

# Utopia is as necessary as our daily bread

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«Poetry is as necessary as our daily bread», says the poet. Poetry and utopia rhyme well, and both are indispensably necessary to pass through the tunnel. We don't accept that official society that reduces human life to the marketplace or, in the best of cases, which proposes as its objective, always postponed, to reduce hunger in half.

We are indignant and perplexed. Many voices, from many quarters, say that we are in crisis. And that with things as they are, neither God nor the World is pleased.

To be in crisis, however, is not necessarily a disaster. Crisis is a fever of the spirit. Where there is fever there is life. The dead do not have a fever.

We are not dealing with ignoring reality. Rather, we have to accept and transform it radically. Now we do not resign ourselves to proclaiming that «another world is possible»; we proclaim that it is feasible and that we are making it. The *World Latin American Agenda* which we are preparing for 2007 is entitled precisely «We demand and make a different democracy». «Down with *with the people* and *with the left*» declare the Zapatistas in «the other campaign». And already it has been announced that we are going «toward the socialism of the XXI century», with «Humanity as the subject» of change.

Utopia is necessary because the inequality between the rich and the poor is increasing, according to the UN, even in the countries of the First World. Our America, according to the Organization of American States (OAS), is the region most unjust, for that systematic inequality. There is more richness in the Earth, but there is more injustice. Africa has been called «the dungeon of the world» –a continental Shoah. 2500 million persons survive on the Earth with less than two euros a day, and 25,000 persons die of hunger everyday, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Desertification threatens the life of 1,200 million people in a hundred countries. Fraternity and land under their feet is denied to immigrants. The USA is constructing a wall of 1,500 kilometers against Latin America; and at the south of Spain Europe is raising a barricade against Africa. All of which, besides being wicked, is programmed. An African immigrant, in an excruciating letter, writes: «I beg you not to think that what we live here is normal, because in fact it is a result of the injustice established and sustained by inhuman systems that kill and impoverish....Do not support this system with your silence...».

But Humanity «is on the move»; and is making a turn toward the truth and toward justice. There is much utopia and much commitment in this disillusioned planet. Someone has recalled that the 20<sup>th</sup> century has been an immense cemetery of empires: the British, the French, the Portuguese, the Dutch, the German, the Japanese and the Russian. Remaining, tottering, is the USA empire, which also will fall. «Latin-America is distancing itself from the tutelage of the United States» and Asia also has turned its back on the United States, in the first summit organized by ASEAN. UNESCO has declared *Cultural Diversity* as the Patrimony of

Humanity. The 21<sup>st</sup> century –which we know will be a mystical century–, will also be the century of the environment. Ecumenical dialogue and inter-religious dialogue are increasing on various levels, as a new paradigm of religious faith and of world peace. The Churches, the Religions, are necessarily going to meet, and will have to put themselves at peace for the peace of the world. In the Catholic Church, within an official monotonous continuity, which already was to be expected, many communities and many groups of theological reflection and of pastoral action know how to be simultaneously faithful and free. We are learning how to be an Adult Church, one and plural. If we reject the dictatorship of relativism, we also reject the dictatorship of dogmatism.

We will not permit that the Vatican Council II becomes a «forgotten future» and we even urge the preparation of a new Council, truly ecumenical, which from the Christian faith contributes to the greatest task of humanizing Humanity. In Latin-America there is being prepared the Fifth Episcopal Conference, called «CELAM V». A first draft of the text, for consultation, is not very stimulating, as written «by theologians who are in the heavens», ridicules an old theologian. It's up to us to supply alternatives and not permit that CELAM V forgets Medellín. There are socio-pastoral priorities in Latin-America which demand of us realism and utopia, coherence and commitment, without any possible delay.

Here at home, in the Prelature of São Félix do Araguaia, we keep going, now with Bishop Don Leonardo. Challenges are not lacking. Still without solution is the encampment in front of the Hacienda Bordolandia, already expropriated; the Gleba Libertade, also invaded, for about three years is awaiting a solution; and the village Xavante Marawatsede remains with 13 years of tension. (The agrarian and indigenous policies of our Brazil are obstructed by «respect» for the *latifundio* (large land estate), for agribusiness, and for the politico-rural elite.) In our Pastoral Assembly this year we have reaffirmed three priorities for our particular Church: formation, autonomy, socio-political pastoral. We are preparing for the great *Romería* (Pilgrimage) of the Martyrs of the Journey, in Ribeirão Casacalheira, on June 15 and 16, on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the martyrdom of Father João Bosco Penido Burnier. With our Father João Bosco we also remember all those men and women who are giving their life for the Reign, especially in Our America. The motto of the Pilgrimage is «Lives for the Reign of Life». Among the many memorials we give special attention to the figure of the patriarch of the cause of the indigenous, Sepé Tiarajú, on the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his heroic death.

To remember martyrdom is a vital part of every people, and vital for the Church of Jesus. If we lose the remembrance of the martyrs, we lose the future of the poor.

I continue in my leisure as a retired person, experiencing «biological poverty» with its limitations. In compensation I have been able to edit some books, as children of old age. Am I permitted to make some commercial publicity? «Murais da Libertação», with Cerezo Barredo, ed. Loyola; «Orações da Caminhada», ed. Verus; «Cuando los días dan que pensar», ed. PPC; «Cartas marcadas», ed. Paulus/Brasil; «Con Jesús, el de Nazaret», with José Luis Cortés, ed. PPC; «Los ojos de los pobres», with Juan Guerrero, in Castellano and in Catalán, ed. Ediciones 62.

We continue editing utopia, commitment, transparency, life. And we remember that utopia should be verified by daily praxis, that «hope is justified only in those who are walking» and that «it is given to us to serve those who have lost hope.» For this service I think that what is asked of us today above all is a coherent witness, a Samaritan closeness, and a prophetic presence.

To all and the each and every one of you to whom I owe friendship, gratitude and a letter, an affectionate embrace in the militant peace of the Gospel.

**Pedro Casaldáliga**