



WORLD MEETING OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

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Press Release - final session 1 IV WMPM

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Popular movements to propose to Francis an alternative to humanity's challenges

The first part of the IV World Meeting of the Popular Movements has ended with an open dialogue on the challenges facing humanity that will lead to a final document to be presented to Pope Francis in September.

The three-hour meeting involved more than 200 delegates from popular movements from the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, representing a huge range of the poorest, most excluded and insecurely employed workers in 54 countries. They included landless rural workers; poorly housed workers and their families from deprived areas and shanty towns; and workers in a variety of trades who not only suffer the injustices of the system but work to combat them in the shared desire for a planet that guarantees to everyone and in every place access to land, labor and lodging.

In this first phase of the meeting – a practical way of building a culture of encounter and walking together – the delegates discussed the impact of the pandemic and the challenges that, from the perspective of the popular movements, humanity currently faces.

Also taking part were Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Integral Human Development; Cardinal Michael Czerny, undersecretary of the same Dicastery; and Archbishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, together with a delegation of other Vatican officials.

Gloria Morales, a North-American worker, chaired what she called this “space of great importance, where we discuss together solutions to the challenges of humanity facing a lack of land, labor and lodging, to build a better world.” She said the discussion would be “incorporated into the document that will be presented to Pope Francis.”

To lead change and respond out of solidarity

Next to speak was Cardinal Peter Turkson who reviewed the journey undertaken in the previous meetings, “which allow us to move ahead” in leading processes of change, on the basis of the sacred rights to land, labor and lodging for all, “which are now universal”. These allow the popular movements to take the lead in overcoming injustices and responding to global problems.

"This meeting is a source for the protagonists of change, for those who are in direct contact with those who suffer injustices and suffer inequalities. Poor people challenge us to solve the problems of inequality" that begin with each one of us. The integral conversion of each person, the communitarian struggle against injustices "will change the structures of society".



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"The challenges cannot be solved by a group or individually, the structures of evil are answered with solidarity", which penetrates the lives of the people of the peripheries and that in this endeavor is Pope Francis, who needs "courage, compassion and tenacity, without violence". Proposing as a method to carry out this struggle "the culture of encounter" cultivating and promoting "the common agenda we have". Revitalizing democracy itself, which the economic structure has atrophied, "to move towards a world of justice and equality and strengthen more just structures," he concluded.

Our commitment is vital: do not let them take away our dignity

Charo Castelló of the World Movement of Christian Workers (MMTC-HOAC Spain) presented a brief summary of the process of dialogue with Pope Francis. "In each of our peoples, countries and continents we have pursued our 'method', which is as important as the objective, namely to see the reality of our brothers and sisters, feel their suffering, walk with the daily work of hope and struggles for survival; to discern in the light of the important values and Christian and ethical principles of Pope Francis's contributions, and from there carry out organized and popular actions consistent with this program of the three Ts," she said.

In this journey Castelló called for "a critical standpoint that allows us to continue in organized commitment, defending a dignified land, lodging and labor. How much and how often we have walked with our most impoverished brothers and sisters, migrants and displaced peoples. How much and how often we have protected Mother Earth with our lifestyles and our advocacy," she urged. Castelló ended by urging that we commit "to carry out this change of economic, political, and cultural paradigm .. because we know that things can change. Because we are brothers and sisters, let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of our dignity!" she urged.

Listen to us

Sonia Fadrigo of Slum Dwellers International (SDI-Philippines), a grassroots movement of people living in informal settlements, intervened to raise some essential challenges for the poorest workers, such as "access to basic services, such as housing, water, sanitation, the impact of climate change and now the Covid-19 pandemic" that are being responded with a committed attitude, from solidarity and care "among peers". In this sense, he pointed out the struggles they are developing with governments, authorities, etc., looking for solutions and leading the changes "with us and not for us".

Defending the teachings of Francis

Juan Grabois of the Movement of Excluded Workers (MTE-UTEP Argentina) made an intervention, pivoting on two parts. On the one hand, he denounced the socio-environmental and economic situation, warning that just as when nature is attacked, this "has consequences, so will social exclusion". In this sense, he has shelled out the enormous existing inequalities and has insisted on "reaffirming our proposals and the lessons of Francis" starting with the three shared banners: land, roof and work, "and to each one corresponds a mission: when we talk about land (*tierra*) we have to talk about an agrarian reform, when we talk about housing



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(*techo*) we have to think about a deep human reform (where we will live people according to real human criteria) when we talk about work (*trabajo*) we need to develop a popular and social economy".

Grabois recalled Francis' request to "unite our peoples, put the economy at the service of the peoples and defend mother earth". In this sense, he warned that "cowardice in this defense is a grave sin". In addition, he recalled the risks in this mission for the popular activists "we must not be restricted in our projects, but also with a political vision of transformation at a massive level. The other risk is that of corruption, especially when we have access to issues of power, not to fall into these temptations" losing contact with reality. "We must not lose the relationship with the fight for land (*tierra*), housing (*techo*) and work (*trabajo*)", he said.

Finally, he made self-criticism by recognizing a certain lukewarmness in the extension and diffusion of "the teachings of Francis" and in this thread, he criticized "the Church that has reneged and domesticated the teachings of Francis. Let us not have this lukewarmness", he concluded.

Community-based thinking as an alternative to current dilemmas

The meeting continued with the intervention of Joao Pedro Stédile of the Landless Movement (MST-LVC Brazil) who expressed his solidarity with all the peoples in struggle, especially those of Haiti and Palestine, and remembered the thousands of people and activists who have died because of the pandemic.

Stédile introduced the debate on The Dilemmas of Humanity, which was then discussed in working groups, recalling the world crisis that continues to provoke this economic system "organized only for-profit and not for-life. Capitalism "neither produces nor organizes the economy to solve the needs of the people"; it promotes "selfishness and consumerism". Faced with this reality that causes suffering to individuals, peoples and the planet, the popular movements are called upon "to think about how to get out of the crisis through the dilemmas of the crisis".

This collective thinking that was discussed in this meeting should favor "a program, a way out" about the changes that must be made. In this sense, he pointed out that the changes are related to "good living, saving nature, mother earth, defending her as a common good" and preventing any aggression. The method he suggested for their dialogue is to act by cultivating "solidarity" as a practice of social equality. The process of change, although difficult, will come "from the organized people. Changes have always been the fruit of the people's struggle," he remarked.

In September, Part II of the IV Meeting

Gloria Morales explained the calendar and procedure for contributions to the final document that has been discussed in the working groups. This document of dilemmas of humanity, a collective reflection of the popular movements, will be delivered to Pope Francis in the



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second half of September. In this second part of the meeting, a video with the actions of the Popular Movements during the hardest moments of the pandemic will also be shared. The meeting ended with a song by Rose Molokoane, "together, we can".