

POPE CALLS FOR SOLIDARITY AT WORLD MEETING OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

By Celine A. Quinio, JPIC Commission Secretariat

*No family without a dwelling, no peasants without land, no worker without rights,
no person without the dignity that work gives.—Pope Francis*



Fr. Felix Mushobozi CPPS, Co-Secretary of the JPIC Commission Secretariat, is introduced to Pope Francis. Every participant at the meeting was personally welcomed by the Pope—“His embrace moved us and will be forever in our memory.”—Statement in quotes from the 15-Point Declaration

Vatican, 11/6/14. In his address to representatives of 76 popular movements around the world who were gathered at the Old Synod (“walk together”) Hall of the Vatican, Pope Francis invited the assembly to be in *solidarity* with each other and the Church. “Solidarity,” he said, “means much more than some acts of sporadic generosity. It is to think and to act in terms of community, of the priority of the life of all over the appropriation of goods by a few. It is also to fight against the structural causes of poverty, inequality, lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights. It is to confront the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced displacements, painful emigrations, the traffic of persons, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called to transform.”

Upon the initiative of Pope Francis, more than 100 people, representing the marginalized, outsiders and the poor in society, traveled to Rome, Italy, Oct. 27-29, for the World Meeting of Popular Movements. Among them was Nohra Padilla Herrera, who came to represent the National Recyclers Association in Colombia. Recyclers are the people who live off of selling recyclable items found in the trash and rely on whatever they find in the bins to pay for their daily meal. Popular movements fight for the rights of people like them. Also at the meeting was Evo Morales, President of Bolivia, who came to represent the World Assembly of Indigenous Peoples, of which he is president.

The historic event was organized and promoted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and with the directors of several movements “to face the challenge Pope Francis himself sets with courage and intelligence, to seek radical proposals



More than 100 people who represent the marginalized, outsiders and the poor in society traveled to Rome, Italy, Oct. 27-29, for the World Meeting of Popular Movements. Photo from movimientospopulares.org.

to resolve the problems of the poor.” This is the first time the Vatican has sponsored an international gathering of popular movements.



Representing the JPIC Commission at the World Meeting of Popular Movements were: Felix Mushobozi CPPS, Julia Arciniegas FMA, Yaneth Moreno Rodriguez SDS and Franca Sessa LSA (not in photo).

In addition those who represented the three principal themes of the meeting—*land, housing and labor*—the gathering included bishops and pastoral workers, intellectuals and academicians. They contributed significantly to the discussions, while respecting the role of the sectors and popular movements.

Discussions on land, housing and labor, centered around the structural causes of so much inequality, depriving the unemployed, farmers, people who live in slums and in the outskirts of society, of work, housing and land, generating violence and destroying nature. “It’s the first time social movements come together to discuss these issues with the Pope,” said Esteban Castro, Secretary General of the Confederación de Trabajadores de la Economía Popular (Argentina). “In the long run, we’d like to start international organizations that are supported by the Church and that defend worker’s rights.” (*Rome Reports*)

Priests and bishops in Latin America are actively involved in organizing unofficial temporary workers. Among them was then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio. “As a Bishop, he would help out the poorest neighborhoods, so he understood the reality of how people lived there,” said Sergio Sanchez of the Federation of Recyclers in Argentina. “He would always say that we needed to teach the youth to stand up and take action.” (*Rome Reports*)

“This meeting of Popular Movements is a sign, it is a great sign,” remarked the Pope, “you have come to put in the presence of God, of the Church, of peoples, a reality that is often silenced. The poor not only suffer injustice but they also struggle against it!”

“...The Popular Movements express the urgent need to revitalize our democracies, so often kidnapped by innumerable factors,” the Pope declared. “It is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of the great majorities and that protagonism exceeds the logical proceedings of formal democracy. The prospect of a world of lasting peace and justice calls us to overcome paternalistic welfarism; it calls us to create new ways of participation that include the Popular Movements and animate local, national and international government structures with that torrent of moral energy that arises from the incorporation of the excluded in the building of a common destiny—and this, with a constructive spirit, without resentment, with love.”



The meeting concluded with a 15-Point Declaration by the participants, citing the highlights of the historic event. One of the outcomes states: “The immediate product of the meeting, we brought two things, the ‘Charter of the Excluded’ to work with the foundation of the sectors and people’s movements, which commit to massively distribute the speech of Pope Francis and memories; and the proposal to create a permanent space of collaboration between popular movements and the Church.”

“I accompany you with my heart on this journey. Let us say together from our heart: no family without a dwelling, no rural workers without land, no worker without rights, no person without the dignity that work gives.”—Pope Francis

[Full text of the Pope’s message; 15-Point Declaration \(WMPM\)](#)