



STATEMENT. April 21, 2026

One year after Francis: Memory and hopeful commitment to dignity, social justice and peace

On the first anniversary of the death of Pope Francis, popular movements around the world offer a grateful remembrance of his life and commitment, and reaffirm the path that we began together with him, a path that continues today in a time that is especially decisive for humanity.

Francis did not merely accompany us; he opened a historical process. He recognized in those who live on the peripheries a transformative force capable of “organizing hope” and building fraternity from below. He taught us that dignity is not negotiable and that the struggle for land, housing and work is a demand of justice and, for those of us who believe, of faith. His legacy does not belong to the past; it remains alive in communities, in daily struggles and in the conviction that no one should be cast aside.

This path has not come to a halt. At the Fifth World Meeting of Popular Movements, held at Spin Time in Rome, we recognized that “we are living in a fractured world, wounded by violence, injustice and contempt for human dignity.” Wars are multiplying, inequalities are deepening, labor precariousness is spreading and millions of people continue to be excluded from their most basic rights. In this context, we reaffirm that land, housing and work are the non-negotiable foundation of social justice and peace.

Pope Leo XIV has confirmed and renewed this process. In his first meeting with popular movements, he reminded us of the need to “see ‘new things’ from the periphery” and proclaimed that “land, housing and work are sacred rights,” and that the struggle for them is “legitimate.” His words have been both a confirmation and a demanding call to persevere in the mission, strengthen organization and assume the historical responsibility of this time. He has encouraged us not only to denounce injustice but also to build alternatives, recognizing ourselves as “social poets” who, from the concrete lives of peoples, seek solutions for a wounded society. He also affirmed that the Church must accompany popular movements: “Just as the Church accompanied the formation of trade unions in the past, today we must accompany popular movements.”

We are living, however, in a particularly critical moment. Democracy is weakening in many places, eroded by the concentration of economic power and by plutocratic dynamics that empty citizen participation of its substance. War is once again presented as a legitimate political instrument, normalizing violence as a way of resolving conflicts.

Discourses of hatred are growing, and the criminalization of poverty, of migrants and of those who practice solidarity is intensifying. As Pope Leo XIV has warned, we are facing “an ethical



vacuum in which evil easily takes hold," and we are called to fill it with processes of justice, solidarity and fraternity.

In this context, we are deeply concerned that the defense of peace and human dignity is being delegitimized and attacked in the global public debate. The recent public attacks against Pope Leo XIV for his rejection of war and abuses of power reveal the extent to which commitment to the most vulnerable challenges entrenched interests. In response, we receive and make his words our own. The Church and all people of good will have "the moral obligation to stand against war."

On this anniversary, popular movements reaffirm our vocation to be protagonists of this time through the organization of peoples and the patient construction of alternatives. We commit ourselves to continue promoting actions that guarantee rights, to strengthen alliances among movements and with the Church, and to advance a democracy that places the care of human dignity at its center.

We know that the path is not easy. But we also know that we are not alone. As we have been reminded, our struggle is born "from the desire for love" and is sustained by the fraternity we build each day. That is our strength and our hope.

One year after his passing, we give thanks for Francis, for his witness, his closeness and his love for us. In continuity with that legacy, we renew our commitment to the path we now follow together with Pope Leo XIV and the whole Church of Christ: a path of social justice, peace and fraternity, in which the dignity of every person is recognized and guaranteed everywhere.

For, in the face of a world that is burning, we continue to believe in and to organize hope.