
Pope in Canada: “No to ideological colonisations and terrible cold wars that are still increasing”

“Colonization has not ended; in many places it has been transformed, disguised and concealed”, Francis denounced in his first speech in Québec, delivered yesterday – the third day of his journey to Canada, during a meeting with civil authorities, representatives of indigenous peoples and the Diplomatic Corps. “This is the case with forms of ideological colonization”, Francis said. In his visit to the French-speaking part of the Country, charmed by its natural wonders, Francis renewed his

“request for forgiveness for the wrong done by so many Christians to the indigenous peoples”

a distinctive mark of his 37th apostolic journey from the very beginning. “In the past, the colonialist mentality disregarded the concrete life of people and imposed certain predetermined cultural models; yet today too, there are any number of forms of ideological colonization that clash with the reality of life, stifle the natural attachment of peoples to their values, and attempt to uproot their traditions, history and religious ties”, Francis remarked. “This mentality, presumptuously thinking that the dark pages of history have been left behind, becomes open to the ‘cancel culture’ that would judge the past purely on the basis of certain contemporary categories”, argued the Pope: “The result is a cultural fashion that levels everything out, makes everything equal, proves intolerant of differences and concentrates on the present moment, on the needs and rights of individuals, while frequently neglecting their duties with regard to the most weak and vulnerable of our brothers and sisters: the poor, migrants, the elderly, the sick, the unborn...”.

“We can learn much from this ability to listen attentively to God, to persons and to nature”,

Francis’ tribute to the indigenous peoples, starting with the symbol of Canada par excellence: the maple leaf, representing the “industriousness” of the indigenous peoples, with “their constant concern to protect the land and the environment, in fidelity to a harmonious vision of creation.” “We need it – emphasised the Pope - especially amid the dizzying and frenzied pace of today’s world, marked by a constant ‘rapidification’, which makes difficult a truly human, sustainable and integral development, and ends up creating ‘a society of weariness and disillusionment’, which finds it hard to recover the taste for contemplation, authentic relationships, the mystique of togetherness.” “How much we need to listen to and dialogue with one another, in order to step back from the prevailing individualism, from hasty judgments, widespread aggressiveness and the temptation to divide the world into good people and bad!”, Francis exclaimed. The values present in the indigenous cultures, he said, “can inspire us all, and help to heal harmful tendencies to exploitation. Exploiting creation, relationships, time and basing human activity solely on what proves useful and profitable.” “These vital teachings, however, were violently opposed in the past”, the Pope remarked, reiterating the “mea culpa” that is at the heart of his journey, highlighting the “policies of assimilation and enfranchisement, also involving the residential school system, which harmed many indigenous families by undermining their language, culture and worldview”, and where “different local Catholic institutions had a part.”

It is necessary “to promote the legitimate rights of the native populations and to favour processes of healing and reconciliation between them and the non-indigenous people of the country”,

It is the Pope’s guidance “to build a better Country”, starting by admitting our faults, he said. “The

indigenous peoples have much to teach us about care and protection for the family; among them, from an early age, children learn to recognize right from wrong, to be truthful, to share, to correct mistakes, to begin anew, to comfort one another and to be reconciled”, the Pope’s second tribute: “May the wrongs that were endured by the indigenous peoples, for which we are ashamed, serve as a warning to us today, lest concern for the family and its rights be neglected for the sake of greater productivity and individual interests.” Francis went on referring to present-day developments: “Today, before the senseless folly of war, we have once again need to heal forms of hostility and extremism and to cure the wounds of hatred.” “We have no need to divide the world into friends and enemies, to create distances and once again to arm ourselves to the teeth: an arms race and strategies of deterrence will not bring peace and security”, he remarked. “We need to ask ourselves not how to pursue wars, but how to stop them. And to prevent entire peoples from once more being held hostage and in the grip of terrible cold wars that are still increasing. What we need are creative and farsighted policies capable of moving beyond the categories of opposition in order to provide answers to global challenges”, like peace, climate change, the effects of the pandemic and international migration movements. We need “to be able to look, as the indigenous wisdom tradition teaches, seven generations ahead, and not to our immediate convenience, to the next elections, or the support of this or that lobby”, for young people “deserve a better future than the one we are preparing for them.” Francis thus expressed his appreciation for Canada’s “ecological vocation”, and for “an essential word for all Canadians: multiculturalism.” In recognising the generosity shown in accepting many Ukrainian and Afghan migrants, the Pope highlighted the need “to move beyond the rhetoric of fear with regard to immigrants.” Even in a country as developed and prosperous as Canada, the Pope said, “there are many homeless persons who turn to churches and food banks to receive essential help”, denounced the Pope. “It is indeed sad – he said - that precisely among the native peoples we often find many indices of poverty.”

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