



The Emergency of the Socially Excluded



Workshop organized by the PAS with LUMSA University and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (5 December 2013)

Preface

Motivated by the instinct of the Holy Spirit in favour of the neediest, Pope Francis introduced me to his countryman Juan Grabois, the lawyer who, with his support when he was Archbishop of Buenos Aires, was able to work with the leaders of the “cartoneros” movement of the Argentine capital to obtain legal recognition for them. The workshop will focus on the emergency of these new social outcasts: a human mass that normally settles on the geographical outskirts of cities, creating informal housing and popular movements with their own leaders, people who are able to find and organize partially paid work, but of a kind that is not normally recognized by government bodies or traditional trade unions. According to current calculations there are over 200,000 slums in the world today (Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, Verso, London-New York 2006, p. 26), which accommodate a total of about 1.3 billion people (*The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements*, UN-Habitat, 2003, p. xxv). However, also as a result of the economic crisis, the number of the “excluded” is tragically increasing (UN-Habitat estimates that the figure will reach 2 billion in 2030, loc. cit.). Besides, the number of people excluded from employment is estimated to have already overtaken that of workers represented by unions. According to ILO, 70% of Indian and Filipino workers and 40% of Asian and Latin American workers are employed in the informal economy (*Statistical update on employment in the informal economy*, ILO – Dept. of Statistics, June 2012, fig. 1). While the phenomenon of the excluded becomes evident in the cities of the developing world, several analysts maintain it will gradually spread to the developed countries. Europe, with an economy in which 25% of workers (and 50% of young people) are unemployed, as is the case of Greece and Spain, cannot be considered immune from this phenomenon.

Pope Francis wishes for our workshop to study the causes of this new emergency and prescribe an agenda with possible solutions. Supposed contributing factors include the robotization of work, institutionalized corruption, market liberalization and the financial discipline imposed by the IMF and the World Bank as a result of globalization, de-industrialization and reproduction of poverty resulting from the crisis, and, in general, the insensitivity of capitalism, both of governments and private sectors, which, moved by profit alone, are unable to recognize this growing emergency. The social inclusion of the excluded also entails training community leaders and people of the “geographical and existential suburbs” to strengthen them in their struggle for the recognition of their capabilities and the common good. In Buenos Aires Cardinal Bergoglio had created a “vicaría” for emergency zones, employing the best talent, both religious and lay, of his Archdiocese. The unavoidable imperative, human and Christian, that we are called to is thus to find new solutions to the “emergency of the excluded”.

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