestry, real estate, agribusiness -- to stop destroying forests, wetlands and mountains, to stop polluting rivers and seas, to stop poisoning food and people.

In the name of God, I ask the great food corporations to stop imposing monopolistic systems of production and distribution that inflate prices and end up withholding bread from the hungry.

In the name of God, I ask arms manufacturers and dealers to completely stop their activity, because it foments violence and war, it contributes to those awful geopolitical games which cost millions of lives displaced and millions dead.

In the name of God, I ask the technology giants to stop exploiting human weakness, people’s vulnerability, for the sake of profits without caring about the spread of hate speech, grooming, fake news, conspiracy theories, and political manipulation.

In the name of God, I ask the telecommunications giants to ease access to educational material and connectivity for teachers via the internet so that poor children can be educated even under quarantine.

In the name of God, I ask the media to stop the logic of post-truth, disinformation, defamation, slander and the unhealthy attraction to dirt and scandal, and to contribute to human fraternity and empathy with those who are most deeply damaged.

In the name of God, I call on powerful countries to stop aggression, blockades and unilateral sanctions against any country anywhere on earth. No to neo-colonialism. Conflicts must be resolved in multilateral fora such as the United Nations. We have already seen how unilateral interventions, invasions and occupations end up; even if they are justified by noble motives and fine words.

This system, with its relentless logic of profit, is escaping all human control. It is time to slow the locomotive down, an out-of-control locomotive hurtling towards the abyss. There is still time.

Together with the poor of the earth, I wish to ask governments in general, politicians of all parties, to represent their people and to work for the common good. I want to ask them for the courage to look at their own people, to look people in the eye, and the courage to know that the good of a people is much more than a consensus between parties (cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 218). Let them stop listening exclusively to the economic elites, who so often spout superficial ideologies that ignore humanity’s real dilemmas. May they be servants of the people who demand land, work, housing and good living. This aboriginal good living or *buen vivir* is not the same as “*la dolce vita*” or “sweet idleness”, no. This is good human living that puts us in harmony with all humanity, with all creation.

I also want to ask all of us religious leaders never to use the name of God to foment wars or coups (cf. Document on Human Fraternity, 2019). Let us stand by the peoples, the workers, the humble, and let us struggle together with them so that integral human development may become a reality. Let us build bridges of love so that the voices of the periphery with their weeping, but also with their singing and joy, provoke not fear but empathy in the rest of society. And so, I persist in my pestering. It is necessary to confront together the populist discourses of intolerance, xenophobia, and aporophobia, which is hatred of the poor. Like everything that leads us to indifference, meritocracy and individualism, these narratives only serve to divide our peoples, and to undermine and nullify our poetic capacity, the capacity to dream together.

3. Let us dream together!

Sisters and brothers, let us dream together. And so, as I ask all of this with you as well as of you, I want to add some reflections on the future that we must dream and build. Although I say reflections, perhaps I ought to say dreams, because right now our brains and hands are not enough, we also need our hearts and our imagination; we need to dream so that we do not go backwards. We need to use that sublime human faculty which is the imagination, that place where intelligence, intuition, experience and historical memory come together to create, compose, venture and risk. Let us dream together, because it was precisely the dreams of freedom and equality, of justice and dignity, the dreams of fraternity, that improved the world. And I am convinced when we look through these dreams we will find God's own dream for all of us, who are His own sons and daughters.

Let us dream together, dream among yourselves, dream with others. Know that you are called to participate in great processes of change, as I said to you in Bolivia: "the future of humanity is in great measure in your own hands, through your ability to organise and carry out creative alternatives". In your hands.

But such things are unattainable, some will say. Yes. Yet they can get us going, can set us on our way. And that, precisely, is where all your strength lies, all your value. Because you are capable of going beyond the short-sighted self-justifications and human conventions that achieve nothing but continue to justify things as they are. Dream. Dream together. Don't give in to that resignation of the toughs and of the losers. The tango expresses so well: "Go on and then go on some more! We'll meet in hell 'cause that's what lies in store!" No, no, don't give in to this, please. Dreams are always dangerous for those who defend the status quo because they challenge the paralysis that the egoism of the strong and the conformism of the weak want to impose. There is something of an unsigned but subconscious pact here, isn't there? The egoism of the strong with the conformism of the weak. It cannot work like this. Dreams transcend the narrow limits imposed on us and suggest possible new worlds to us. And I am not talking about ignoble fantasies that confuse living well with having fun, which is nothing more than passing the time to fill the void of meaning and thus remain at the mercy of the world's dominant ideology. No, it is not that. But to dream of that good living in harmony with all humanity and creation.

But what is one of the greatest dangers we face today? In the course of my life - I am not a teenager, I know, I do have some experience - I have managed to learn that from a crisis you never emerge the same. We will not come out of this pandemic crisis the same. Come out better or come out worse but: the same as we were before? No. We will never emerge the same. And today together, always together, we have to face this question: "How will we emerge from this crisis? Better or worse?" Of course, we want to come out better, but to do so we have to break the bonds of what is easy and the docile acceptance that "there is no other way", that "this is the only possible system." Such resignation destroys "us" and substitutes the isolation of "every man for himself". And so, we must dream. It worries me that, while we are still paralysed, "there are already projects underway to restore the same socio-economic structure we had before" because it is easier. Let us choose the difficult path. Let us come out better.

In Fratelli tutti I used the parable of the Good Samaritan as the clearest possible Gospel presentation of this intentional choice. A friend told me that the figure of the Good Samaritan is associated by a certain cultural industry with a half-wit. This is the distortion that provokes the depressive hedonism that is meant to neutralise the transformative power that people possess, and in particular young people.

Do you know what comes to mind now when, together with popular movements, I think of the Good Samaritan? Do you know what comes to mind? The protests over the death of George Floyd. It is clear that this type of reaction against social, racial or macho injustice can be manipulated or exploited by political machinations or whatever, but the main thing is that, in that protest against this death, there was the Collective Samaritan who is no fool! This movement did not pass by on the other side of the road when it saw the injury to human dignity caused by an abuse of power. The popular movements are not only social poets but also collective Samaritans.

In these processes, there are many young people who feel hope, but there are many other young people who are sad, who perhaps in order to feel something in this world need to resort to the cheap consolations offered by the consumerist and narcotising system. And others, sad to say, others choose to leave the system altogether. The statistics on youth suicides are not published in their entirety. What you do is very important, but it is also important that you succeed in transmitting to present and future generations the same thing that inflames your hearts. In this you have a dual task or responsibility. Like the Good Samaritan, to tend attentively to all those who are stricken along the way, and at the same time, to ensure that many more join in: the poor and the oppressed of the earth deserve it, and our common home demands it of us.

I want to offer some guidelines. The social teaching of the Church does not have all the answers, but it does have some principles that along this journey can help to concretize the answers, principles useful to Christians and non-Christians alike. It sometimes surprises me that every time I speak of these principles, some people are astonished, and then the Holy Father gets labeled with a series of epithets that are used to reduce any reflection to mere discrediting

adjectives. It doesn't anger me, it saddens me. It is part of the post-truth plot that seeks to nullify any humanistic search for an alternative to capitalist globalisation, it is part of the throwaway culture, and it is part of the technocratic paradigm.

The principles I set out are tested, human, Christian, and are compiled in the Compendium drawn up by the then Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.³⁷ It is a small manual of the Church's Social Teaching. And sometimes, when the Popes, be it myself or Benedict, or John Paul II, say something, there are people who wonder: "Where did he get it from?" It is the traditional teaching of the Church. There is a lot of ignorance about this. The principles I expound are in this Compendium commissioned by Saint John Paul II. I recommend that you read it, you and all social, trade union, religious, political and business leaders.

In chapter four of this document, we find principles such as the preferential option for the poor, the universal destination of goods, solidarity, subsidiarity, participation, and the common good. These are all ways in which the Good News of the Gospel takes concrete form on a social and cultural level. And it saddens me that some members of the Church get annoyed when we mention these guidelines that belong to the full tradition of the Church. But the Pope must not stop mentioning this teaching, even if it often annoys people, because what is at stake is not the Pope but the Gospel.

And so in this context, I would like to briefly reiterate some of the principles we rely upon to carry out our mission. I will mention two or three, not more. One is the principle of solidarity. Solidarity not only as a moral virtue but also as a social principle: a principle that seeks to confront unjust systems with the aim of building a culture of solidarity that expresses, the Compendium literally says, "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good".³⁸

Another principle is to stimulate and promote participation and subsidiarity between movements and between peoples, capable of thwarting any authoritarian mindset, any forced collectivism or any state-centric mindset. The common good cannot be used as an excuse to quash private initiative, local identity or community projects. Therefore, these principles promote an economy and politics that recognise the role of popular movements, "the family, groups, associations, local territorial realities; in short, for that aggregate of economic, social, cultural, sports-oriented, recreational, professional and political expressions to which people spontaneously give life and which make it possible for them to achieve effective social growth".³⁹

As you see, dear brothers, dear sisters, these are balanced and well-established principles in the Social Teaching of the Church. With these two principles I believe we can take the next step from dream to action. Because it is time for action.

4. Time for action

³⁷ Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004.

³⁸ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 193.

³⁹ *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 185.

I often hear, “Father, we agree, but in real terms, what must we do?” I do not have the answer, and so we must dream together and find it together. There are, however, some concrete measures that may allow for significant changes. These measures are present in your documents, in your speeches, and I have taken them very much into account; I have reflected on them and consulted specialists. In past meetings we talked about urban integration, family farming and the popular economy. We have to go on working together to make them a reality, and now let me add two more: the universal wage and shortening the workday.

A basic income (the UBI) or salary so that everyone in the world may have access to the most basic necessities of life. It is right to fight for a humane distribution of these resources, and it is up to governments to establish tax and redistribution schemes so that the wealth of one part of society is shared fairly, but without imposing an unbearable burden, especially upon the middle class. Generally, when conflicts arise in this matter, it is the middle class that suffers most. Let us not forget that today’s huge fortunes are the fruit of the work, scientific research and technical innovation of thousands of men and women over generations.

Shortening the workday is another possibility: the minimum income is one, the reduction of the working day is another possibility, and one that needs seriously to be explored. In the 19th century, workers laboured twelve, fourteen, sixteen hours a day. When they achieved the eight-hour day, nothing collapsed, contrary to what some sectors had predicted. So, I insist, “working fewer hours so that more people can have access to the labour market is something we need to explore with some urgency”. There must not be so many people overwhelmed by overwork and so many others overwhelmed by lack of work.

I believe these measures are necessary, but of course not sufficient. They do not solve the root problem, nor do they guarantee access to land, housing and work in the quantity and quality that landless farmers, families without secure shelter and precarious workers deserve. Nor will they solve the enormous environmental challenges we face. But I wanted to mention them because they are possible measures and would point us in the right direction.

It is good to know that we are not alone in this. The United Nations has tried to establish some targets through the so-called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but unfortunately, they are not well known by our peoples and in the peripheries; which reminds us of the importance of sharing and involving everyone in this common quest.

Sisters and brothers, I am convinced that “the world can be seen more clearly from the peripheries”. We must listen to the peripheries, open the doors to them and allow them to participate. The suffering of the world is better understood alongside those who suffer. In my experience, when people, men and women, have suffered injustice, inequality, abuse of power, deprivations, and xenophobia in their own flesh – in my experience, I can see that they understand much better what others are experiencing and are able to help them realistically to open up paths of hope. How important it is that your voice be heard, represented in all the places where decisions are made. Offer your voice in a collaborative spirit; speak with moral certainty of what must be done. Strive to make your voice heard; but please, in those places, do

not allow yourself to be constrained or corrupted. These two words are heavy with meaning, but I won't talk about them now.

Let us reaffirm the commitment we made in Bolivia: to place the economy at the service of the people in order to build a lasting peace based on social justice and on care for our Common Home. Continue to promote your agenda of land, work and housing. Continue to dream together. And thank you, thank you very much, thank you for letting me dream with you.

Let us ask God to pour out His blessings on our dreams. Let us not lose our hope. Let us remember the promise that Jesus made to His disciples: "I will be with you always," and remembering it, at this moment of my life, I want to tell you that I will also be with you. The important thing is to realise that He is with you. Thank you.

Message of Pope Francis on the occasion of the 10th Anniversary of *Evangelii gaudium*

24 November 2023

Dear brothers and sisters,

I thank the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development for organizing this symposium to reflect on *Evangelii Gaudium* ten years after its publication.

On that occasion, I addressed Christians to invite them to a new phase in the proclamation of the Gospel. I proposed rediscovering the missionary joy of the first Christians, filled with joy, unflagging courage and zeal in proclaiming the Gospel,⁴⁰ even in circumstances that were not conducive to the Gospel message, the struggle for justice, or the defence of human dignity.⁴¹ They were defamed, persecuted, tortured, killed .. and yet, instead of shutting themselves away, they were the paradigm of an outgoing Church, that knew how to boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.⁴²

Difficulties also exist in our time; less explicit but at perhaps more insidious. As they are less visible, they operate like an anaesthetic or like the carbon monoxide from old cookers that kills silently. Every period of history is marked by the presence of human weakness, self-absorption, complacency and selfishness, to say nothing of the concupiscence which preys upon us. These things are ever present under one guise or another.⁴³

The proclamation of the Gospel in today's world continues to demand of us a prophetic, counter-cultural resistance to the self-centred hedonism of paganism,⁴⁴ like that of the Fathers of the Church, resistance before a system that kills, excludes, destroys human dignity; resistance before a mentality that isolates, alienates, closes the inner life in its own interests, distances us from our neighbour, distances us from God.

In *Evangelii Gaudium* I wanted to show clearly that, called to have the same sentiments as Jesus Christ, our evangelizing mission and our Christian life cannot ignore the poor. The entire history of our redemption is marked by the presence of the poor.⁴⁵ All of it. From his own mother, the Holy Virgin, a poor girl on the outskirts of a great empire. Jesus Himself who made Himself poor, who was born in a stable among animals and peasants, who grew up among workers and earned His bread with His hands, who surrounded Himself with crowds of the dispossessed,

⁴⁰ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (24 November 2013), 263.

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid, 24

⁴³ Ibid, 263

⁴⁴ Ibid, 193

⁴⁵ Ibid, 197

identified with them, put them at the centre of His heart, announced the Good News to them first, who promised them the Kingdom of Heaven and sent us all, missionary disciples, to feed them, to distribute goods justly with them, to defend their cause to the point of clearly indicating to us that mercy towards all of these is the key to heaven (cf. Mt 25:35ff).⁴⁶

This message is so clear and direct, so simple and eloquent, that no ecclesial interpretation has the right to relativize it,⁴⁷ because our salvation is at stake here. That is why the Pope cannot fail to put the poor at the centre. It is not politics, it is not sociology, it is not ideology, it is purely and simply the requirement of the Gospel. The practical implications of this non-negotiable principle for each context, society, person and institution – in international organizations and governments, in trade unions and popular movements, in companies and financial institutions, in politicians, judges and the media – can and must vary, but what no one can evade or excuse themselves from is the debt of love that every Christian – and I dare say, every human being – owes to the poor.

The Church can find in the poor the wind that fans the flame of a waning fervour, like that thick liquid with which the ancient priests of Nehemiah's time rekindled the fire of the altar after the exile so that there was "a fire so great that all were astonished".⁴⁸ In the active love we owe to the poor there is the remedy for the great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism ... the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience.⁴⁹

In u, without laying claim to a monopoly on the interpretation of social reality, I argued that in order to radically solve the problems of the poor, a necessary condition for solving any other problem since inequality is at the root of social ills, we needed a profound change of mentalities and structures. I would like to refer briefly to these two aspects by taking some paragraphs from the Exhortation.

A new mindset

A new mindset which thinks in terms of community and the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of good by a few.⁵⁰

Solidarity is a spontaneous reaction by those who recognize that the social function of property and the universal destination of goods is justified by the need to protect and increase them, so that they can better serve the common good; for this reason, solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them. These convictions and habits of solidarity, when they are put into practice, open the way to other structural transformations and make them

⁴⁶ Ibid, 197

⁴⁷ Ibid, 194

⁴⁸ 2 Mac, 1, 22

⁴⁹ Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (24 November 2013), 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 188

possible. Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual.⁵¹ Sometimes it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth, since 'peace is founded not only on respect for human rights, but also on respect for the rights of peoples'. Sadly, even human rights can be used as a justification for an inordinate defense of individual rights or the rights of richer peoples. With due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity. It must be reiterated that 'the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others'. To speak properly of our own rights, we need to broaden our perspective and to hear the plea of other peoples and other regions than those of our own country. We need to grow in solidarity which 'would allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny', since 'every person is called to self-fulfilment'.⁵²

New structures of solidarit

The new structures, founded on this new mindset, must [reject] the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and [attack] the structural causes of inequality.⁵³

The dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies. At times, however, they seem to be a mere addendum imported from without in order to fill out a political discourse lacking in perspectives or plans for true and integral development. How many words prove irksome to this system! It is irksome when the question of ethics is raised, when global solidarity is invoked, when the distribution of goods is mentioned, when reference is made to protecting labour and defending the dignity of the powerless, when allusion is made to a God who demands a commitment to justice. Casual indifference in the face of such questions empties our lives and our words of all meaning. Business is a vocation, and a noble vocation, provided that those engaged in it see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in life; this will enable them truly to serve the common good by striving to increase the goods of this world and to make them more accessible to all.⁵⁴

We can no longer trust in the unseen forces and the invisible hand of the market. Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programmes, mechanism and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Ibid, 189.

⁵² Ibid, 190.

⁵³ Ibid, 202.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 203.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 204.

If we do not achieve this change of mindset and structures, we are condemned to see the deepening of the climate, health and migration crises, and particularly violence and wars, putting at risk the whole human family, poor and non-poor, integrated and excluded, because “we are all in the same boat and we are all called to row together”.

In *Evangelii gaudium* I intended to show:

Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root. Just as goodness tends to spread, the toleration of evil, which is injustice, tends to expand its baneful influence and quietly to undermine any political and social system, no matter how solid it may appear. If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of a society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of a hope for a better future. We are far from the so-called “end of history”, since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realized.⁵⁶

Today’s economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve. It serves only to offer false hopes to those clamouring for heightened security, even though nowadays we know that weapons and violence, rather than providing solutions, create new and more serious conflicts. Some simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poorer countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations, they claim that the solution is an “education” that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless. All this becomes even more exasperating for the marginalized in the light of the widespread and deeply rooted corruption found in many countries – in their governments, businesses and institutions – whatever the political ideology of their leaders.⁵⁷

In the same way, the climate, healthcare and migratory crises have the same root in the inequity of this economy that kills, discards and destroys sister mother earth, in the selfish mentality that sustains it, to which I referred in greater depth in *Laudato sí*. Those who think they can save themselves alone, in this world or in the next, are mistaken.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 59.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 60.

Ten years on from the publication of *Evangelii gaudium*, let us reaffirm that only by listening to the often-silenced cry of the earth and of the poor can we fulfil our evangelizing mission, live the life that Jesus proposes to us and contribute to solving the grave problems of humanity.

I thank you again for this Symposium.

Thank you for what you do. I bless you and accompany you with prayer. And please do not forget to pray for me.

Other documents from the social thought of Pope Francis

Some points from the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (2013)

52. In our time humanity is experiencing a turning-point in its history, as we can see from the advances being made in so many fields. We can only praise the steps being taken to improve people's welfare in areas such as health care, education and communications. At the same time we have to remember that the majority of our contemporaries are barely living from day to day, with dire consequences. A number of diseases are spreading. The hearts of many people are gripped by fear and desperation, even in the so-called rich countries. The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity. This epochal change has been set in motion by the enormous qualitative, quantitative, rapid and cumulative advances occurring in the sciences and in technology, and by their instant application in different areas of nature and of life. We are in an age of knowledge and information, which has led to new and often anonymous kinds of power.

No to an economy of exclusion

53. Just as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say "thou shalt not" to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. Human beings are themselves considered consumer goods to be used and then discarded. We have created a "throw away" culture which is now spreading. It is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be a part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers".

54. In this context, some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system. Meanwhile, the excluded are still waiting. To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all this were someone else's responsibility and not

our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us.

No to the new idolatry of money

55. One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.

56. While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. This imbalance is the result of ideologies which defend the absolute autonomy of the marketplace and financial speculation. Consequently, they reject the right of states, charged with vigilance for the common good, to exercise any form of control. A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. Debt and the accumulation of interest also make it difficult for countries to realize the potential of their own economies and keep citizens from enjoying their real purchasing power. To all this we can add widespread corruption and self-serving tax evasion, which have taken on worldwide dimensions. The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.

No to a financial system which rules rather than serves

57. Behind this attitude lurks a rejection of ethics and a rejection of God. Ethics has come to be viewed with a certain scornful derision. It is seen as counterproductive, too human, because it makes money and power relative. It is felt to be a threat, since it condemns the manipulation and debasement of the person. In effect, ethics leads to a God who calls for a committed response which is outside the categories of the marketplace. When these latter are absolutized, God can only be seen as uncontrollable, unmanageable, even dangerous, since he calls human beings to their full realization and to freedom from all forms of enslavement. Ethics – a non-ideological ethics – would make it possible to bring about balance and a more humane social order. With this in mind, I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: “Not to share one’s wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs”.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Saint John Chrysostom, *De Lazaro Concio, II, 6: PG 48, 992D.*

58. A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. I urge them to face this challenge with determination and an eye to the future, while not ignoring, of course, the specifics of each case. Money must serve, not rule! The Pope loves everyone, rich and poor alike, but he is obliged in the name of Christ to remind all that the rich must help, respect and promote the poor. I exhort you to generous solidarity and to the return of economics and finance to an ethical approach which favours human beings.

No to the inequality which spawns violence

59. Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. The poor and the poorer peoples are accused of violence, yet without equal opportunities the different forms of aggression and conflict will find a fertile terrain for growth and eventually explode. When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root. Just as goodness tends to spread, the toleration of evil, which is injustice, tends to expand its baneful influence and quietly to undermine any political and social system, no matter how solid it may appear. If every action has its consequences, an evil embedded in the structures of a society has a constant potential for disintegration and death. It is evil crystallized in unjust social structures, which cannot be the basis of hope for a better future. We are far from the so-called “end of history”, since the conditions for a sustainable and peaceful development have not yet been adequately articulated and realized.

60. Today’s economic mechanisms promote inordinate consumption, yet it is evident that unbridled consumerism combined with inequality proves doubly damaging to the social fabric. Inequality eventually engenders a violence which recourse to arms cannot and never will be able to resolve. It serves only to offer false hopes to those clamouring for heightened security, even though nowadays we know that weapons and violence, rather than providing solutions, create new and more serious conflicts. Some simply content themselves with blaming the poor and the poorer countries themselves for their troubles; indulging in unwarranted generalizations, they claim that the solution is an “education” that would tranquilize them, making them tame and harmless. All this becomes even more exasperating for the marginalized in the light of the widespread and deeply rooted corruption found in many countries – in their governments, businesses and institutions – whatever the political ideology of their leaders.

Homily of the Holy Father: "Work Is the Vocation of Man"

Chapel of the Casa Santa Marta (Vaticano)

1 May 2020

"God created" (Gen 1:27). A Creator. He created the world, He created man, and He gave man and woman a mission: to manage, to work with and bring forward creation. And the Bible uses the word "work" to express this activity of God: He "completed the work He had been doing. He rested on the seventh day... after all His work of creating" (Gen 2:2). And he gives this activity to man: "You need to do this, take care of this and that, you need to work so as to create with me," as if he were saying this, "so that this world might continue" (see Gen 2:15, 19-20). To the point that work is none other than the continuation of God's work: human work is man's vocation received from God at the end of the creation of the universe.

Work makes the human person similar to God, because with work man is a creator, capable of creating, of creating many things; also of creating a family to raise. The human person is a creator, and creates through work. This is his vocation, and it says in the Bible that "God saw all He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen 1:31). That is, work had goodness within itself and creates the harmony of things - beauty, goodness - and involves man in everything: in his thought, his actions, everything. Man is involved in work. It is man's first vocation: to work. And this gives dignity to man. The dignity that makes him resemble God. The dignity of work.

Once, a man went to Caritas, a man who had no employment and went to ask for help for his family. An employee of Caritas, who gave him something to eat, said to him, "At least you can take some food home". "But this is not enough for me", was the answer. "I want to earn the food I take home". He was lacking the dignity, that dignity of "making" the bread himself, through work, and taking it home. The dignity of work, which is trampled on, unfortunately.

Throughout history we have read about the brutality inflicted on slaves: they were brought from Africa to America - I think of that history that touches my own land - and we say, "What barbarism!" But there are many slaves today too, many men and women who are not free to work; they are forced to work in order to survive, nothing more. They are slaves: it is forced labour. It is forced labour, unjust, ill-paid, and which leads men and women to live with their dignity trampled underfoot. There are many, many throughout the world. Many. In the newspapers a few months ago we read, in a country in Asia, of how a man had beaten to death an employee who earned less than half a dollar a day, because he had done something badly.

Today's slavery is our "indignity", because it takes away the dignity of men, of women, all of us. "No, I work, I have my dignity". Yes, but your brothers and sisters do not. "Yes, Father, it is true, but this, since it is very far away from me, I struggle to understand it. But they are among us; yes, here among us. Think of the day workers, who are made to work for minimum pay, and not for eight, but for twelve or fourteen hours a day: this happens today, here. Throughout the world, and also here. I think of the domestic worker who does not receive a fair wage, who has no

social security assistance, insurance, no pension provision: this does not only happen in Asia. It happens here.

Every injustice inflicted on a person who works tramples on human dignity; and also the dignity of the one who does this injustice. It lowers the level and we end up with that tension that exists between a dictator and a slave. Instead, the vocation that God gives us is so good: to create, to re-create, to work. But this can be done when the conditions are right and the dignity of the person is respected.

Today let us join with many men and women, believers and non-believers, who commemorate Workers' Day, the day of work, for those who fight for justice in the world of work, for those - the good employers - who manage their businesses fairly, even if they themselves lose as a result. Two months ago I spoke on the telephone to a businessman, here in Italy, who asked me to pray for him because he did not want to lay off any of his workers, and said, "Because to lay off one of them is like firing myself". This conscience of so many employers who are good, who take care of their employees as if they were their own children. Let us pray for them too. And let us ask Saint Joseph, with this beautiful image [a statue standing near the altar] with the tools of his trade in his hand, that he might help us fight for the dignity of work, so that there may be work for everyone and that the work may be dignified. Not slave labour. May this be our prayer today.

Some points from the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* (2020)

116. The needy generally “practise the special solidarity that exists among those who are poor and suffering, and which our civilization seems to have forgotten or would prefer in fact to forget. Solidarity is a word that is not always well received; in certain situations, it has become a dirty word, a word that dare not be said. Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labour rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money... Solidarity, understood in its most profound meaning, is a way of making history, and this is what popular movements are doing”.⁵⁹

118. The world exists for everyone, because all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of colour, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all. As a community, we have an obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.

162. The biggest issue is employment. The truly “popular” thing – since it promotes the good of the people – is to provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources. This is the finest help we can give to the poor, the best path to a life of dignity. Hence my insistence that, “helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work”.⁶⁰ Since production systems may change, political systems must keep working to structure society in such a way that everyone has a chance to contribute his or her own talents and efforts. For “there is no poverty worse than that which takes away work and the dignity of work”.⁶¹ In a genuinely developed society, work is an essential dimension of social life, for it is not only a means of earning one’s daily bread, but also of personal growth, the building of healthy relationships, self-expression and the exchange of gifts. Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people.

168. The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith. Whatever the challenge, this impoverished and repetitive school of thought always offers the same recipes. Neoliberalism simply reproduces itself by resorting to the magic theories of “spillover” or “trickle” – without using the name – as the only solution to societal problems. There is little appreciation of the fact that the alleged “spillover” does not resolve the inequality that gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society. It is imperative to have a proactive economic policy directed at “promoting an economy

⁵⁹ Address to Participants in the Meeting of Popular Movements (28 October 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 851-852.

⁶⁰ Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'* (24 May 2015), 128: AAS 107 (2015), 898.

⁶¹ Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See (12 January 2015): AAS 107 (2015), 165; cf. Address to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements (28 October 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 851-859.

that favours productive diversity and business creativity⁶² and makes it possible for jobs to be created and not cut. Financial speculation fundamentally aimed at quick profit continues to wreak havoc. Indeed, “without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfil its proper economic function. And today this trust has ceased to exist”.⁶³ The story did not end the way it was meant to, and the dogmatic formulae of prevailing economic theory proved not to be infallible. The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom. It has also shown that, in addition to recovering a sound political life that is not subject to the dictates of finance, “we must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need”.⁶⁴

169. In some closed and monochrome economic approaches, for example, there seems to be no place for popular movements that unite the unemployed, temporary and informal workers and many others who do not easily find a place in existing structures. Yet those movements manage various forms of popular economy and of community production. What is needed is a model of social, political and economic participation “that can include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny”, while also ensuring that “these experiences of solidarity which grow up from below, from the subsoil of the planet – can come together, be more coordinated, keep on meeting one another”.⁶⁵ This, however, must happen in a way that will not betray their distinctive way of acting as “sowers of change, promoters of a process involving millions of actions, great and small, creatively intertwined like words in a poem”.⁶⁶ In that sense, such movements are “social poets” that, in their own way, work, propose, promote and liberate. They help make possible an integral human development that goes beyond “the idea of social policies being a policy for the poor, but never with the poor and never of the poor, much less part of a project that reunites peoples”.⁶⁷ They may be troublesome, and certain “theorists” may find it hard to classify them, yet we must find the courage to acknowledge that, without them, “democracy atrophies, turns into a mere word, a formality; it loses its representative character and becomes disembodied, since it leaves out the people in their daily struggle for dignity, in the building of their future”.⁶⁸

⁶² Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 129: AAS 107 (2015), 899.

⁶³ BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 35: AAS 101 (2009), 670.

⁶⁴ *Address to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements (28 October 2014)*: AAS 106 (2014), 858.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Address to Participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements (5 November 2016)*: L'Osservatore Romano, 7-8 November 2016, pp. 4-5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

International meeting on “The Economy of Francis – youth, a pact, the future”: video message of the Holy Father

21 November 2020

Dear young people, good afternoon!

Thank you for being there, for all the work you have done, and for the efforts you have made over the past months, despite changes in our programme. You did not lose heart, and in fact I have appreciated the level of reflection, precision and seriousness with which you have worked. You brought to it all of your passion for the things that excite you, cause you concern, make you indignant and urge you to work for change.

Our original idea was to meet in Assisi, to find inspiration in the footsteps of Saint Francis. In the crucifix at San Damiano, and in many other faces – like that of the leper – the Lord came to Francis, called him and gave him a mission. He empowered Francis to cast off the idols that had isolated him from others, the questions and doubts that had paralyzed him and kept him trapped in thinking “this is the way things have always been done” (for that is a trap!), or in the bittersweet melancholy of those caught up only in themselves. The Lord made it possible for Francis to intone a hymn of praise, an expression of his joy, freedom and self-giving. I consider this virtual meeting in Assisi not as an endpoint, but rather the beginning of a process that we are asked to undertake together as a vocation, a culture and a covenant.

The vocation of Assisi

“Francis, go and repair my house, which you can see is in ruins”. These were the words that so stirred the young Francis, and have become a special summons addressed to each one of us. When you feel called to share actively in the building of a new “normal”, you respond by saying “yes” and this is a source of great hope. I know that you immediately accepted this invitation because you yourselves are in a position to realize that things cannot go on the way they are. This was evident from your interest and your active participation in this covenant, which has surpassed all expectations. You showed a personal interest in identifying the crucial issues we are facing, and you did this from a particular perspective: that of the economy, which is your area of research, study and work. You recognize the urgent need for a different economic narrative, for a responsible realization that “the present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view”⁶⁹ and is harming our sister earth, so gravely maltreated and despoiled, together with the poor and the excluded in our midst. Those two things go together: if you harm the earth, the number of poor and excluded increases. They are the first to be hurt... and the first to be forgotten.

Be careful, though, not to be talked into believing that this is just another banal problem. Your voice is much more than an empty, passing outcry that can be quelled with the passage of time.

⁶⁹ Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 61. Hereafter, LS.

Rather, you are called to have a concrete impact on cities and universities, workplaces and unions, businesses and movements, public and private offices, and to work with intelligence, commitment and conviction in order to reach the centres where ideas and paradigms are developed and decided.⁷⁰ That is why I have invited you to make this covenant. The gravity of the present situation, made all the more evident by the Covid pandemic, demands that a responsible stand be taken by all social actors, all of us, with yourselves in the forefront. The effects of our actions and decisions will affect you personally. Consequently, you cannot remain outside the centres that are shaping not only your future, but also, I am convinced, your present. You cannot absent yourselves from those places where the present and future are generated. You are either part of them or history will pass you by.

A new culture

We need change; we want change and we seek change.⁷¹ But the problem arises when we realize that we lack adequate and inclusive answers to many of our current problems. Indeed, we experience a certain fragmentation in our analyses and diagnoses that ends up blocking every possible solution. Deep down, we lack the culture required to inspire and encourage different visions marked by theoretical approaches, politics, educational programmes and indeed spirituality, that cannot be fit into a single dominant mindset.⁷² Given the urgent need to come up with answers, it is indispensable to promote and support leadership groups capable of shaping culture, sparking processes – remember that word: processes – blazing trails, broadening horizons and building common bonds... Every effort to organize, care for and improve our common home, if it is to be meaningful, will also demand a change in “life-style, models of production and consumption, and established structures of power which today govern societies”.⁷³ Without this, you will accomplish nothing.

We need, on the local and institutional levels, leadership groups that can take up problems without becoming trapped or frustrated by them, and in this way challenge the tendency – often unconscious – to submit to certain ideological ways of thinking that end up justifying injustices and paralyzing all efforts to combat them. As an example, we can think of hunger, which, as Benedict XVI rightly pointed out, “is not so much dependent on a lack of material resources as on a shortage of social resources, the most important of which are institutional”.⁷⁴ If you are able to resolve this problem, you will open up a path to the future. Let me repeat those words of Pope Benedict: hunger depends less on lack of material resources than on the lack of social resources, the most important of which are institutional.

The social and economic crisis that many people are experiencing at first hand, and that is mortgaging the present and the future by the abandonment and exclusion of many children, adolescents and entire families, makes it intolerable for us to privilege sectorial interests to the detriment of the common good. We need to recover a sense of the common good. Here I would

⁷⁰ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 74. Hereafter, *GE*.

⁷¹ Cf. *Address for the World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de Sierra, 9 July 2015.

⁷² Cf. *LS*, 111.

⁷³ SAINT JOHN PAUL II, *Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), 58.

⁷⁴ *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 27.

bring up an exercise that you have experimented with as a method for a sound and revolutionary resolution of conflicts. In these months, you have shared a number of reflections and significant theoretical models. You have considered twelve problems (the “villages” as you call them) in order to debate, discuss and identify practical approaches to resolving them. You have experienced the urgently needed culture of encounter, which is the opposite of the throwaway culture now in vogue. This culture of encounter makes it possible for many voices to be heard around the same table, in order to dialogue, consider, discuss and formulate, in a polyhedral perspective, different aspects and possible responses to global problems involving our peoples and our democracies.⁷⁵ It is not easy to move towards real solutions when those who do not think like ourselves are discredited, slandered and misquoted! Discrediting, slandering and misquoting are cowardly ways of refusing to make the decisions needed to solve many problems. Let us never forget that “the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts”,⁷⁶ and that “the mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family”.⁷⁷

This exercise – encountering one another aside from all legitimate differences – is the first step towards any change that can help generate a new cultural and consequently economic, political and social mentality. For you will never be able to undertake great things solely from a theoretical or individual perspective, without a spirit that drives you, without meaningful interior motivations, without a sense of belonging and rootedness that can enhance personal and communal activities.⁷⁸

The future will thus prove an exciting time that summons us to acknowledge the urgency and the beauty of the challenges lying before us. A time that reminds us that we are not condemned to economic models whose immediate interest is limited to profit and promoting favourable public policies, unconcerned with their human, social and environmental cost.⁷⁹ Policies that assume we can count on an absolute, unlimited and indifferent availability of resources. We are not forced to continue to think, or quietly accept by our way of acting, that “some feel more human than others, as if they were born with greater rights”⁸⁰ or privileges for the guaranteed enjoyment of determined essential goods or services.⁸¹ Nor is it sufficient to trust in the search for palliatives in the third sector or in philanthropic models. Although their efforts are crucial, they

⁷⁵ Cf. Address to the Seminar “*New Forms of Solidarity towards Fraternal Inclusion, Integration and Innovation*”, organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (5 February 2020). Let us recall that “true wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data, which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental pollution” (LS, 47).

⁷⁶ EG, 235.

⁷⁷ Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020), 105. Hereafter, FT.

⁷⁸ Cf. LS, 216.

⁷⁹ Favouring, when necessary, fiscal evasion, lack of respect for the rights of workers, and “the possibility of corruption by some of the largest world businesses, not infrequently in collusion with the governing political sector” (Address to the Seminar “*New Forms of Solidarity towards Fraternal Inclusion, Integration and Innovation*”, cited above).

⁸⁰ LS, 90. For example, “to blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues. It is an attempt to legitimize the present model of distribution, where a minority believes it has the right to consume in a way that can never be universalized, since the planet could not even contain the waste products of such consumption” (LS, 50).

⁸¹ Although all of us are endowed with the same dignity, not all of us start from the same place and with the same possibilities when we consider the social order. This challenges us to consider ways to make freedom and equality not a merely nominal datum that lends itself to favouring injustice (cf. FT, 21-23). We would do well to ask ourselves: “What happens when fraternity is not consciously cultivated, when there is a lack of political will to promote it through education in fraternity, through dialogue and through the recognition of the values of reciprocity and mutual enrichment?” (FT, 103).

are not always capable of confronting structurally the current imbalances, which affect those most excluded, and they unintentionally perpetuate the very injustices they seek to combat. Nor is it simply or exclusively a matter of meeting the most essential needs of our brothers and sisters. We need to accept structurally that the poor have sufficient dignity to sit at our meetings, participate in our discussions and bring bread to their own tables. It is about much more than “social assistance” or “welfare”: we are speaking of a conversion and transformation of our priorities and of the place of others in our policies and in the social order.

Today, well into the twenty-first century, “it is no longer simply about exploitation and oppression, but something new. Exclusion ultimately has to do with what it means to be part of the society in which we live; those excluded are no longer society’s underside, or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it”.⁸² Think about this: exclusion strikes at the root of what it means to be a part of the society in which we live, since those who are excluded are no longer society’s underside, or its fringes or its disenfranchised – they are no longer even a part of it. This is the culture of waste, which not only discards, but makes others feel discarded, rendered invisible on the other side of the wall of indifference and comfort.

I remember the first time I saw a closed neighbourhood: I didn’t know they existed. I had to visit the Jesuit novitiates, and in one country, as I passed through the city, they told me: “You can’t go to that part, because it is a closed neighbourhood”. Inside, there were walls, houses and streets, but closed off: a neighbourhood living in indifference. I was quite struck by this. But afterwards those neighbourhoods grew and kept growing, everywhere. Let me ask you: is your heart like a closed neighbourhood?

The Assisi covenant

Certain questions can no longer be deferred. The enormous and urgent task of facing them demands generous commitment in the areas of culture, academic training and scientific research, and a refusal to indulge in intellectual fashions or ideological positions, little islands that isolate us from life and from the real suffering of people.⁸³ Dear young economists, entrepreneurs, workers and business leaders, the time has come to take up the challenge of promoting and encouraging models of development, progress and sustainability in which people, especially the excluded (including our sister earth), will no longer be – at most – a merely nominal, technical or functional presence. Instead, they will become protagonists in their own lives and in the entire fabric of society.

This calls for more than empty words: “the poor” and “the excluded” are real people. Instead of viewing them from a merely technical or functional standpoint, it is time to let them become protagonists in their own lives and in the fabric of society as a whole. Let us not think for them, but with them. Not acting, according to the model of the Enlightenment, as enlightened élites, where everything is done for the people, but nothing with the people. This is not acceptable. Let

⁸² EG, 53. In a world of virtual possibilities, changes and fragmentation, social rights cannot only be exhortations or empty appeals but must be a beacon and compass for the way, for “the health of a society’s institutions has consequences for the environment and the quality of human life” (LS, 142).

⁸³ Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (8 December 2017), 3.

us, then, not think for them, but with them. Let us learn from them how to propose economic models that will benefit everyone, since their structural and decisional approaches will be determined by the integral human development clearly set forth by the Church's social doctrine. Politics and economics must not "be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy. Today, in view of the common good, there is an urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life".⁸⁴ Lacking such focus and direction, we would remain prisoners of an alienating circularity that would perpetuate only dynamics of degradation, exclusion, violence and polarization. "Every program organized to increase productivity should have but one aim: to serve persons. They should reduce forms of inequality, eliminate discrimination, free people from the bonds of servitude... It is not enough to increase the general fund of wealth and then distribute it more fairly. This is not enough. Nor is it enough to develop technology so that the earth may become a more fitting dwelling place for human beings".⁸⁵ This too is not enough.

The approach of integral human development is good news to be proclaimed and put into practice. Not a dream, but a concrete path: good news to be proclaimed and put into practice, for it proposes that we rediscover our common humanity on the basis of the best of ourselves, namely, God's dream that we learn to be keepers of our brothers and sisters and those most vulnerable (cf. Gen 4:9). "The true measure of humanity is essentially determined in relationship to suffering and to the sufferer. This holds true for both individuals and for society".⁸⁶ The measure of humanity: a measure that must be embodied in our decisions and our economic models.

How reassuring it is to hear once more the words of Saint Paul VI, who in his desire that the Gospel message permeate and guide all human realities, wrote that "development cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well-rounded; it must foster the development of each person and of the whole person... We cannot allow economics to be separated from human realities, nor development from the civilization in which it takes place. What counts for us is man, each individual man and woman, each human group, and humanity as a whole".⁸⁷

Many of you will have the ability to affect and shape macro-economic decisions involving the destiny of many nations. Here too, there is great need for individuals who are well-prepared, "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt 10:16). Individuals capable of caring for "the sustainable development of countries and [ensuring] that they are not subjected to oppressive lending systems which, far from promoting progress, subject people to mechanisms which generate greater poverty, exclusion and dependence".⁸⁸ Lending systems, by themselves, lead to poverty and dependence. It is legitimate to call for the development of a model of international solidarity capable of acknowledging and respecting interdependence between nations and favouring mechanisms of control that prevent any kind of subjection. And working

⁸⁴ LS, 189.

⁸⁵ SAINT PAUL VI, *Encyclical Letter Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 34. Hereafter, PP.

⁸⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Encyclical Letter Spe Salvi* (30 November 2007), 38.

⁸⁷ PP, 14.

⁸⁸ *Address to the United Nations General Assembly* (25 September 2015).

for the promotion of the most disadvantaged and developing countries, for every people is called to become the artisan of its own destiny and that of the entire world.⁸⁹

* * *

Dear young people, “today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people’s troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment”.⁹⁰ An unpredictable future is already dawning. Each of you, starting from the places in which you work and make decisions, can accomplish much. Do not seek shortcuts, however attractive, that prevent you from getting involved and being a leaven wherever you find yourselves (cf. Lk 13:20-21). No shortcuts! Be a leaven! Roll up your sleeves! Once the present health crisis has passed, the worst reaction would be to fall even more deeply into feverish consumerism and forms of selfish self-protection. Remember: we never emerge from a crisis unaffected: either we end up better or worse. Let us foster what is good, make the most of this moment and place ourselves at the service of the common good. God grant that in the end there will no longer be “others”, but that we adopt a style of life where we can speak only of “us”.⁹¹ Of a great “us”. Not of a petty “us” and then of “others”. That will not do.

History teaches us that no system or crisis can completely suppress the abilities, ingenuity and creativity that God constantly awakens within us. With dedication and fidelity to your peoples, and to your present and future, you can join others in forging new ways to make history. Do not be afraid to get involved and touch the soul of your cities with the gaze of Jesus. Do not fear to enter courageously the conflicts and crossroads of history in order to anoint them with the fragrance of the Beatitudes. Do not fear, for no one is saved alone. You are young people from 115 countries. I ask you to recognize our need for one another in giving birth to an economic culture able “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands, and inspire in young people – all young people, with no one excluded – a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel”.⁹²

Thank you!

⁸⁹ Cf. PP, 65.

⁹⁰ FT, 77.

⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 35.

⁹² *Opening Address at the Synod for Young People* (3 October 2018).

To the members of the Foundation “Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice”: address of the Holy Father

Sala Clementina (Vatican)
Saturday, 23 October 2021

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I am pleased that we can be with one another during your International Convention. Thank you, Madam President, for your kind and, as ever, clear words. In these days, you are discussing significant, and indeed fundamental, issues: solidarity, cooperation and responsibility as antidotes to injustice, inequality and exclusion.

These are timely issues, since the uncertainty and instability present in the lives of many individuals and communities have been aggravated by an economic system that continues to discard people’s lives in the name of the god of money, fostering greed and destructive attitudes towards the resources of the earth and fueling various forms of injustice. In the face of this, we cannot remain indifferent. At the same time, our response to injustice and exploitation must be more than mere condemnation; first and foremost, it must be the active promotion of the good: condemnation of what is wrong, yet promotion of what is good. For this reason, I am most appreciative of your work, especially in the areas of education and training, and in particular for your commitment to financing study and research by young people on new models of economic and social development inspired by the Church’s social doctrine. This is important and greatly needed: in soil contaminated by the predominance of finance, we need to sow many small seeds that can bear fruit in an economy that is equitable and beneficial, humane and people-centred. We need possibilities able to become realities, and realities able to offer hope. This means putting into practice the social teaching of the Church.

I want to return to the term “predominance of finance”. Four years ago a distinguished economist who had also worked in government came to see me. She told me that she had tried to create a dialogue between the economy, humanism and religion in a think-tank, and that it had gone well and continues to go well. I tried the same thing, she said, between finance, humanism and religion, yet we could not even begin. Interesting. That made me think. This economist made me feel that finance was something impractical, something “fluid”, “ephemeral” that ends up like a chain letter. I share this experience with you and perhaps it may help you.

The three words you have chosen – solidarity, cooperation and responsibility – represent three pillars of the Church’s social teaching, which sees the human person, naturally open to relationships, as the summit of creation and the centre of the social, economic and political order. Based on this vision, with concern for human beings and sensitivity to concrete historical processes, the Church’s teaching contributes to a vision of the world opposed to individualistic visions, since it is based on the interplay between persons and directed to the common good. At the same time, that teaching is opposed to the collectivistic visions that today are reemerging in a new form, concealed behind projects of technocratic standardization. This is not simply a

matter of “politics”; the Church’s social teaching is grounded in the word of God and seeks to promote integral human development on the basis of our faith in the God who became man. For this reason, it should be practised, cherished and developed. Let us once more become passionate about that teaching, let us make it known, for it is a treasure of the Church’s tradition! It is precisely from your study of the Church’s social doctrine that you too have felt called to combat forms of inequality that strike especially the most fragile, and to work in promoting a real and effective fraternity.

Solidarity, cooperation and responsibility: in these days you have placed these three words at the centre of your discussions. Three words that recall the mystery of God himself, who, as Trinity, a communion of persons, inspires us to find our fulfilment in generous openness to others (solidarity), through collaboration with others (cooperation) and through commitment to others (responsibility). He inspires us to do this in every aspect of our life in society, through our relationships, our work and civic engagements, our relationship with creation and our participation in political life. In every sphere of life, today more than ever, we are bound to witness our concern for others, to think not only of ourselves, and to commit ourselves freely to the development of a more just and equitable society where forms of selfishness and partisan interests do not prevail. At the same time, we are called to be vigilant in upholding respect for the human person and his or her freedom, and in safeguarding his or her inviolable dignity. This is the mission of implementing the Church’s social doctrine.

Dear friends, in promoting these values and this way of living – as we know – we often find ourselves going against the grain, yet let us always remember that we are not alone. God has drawn near to us. Not merely in words, but by his very presence: in Jesus, God became incarnate. With Jesus, who became our brother, we recognize in every man a brother, in every woman a sister. This universal communion inspires us, as a believing community, to cooperate readily with everyone for the common good: without forms of rejection, exclusivity or prejudice. As Christians, we are called to a love that transcends borders and limits; we are called to be a sign and witness that it is possible to pass beyond the walls of selfishness and personal and national interest. Beyond the power of money that often decides the destiny of peoples; beyond ideological divisions that foster hatred; beyond all historical and cultural barriers and, above all, beyond indifference, that culture of indifference which, sadly, we experience daily. We can be “brothers and sisters all”, and so we can and must think and work as “brothers and sisters of all”. This may seem to be an unrealistic utopia. But we prefer to believe that it is a dream that can come true. For it is the dream of the triune God. With his help, it is a dream that can begin to become reality, also in our world.

Building a more solidary, just and equitable world is a daunting enterprise. For believers, however, it is not simply a practical matter, with no relation to doctrine. Indeed, it is the way to embody our faith, to praise the God who loves men and women, who loves life. Dear brothers and sisters, the good that you do for every person on earth brings joy to the heart of God in heaven. Continue resolutely on this path. I accompany you with my prayers and I bless you in your work. And I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

Meeting “Economy of Francis”: address of the Holy Father

Event stage of Santa Maria degli Angeli (Assisi)
24 September 2022

Dear young people, good morning!

I greet all those who are able to be here today. I would also like to greet those who could not make it, those at home. I greet all of you! We are all united: those joining us from various places and those present here.

I have waited more than three years for this moment, since 1 May 2019, when I wrote you the letter that called and then brought you here to Assisi. For many of you – as we have just heard – the encounter with the Economy of Francesco awakened something that was already within you. You were already committed to creating a new economy; my letter brought you together, gave you a broader horizon and made you feel part of a worldwide community of young people who have the same vocation. When a young person sees in another young person the same calling, and this experience is repeated with hundreds, even thousands of other young people, then great things become possible, even the hope of changing an enormous and complex system like the world economy. Indeed, it would appear that talking about economics today seems like an old thing: today we talk about finance, and finance is a watery thing, a gaseous thing, you cannot hold it. Once, a good world economist told me that she attended a conference on the link between economics, humanism and religion. The event went well. She wanted to do the same with finance and was not able to do so. Beware of this fleeting nature of finances: you must resume economic activity from the roots, from human roots as was done in the past. You young people, with the help of God, know what to do, you can do it; young people have done many things before in the course of history.

You are living your youth in a time that is not easy: the environmental crisis, then the pandemic, and now the war in Ukraine, and the other wars which have continued for years in various countries, have marked your lives. Our generation has left you with a rich heritage, but we have not known how to protect the planet and are not securing peace. When you hear that the fishermen of San Benedetto del Tronto, pulled 12 tons of dirt and plastic and other things out of the sea in one year, you realise that we do not know how to protect the environment. Nor do we know how to keep peace as a result. You are called to become artisans and builders of our common home, a common home that “is falling into ruin”. Today, a new economy inspired by Francis of Assisi can and must become an economy of friendship with the earth and an economy of peace. It is a question of transforming an economy that kills (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 53) into an economy of life, in all its aspects. That “good life” is not the sweet life or living it well, no. Good living is the mysticism that the indigenous peoples teach us to have in relation to the earth.

I admire your decision to model this gathering in Assisi on prophecy. I liked what you said about prophecy. After his conversion, Francis of Assisi's life was a prophecy that continues also into our own times. In the Bible, prophecy is very much connected with young people. Samuel was called as a boy, Jeremiah and Ezechiel were young, Daniel was a youth when he prophesied the innocence of Susanna and saved her from death (cf. Dan 13:45-50); and the prophet Joel announced to the people that God would send his Spirit and "their sons and daughters would prophesy" (3:1). According to Scripture, young people are the bearers of a spirit of knowledge and intelligence. It was the young David who humbled the arrogance of the giant Goliath (cf. 1 Sam 17: 49-51). Indeed, when civil society and businesses lack the skills of the young, the whole of society withers and the life of everyone is extinguished. There is a lack of creativity, optimism, enthusiasm, and courage to take risks. A society and an economy without young people are sad, pessimistic and cynical. If you want to see this, go to these ultra-specialized universities in liberal economics, and look at the faces of the young men and women studying there. Yet, we are grateful to God that you are here: not only will you be there tomorrow, you are here today. You are not just the "not yet", you are also the "already here", you are the present.

An economy that inspires us with the prophetic dimension is expressed today in a new vision of the environment and the earth. We have to embrace this harmony with the environment and the earth. There are many people, businesses and institutions that are making an ecological conversion. We need to go forward on this road and do more. You are doing and asking everyone to do this "more". It is not enough to make cosmetic changes; we need to discuss models of development. The situation is such that we cannot just wait until the next international summit, which might be too late. The earth burns today, and today we must change, at all levels. In this last year, you have worked on the economy of plants, an innovative topic. You have seen that the plant paradigm contains a different approach to the earth and the environment. Plants cooperate with their whole environmental surroundings, and also when they compete, they actually are cooperating for the good of the ecosystem. Let us learn from the meekness of plants: their humility and their silence can offer us a different approach, which we urgently need.

For, if we speak of ecological transition but remain in the economic paradigm of the twentieth century, which plundered the earth and its natural resources, then the strategies we adopt will always be insufficient or sick from the roots. The Bible is full of images of trees and plants, from the tree of life to the mustard seed. And Saint Francis helps us with his universal fraternity with all living creatures. We human beings, in these last two centuries, have grown at the expense of the earth. The earth is the one that pays the price. We have often plundered in order to increase our own well-being, and not even the well-being of all, but of a small group. Now is the time for new courage in abandoning fossil fuels to accelerate the development of zero or positive impact sources of energy.

We must also accept the universal ethical principle – however unpopular – that damages must be repaired. This is a universal, ethical principle: damage must be repaired. If we grew up abusing the planet and the atmosphere, today we must also learn to make sacrifices in lifestyles that remain unsustainable. Otherwise, our children and grandchildren will pay the price, a price that will be too high and too unjust. Six months ago, I listened to a very important scientist, who

said: “Yesterday my granddaughter was born. If we continue like this, within thirty years the poor girl will have to live in an uninhabitable world”. Our children and grandchildren will pay the price, a price that will be very high and unfair. Quick and decisive change is needed. I say this with seriousness. I am counting on you! Please, do not be afraid to bother us! Be an example for us! And I tell you the truth: one needs courage to walk on this path, and sometimes it takes a little bit of heroism. In a meeting, I listened to a 25-year-old man, who had just graduated as an engineer, and who could not find a job. In the end, he found one in an industry about which he did not know much. When he realised what the job entailed, he refused it because they were making weapons. These are the heroes of today.

Sustainability, then, is a multidimensional word. Aside from the environmental, there are also the social, relational and spiritual dimensions. The social aspect is slowly beginning to be recognized: we are realizing that the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth are the same cry (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 49). When we work for ecological transformation, then, we must keep in mind the effects that some environmental choices have on poverty. Not all environmental solutions have the same effects on the poorest, and therefore those that reduce misery and inequality should be preferred. As we seek to save the planet, we must not neglect those who suffer. Carbon dioxide is not the only pollution that kills; inequality also fatally damages our planet. We must not allow the new environmental calamities to erase from public view the long-standing and ever-present calamities of social injustice, as well as political injustices. Let us think, for example, of a political injustice; the poor battered people of the Rohingya who wander from one place to another because they cannot live in their own homeland. It is a political injustice.

Then there is the unsustainability of our relationships: in many countries relationships between people are becoming impoverished. Especially in the West, communities are becoming increasingly fragile and fragmented. The family, and with it the acceptance and protection of life, is suffering a serious crisis in some regions of the world. Current consumerism seeks to fill the void of human relationships with ever more sophisticated commodities – loneliness is big business in our time! – but in this way it generates a famine of happiness. This is not a good thing. Think of the demographic winter, for example, and how it relates to all this. The demographic winter where the population of all countries is going down significantly because, instead of having children, people give greater attention to having emotional relationships with dogs and cats. We have to start procreating again. But also in this demographic winter there is the slavery of women: a woman who cannot be a mother because as soon as her belly begins to rise, they fire her; pregnant women are not always allowed to work.

Finally, there is a spiritual unsustainability to our capitalism. Human beings, created in the image and likeness of God, are seekers of meaning before being seekers of material goods. We are all seekers of meaning. That is why the first capital of any society is spiritual capital, for this is what gives us a reason to get up every morning and go to work, and engenders the joy of living that is also necessary for the economy. Our world is quickly consuming this essential kind of capital, accumulated over centuries by religions, wise traditions and popular piety. Consequently, young people especially suffer from this lack of meaning: faced with the pain and uncertainties of life, they often find their souls depleted of the spiritual resources needed to process suffering,

frustration, disappointment and grief. Go and look at the percentage of suicide among young people, and how the numbers are going up. They do even not publish everything, and sometimes hide the figures. The fragility of many young people comes from a lack of this precious spiritual capital – an invisible but more real capital than financial or technological capital. I ask, do you have a spiritual capital? Everyone can answer quietly. We urgently need to rebuild this essential spiritual patrimony. Technology can do much: it teaches us the “what” and the “how”: but it does not tell us the “why”; and so our actions become sterile and do not bring fulfilment to life, not even economic life.

Finding myself in the city of Francis, I cannot help but speak about poverty. Developing an economy inspired by him means committing ourselves to putting the poor at the centre. Starting with them, we look at the economy; starting with them, we look at the world. There is no “Economy of Francesco” without respect, care and love for the poor, for every poor person, for every fragile and vulnerable person – from conception in the womb to the sick person with disabilities, to the elderly person in difficulty. I would go even further: an economy of Francesco must not limit itself to working for or with the poor. As long as our system “produces” discarded people, and we operate according to this system, we will be accomplices of an economy that kills. Let us ask ourselves. Are we doing enough to change this economy or are we content with painting a house in order to change its colour without changing the structure of the house? It is not a question of paint strokes, no: you have to change the structure. Perhaps our response should not be based on how much we can do but on how we are able to open new paths so that the poor themselves can become protagonists of change. In this regard, there are significant and developed examples in India and the Philippines.

Saint Francis loved not only the poor but poverty itself. This can also be called an austere way of living. Francis went to lepers not so much to love them but because he wanted to become poor like them. Following Jesus Christ, he stripped himself of everything to become poor with the poor. Indeed, the first market economy was born in the thirteenth century in Europe through daily contact with Franciscan Friars, who were friends of the first merchants. That economy certainly created wealth but it did not despise poverty. Our capitalism, instead, wants to help the poor but does not respect them; it does not understand the paradox in the beatitude: “Blessed are the poor” (cf. Lk 6:20). We do not have to love poverty. On the contrary, we need to combat it, above all, by creating work, dignified work. The Gospel tells us, however, that without respect for the poor, we cannot combat poverty. It is from here that all of us need to begin, including entrepreneurs and economists: living the evangelical paradoxes of Francis. When I talk to people or hear confessions, I always ask: “Do you give alms to the poor?” – “Yes, yes, yes!” – “And when you give alms to the poor, do you look him or her in the eye?” – “Eh, I don’t know ...” – “And when you give alms, do you throw the coin or touch the poor person’s hand?”. They do not look at the eyes and do not touch; and this is a way of distancing ourselves from the spirit of poverty, distancing ourselves from the true reality of the poor, distancing ourselves from the humanity that every human relationship must have. Someone will say to me: “Holy Father, we haven’t got much time, when are you finishing?”: I am finishing now.

In light of this reflection, I would like to leave you with three signposts for moving forward.

The first is to look at the world with the eyes of the poorest of the poor. In the medieval period, the Franciscan movement was able to create the first economic theories and even the first banks for those in need (“Monti di Pietà”), because it looked at the world with the eyes of the poorest of the poor. You too will improve the economy if you look at things from the perspective of victims and the discarded. In order to have the eyes of the poor and victims, however, it is necessary to get to know them, to be their friends. And, believe me, if you become friends of the poor, you will share their life, you will have a share in the Kingdom of God, because Jesus said that to these belong the Kingdom of God. For this reason, they are blessed (cf. Lk 6:20). I will say it again: may your daily choices not “produce” discarded people.

The second: you are mostly students, scholars and entrepreneurs, but do not forget about work, do not forget about workers. The work of our hands. Work is already the challenge of our time, and it will be all the more the challenge of tomorrow. Without dignified work and just remuneration, young people will not truly become adults and inequality will increase. It is possible, at times, for a person to survive without work but he or she does not live well. So while you create goods and services, do not forget to create work, good work and work for everyone. The third signpost is incarnation. In the crucial moments of history, those who left a good mark were able to do so because they translated ideals, desires and values into concrete actions.

They “incarnated” them. In addition to writing and organizing conferences, these men and women established schools and universities, banks, trade unions, associations and institutions. You will change the economic world if you use your hands together with your heart and head. The three languages. When we think: we have the head, the language of thought. But we don’t stop there, we have to combine it with the language of feeling, the language of the heart. And not only that, we also have to link it with the language of the hands. So you have to do what you feel and think, feel what you do, and think what you feel and do. This is the union of the three languages. Ideas are necessary, they entice us, especially young people, but they can turn into traps if they do not become “flesh”, in other words something concrete, a daily commitment: the three languages. Ideas alone do not work; we will all finish up in an endless circle if we follow just ideas. Ideas are necessary, but they must take “flesh”. The Church has always rejected the gnostic – gnosis, that of idea alone – temptation of thinking that the world changes only through different knowledge, without the effort of the flesh. Actions are less “luminous” than great ideas because they are concrete, particular, limited, with light and shadow together, but they fertilize the ground day after day for reality is greater than an idea (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 233). Dear young people, reality is always bigger than idea: pay attention to this.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you for your efforts: thank you. Go forward together with the inspiration and intercession of Saint Francis. And if you are agreeable, I would like to conclude with a prayer. I will pray it aloud and you can follow me silently in your heart. Father, we ask forgiveness for having damaged the earth, for not having respected indigenous cultures, for not having valued and loved the poorest of the poor, for having created wealth without communion. Living God, who with your Spirit have inspired the hearts, hands and minds of these young people and sent them on the way to a promised land, look kindly on their generosity, love and desire to spend their lives for a great ideal. Bless them, Father, in their

undertakings, studies and dreams; accompany them in their difficulties and sufferings, help them to transform their difficulties and sufferings into virtue and wisdom. Support their longing for the good and for life, lift them up when facing disappointments due to bad examples, do let them become discouraged but instead may they continue on their path. You, whose only begotten Son became a carpenter, grant them the joy of transforming the world with love, ingenuity and hands. Amen.

Thank you very much.

What have other Popes said on Land, Housing and Work?

The Popular Movements in continuity with the Social Magisterium of the Church

The struggle for land, housing and work is not a recent invention, nor an isolated cry of the popular movements of our time. Rather, it is a deep echo that resonates throughout the history of the Church and its Social Doctrine, a living continuity that runs through the magisterium of numerous Popes. They respond to the heartbeat of justice, mercy and charity present at the heart of the Gospel. It is a teaching that constantly challenges Christians to respond to injustice, to recognise the dignity of every human being and to act accordingly.

Below is a selection of texts from previous Popes who, like Francis, have defended these fundamental rights throughout their magisterium. From Leo XIII's '*Rerum novarum*' (1891) to Benedict XVI's '*Caritas in veritate*' (2009), these documents show how the defence of land, housing and work has been a constant in the Church's social teaching. Far from being a revolutionary idea of a specific era, it is a call for justice that, over the years, has kept alive the hope of a world where every person can live with the dignity of the Children of God.

Some points from the Apostolic Exhortation *Rerum novarum* (1891) of Pope Leo XIII

Now, in preventing such strife as this, and in uprooting it, the efficacy of Christian institutions is marvellous and manifold. First of all, there is no intermediary more powerful than religion (whereof the Church is the interpreter and guardian) in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice.

20. Of these duties, the following bind the proletarian and the worker: fully and faithfully to perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder; and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles, who work upon the people with artful promises of great results, and excite foolish hopes which usually end in useless regrets and grievous loss. The following duties bind the wealthy owner and the employer: not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character. They are reminded that, according to natural reason and Christian philosophy, working for gain is creditable, not shameful, to a man, since it enables him to earn an honorable livelihood; but to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman. Again justice demands that, in dealing with the working man, religion and the good of his soul must be kept in mind. Hence, the employer is bound to see that the worker has time for his religious duties; that he be not exposed to corrupting influences and dangerous occasions; and that he be not led away to neglect his home and family, or to squander his earnings. Furthermore, the employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength, or employ them in work unsuited to their sex and age. His great and principal duty is to give every one what is just. Doubtless, before deciding whether wages are fair, many things have to be considered; but wealthy owners and all masters of labor should be mindful of this - that to exercise pressure upon the indigent and the destitute for the sake of gain, and to gather one's profit out of the need of another, is condemned by all laws, human and divine. To defraud any one of wages that are his due is a great crime which cries to the avenging anger of Heaven. "Behold, the hire of the laborers... which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth; and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth."(6) Lastly, the rich must religiously refrain from cutting down the workmen's earnings, whether by force, by fraud, or by usurious dealing; and with all the greater reason because the laboring man is, as a rule, weak and unprotected, and because his slender means should in proportion to their scantiness be accounted sacred.

34. But although all citizens, without exception, can and ought to contribute to that common good in which individuals share so advantageously to themselves, yet it should not be supposed that all can contribute in the like way and to the same extent. No matter what changes may occur in forms of government, there will ever be differences and inequalities of condition in the State. Society cannot exist or be conceived of without them. Some there must be who devote themselves to the work of the commonwealth, who make the laws or administer justice, or whose advice and authority govern the nation in times of peace, and defend it in war. Such men

clearly occupy the foremost place in the State, and should be held in highest estimation, for their work concerns most nearly and effectively the general interests of the community. Those who labor at a trade or calling do not promote the general welfare in such measure as this, but they benefit the nation, if less directly, in a most important manner. We have insisted, it is true, that, since the end of society is to make men better, the chief good that society can possess is virtue. Nevertheless, it is the business of a well-constituted body politic to see to the provision of those material and external helps "the use of which is necessary to virtuous action."(28) Now, for the provision of such commodities, the labor of the working class - the exercise of their skill, and the employment of their strength, in the cultivation of the land, and in the workshops of trade - is especially responsible and quite indispensable. Indeed, their co-operation is in this respect so important that it may be truly said that it is only by the labor of working men that States grow rich. Justice, therefore, demands that the interests of the working classes should be carefully watched over by the administration, so that they who contribute so largely to the advantage of the community may themselves share in the benefits which they create-that being housed, clothed, and bodily fit, they may find their life less hard and more endurable. It follows that whatever shall appear to prove conducive to the well-being of those who work should obtain favorable consideration. There is no fear that solicitude of this kind will be harmful to any interest; on the contrary, it will be to the advantage of all, for it cannot but be good for the commonwealth to shield from misery those on whom it so largely depends for the things that it needs.

37. Rights must be religiously respected wherever they exist, and it is the duty of the public authority to prevent and to punish injury, and to protect every one in the possession of his own. Still, when there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to especial consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves, and stand less in need of help from the State; whereas the mass of the poor have no resources of their own to fall back upon, and must chiefly depend upon the assistance of the State. And it is for this reason that wage-earners, since they mostly belong in the mass of the needy, should be specially cared for and protected by the government.

54. Associations of every kind, and especially those of working men, are now far more common than heretofore. As regards many of these there is no need at present to inquire whence they spring, what are their objects, or what the means they imply. Now, there is a good deal of evidence in favor of the opinion that many of these societies are in the hands of secret leaders, and are managed on principles ill - according with Christianity and the public well-being; and that they do their utmost to get within their grasp the whole field of labor, and force working men either to join them or to starve. Under these circumstances Christian working men must do one of two things: either join associations in which their religion will be exposed to peril, or form associations among themselves and unite their forces so as to shake off courageously the yoke of so unrighteous and intolerable an oppression. No one who does not wish to expose man's chief good to extreme risk will for a moment hesitate to say that the second alternative should by all means be adopted.

55. Those Catholics are worthy of all praise-and they are not a few-who, understanding what the times require, have striven, by various undertakings and endeavors, to better the condition of the working class by rightful means. They have taken up the cause of the working man, and have spared no efforts to better the condition both of families and individuals; to infuse a spirit of equity into the mutual relations of employers and employed; to keep before the eyes of both classes the precepts of duty and the laws of the Gospel - that Gospel which, by inculcating self restraint, keeps men within the bounds of moderation, and tends to establish harmony among the divergent interests and the various classes which compose the body politic. It is with such ends in view that we see men of eminence, meeting together for discussion, for the promotion of concerted action, and for practical work. Others, again, strive to unite working men of various grades into associations, help them with their advice and means, and enable them to obtain fitting and profitable employment. The bishops, on their part, bestow their ready good will and support; and with their approval and guidance many members of the clergy, both secular and regular, labor assiduously in behalf of the spiritual interest of the members of such associations. And there are not wanting Catholics blessed with affluence, who have, as it were, cast in their lot with the wage-earners, and who have spent large sums in founding and widely spreading benefit and insurance societies, by means of which the working man may without difficulty acquire through his labor not only many present advantages, but also the certainty of honorable support in days to come. How greatly such manifold and earnest activity has benefited the community at large is too well known to require Us to dwell upon it. We find therein grounds for most cheering hope in the future, provided always that the associations We have described continue to grow and spread, and are well and wisely administered. The State should watch over these societies of citizens banded together in accordance with their rights, but it should not thrust itself into their peculiar concerns and their organization, for things move and live by the spirit inspiring them, and may be killed by the rough grasp of a hand from without.

56. In order that an association may be carried on with unity of purpose and harmony of action, its administration and government should be firm and wise. All such societies, being free to exist, have the further right to adopt such rules and organization as may best conduce to the attainment of their respective objects. We do not judge it possible to enter into minute particulars touching the subject of organization; this must depend on national character, on practice and experience, on the nature and aim of the work to be done, on the scope of the various trades and employments, and on other circumstances of fact and of time - all of which should be carefully considered.

Some points from the Apostolic Exhortation *Quadragesimo anno* (1931) of Pope Pius XI

54. Property, that is, "capital," has undoubtedly long been able to appropriate too much to itself. Whatever was produced, whatever returns accrued, capital claimed for itself, hardly leaving to the worker enough to restore and renew his strength. For the doctrine was preached that all accumulation of capital falls by an absolutely insuperable economic law to the rich, and that by the same law the workers are given over and bound to perpetual want, to the scantiest of livelihoods. It is true, indeed, that things have not always and everywhere corresponded with this sort of teaching of the so-called Manchesterian Liberals; yet it cannot be denied that economic social institutions have moved steadily in that direction. That these false ideas, these erroneous suppositions, have been vigorously assailed, and not by those alone who through them were being deprived of their innate right to obtain better conditions, will surprise no one.

55. And therefore, to the harassed workers there have come "intellectuals," as they are called, setting up in opposition to a fictitious law the equally fictitious moral principle that all products and profits, save only enough to repair and renew capital, belong by very right to the workers. This error, much more specious than that of certain of the Socialists who hold that whatever serves to produce goods ought to be transferred to the State, or, as they say "socialized," is consequently all the more dangerous and the more apt to deceive the unwary. It is an alluring poison which many have eagerly drunk whom open Socialism had not been able to deceive.

56. Unquestionably, so as not to close against themselves the road to justice and peace through these false tenets, both parties ought to have been forewarned by the wise words of Our Predecessor: "However the earth may be apportioned among private owners, it does not cease to serve the common interests of all."⁹³ This same doctrine We ourselves also taught above in declaring that the division of goods which results from private ownership was established by nature itself in order that created things may serve the needs of mankind in fixed and stable order. Lest one wander from the straight path of truth, this is something that must be continually kept in mind.

57. But not every distribution among human beings of property and wealth is of a character to attain either completely or to a satisfactory degree of perfection the end which God intends. Therefore, the riches that economic-social developments constantly increase ought to be so distributed among individual persons and classes that the common advantage of all, which Leo XIII had praised, will be safeguarded; in other words, that the common good of all society will be kept inviolate. By this law of social justice, one class is forbidden to exclude the other from sharing in the benefits. Hence the class of the wealthy violates this law no less, when, as if free from care on account of its wealth, it thinks it the right order of things for it to get everything and the worker nothing, than does the non-owning working class when, angered deeply at outraged justice and too ready to assert wrongly the one right it is conscious of, it demands for itself everything as if produced by its own hands, and attacks and seeks to abolish, therefore, all

⁹³ Encyclical, *On the Condition of Workers*, 14

property and returns or incomes, of whatever kind they are or whatever the function they perform in human society, that have not been obtained by labor, and for no other reason save that they are of such a nature. And in this connection We must not pass over the unwarranted and unmerited appeal made by some to the Apostle when he said: "If any man will not work neither let him eat."⁹⁴ For the Apostle is passing judgment on those who are unwilling to work, although they can and ought to, and he admonishes us that we ought diligently to use our time and energies of body, and mind and not be a burden to others when we can provide for ourselves. But the Apostle in no wise teaches that labor is the sole title to a living or an income.⁹⁵

58. To each, therefore, must be given his own share of goods, and the distribution of created goods, which, as every discerning person knows, is laboring today under the gravest evils due to the huge disparity between the few exceedingly rich and the unnumbered propertyless, must be effectively called back to and brought into conformity with the norms of the common good, that is, social justice.

⁹⁴ II Thess. 3:10.

⁹⁵ Cf. II Thess. 3:8-10.

Some points from the Encyclical *Mater et Magister* (1961) of Pope John XXIII

20. As for the State, its whole *raison d'être* is the realization of the common good in the temporal order. It cannot, therefore, hold aloof from economic matters. On the contrary, it must do all in its power to promote the production of a sufficient supply of material goods, "the use of which is necessary for the practice of virtue."⁹⁶ It has also the duty to protect the rights of all its people, and particularly of its weaker members, the workers, women and children. It can never be right for the State to shirk its obligation of working actively for the betterment of the condition of the workingman.

21. It is furthermore the duty of the State to ensure that terms of employment are regulated in accordance with justice and equity, and to safeguard the human dignity of workers by making sure that they are not required to work in an environment which may prove harmful to their material and spiritual interests. It was for this reason that the Leonine encyclical enunciated those general principles of rightness and equity which have been assimilated into the social legislation of many a modern State, and which, as Pope Pius XI declared in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*,⁹⁷ have made no small contribution to the rise and development of that new branch of jurisprudence called labor law.

83. Consequently, if the whole structure and organization of an economic system is such as to compromise human dignity, to lessen a man's sense of responsibility or rob him of opportunity for exercising personal initiative, then such a system, we maintain, is altogether unjust—no matter how much wealth it produces, or how justly and equitably such wealth is distributed.

84. It is not possible to give a concise definition of the kind of economic structure which is most consonant with man's dignity and best calculated to develop in him a sense of responsibility. Pius XII, however, comes to our rescue with the following directive: "The small and average sized undertakings in agriculture, in the arts and crafts, in commerce and industry, should be safeguarded and fostered. Moreover, they should join together in co-operative associations to gain for themselves the benefits and advantages that usually can be gained only from large organizations. In the large concerns themselves there should be the possibility of moderating the contract of work by one of partnership."⁹⁸

147. In using their various organizations, agricultural workers—as indeed all other classes of workers—must always be guided by moral principles and respect for the civil law. They must try to reconcile their rights and interests with those of other classes of workers, and even subordinate the one to the other if the common good demands it. If they show themselves alive to the common good and contribute to its realizations, they can legitimately demand that their efforts for the improvement of agricultural conditions be seconded and complemented by public authority.

⁹⁶ St. Thomas, *De regimine principum*, I, 15.

⁹⁷ Cf. AAS 23 (1931) 185.

⁹⁸ *Broadcast message*, 1 Sept. 1944, cf. AAS 36 (1944) 254.

148. We therefore desire here to express Our satisfaction with those sons of Ours the world over who are actively engaged in co-operatives, in professional groups and in worker movements intent on raising the economic and social standards of the agricultural community.

Some points from the Encyclical *Populorum progression* (1967) of Pope Paul VI

26. However, certain concepts have somehow arisen out of these new conditions and insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These concepts present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and private ownership of the means of production as an absolute right, having no limits nor concomitant social obligations this unbridled liberalism paves the way for a particular type of tyranny, rightly condemned by Our predecessor Pius XI, for it results in the "international imperialism of money."⁹⁹ Such improper manipulations of economic forces can never be condemned enough; let it be said once again that economics is supposed to be in the service of man.¹⁰⁰ But if it is true that a type of capitalism, as it is commonly called, has given rise to hardships, unjust practices, and fratricidal conflicts that persist to this day, it would be a mistake to attribute these evils to the rise of industrialization itself, for they really derive from the pernicious economic concepts that grew up along with it. We must in all fairness acknowledge the vital role played by labor systemization and industrial organization in the task of development.

29. We must make haste. Too many people are suffering. While some make progress, others stand still or move backwards; and the gap between them is widening. However, the work must proceed in measured steps if the proper equilibrium is to be maintained. Makeshift agrarian reforms may fall short of their goal. Hasty industrialization can undermine vital institutions and produce social evils, causing a setback to true human values.

34. Organized programs designed to increase productivity should have but one aim: to serve human nature. They should reduce inequities, eliminate discrimination, free men from the bonds of servitude, and thus give them the capacity, in the sphere of temporal realities, to improve their lot, to further their moral growth and to develop their spiritual endowments. When we speak of development, we should mean social progress as well as economic growth. It is not enough to increase the general fund of wealth and then distribute it more fairly. It is not enough to develop technology so that the earth may become a more suitable living place for human beings. The mistakes of those who led the way should help those now on the road to development to avoid certain dangers. The reign of technology—technocracy, as it is called—can cause as much harm to the world of tomorrow as liberalism did to the world of yesteryear. Economics and technology are meaningless if they do not benefit man, for it is he they are to serve. Man is truly human only if he is the master of his own actions and the judge of their worth, only if he is the architect of his own progress. He must act according to his God-given nature, freely accepting its potentials and its claims upon him.

44. This duty concerns first and foremost the wealthier nations. Their obligations stem from the human and supernatural brotherhood of man, and present a three-fold obligation: 1) mutual solidarity—the aid that the richer nations must give to developing nations; 2) social justice—the

⁹⁹ Encyc. *letter Quadragesimo anno*: AAS 23 (1931), 212.

¹⁰⁰ Cf., for example, Colin Clark, *The Conditions of Economic Progress*, 3rd ed., New York: St. Martin's Press (1960), 3-6.

rectification of trade relations between strong and weak nations; 3) universal charity—the effort to build a more humane world community, where all can give and receive, and where the progress of some is not bought at the expense of others. The matter is urgent, for on it depends the future of world civilization.

86. Finally, a word to those of you who have heard the cries of needy nations and have come to their aid. We consider you the promoters and apostles of genuine progress and true development. Genuine progress does not consist in wealth sought for personal comfort or for its own sake; rather it consists in an economic order designed for the welfare of the human person, where the daily bread that each man receives reflects the glow of brotherly love and the helping hand of God.

Some points from the Encyclical *Laborem exercens* (1981) of Pope John Paul II

8. Worker Solidarity

When dealing with human work in the fundamental dimension of its subject, that is to say, the human person doing the work, one must make at least a summary evaluation of developments during the ninety years since *Rerum Novarum* in relation to the subjective dimension of work. Although the subject of work is always the same, that is to say man, nevertheless wide-ranging changes take place in the objective aspect. While one can say that, by reason of its subject, work is one single thing (one and unrepeatable every time), yet when one takes into consideration its objective directions one is forced to admit that there exist many works, many different sorts of work. The development of human civilization brings continual enrichment in this field. But at the same time, one cannot fail to note that in the process of this development not only do new forms of work appear but also others disappear. Even if one accepts that on the whole this is a normal phenomenon, it must still be seen whether certain ethically and socially dangerous irregularities creep in, and to what extent.

It was precisely one such wide-ranging anomaly that gave rise in the last century to what has been called "the worker question", sometimes described as "the proletariat question" . This question and the problems connected with it gave rise to a just social reaction and caused the impetuous emergence of a great burst of solidarity between workers, first and foremost industrial workers. The call to solidarity and common action addressed to the workers-especially to those engaged in narrowly specialized, monotonous and depersonalized work in industrial plants, when the machine tends to dominate man - was important and eloquent from the point of view of social ethics. It was the reaction against the degradation of man as the subject of work, and against the unheard-of accompanying exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions and social security for the worker. This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity.

Following the lines laid down by the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* and many later documents of the Church's Magisterium, it must be frankly recognized that the reaction against the system of injustice and harm that cried to heaven for vengeance¹⁰¹ and that weighed heavily upon workers in that period of rapid industrialization was justified from the point of view of social morality. This state of affairs was favoured by the liberal socio-political system, which, in accordance with its "economistic" premises, strengthened and safeguarded economic initiative by the possessors of capital alone, but did not pay sufficient attention to the rights of the workers, on the grounds that human work is solely an instrument of production, and that capital is the basis, efficient factor and purpose of production.

From that time, worker solidarity, together with a clearer and more committed realization by others of workers' rights, has in many cases brought about profound changes. Various forms of neo-capitalism or collectivism have developed. Various new systems have been thought out.

¹⁰¹ Dt 24:15; Jas 5:4; and also Gen 4:10.

Workers can often share in running businesses and in controlling their productivity, and in fact do so. Through appropriate associations, they exercise influence over conditions of work and pay, and also over social legislation. But at the same time various ideological or power systems, and new relationships which have arisen at various levels of society, have allowed flagrant injustices to persist or have created new ones. On the world level, the development of civilization and of communications has made possible a more complete diagnosis of the living and working conditions of man globally, but it has also revealed other forms of injustice, much more extensive than those which in the last century stimulated unity between workers for particular solidarity in the working world. This is true in countries which have completed a certain process of industrial revolution. It is also true in countries where the main working milieu continues to be agriculture or other similar occupations.

Movements of solidarity in the sphere of work—a solidarity that must never mean being closed to dialogue and collaboration with others—can be necessary also with reference to the condition of social groups that were not previously included in such movements but which, in changing social systems and conditions of living, are undergoing what is in effect "proletarianization" or which actually already find themselves in a "proletariat" situation, one which, even if not yet given that name, in fact deserves it. This can be true of certain categories or groups of the working "intelligentsia", especially when ever wider access to education and an ever increasing number of people with degrees or diplomas in the fields of their cultural preparation are accompanied by a drop in demand for their labour. This unemployment of intellectuals occurs or increases when the education available is not oriented towards the types of employment or service required by the true needs of society, or when there is less demand for work which requires education, at least professional education, than for manual labour, or when it is less well paid. Of course, education in itself is always valuable and an important enrichment of the human person; but in spite of that, "proletarianization" processes remain possible.

For this reason, there must be continued study of the subject of work and of the subject's living conditions. In order to achieve social justice in the various parts of the world, in the various countries, and in the relationships between them, there is a need for ever new movements of solidarity of the workers and with the workers. This solidarity must be present whenever it is called for by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger. The Church is firmly committed to this cause, for she considers it her mission, her service, a proof of her fidelity to Christ, so that she can truly be the "Church of the poor". And the "poor" appear under various forms; they appear in various places and at various times; in many cases they appear as a result of the violation of the dignity of human work: either because the opportunities for human work are limited as a result of the scourge of unemployment, or because a low value is put on work and the rights that flow from it, especially the right to a just wage and to the personal security of the worker and his or her family.

Some points from the message of Pope Benedict XVI for the LXIII World Day of Peace (2010): “If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation”.

2. In my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, I noted that integral human development is closely linked to the obligations which flow from man’s relationship with the natural environment. The environment must be seen as God’s gift to all people, and the use we make of it entails a shared responsibility for all humanity, especially the poor and future generations. I also observed that whenever nature, and human beings in particular, are seen merely as products of chance or an evolutionary determinism, our overall sense of responsibility wanes.¹⁰² On the other hand, seeing creation as God’s gift to humanity helps us understand our vocation and worth as human beings. With the Psalmist, we can exclaim with wonder: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you have established; what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (Ps 8:4-5). Contemplating the beauty of creation inspires us to recognize the love of the Creator, that Love which “moves the sun and the other stars”.¹⁰³

7. Sad to say, it is all too evident that large numbers of people in different countries and areas of our planet are experiencing increased hardship because of the negligence or refusal of many others to exercise responsible stewardship over the environment. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council reminded us that “God has destined the earth and everything it contains for all peoples and nations”.¹⁰⁴ The goods of creation belong to humanity as a whole. Yet the current pace of environmental exploitation is seriously endangering the supply of certain natural resources not only for the present generation, but above all for generations yet to come.¹⁰⁵ It is not hard to see that environmental degradation is often due to the lack of far-sighted official policies or to the pursuit of myopic economic interests, which then, tragically, become a serious threat to creation. To combat this phenomenon, economic activity needs to consider the fact that “every economic decision has a moral consequence”¹⁰⁶ and thus show increased respect for the environment. When making use of natural resources, we should be concerned for their protection and consider the cost entailed – environmentally and socially – as an essential part of the overall expenses incurred. The international community and national governments are responsible for sending the right signals in order to combat effectively the misuse of the environment. To protect the environment, and to safeguard natural resources and the climate, there is a need to act in accordance with clearly-defined rules, also from the juridical and economic standpoint, while at the same time taking into due account the solidarity we owe to those living in the poorer areas of our world and to future generations.

14. If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church’s

¹⁰² Cf. No.48.

¹⁰³ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Paradiso, XXXIII, 145*.

¹⁰⁴ Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 34.

¹⁰⁶ Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate*, 37.

Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by his death and resurrection has reconciled with God “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col 1:20). Christ, crucified and risen, has bestowed his Spirit of holiness upon mankind, to guide the course of history in anticipation of that day when, with the glorious return of the Saviour, there will be “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pet 3:13), in which justice and peace will dwell for ever. Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all. It is an urgent challenge, one to be faced with renewed and concerted commitment; it is also a providential opportunity to hand down to coming generations the prospect of a better future for all. May this be clear to world leaders and to those at every level who are concerned for the future of humanity: the protection of creation and peacemaking are profoundly linked! For this reason, I invite all believers to raise a fervent prayer to God, the all-powerful Creator and the Father of mercies, so that all men and women may take to heart the urgent appeal: If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation.