

“Today I No Longer Have Those Dreams”
Says the Cardinal

Cardinal Carlo M. Martini, Jesuit, biblical scholar, former archbishop of Milan, and my colleague in Parkinson’s, is an ecclesiastical model of dialogue, of welcome, and of profound renewal in both the Church and society. In his book of confidences and confessions, *Nocturnal Conversations in Jerusalem*,¹ he declares, “Earlier on I had dreams about the Church. I dreamed about a Church that went forward in poverty and humility; that did not depend on the powers of this world. It was a Church in which distrust was pulled out by the roots; a Church that provided a space for people who thought more broadly; that lifted up the spirit of those, especially, who felt they were small or sinners. I dreamed of a young Church. Today I no longer have that dream.” This categorical affirmation by Martini is not, and cannot be, a declaration of failure, of ecclesial deception, of renouncing utopia. Martini continues to dream of nothing less than the Reign of God, the utopia of all utopias, God’s very own dream.

He and millions of others in the Church, dream of that “Other Possible Church” that is at the service of the “Other Possible World.” Cardinal Martini is a good witness and a good guide on this alternative journey. He has demonstrated that.

Today, in the Church (that Church of Jesus made up of various churches) and also in society (which consists of various peoples, many cultures, and a variety of historical processes), we need to radicalize the search for justice and peace, for human dignity and equality in otherness. We need to radicalize real progress in the context of deep ecology. Like Bobbio, we need also to say that “Freedom has to be set into the very heart of equality.” Today this needs to happen in the context of vision and action that is literally global. This is the other globalization, the one that defends our thinkers, our activists, our martyrs, and our starving people.

The current major economic crisis is a global crisis of Humanity. It will not be resolved by any form of capitalism because there is no space for capitalism with a human heart. Capitalism continues to be homicidal, ecocidal, and suicidal. There is no way to simultaneously serve the god of the banks and the God of Life. We cannot put arrogance and usury in the same category as living together fraternally. The fundamental question is whether we are trying to save the System or to save Humanity. In Chinese, the word for crisis has a double meaning. It can mean crisis as *danger* or as *opportunity*. Great crises open up great opportunities.

In the U.S. electoral campaign, the “dream of Martin Luther King” was often invoked. The hope was to bring that dream to life today. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, we remember fondly the *Alliance of the Catacombs of the Servant and Poor Church*. On November 16, 1965, a few days before the Council ended, forty Council Fathers celebrated Eucharist in the Roman Catacombs of Domitila. There they signed the *Alliance of the Catacombs*. Dom Hélder Câmara, whose 100th birthday is being celebrated this year, was one of the prime movers in this prophetic group. In 13 points, the *Alliance* insists on the Evangelical poverty of the Church: without honorific titles, without privileges, and without worldly ostentation. It insists on collegiality and on co-responsibility in the Church as People of God. It calls for openness to the world and brotherly and sisterly welcome.

Today, in the current situation of upheaval, we profess the validity of many social, political, and ecclesial dreams. In no way can we renounce them. We continue rejecting neoliberal capitalism, the neo-imperialism of money and arms, and the economy of the market and consumerism that buries a large majority of Humanity in poverty and hunger. We will continue to reject all discrimination based on gender, culture, or race. We demand a substantial transformation of world organizations like the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund,

¹ [Tr. Originally published in Italian as *Conversazioni notturne a Gerusalemme*. There appears to be no English version available at this time.]

the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. We pledge to live a “deep and integral ecology” by fostering alternative agrarian-agricultural politics in opposition to the predatory politics of the estate owners and of those who practice monoculture and toxic agriculture. We will participate in transformational social, political, and economic efforts aimed at promoting a democracy of “high intensity.”

As Church, in the light of the Gospel, we want to live the obsessive passion of Jesus and the Reign of God. We want to be a Church of the option for the poor, an ecumenical community and a macro-ecumenical one as well. The God in whom we believe, the Abba of Jesus, cannot in any way support fundamentalisms, exclusions, devouring inclusions, or proselytizing pride. Enough of making *our* God the only true one! “My God, will you let me see God?” With all due respect for the opinion of Pope Benedict XVI, interreligious dialogue is not only possible, it is necessary. We will make ecclesial co-responsibility the legitimate expression of an adult faith. Correcting centuries of discrimination, we will demand full equality for women in the life and ministries of the Church. We will encourage the respected freedom and service of our theologians, both men and women. The Church will be a network of prayerful, servant, prophetic, communities that are witnesses to the Good News. It will be a Good News of life, of freedom, of blessed communion; a Good News of mercy, welcome, pardon, and tenderness; of a Samaritan woman standing beside all the paths of Humanity. We will continue to make sure that the warning of Jesus, “It will not be so among you” (Matt. 21: 26), is lived out in practice. Let authority be service. The Vatican will cease to be a State and the Pope will no longer be a Head of State. The Curia will have to be profoundly reformed and local churches will promote the inculturation of the Gospel and shared ministry. Without fear and without evasions, the Church will be committed to the towering goal of justice and peace, of human rights and of the avowed equality of all peoples. It will be a prophetic voice of proclamation, of denunciation, and of consolation. The politics practiced by all Christian men and women will be “the highest expression of fraternal love.” (Pius XI)

We refuse to abandon these dreams even though they may appear illusory: “We still sing, we still dream.”² We will hold to the word of Jesus: “I have come to bring fire to the Earth, and how I wish it were blazing already.” (Luke 12:49) By following Jesus with humility and courage, we will see how to live these dreams each day of our lives. We will continue having crises. Humanity, with its religions and churches, will continue being holy and sinful. But we will not lack the global campaigns of solidarity, the Social Forums, the Vias Campesinas, the popular movements, the successes of the Landless Peasants, the ecological alliances, the alternative paths of Our America, the Basic Ecclesial Communities, the efforts at reconciliation between *Shalom* and *Salam*, and the indigenous and Afro-American victories. Once more and for all time, I declare that “I hold to the slogan: Hope.”

Let each one of us, men and women, who are able to come into this fraternal circle, in communion of religious faith or of human passion, receive an embrace as big as these dreams. We who are old still have dreams, says the Bible (Joel 3:1). A few days ago I read this definition: “Old age is a sort of post-war;” though not necessarily one of backing down. Parkinson’s is only a chance happening along the way. We continue with the Reign of God inside.

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² [Tr.: The title of a song by Víctor Heredia of Argentina.]