

The Only World Worth Building Includes Everyone

Pope Francis

From a talk Pope Francis delivered on 25 April 2017.

Quite a few years of life have strengthened my conviction that each and everyone's existence is deeply tied to that of others: life is not time merely passing by, life is about interactions. As I meet, or lend an ear to those who are sick, to the migrants who face terrible hardships in search of a brighter future, to prison inmates who carry a hell of pain inside their hearts, and to those, many of them young, who cannot find a job, I often find myself wondering: "Why them and not me?" I, myself, was born into a family of migrants; my father, my grandparents, like many other Italians, left for Argentina and met the fate of those who are left with nothing. I could have very well ended up among today's "discarded" people.

First and foremost, we all need each other. We can only build the future by standing together, including everyone. Everything is connected, and we need to restore our connections to a healthy state. Many of us, nowadays, seem to believe that a happy future is something impossible to achieve. While such concerns must be taken very seriously, they are not invincible. They can be overcome when we don't lock our door to the outside world. Happiness can only be discovered as a gift of harmony between the whole and each single component.

And this brings me to my second message. How wonderful would it be if the growth of scientific and technological innovation would come along with more equality and social inclusion. How wonderful would it be, while we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brothers and sisters orbiting around us. How wonderful would it be if solidarity were not simply reduced to social work, and became, instead, the default attitude in political, economic and scientific choices, as well as in the relationships among individuals, peoples and countries. Only by educating people to a true solidarity will we be able to overcome the "culture of waste," which doesn't

concern only food and goods, but people who are cast aside by our techno-economic systems which, without even realising it, are now putting products at their core, instead of people.

Solidarity is a free response born from the heart of each and everyone. When one realises that life, even in the middle of so many contradictions, is a gift, that love is the source and the meaning of life, how can they withhold their urge to do good to another fellow being? Let us help each other, all together, to remember that the other is not a statistic or a number. The other has a face. The "you" is always a real presence, a person to care for.

There is a parable Jesus told to help us understand the difference between those who'd rather not be bothered and those who take care of the other. It is the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A man had been assaulted, robbed, and abandoned on a dirt road. A priest and a Levite, two very influential people of the time, walked past him without stopping to help. Then a Samaritan, a very much despised ethnicity at the time, did not ignore the injured man and assisted him. This story is the story of today's humanity. People's paths are riddled with suffering, as everything is centered around money and things, instead of people. And often there is this habit, by people who call themselves "respectable", of not taking care of the others, thus leaving thousands of human beings, or entire populations, on the side of the road. Fortunately, there are also those who are creating a new world by taking care of others.

We have so much to do, and we must do it together despite the evil we breathe every day. Thank God, no system can nullify our desire to open up to the good, to compassion and to our capacity to react against evil, all of which stem from deep within our hearts. Through the darkness of today's conflicts, each and every one of us can become a bright candle, a reminder that light will overcome darkness.

To Christians, the future does have a name, and its name is Hope. Feeling hopeful does not mean to be optimistically naïve and ignore the tragedy humanity is facing. Hope is the virtue of a heart that doesn't lock itself into darkness, that doesn't dwell on the past, doesn't simply get by in the present, but is able to see a tomorrow. Hope is a humble, hidden seed of life that, with time, will develop into a large tree. And it can do so much, because a tiny flicker of light that feeds on hope is enough to shatter the shield of darkness. A single individual is enough for hope to exist, and that individual can be you. And then there will be another "you," and another "you," and it turns into an "us." Hope began with one "you". When there is an "us," there begins a revolution.

The third message I would like to share today is, indeed, about revolution: the revolution of tenderness. This is the love that comes close and becomes real. It is a movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands. Tenderness means to use our eyes to see the other, our ears to hear the other, to listen to the children, the poor, those who are afraid of the future. To listen also to the silent cry of our common home, of our sick and polluted Earth. Tenderness means to use our hands and our heart to comfort the other, to take care of those in need. This is the path that Jesus himself took. Yes, tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women. Tenderness is not weakness; it is fortitude. It is the path of solidarity, the path of humility. The more powerful you are, the more your actions will have an impact on people. If you don't, your power will ruin you, and you will ruin the other. Through humility and concrete love, on the other hand, power – the highest, the strongest one – becomes a service, a force for good.

The future of humankind isn't exclusively in the hands of politicians, of great leaders, of big companies. Yes, they do hold an enormous responsibility. But the future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognise the other as a "you" and themselves as part of an "us." We all need each other. ■