SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 180819a

Sunday 19.08.2018

Message for the 39th Meeting for Friendship between Peoples (Rimini, 19-25 August 2018)

On the occasion of the 39th edition of the Meeting for Friendship between Peoples, which began today in Rimini on the theme “The forces that move history are the same that make man happy”, on behalf of the Holy Father Francis, Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin sent to the bishop, Msgr. Francesco Lambiasi, the following message:

Message

To His Excellency the Most Reverend

Msgr. Francesco LAMBIASI

Bishop of Rimini

Your Most Reverend Excellency

This year too the Holy Father Francis wishes to send, through you, a cordial greeting to the organizers, to the volunteers and to the participants in the 39th *Meeting for Friendship among peoples*, a greeting to which I join my personal best wishes for the success of the event.

The title of the *Meeting* – “The forces that move history are the same that make man happy” – borrows an expression from Don Giussani and refers to that crucial turning point in society around 1968, whose effects have not been fully exhausted fifty years later, so much so that Pope Francis affirms that “today we do not live an era of change so much as a change of era” (*Address to the Fifth National Conference of the Italian Church*, Florence, 10 November 2015).

Breaking with the past became the categorical imperative of a generation that pinned its hopes on a revolution of structures capable of ensuring greater authenticity of life. Many believers yielded to the charm of this perspective and made the faith a moralism that, taking Grace for granted, relied on the efforts of practical realization of a better world.

For this reason it is significant that, in that context, to a young person absorbed in the search for the "forces that dominate history", Don Giussani said: "The forces that move history are the same that make man happy" (*Vita di don Giussani*, BUR 2014, page 412). With these words he challenged the young to verify the forces that change history, raising the bar with which to measure their revolutionary endeavour.

What has become of this endeavour? What remains of that desire to change everything? This is not the place for an historical overview, but we can identify some symptoms that emerge from the current situation in the West. We are going back to putting up walls, rather than building bridges. There is a tendency to be closed, instead of open to the other who is different from us. Indifference is growing, rather than the desire to take the initiative for change. A sense of fear prevails over trust in the future. And we wonder whether in the last half century the world has become more inhabitable.

This question relates to us Christians too, those of us who have passed through the season of 1968 and who are now called upon to reflect, along with many other protagonists, and to ask ourselves: what have we learned? What can we cherish?

Man's temptation has always been to think that his intelligence and his capacities are the principles that govern the world; a claim that is realized in two ways: "One is the attraction of Gnosticism … which ultimately keep[s] one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings. The other is the … neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, 94).

But, then, must the Christian who wants to avoid these two temptations necessarily renounce the desire for change? No, it is not a question of withdrawing from the world so as not to risk making mistakes, and to conserve to faith a sort of uncontaminated purity, since "an authentic faith … always involves a deep desire to change the world" (*ibid.*, 183), to move history, as the title of the *Meeting* tells us).

Many will ask themselves: is it possible? The Christian cannot give up dreaming that the world will change for the better. It is reasonable to dream this, because at the root of this certainty there is the profound conviction that Christ is the beginning of the new world, which Pope Francis summarizes with these words: ""Christ's resurrection is not an event of the past: it contains a vital power which has permeated the world. Where all seems to be dead, signs of the resurrection suddenly spring up. It is an irresistible force … in the midst of the darkness something new always springs to life" (*ibid.*, 276).

We have seen at work this "life force" in many situations throughout history. How can we forget that other epoch change that marked the world? The Holy Father spoke about it to the European episcopate last year: "In the twilight of the ancient world, as the glories of Rome fell into the ruins that still amaze us, and new peoples flooded across the borders of the Empire, one young man echoed anew the words of the Psalmist: "Who is the man that longs for life and desires to see good days?" By asking this question in the Prologue of his Rule, Saint Benedict … was not concerned about social status, riches or power. He appealed to the nature common to every human being, who, whatever his or her condition, longs for life and desires to see good days" (*Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community*, 28 October 2017).

Who will save today this desire the dwells, if confusedly, in the heart of man? Only something that lives up to his infinite thirst. In fact, if desire does not find an adequate object, it remains blocked and no promise, no initiative, is able to move it. From this point of view, "it is perfectly conceivable that the modern age, which began with such an exceptional and promising flow of human activity, will end in the most deadly and sterile passivity that history has ever known" (H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Milan 1994, 239-240).

No effort, no revolution can satisfy the human heart. Only God, Who made us with infinite desire, can fill him with His infinite presence; for this He became man: so that men may meet the One who saves and fulfils the desire for happy days, as recalled by a passage from the *Aparecida Document* (29 June 2007), fruit of the Fifth Conference of the episcopate of the Latin American continent and of the Caribbean. The Holy Father, in giving thanks for the exhibition dedicated to the great Marian Shrine of Aparecida, offers this step as a contribution to the deepening of the theme of the Meeting: "The event of Christ is [...] the beginning of this new subject born in history [...]: 'Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction' (*Deus caritas est*, 1). [...] The very nature of Christianity consists, therefore, in recognizing the presence of Jesus and following Him. This was the beautiful experience of those early disciples who, meeting Jesus, were fascinated and full of amazement before the extraordinary figure Who spoke to them, by the way in which He treated them, giving answers to the hunger and thirst for life of their hearts. John the Evangelist told us, with icastic strength, the impact that the person of Jesus produced in the first two disciples, John and Andrew, who met Him. It all begins with the question: "What do you want?" (*Jn* 1: 38). This was followed by an invitation to live an experience: "Come and you will see" (*Jn* 1: 39). This narration will remain in history as a unique synthesis of the Christian method" (*Aparecida Document*, 243-244).

The Holy Father hopes that this year's *Meeting* will be, for all those who participate, an opportunity to deepen or to welcome the Lord Jesus' invitation: "Come and you will see". This is the strength that, while it frees man from the slavery of the "false infinites", which promise happiness without being able to ensure it, it makes him the new protagonist of the world scene, called to make history into the meeting place of the sons of God with their Father and of brothers between themselves.

As he assures you of his prayer that you may be up to this exciting challenge, Pope Francis asks you to pray for him and for the World Meeting of Families that will take place in Dublin from 25 to 26 August.

In adding my personal wishes, accompanied by prayer, I wish to avail myself of the circumstance to convey my most distinct respects.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin

Secretary of State