The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever

The VIII POESSA report (Spanish association for the promotion of Social Studies and Applied Sociology) regarding Exclusion and Social Development in Spain confirms that social exclusion is deeply rooted in the structure of our country. Today, there are 8.5 million people under this condition, which represents 18.4% of the population. This represents an increase of 1.2 million people compared to the numbers in 2007 a year before the crisis. They represent the face of a stagnant society, a large group of people for whom "the mobility elevator does not work and cannot even go up to the first floor".

This research also identifies an integrated society represented by those people who do not have difficulties for their own survival, with a decent life in material terms that has recovered up to the same levels before the Big Recession. They represent 48.8% of the population. Within this society, the report detects a group which makes up what they call an unsafe society, formed by around 6 million people. This group is in high risk of exclusion. They fear that, with an eventual new crisis, their breadwinner will collapse. They feel outraged when they see the safe society drawing back and disconnecting from the rest. They are the ones wanting to feel they still have the power to interrupt the dynamics of society of the safe ones and to block the arrival of immigrants.

Those in the society of opportunities, instead, are in an accommodated position. They think they are right with their ideas and consumption habits. This social class consumes in excess, without being aware of social exclusion, and can place their needs on the political agenda. They show a certain fatigue in solidarity. In fact, they do not practice the empathy since they usually blame poorer and excluded classes for their responsibility for being in such situation.

In this context, the Message of Pope Francis for the Third World Journey of the Poor celebrated on November the 17th is especially accurate for Spain: “The hope of the poor will not perish for ever” (psalm 9) These words of the Psalm remain timely. They express a profound truth that faith impresses above all on the hearts of the poor, restoring lost hope in the face of injustice, sufferings and the uncertainties of life.

The Pope describes that this psalm was created in a moment of great economic development which, as it is usually the case, also lead to strong social inequalities. Inequality created a great number of indigent people, whose condition seemed even more dramatic when it was compared with the wealth of some privileged families. The sacred author, observing such situation, draws a picture full of realism and truth. The psalmist describes the condition of the impoverished person and the arrogance that oppresses him (cf. 10,1-10); he invokes the judgement of God for the reestablishment of justice and the overcome inequality (cf 10,14-15). It is as if he was asking back again the question that has been repeated along the centuries until our days: How can God tolerate this inequality? Why does he allow the humiliation that creates impoverishment? Why does he allow those who oppress to have a happy life while their behaviour should be condemned?

Today we find families forced to leave their lands, victims of multiple forms of violence, from prostitution to drugs and deeply humiliated. Also, how can we forget the millions of immigrants affected by so many hidden interests, whose solidarity and equality are being denied? What can we say of the marginalised and homeless people that wander the streets of our cities? By standing by poor people, the Church is called to act so no one suffers from exclusion. We cannot distance from the suffering body of the Lord; we must touch his flesh to engage in first person on a service that constitutes real evangelization. This engagement, also in social terms, is not external to the announce of the Gospel, but rather manifests the realism of the Christian faith and its historical validity. The love that gives life to the faith in Jesus does not allow us to turn inwards into a suffocating individualism, in segments of underhand spiritual intimacy, without any influence of the social life.

Our opulent society needs to revert the unconnected society, strengthen the mechanisms of inclusion of citizenship, enlarge the guarantee of the guiding principles of social and economic politics of the Constitution and create a new scenario with shared social responsibilities. A social leadership is essential, a bottom-top construction that can invert the path of mistrust and isolation.

Our Christian communities must always be open to solidarity and to practice justice. The closeness with those who suffer, with victims of the culture of disposability must be a pastoral priority. Only this can give us lucidity for an attitude of prophetic denounce and encounter with those who represent the same image than the one who saves us.

Christian ethics is not and ethic of minimums but rather of maximums from the moment in which Jesus proclaims: “Love one another as I have loved you”. Yes, as the Council said, Christ reveals to the human being what belongs to the human being, the paths of justice and love that Jesus taught us are paths of true humanity, and will make the words of the psalm true: “The hope of the poor shall not perish for ever”.

FCO. JAVIER ALONSO RODRÍGUEZ
President GCJP
CREATION IS «GOD’S SOCIAL NETWORK»

From September the 1st to October the 27th the Church has been immersed in a time of prayer, dialogue and ecological conversion.

This period initiated with the World Journey of Prayer for the Care for Creation and finished with the Amazon Synod.

“And God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:25). God’s gaze, at the beginning of the Bible, rests lovingly on his creation. From habitable land to life-giving waters, from fruit-bearing trees to animals that share our common home, everything is dear in the eyes of God, who offers creation to men and women as a precious gift to be preserved”. These were the first words of Francis in his Message for the Journey of Prayer on September the 1st.

The Pope pointed out that, unfortunately, what was created as something good has turned into something exploitable by human greed. Therefore, our planet is in serious danger for the survival of all beings living in it, putting a risk the life of people, especially those who are poor and vulnerable from developing countries. Those countries do not have the necessary means for fighting against climate change and, in many cases, their inhabitants are forced to displace seeking for better life conditions or simply for survival. Migration are not usually well seen by host countries.

This way, Creation has turned into a place of rivalry and confrontation instead of a place of encounter and exchange. This has unleashed serious environmental impacts: increase of polluted air in cities, non-stop burning of fossil fuels, presence of micro-plastics in seas and oceans, calcination of forests, pollution of safe water and shortage of the latter. The biggest part of these impacts fosters climate change, whose effects we experience more and more frequently the increase of extreme meteorological phenomena that produce big disasters: desertification, droughts, devastation... We could continue enumerating a long list of harmful changes each of them caused by human action.

All mentioned before is reflected in the region of the Amazonia, whose Synod was celebrated some weeks ago. There, once again, the good living of indigenous people, with an ancestral culture in harmony with nature, is being threatened by the unstoppable desire of a part of the population wanting to improve their welfare state no matter the price to pay for it. This welfare state is achieved, many times, through the violation of Human Rights or even the life of those people that live in places were abundant resources attracts the big company’s economic interests. With this, big multinational and their macro-projects destroy the environment, pollute waters and soil, exhaust its resources for later on, abandoning the affected people and repeating the same process in other emplacements.

This is why the Pope, in his above-named message, encourages consumption habits, our ways of travelling, attitude towards leisure, the willingness to waste things: food, clothes, etc., and hence taking care of the people and nature from the austerity and respect towards the environment.

In this friendship with God we must consider our social and political commitment as well in order to contribute to the creation, to the best of our ability, a model for fair, charitable and sustainable development.

Therefore, the Synod represents a symbol of hope that has made possible the hearing of the polyphonic voice of the Amazonia in the Church. This must encourage us to have an attitude of active listening towards the Mother Earth and its inhabitants in order to experience a total ecology as an essential part of our Christian faith and commitment. By this mean, we will create a Church missionary on the way out, merciful, Samaritan, supportive, open to ecumenical, interreligious and cultural dialogue. In this way, we will be able to guard Creation and take care of the common house.

To listen to the symphonic voice of the universe to rediscover the Father’s tenderness in everything that exists.

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ISABEL CUENCA ANAYA
Secretary-General, GC JP
Thirty years after the fall of the iron curtain

From October the 11th to the 14th, it was held in Bratislava the Justice and Peace European International Seminar, followed by the statutory General Assembly of our entity. 21 States participated in the European network of Justice and Peace. The motto was “Challenges of Solidarity: living together in Europe 30 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain”. The Seminar began with a liturgical celebration of the Greek-Catholic rite, followed by the inaugural welcoming ceremony and an introductory lecture on the theme by the philosopher Prof. Martin Luther.

On Saturday morning two workshops were held, “Migration and Mobility from the Central European Perspective” and “Take action against poverty and social exclusion: the case of Roma people and other excluded communities”, encouraged by the leaders of Cáritas, of the Pastoral with Roma people and by other entities of social action, as well as well-known journalist. The considerations established that institutions, political actors, public opinion from Slovakia and from other countries of the region are not keen to the migration phenomenon and generally, neither to situations of diversity or accet-
tion of minoritarian groups for ethnic or religious matters. This is mainly due to the feeling of national glorification that has created a closed society, and which has been translated into conservative governments as an answer to a long period of socialist/communist dictatorship. The Journey continued during the afternoon with a round table related to measures to transform this reality into solidarity both at home and abroad. The participants were the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Focolare movement and the University School of Social Work.

On Sunday, we visited the public Central University and its premises and services of catholic religious pastoral for students, that develops within a great amplitude of spaces, means and contents, characteristic of a social situation of “Christianity”. In the course of this visit, we celebrated a multitudinous and participated Eucharist. The rest of the day the “symbolic action” took place, developed by boat on the Danube, in the area of the border with Austria, in memory and homage to the thousands of people who tried to flee from political and religious persecution during the hardest years of the dictatorship. There was music, prayer, silence, throwing flowers into the river and a mural of symbolic and supportive phrases by each delegation; as well as the concentration and speeches of associations of victims and relatives, including elderly survivors, at the point where the river forms a strait and where a Memorial arch called “Door of Freedom” has been erected.

Back in Bratislava, the General Assembly began, which continued on Monday morning and ended with the adoption and reading of the Final Declaration “Peace, Justice and Truth after the Pall of the Wall”.

BUDALD VENDRELL FERRER
Vice-president, GCJP

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

“No is no, and if you don’t say yes, it also means no. And if you wear a skirt and you are dressed up, it is also a no. And if someone tries to make you guilty the answer is no”. The Blonde Neighbour, influencer

November the 25th is a journey of denounce and reflection in which figures, official records and data leave us overwhelmed. They show and highlight that the violence against women and girls all around the world entails a brutal violation of Human Rights, one of the cruellest discriminations of gender since it is a violence against an individual for the mere fact of being a woman.

Gender-based violence is the main obstacle for achieving equality, its absolute negation. It is a type of violence that aims to maintain the control over the woman by subordinating her. We are talking about a violence that isolates and dominates, where fear, shame and silence are their main allies. It is a violence that remains unpunished and that free-runs in a space where legislation and its rulings lack of gender persp ective, causing on women a flagrant judicial unprotection and creating situations of discrimination and revictimization.

For all this we, women from North and South claim that we want to be equal and free, and also alive. We deny any mistreatment, abuse and exploitation, we refuse to feel hypersexualized, we refuse to be the main character of toxic relationships that subject us, we condemn trafficking, we denounce forced marriages, we fight to put an end to female genital mutilation, we are horrified that our bodies are used as weapons of war in armed conflicts and we defend the mobility of those women who decide to cross borders.

Likewise, we demand wages that allow us to live in a dignified and autonomous way, we demand an inclusive language and violence against women to be addressed necessarily from the perspective of intersectionality, contemplating those determining elements that can converge with it (religion, ethnicity, age, disability...). In short, we demand prevention programs and policies, the increase resources aimed at fighting against violence, the application of gender justice and the protection, assistance, care and reparation of the damage inflicted on women who suffer violence, to their children and to their environment.

And this is the unequivocal message that we find in the gospel, the cornerstone. We simply want ourselves alive, we want ourselves free, we want ourselves equal: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28.

CARMEN HERNÁNDEZ COBOS
Technical Secretary, GCJP
The Multi-

General Commission for

Justice and Peace in Spain (with special consultative status with the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations); PICUM). The growth and the exploitation of people and resources. The structural way of life in our society.


During the World Food Day, the promoters of the "If You Care for the Planet, you Fight Poverty" campaign remembered that every time we decide what to eat, we also choose whether to take care or to destroy our planet. The intensive production of agricultural food concentrates this business in the hands of large companies that commercialize production and speculate with it, hindering access to food, linking themselves to land grabbing and expulsion of native peoples. One third of arable land is eroded by monocultures which makes 75% of the biodiversity to be disappearing. Moreover, when producing food, a third of the greenhouse gases are generated, without forgetting that one out of every three products ends up in the garbage.

The entities have participated in the Synod for the Amazon because they have a presence in that territory and want to accompany this crucial moment of the Church, in which the proposal of integral ecology is presented as a new path in the face of the social and environmental crisis that we are living. Throughout the Synod, people made the symbolic gesture of taking off their shoes and stepping on the earth in order to feel that they belong to it, as they do in Amazonian celebrations: "Take off your shoes, because the earth you step on is sacred earth."