

"An army of social poets"

The story of the World Meeting of Popular Movements with Pope Francis.

On Saturday, October 24, the World Meeting of Popular Movements wanted by the Pope took place. A journey that began in 2014 in the Vatican City, continued in Bolivia in 2015, again in the Vatican in 2016 and in Chile in 2018. **A meeting with the social movements, indispensable for building the future, as Francis underlined.** Compared to the past, the meeting was held by videoconference due to the pandemic. There were about **150 representatives of social movements** who responded to the letter addressed by Francis last Easter. **Voices and faces from all over the world.** The Argentine **UTEP** that brings together the workers of the popular economy, **La Via Campesina** that brings together hundreds of millions of farmers in the world, the **Slum Dwellers** of India that represent the poor of cities, the **indigenous** African communities of Bolivia, the Guatemalan Street Youth Movement, the **African Children's Movement** which has also taken place in past years, a delegation from the **Alas - Latin America Network** and working young people from Côte d'Ivoire, the **Mexican Peace Brigades**, the **Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network** and many others. For Italy there were **La Lega dei Braccianti, Libera, Mediterranea and the Net of Even Numbers (Rete Dei Numeri Pari).**

Libera also had the opportunity to invite, as happened in past years, an international delegation representing Red Alas - Alternative Social Latin America and the African Network, including the Afro-Indian Community Yabatac (Bolivia), the Institución Educativa Ecológica Tarpurisunchis (Peru), Movimiento Jovenes de Calle (Guatemala), Brigada Humanitaria de Paz Marabunta (Mexico), Enfants et Jeunes Travailleurs de Côte d'Ivoire (Côte d'Ivoire) and Southern Africa People's Solidarity Network SAPSN (Zimbabwe).

The meeting was moderated by Cardinal Michael Czerny and was concluded by the intervention of Cardinal Peter Turkson, Undersecretary and Prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development. Three objectives of the meeting:

1. to deepen the reflection on the so-called 3T, "tierra, techo, trabajo", that is to say Earth, House and Work, the "sacred" rights on which the alliance between movements and Francis was born;
2. to share the reflections on the last encyclical "Fratelli tutti";
3. discuss the prospects and proposals of the "economy of Francis", which will be at the center of the meeting to be held in Assisi from 19 to 21 November between the pope and hundreds of under35 engaged on these issues.

Because we can't think we're healthy in a sick world. An awareness acquired and shared by popular movements, by Francis and by science. The main obstacle to the urgent and necessary change that we all need, as Francis explained in his recent encyclicals, comes from the global economic system. Economic liberalism, defined by the pope as the **"money system"**, is at the origin of world crises and the different forms of terrorism. There can be no ambiguity on this, as has been said by all the representatives of the movements during the meeting. Despite many, as **Marina Oliveira of Brazilian**

Christian Workers has recalled, "they try to reduce and capture the words of Francis within the system, we know well that the crisis cannot be overcome within capitalism: for this reason the economy of Francis and Clare is anti-capitalist". The popular movements, placing at the centre of their action the struggle for the dignity of the "discarded" by the system, represent today more than ever the social subject of transformation. As has been stated in several speeches, they do not listen to the pope in a passive way but they question him, building paths and shared proposals. "Our project is outside this production and extractive mechanism," was remarked.

The need for a profound, radical and systemic change is the main political objective of the document that will be presented by the Popular Movements in Assisi at the meeting on the economy of Francis. The economist **Andres Cappa** explained what are thought in the document as the five axes of change:

1. integral ecology and common goods;
2. economic democracy, universal basic income and new financial institutions;
3. land, home and work, for an integral development and a popular economy of the poor, not for the poor;
4. education, health and technology
5. peace and sovereignty.

An economy that pursues "good living", not economic growth, as **Jean Pierre** from Haiti recalled. Because this system, denounces **João Pedro Stedile of Via Campesina**, does not guarantee the basic needs of people, food, home, work, health, education, participation. Because this system, as the same Stedile denounces, does not guarantee the primary needs of people, food, home, work, health, education, participation. **"Nothing for us without us!" Rose Molokoane**, Deputy President at Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and National Coordinator of the South Africa Alliance and the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP), denounced it. The recognition of new social subjects and knowledge represents a terrain of great conflict between popular movements and academia. The gap between academia and the reality of people was another of the meeting's topics. The technical language is not able to recognize the knowledge of the poor of the Earth. The western academy does not recognize popular knowledge and through the scientific method it fragments it, renouncing a systemic approach. The need to recognize and systematize popular knowledge is instead at the basis of the project of the **Latin American University of the suburbs, Ulpe**, which will give concreteness to "integral emancipatory education". The project was presented during the meeting by **Father Charly Olivero**, parish priests of the Argentine suburbs, and will be financed by the Department for Integral Human Development. A fundamental and concrete contribution to the educational project of **the last encyclical "Fratelli Tutti"** and to the support of the grassroots action of popular movements. There are clear signs that "the putrefaction of the state of affairs in the liberal economy" said the Argentine **Juan Grabois**, representative of the workers of the popular and informal economy. Today, our right to exist is being called into question. The pandemic highlights even more how the "economic and political system has a great lack of human dignity", said **Cardinal Turkson** at the conclusion of the meeting. A deficit that is now unsustainable and incompatible with our common character of "brothers who share the womb of history".

The popular movements together with Francis today represent the only political space in the world that is seriously considering the issues related to our time, giving answers not only to the crisis but innovating in the construction of relations, knowledge, languages and proposals to rebuild hope and act change. The road is long, but the road is the right one.

Giuseppe De Marzo, Coordinator of social policies department for LIBERA