Let's dream the future together

“Let’s dream the future together.” The Pope begins the reflection of the message of the V World Day of the Poor, in order to remind us that poor people, not necessarily in the economic sense of the word, are always the favorite ones in the care of Jesus Christ and, therefore, they should also have a central place in the activities and commitment of the Catholic Church and its believers.

Along the same lines, we often use the words “the poor are the true face of God”. However, reality shows us that most of the time it is reduced to that, to “words” without any real content. In this regard, the Pope never ceases to repeat that the face of God is that of a Father who is close to the poor, because “they were the first to be evangelized and called to share in the Lord’s joy and his kingdom”.

Hence, it is right to set a day that reminds us of the need for this mandate, in the face of a reality that we so often, out of convenience or selfishness, pretend to ignore. The objective of these Days is to stimulate believers to react to the culture of waste and discarding and to move towards the culture of encounter.

The poor people who are asking for help today are all victims of a society and a lifestyle based on materialism, individualism, ruthless competition between individuals and peoples, the depredation of the Earth’s resources, forced migrations, wars, social inequality and the corruption of power. Thus, Francis urges us to “to recognize the varied and excessive forms of moral and social disorder that are generating ever new forms of poverty.”

The Pope also speaks about woman, all those women who down the centuries would be silenced and suffer violence. […] Women, so often discriminated against and excluded from positions of responsibility, are seen in the Gospels to play a leading role in the history of revelation.”

Further on, the Pope calls for a shift in our mentality to stop considering poor people separately, people who simply require a charitable service, and to accept the challenge of solidarity and participation, following the example of saints who have made sharing with the poor their life project.

After recalling that the pandemic has produced an increase in poverty, depriving millions of vulnerable people of basic goods, the Pope reminded us that justice is the path we must follow to overcome social inequalities and to restore human dignity, so often trampled upon.

He warns us that “individualistic lifestyles are complicit in generating poverty, and often saddle the poor with responsibility for their condition. Yet poverty is not the result of fate; it is the result of selfishness”. It recognizes that “it is critical, therefore, to generate development processes in which the abilities of all are valued, so that complementarity of skills and diversity of roles can lead to a common resource of mutual participation. […] None are so poor that they cannot give something of themselves in mutual exchange”.

This message is rooted in other prophetic voices, such as the one of St. John Chrysostom, whom the Pope quotes: “When you see on land a man or a woman who has suffered the shipwreck of poverty, do not judge, do not ask for an account of their conduct, but deliver them from their misfortune.”

Another great prophet, Pope St. John XXIII, on the occasion of the Second Vatican Council, in reviewing what for him had been the essence of the First Session, emphasized that “Church examined itself, it asked itself what conversion it needed, and opened itself to a new Pentecost as the Church of all, but above all, as the Church of the poor.”

The Pope believes that an increase in sensitivity is essential to understand the needs of those living in poverty and their ever-changing living conditions. We need to recognize the multiple expressions of poverty through an open heart, through acceptance and participation, creating models that are forward-looking and that put into practice new signs of love and Christian charity as well as the immediate help that may be needed.

The last words of this message cry out for an evangelization “that goes out to find the poor… wherever they are […] it is urgent that we go out to meet them in their homes, in hospitals and nursing homes, in the streets and in the dark corners where they sometimes hide in shelters and refuge centers [...]”. Finally, he concludes with the powerful phrase of a holy evangelizer, Primo Mazzolari: “The poor are to be embraced, not counted.”

EUDALD VENDRELL
Vice-president, GCJP
In the second half of October, Pope Francis addressed the Movements as "social poets who bring hope where there is only rejection and exclusion" because "they create hope with their hands, forging the dignity of each and every person, of their families and of society as a whole with Shelter, Land and Work, Care and Community". The Pope made some requests that reflect not only the indispensable personal change but also the adjustment of our socio-economic models in order to give them a human face. In the name of God, he asked for:

**Health:** “All the great pharmaceutical laboratories to release the patients. Make a gesture of humanity and allow every country, every people, every human being to have access to the vaccines”.

With more than 6.65 billion doses that have been administered, three out of four people could have received one. Africa has barely been able to vaccinate 9.5% of the population, as opposed to the WHO target of vaccinating 40% of the population in low- and lower-middle-income countries by the end of the year.

**Zero poverty:** “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 people”.

The moratorium granted by the organizations due to the pandemic was extended from May 1, 2020 to June 2021. However, these dates are only appropriate in the evolution of Covid-19 in their territories, but not in that of the poorest.

**Eco-logy:** “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 these days of November, headlines are being made in the municipality of Estor, Guatemala, a region with a significant diversity of natural resources and minerals such as nickel. The extractive activities of international companies, supported by the local administration, disregard the opinion or needs of the Maya Q'eqchi' people, who have faced serious reprisals for demanding their rights and for trying to stop the negative impacts of their exploitation on the environment and the social network of the municipality. We support REPAM’s recent demands to create companies that will begin decontamination processes and to provide living beings with legal personality.

**Technology:** “The technology giants to stop exploiting human weakness [...] for the sake of profits without caring about the spread of hate speech, grooming, fake news, conspiracy theories, and political manipulation”.

The consequences of the fake news that circulate every day are even putting lives at risk, since there are people with symptoms of diseases who try non-proven remedies in the hope of being cured. Information must be verified before sharing it. Technology facilitates the speed of propagation of these lies and the distortion of identity.

**Nutrition:** “The great food corporations to stop imposing monopolistic systems of production and distribution that inflate prices and end up withholding bread from the hungry”.

It is estimated that 1% of farms operate at least 70% of the world’s available farmland. They export food to global supply chains, built according to the rules of the WTO and the major trade agreements. This implies the destruction of national food self-sufficiency and the steady increase in export-oriented production that drives communities off their own land and wipes out what is left of the forests. Just four corporations from the United States, China and the European Union own and control more than half of the world’s seed, fertilizer and agrochemical markets.

**Peace:** “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”.

We cannot forget those who finance this arms trade. The Spanish Armed Bank has spent more than eight million euros on weapons in the war in Yemen, causing the death of more than 100,000 people, leading more than four million to migrate and more than seven million people to a vulnerable food situation.

**Education:** “The telecommunication giants to ease access to educational material and connectivity for teachers via the internet so that poor children can be educated even under quarantine”.

Before Covid-19, approximately 262 million children worldwide (one in five) were unable to receive a decent education. The pandemic exacerbated this and resulted in learning poverty in more than 60% of those attending elementary school in low- and middle-income countries.

**Truth:** “The media to stop the logic of post-truth, disinformation, defamation [...] and to contribute to human fraternity and empathy with those who are most deeply damaged”.

UNESCO’s “Defend Journalism” campaign warns that we need to find different ways to enhance freedom of expression, knowing that our limit is the respect for human rights.

**Development:** “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 forum such as the United Nations”.

A few months ago, Cuba experienced the greatest protests in decades, blocking communications and causing the disappearance of over 100 people. More than 60 years have passed since the U.S. blockade of Cuba. There are still 17 Non-Self-Governing Territories that the UN is committed to assist in achieving their own government. The prevailing economic model is the new colonialism, that all countries are currently facing.

Finally, the Pope expressed his hope that “if all those who fought together against the pandemic could also dream together of a new world, how different everything would be. They are a fundamental part of this humanity that fights for life against a system of death”.

Technical secretary, GC Justice & Peace
From October 1 to 4, the International Workshop and General Assembly of Justice and Peace Europe were held under the theme "Integral Ecology: overcoming the social and environmental crisis". In the first part and seen from a theoretical perspective, the ecological transition, its limits and opportunities were analyzed. Jean-Pascal van Ypersele, professor of Environmental Sciences at the University of Leuven and former vice-president of the IPCC, was present for this study. In his opening lecture, the professor insisted that global warming is a reality and that people are the main causes of it, but that we can still have hope if we want to slow down global warming as long as we make an effort to change our lifestyle.

Zakia Khattabi, Belgian Minister for the Environment and Climate, then, referring to last summer's ecological disasters, stated that the European Green Deal is the most appropriate response to the crisis. However, she emphasized that this transition must be a fair one, since the people who are most vulnerable are the least responsible for the climate emergency and yet, the most affected.

Nicolas Van Nuffel, president of the Climate Coalition, helped us to reflect on the struggle of young people concerning their future, how their anger can turn into despair. He also advocated for an international dialogue to increase results.

In the second part, we focused on local initiatives in order to learn more about the real situations that the social and environmental crises confront on a daily basis. We visited homes that care for discarded people, youth education centers at risk of exclusion, homeless women’s centers, workshops that recycle tools and sustainable agriculture gardens.

At the end of the meetings, a statement on the Climate Summit (Glasgow) and the Biodiversity Summit (Kunming) was approved. This statement demanded, among other issues, a greater willingness on the part of the European Union to achieve the commitment to keep the increase in the Earth’s average temperature below 1.5 ºC, and that this to be binding. Furthermore, it called for reconsideration on the purchase of CO2 from third countries, for reparations to be made for the damage caused to the environment by the companies and territories that have caused it, and for an end to misleading advertising on sustainability and the environment. All of this without forgetting a crucial aspect: the fact that the voice of the communities most affected by climate change must be heard in the decision-making process.

The webinar raised important questions addressed by the speakers such as: "To what extent is it acceptable to accept the idea that immigrants come to do the jobs that nobody wants, and that is why we welcome them?" Or "How can the Catholic Church, with its different views on migration depending on its geographical coordinates, offer a view in communion based on the preferential option for the impoverished?"

The webinar concluded with Marycruz Arcos’ call to be aware that the future of Europe really is in our hands and with Monsignor Vilanova’s message that Europe should become itself again, recalling the words of John Paul II.
Following the webinars on the Laudato Si’ Goals, during the Season of Creation, we held a last webinar that brought together different networks in which Justice and Peace participates. These networks work on integral ecology at a national, European and international level. Furthermore, they invited the Climate Alliance, l’Eglise Verte and theDicastery for Integral Human Development, respectively. Since last September we have been making and adopting statements at the Conferences of Parties on Climate Change and Biodiversity. The main criticism to COP26 is that the agreements that were adopted are not binding and, therefore, are insufficient as they do not ensure the urgent action needed. It is emphasized that coal is the main source of global warming and its use must be limited. Developed countries are urged to double the funds for adaptation to climate change in developing countries. In Kunming, in Yunnan Province in China, the latter part of COP15 was held in mid-October under the title “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth”. The countries reached consensus that biodiversity loss, as part of other degradation trends, poses an existential threat to our society, culture, prosperity and planet.

“Everything is connected” and transforming the way we consume and promoting a new economic system, with criteria of social justice, redistribution and recognition of natural limits, is still our responsibility and our portion of social participation.

Integral ecology

In the past few months, numerous activities have been held to promote disarmament and a culture of peace. On September 26, we commemorated the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, in a crucial year since January saw the entry into force of the TPNW. Several organizations have requested the Government of Spain to adhere to the Treaty. The GCJP has joined the campaign “10 Reasons why we must sign the TPNW”. Furthermore, the Community of Sant’Egidio organized a Meeting for peace and dialogue between religions: “Peoples as brothers and sisters, future earth”. Religions, given the tense international horizon, are coming together and working on the strong connection between peace and the care of creation because people want to put an end to war, violence and the exploitation of nature. “(Re) imagine Our World. Action for Peace and Justice” is the title under which the 2nd World Peace Congress was held in Barcelona. The event focused on a demilitarized and sustainable future against the “nuclear, ecological and social abyss”. By the end of October, we made the Disarmament Week visible, which addressed the process for the survival of humanity and peace. Finally, the GCJP has joined the Stop Killer Robots campaign. It demands to regulate the use of these robots in the military field.

The initiative Church for Decent Work (ITD, in its Spanish acronym) - which in Spain is promoted by Caritas, CONFER, HOAC, Justice and Peace, Young Catholic Students and Young Christian Workers - has celebrated for the seventh consecutive year the Day for Decent Work, which is commemorated on October 7, promoted by the International Trade Union Confederation and supported by the International Labour Organization. For the occasion, the Church for Decent Work has presented a Manifesto under the slogan “Now more than ever, decent work” in order to demand work “as a right and a way to develop, grow and fulfill ourselves as individuals”. This is especially necessary in the scenario marked by the pandemic, which has added precariousness in the labor world, particularly for women. According to the data that the EBC published as a result of this Day, the guidance for finding a decent job is the main demand received by the Church in Spain, behind even food and housing. Under the hashtag #AhoraMásQueNuncaTrabajoDecente (#NowMoreThanEverDecentWork), the Church for Decent Work has also organized numerous protest and celebratory events in the public plazas and parishes of the Spanish dioceses, along with various social media viral actions.

European Day against Human Trafficking

Last October 18, the European Day against Human Trafficking was celebrated. The Episcopal Subcommission for Migration and Human Mobility, CONFER, Caritas and Justice and Peace formed the Group “Weaving Networks against Trafficking”, in an action to raise awareness and denounce this reality. This constitutes a serious violation of human rights, and claims that measures should be established to ensure the identification and protection of victims. Trafficking is typified at an international level by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol), which complements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime adopted in 2000. Trafficking comes in the form of sexual exploitation, labor exploitation, forced marriages, slavery or servitude, services or forced labor, etc. The dimension of this issue gives us spine-chilling data: in 2018 alone, some 50,000 victims of trafficking were reported in 148 countries. In this context, “The Journey of My Life” has been developed. It is a project that presents four journeys, all based on the experiences of women victims of this crime; it also includes activities that deepen the subject through real testimonies.

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