**Pope Francis: Let us dream – The Path to a Better Future**

We need politicians who burn with the mission to secure for their people the three Ls of land, lodging, and labor, as well as education and health care. That means politicians with broader horizons who can open new ways for the people to organize and express itself. It means politicians who serve the people rather than who make use of them, who walk with those they represent, who carry with them the smell of the neighborhoods they serve. This kind of politics will be the best antidote to corruption in all its forms.

Our age calls for a class of politicians and leaders who take inspiration from Jesus’s parable of the Good Samaritan, which shows how we can develop our lives, our calling and mission. So often what we find at the bottom of it all is the issue of distance. Faced with the man left at the side of the road, some decide to walk on: distant from the situation, they prefer to ignore the facts and carry on as if nothing had happened. Imprisoned in various kinds of thinking and justifications, they pass on by.

It’s the same problem as ever: poverty conceals itself in shame. In order to see, understand, and feel it, you have to come close. You can’t know poverty from a distance; you have to touch it. To recognize and come close—that’s the first step. The second step consists in responding practically and immediately, because a concrete act of mercy is always an act of justice.

But a third step is necessary if we are not to fall into mere welfarism: to reflect on the first two steps and open ourselves to the necessary structural reforms. An authentic politics designs those changes alongside, with, and by means of all those affected, respecting their culture and their dignity. The only time it is right to look down at someone is when we are offering our hand to help them get up. As I once put it in a talk to some religious men and women: “The problem is not feeding the poor, or clothing the naked, or visiting the sick, but rather recognizing that the poor, the naked, the sick, prisoners, and the homeless have the dignity to sit at our table, to feel ‘at home’ among us, to feel part of a family. This is the sign that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst.”[26](#26_1)

In the post-Covid world, neither technocratic managerialism nor populism will suffice. Only a politics rooted in the people, open to the people’s own organization, will be able to change our future.

(p.60)

Today, listening to some of the populist leaders we now have, I am reminded of the 1930s, when some democracies collapsed into dictatorships seemingly overnight. By turning the people into a category of exclusion—threatened on all sides by enemies, internal and external—the term was emptied of meaning. We see it happening again now in rallies where populist leaders excite and harangue crowds, channeling their resentments and hatreds against imagined enemies to distract from the real problems.

In the name of the people, populism denies the proper participation of those who belong to the people, allowing a particular group to appoint itself the true interpreter of popular feeling. A people ceases to be a people and becomes an inert mass manipulated by a party or a demagogue. Dictatorships almost always begin this way: sowing fear in the hearts of the people, then offering to defend them from the object of their fear in exchange for denying them the power to determine their own future.

For example, a fantasy of national-populism in countries with Christian majorities is its defense of “Christian civilization” from perceived enemies, whether Islam, Jews, the European Union, or the United Nations. The defense appeals to those who are often no longer religious but who regard their nation’s inheritance as a kind of identity. Their fears and loss of identity have increased at the same time as attendance at churches has declined.

The loss of relationship with God and a loss of a sense of universal fraternity have contributed to this sense of isolation and fear of the future. Thus irreligious or superficially religious people vote for populists to protect their religious identity, unconcerned that fear and hatred of the other cannot be reconciled with the Gospel.

The heart of Christianity is God’s love for all peoples and our love for our neighbors, especially those in need. To reject a struggling migrant, whatever his or her religious belief, out of fear of diluting a “Christian” culture is grotesquely to mispresent both Christianity and culture. Migration is not a threat to Christianity except in the minds of those who benefit from claiming it is. To promote the Gospel and not welcome the strangers in need, nor affirm their humanity as children of God, is to seek to encourage a culture that is Christian in name only, emptied of all that makes it distinctive.

(p. 63)

To be clear: this is not the Church “organizing” the people. These are organizations that already exist—some Christian, some not. I would like the Church to open its doors more widely to these movements; I hope every diocese in the world has an ongoing collaboration with them, as some already do. But my role and that of the Church is to accompany, not paternalize them. That means offering teaching and guidance, but never imposing doctrine or trying to control them. The Church illuminates with the light of the Gospel, awakening the peoples to their own dignity, but it is the people who have the instinct to organize themselves.

(p.64)

HOPE

When the storm has passed

and the roads are tamed

and we are the survivors

of a collective shipwreck.

With tearful heart

and our destiny blessed

we will feel joy

simply for being alive.

And we’ll give a hug

to the first stranger

and praise our good luck

that we kept a friend.

And then we’ll remember

all that we lost

and finally learn

everything we never learned.

And we’ll envy no one

for all of us have suffered

and we’ll not be idle

but more compassionate.

We’ll value more what belongs to all

than what was earned.

We’ll be more generous

and much more committed.

We’ll understand how fragile

it is to be alive.

We’ll sweat empathy

for those still with us and those who are gone.

We’ll miss the old man

who asked for a buck in the market

whose name we never knew

who was always at your side.

And maybe the poor old man

was your God in disguise.

But you never asked his name

because you never had the time.

And all will become a miracle.

And all will become a legacy.

And we’ll respect the life,

the life we have gained.

When the storm passes

I ask you Lord, in shame

that you return us better,

as you once dreamed us.[32](#32_1)

(p. 73)