



Pope Francis teaching on social justice and popular movements

Excerpts from addresses to World Meetings of Popular Movements

The system's gangrene cannot be whitewashed forever because sooner or later the stench becomes too strong; and when it can no longer be denied, the same power that spawned this state of affairs sets about manipulating fear, insecurity, quarrels, and even people's justified indignation, in order to shift the responsibility for all these ills onto a "non-neighbor".

-Pope Francis, Letter to the U.S. Regional Meeting of Popular Movements, Modesto, California, February 10, 2017

The grave danger is to disown our neighbors. When we do so, we deny their humanity and our own humanity without realizing it; we deny ourselves, and we deny the most important Commandments of Jesus. Herein lies the danger, the dehumanization. But here we also find an opportunity: that the light of the love of neighbor may illuminate the Earth with its stunning brightness like a lightning bolt in the dark; that it may wake us up and let true humanity burst through with authentic resistance, resilience and persistence.

-Pope Francis, Letter to the U.S. Regional Meeting of Popular Movements, Modesto, California, February 10, 2017

As Christians and all people of goodwill, it is for us to live and act at this moment. It is "a grave responsibility, since certain present realities, unless effectively dealt with, are capable of setting off processes of dehumanization which would then be hard to reverse." These are signs of the times that we need to recognize in order to act. We have lost valuable time: time when we did not pay enough attention to these processes, time when we did not resolve these destructive realities. Thus, the processes of dehumanization accelerate. The direction taken beyond this historic turning-point—the ways in which this worsening crisis gets resolved—will depend on people's involvement and participation and, largely, on yourselves, the popular movements.

-Pope Francis, Letter to the U.S. Regional Meeting of Popular Movements, Modesto, California, February 10, 2017

It is a form of suffering, the shortage of work — that leads you — excuse me if I am coming over a little strong but I am telling the truth — to feel that you are deprived of dignity! Where there is no work there is no dignity! And this is not only a problem in Sardinia — but it is serious here! — it is not only a problem in Italy or in certain European countries, it is the result of a global decision, of an economic system which leads to this tragedy; an economic system centred on an idol called “money”.

...Money is in command! Money lays down the law! It orders all these things that are useful to it, this idol. And what happens? To defend this idol all crowd to the centre and those on the margins are done down, the elderly fall away, because there is no room for them in this world!

...We must say “we want a just system! A system that enables everyone to get on”. We must say: “we don’t want this globalized economic system which does us so much harm!”. Men and women must be at the centre as God desires, and not money!

...This is why I am saying to you: “do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!”. But let us be cunning, for the Lord tells us that idols are more clever than we are. The Lord asks us to have the wisdom of serpents and the innocence of doves. Let us acquire this cunning and call things by their proper name. At this time, in our economic system, in our proposed globalized system of life there is an idol at the centre and this is unacceptable! Let us all fight so that there may be men and women, families, all of us at the centre — at least of our own life — so that hope can make headway.... “Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope!”.

-Pope Francis, Pastoral Visit to Cagliari, September 22, 2013

This meeting of Popular Movements is a sign, it is a great sign: you have come to put in the presence of God, of the Church, of peoples, a reality that is often silenced. The poor not only suffer injustice but they also struggle against it! They are not content with empty promises, excuses or alibis. Neither are they waiting with folded arms for the aid of NGOs, welfare plans or solutions that never come or, if they do come, they arrive in such a way that they go in one direction, either to anaesthetize or to domesticate. This is a dangerous means. You feel that the poor will no longer wait; they want to be protagonists; they

organize themselves, study, work, claim and, above all, practice that very special solidarity that exists among those who suffer, among the poor, whom our civilization seems to have forgotten, or at least really like to forget.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

Solidarity is a word that is not always welcomed; I would say that sometimes we have transformed it into a bad word, it cannot be said. However, it is a word that means much more than some acts of sporadic generosity. It is to think and to act in terms of community, of the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. It is also to fight against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights. It is to confront the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced displacements, painful emigrations, the traffic of persons, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called to transform. Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history, and this is what the Popular Movements do.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilize and convert the poor into domesticated and inoffensive beings. How sad it is to see that, behind alleged altruistic works, the other is reduced to passivity, is denied. Or, worse still, businesses and personal ambitions are hiding: Jesus would call them hypocrites. How lovely is a change when we see peoples in movement, especially their poorest members and young people. Then the wind of promise is felt that revives the hope of a better world. My desire is that this wind be transformed into a whirlwind of hope.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

There is no worse material poverty – I must stress it – there is no worse material poverty than one that does not allow for earning one's bread and deprives one of the dignity of work. Youth unemployment, informality, and the lack of labor rights are not inevitable; they are the result of a previous social option, of an economic system that puts profit above man; if the profit is economic, to put it above humanity or above man, is the effect of a disposable

culture that considers the human being in himself as a consumer good, which can be used and then discarded.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

Today, added to the phenomenon of exploitation and oppression, is a new dimension, a graphic and hard hue of social injustice; those that cannot be integrated, the excluded are discarded, the "leftovers." This is the disposable culture and I would like to enlarge on this, though I do not have it written down, but I have just recalled it now. This happens when at the center of an economic system is the god of money, not man, the human person. Yes, at the center of every social or economic system must be the person, image of God, created to be the controller of the universe. When the person is displaced and the god of money comes there is this inversion of values.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

Henceforth every worker, be he or not in the formal system of salaried work, has the right to fitting remuneration, to social security and to retirement coverage. Here there are cardboard dwellers, recyclers, peddlers, seamstresses, artisans, fishermen, rural workers, builders, miners, recovered business laborers, all sorts of members of cooperatives and workers in popular jobs who are excluded from labor rights, who are denied the possibility of joining labor unions, who have no adequate and stable income. Today I want to join my voice to yours and support you in your struggle.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

Why has man, the human person been taken out of this system, out of the center and been replaced by something else. Why is idolatrous worship rendered to money. Why has indifference been globalized! Indifference has been globalized: why should I care what happens to others so long as I can defend my own? Why has the world forgotten God who is Father; it has become an orphan because it left God to one side.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

The Popular Movements express the urgent need to revitalize our democracies, so often kidnapped by innumerable factors. It is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of the great majorities and that protagonism exceeds the logical proceedings of formal democracy. The prospect of a world of lasting peace and justice calls us to overcome paternalistic welfarism; it calls us to create new ways of participation that include the Popular Movements and animate local, national and international government structures with that torrent of moral energy that arises from the incorporation of the excluded in the building of a common destiny -- and this, with a constructive spirit, without resentment, with love.

-Pope Francis at first World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October 29, 2014

We want change in our lives, in our neighborhoods, in our everyday reality. We want a change that 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 people and takes root among the poor, must replace the globalization of exclusion and indifference!

-Pope Francis at Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, October 7, 2015

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" (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!

-Pope Francis at Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, October 7, 2015

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 people understand, and it gives a special feel to genuine popular movements.

-Pope Francis at Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, October 7, 2015

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.

-Pope Francis at Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, October 7, 2015