

1. LYING INFECTS MORE THAN CORONAVIRUS, Pedro Pierre.

More and more we are becoming aware of the manipulation and naivety in relation to this flu epidemic. It's not that we should neglect it, but to give it the importance it deserves, no more and no less. We could put in the basket of naivety the alarmists, the individualists, those who are not interested in politics, those who do not analyze the local and global reality, those who fill their refrigerator for fear of the end of the world, etc.

Look at how the big laboratories rub their hands together and jump for joy over their bank accounts, how governments take advantage of this to make decisions on the sly (no masks, but pellets to kill protesters!). An indigenous man says that 'the coronavirus is a disease of the whites'... Of course, if the 'whites' were not affected there would not be so much computer noise. In poor countries hundreds of people and even tens of thousands die every week from hunger, wars and curable diseases: where is the media to shock, scare and pressure us? Measles, cancer, catastrophic diseases and the same flu that we all suffer from at some point, kill more people than rotavirus. Why don't they organize campaigns to denounce the lack of combativeness of the pharmaceutical laboratories that could suppress or at least reduce much of these diseases?

Pope Francis tells us that 'the third world war has begun, in pieces'. Chemical warfare is underway and the Gringo, European, Russian and Chinese laboratories are working 24 hours a day to perfect the deadly effectiveness of the viruses and thus kill more 'enemies'... What do you mean they are not going to use these viruses to test their massacres? It seems that the coronavirus has escaped from their hands, like the 'mad cow', the avian and swine flu, Ebola (there in Africa, due to the extreme mass poverty, it is more effective!) and how many others. Have they not exploded it in China because the Chinese have already become the first economic and digital power at the planetary level?

Perhaps it would be good to remember what, in his time, Jesus said about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world: "Do not be afraid! Pay no attention! Be vigilant: Don't fall into carelessness or drinking or worldly concerns!" And also, the book of Revelation: "Look: I'm knocking on your door. If you open it, I'll come in, sit at your table and we'll have dinner together." That's the most vigilance we should have: God wants to come to dinner with us every day for a happy, simple and liberating life together... But we are busy with so many very secondary things that hide the essential from us: brotherhood, sharing, solidarity, communion with God...

How much selfishness and rivalry is already causing this coronavirus among us! And we let happiness pass through the friendship offered, through a more communitarian, healthier, simpler life... because individualism, aggressiveness, consumerism, vices... are indeed the end of us.

2. THE HUG OF THE ANACONDA...

Ha! Ha! We are afraid just to think of that mortal hug... Latin America is drowned in the embrace of the anaconda: Honduras, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay... to name just a few countries. Today in Ecuador we suffer this progressive and deadly drowning. We are still discussing whether the 10 years of the Citizens' Revolution with President Rafael Correa was a decade won or lost.

That is the great dispute between the 'Correístas' and the 'anti-Correístas', with all the big media distilling a visceral and permanent anti-Correísmo. Rafael Correa practiced a social capitalism marked by great ruptures in favor of the majority of Ecuadorians. The 'Latin American socialism of the 21st century' remained a campaign proclamation. The reality was that of a social capitalism: the rich continued to earn a lot of money, but poverty decreased by 20 points. Yes, the Correa government persecuted its staunchest and most slanderous opponents. On the other hand, it did not know how to integrate the proposals of the Indigenous Movement or the social and union organizations.

Great achievements speak in his favor: a better distribution of national wealth, an unprecedented improvement in health, education, social security, communication channels, and attention to people in difficult situations. Several historical ruptures appeared throughout these 10 years: the displacement of the national oligarchy that stopped controlling the State, the rich paid taxes, the big media were opposed by the creation of public information media, the minimum wage was doubled, the government of the United States stopped being the obeyed godfather, the plain people recovered their self-esteem, national and international tourism was favored, and Latin American integration was promoted like never before...

In the 2017 presidential election, the candidate of the Citizens' Revolution, Rafael Correa's party, Lenín Moreno, won 36% of the votes in the first round, despite having all the other parties against him. Currently the polls give Correa more than 40% favorable opinion. Faced with the 2021 elections, the current government is looking for all the tricks to eliminate Rafael Correa for any candidacy and prevent his party from participating in those elections.

The government of Lenín Moreno marked the beginning of a shameful betrayal. The same night he won the elections, Lenín Moreno made a pact with the traditionalist right wing that had lost at the polls! Then came a national dialogue that was nothing more than a series of pacts with the oligarchy to cancel their debts, suppress taxes, give them freedom to the exit of foreign exchange, grant them large loans, privatize large strategic sectors in their favor... and persecute the militant correístas, to imprison the Vice President of the Republic without further evidence... Then, after the anti-constitutional farce of a rigged popular consultation, a commission of oligarchic personalities was appointed to destroy all the social, labor, economic and institutional advances that favored the middle and popular classes, particularly the youth.

The country's economy was handed over to the International Monetary Fund, which allows the rich to enrich themselves at the expense of the impoverishment of the majority. Politics again became obedience to the interests of the United States and submission to the big multinationals. The increase in poverty, massive unemployment and the marginalization of indigenous, popular and trade union organizations are clear realities. This situation of neo-colonialism exploded with the national uprising last October.

In October 2019, a popular uprising forced the government to reverse the 30% increase in fuel prices. The transporters were the first to protest, but they stopped all demonstrations after agreeing with the government on economic benefits. The indigenous movement, popular organizations, trade unions, peasants, and people living on the fringes of the big cities, especially youth and women, took over the protests. The real information ran through the social networks. After 13 days of confrontations with the police and the military that resulted in 12 deaths, 1200 prisoners and 1300 wounded, the government accepted a dialogue with the indigenous movement that only asked for the return of the price of gasoline to its previous amount. The government was saved and both the International Monetary Fund and the U.S. Embassy continue to govern the country.

We are left with an 'unfinished revolution' in the face of the 2021 presidential elections, with weakened social organizations, a population without a greater political conscience, a youth dizzy from consumerism and digital technology, widespread and unpunished corruption, a clergy far from the poor, an oligarchy on the back of the way to preserve and increase its privileges. The neoliberal anaconda doesn't want to let go of its mortar hug. We have to wait against a lot of hopelessness and fight to build a citizenry that takes into its own hands the destinies of a wounded homeland.

3. CUBA IN SOLIDARITY FOR CORONAVIRUS

While all the countries close their borders and Trump wants to have the exclusivity of the German vaccine against the coronavirus, "Cuba authorizes the docking of the British cruise ship MS Braemar with five confirmed cases of

covid-19". Cuba opens its country -whose border is not closed- "in view of the urgency of the situation, says the Cuban government, and the risk to the lives of the sick people". The Cuba of Fidel and Che Guevara, the communist Cuba, the dictatorial Cuba, the Cuba criminally and economically blocked for more than 50 years by the governments of the United States, the Cuba censored by the big international commercial media, the demonized Cuba! How many have heard the news?

And also, who has heard that "Cuba highlights its capacity to produce medicine against Covid-19", "Cuban doctors join Venezuela to contain the coronavirus", "Italy recruits doctors from Cuba, Venezuela and China to fight the coronavirus"? And we all know that in Ecuador the government has fired the Cuban doctors from its territory! ... surely from a 'friendly invitation' of the gringo government. Unfortunately, we know that the United States government has decreed that no 'Good News' can come from Cuba or Venezuela. Sad reality!... when the reality is different. One wonders where the perversity is.

The British cruise ship called 'MS Braemar' was anchored in the Caribbean Sea near the Bahamas Islands since last February, because neither the United States, nor Central America nor South America authorized it to dock in any of their ports. One can see the lack of solidarity and the weakness of their national health systems in these countries, including the United States, whose president claims to be the savior of humanity! There are more than 1,000 passengers on board the Braemar, including passengers from Canada, Australia, Belgium, Colombia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway and Sweden. The Cuban government has made an agreement with the British government to transfer the passengers to an airport so that they can travel safely to Great Britain. It is striking that the 'fathers' of the first American invaders have accepted the help of the Cubans: a good blow to their congenital pride.

There are many lessons to be learned from this Cuban solidarity. Those of us who know Cuba know of its solidarity with Latin America and Africa. We also know that the Cuban health system - I think I read that not so long ago in a UN text - is the most effective in the world. They are also first or among the first in biotechnology, sports, culture, eradication of misery... But all this must be silenced because the capitalist West has decided to demonize it so that no one dares to imitate or follow the Cubans and their system of government.

We should read or reread, in these days of quarantine, the book by the Brazilian Dominican Frei Betto entitled "Fidel and Religion" to get an idea of the humanitarian communism that rules in that country. In Fidel's Cuba there have been no people killed because they are Christians! while in the very Catholic Latin American countries they have killed in droves and continue to kill them. What a pity, too, that Christians are not identified with solidarity but with praying, going to Mass, rubbing the feet of the saints, reading the Bible a lot and clapping hands abundantly! The only commandment of Jesus is that 'we should love one another as he loved us'. In this case, the Cubans are giving us a lesson in humanity and Christianity, because according to the parable of the final judgment: they enter the Kingdom, in life and forever, 'those who are visiting and helping the sick because they are doing it to Jesus himself'. So, let's review our human quality and our Christianity! And let us thank the Cubans, good Samaritans, for their human value and their gestures of international solidarity, an ethic quite rare in these times: they tell us with facts that "another world is possible", urgent and necessary.

4. THE BECs: A CHURCH CALLED 'HOPE'

"Simple church, seed of the Kingdom. Beautiful Church, Heart of the People": this is how one of our songs in the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) defines us.

Last week a 10-day Continental Meeting of the Church of the Poor in Latin America ended in Guayaquil. We were Basic Ecclesial Communities, more than 250 participants from 16 countries, including Latinos from the United

States. We expressed our cries and hopes, our denunciations and protests, our spirituality and social commitment. It was an experience of faith and of sharing experiences from the exaggeratedly violent and dehumanizing reality of our continent... The coronavirus pandemic shows us how much we are helpless in the face of this disease, by a system that only takes care of 1% of the world's population at the cost of 99%.

The motto of the Meeting was: "Listening to the cries of the Earth and the poor, we defend life and promote the Kingdom". In fact, this meeting brought together three different groups: some youth EBCs, some adult EBCs and some EBC advisors. Four Latin American bishops accompanied us during these days. These continental meetings take place every four years. The first one took place in Volta Redonda, Brazil, in 1980. The second took place in Cuenca in 1984. Let us remember that the EBCs were born in Brazil in the 1950s, about 10 years before the Council, and spread throughout Latin America, as well as in Africa and Asia. The various Latin American Episcopal meetings have always confirmed the EBCs, but the majority of the bishops have not. They are defined as "the first and fundamental nucleus of the Church at the base of society": we are the 'whole Church', the sister of the parish which has lost much dynamism with the passing of the centuries.

At this Latin American Meeting, some 40 young people who make up the youth EBCs in 11 countries of the continent met first. Then it was the turn of about 200 people from the adult EBCs in about 16 Latin American countries. What did they say? Here are their own words.

First those of the young people: "We poor young people feel marginalized everywhere: we want a social and ecclesial transformation now.

I am this Earth, I am these people, I am my memory and I am this history. We are artisans of the Kingdom in community. The Amazon tells us that everything and everyone is interconnected: We are earth, air, water and fire, in the unity of the whole cosmos.

We are going to make the dreams that God gives us, the dreams of Pope Francis, come true. My hand for my brother: your hand with mine for life. Put the seed in the ground without worrying about the harvest".

The adults said: "Incredible violence, incredible tenacity, incredible resurrection. Blessed ethnic differences that enrich us and are a gift from God! We are the awakening of the Church from the poor in the way of Jesus.

The cries are innumerable in all countries: They are new psalms that cry out to God at the same time despair and confidence. They are the voice of God who says: Enough! The BECs are not there to help the parishes: they are at the service of building the Kingdom, for which Jesus came. The priests and the bishops do not know how to work with the BECs because they did not learn how to work in community and with the poor. The spirituality of the BECs consists in recognizing God in daily life. With the EBCs, we move from being a Church dependent on Europe and colonialist, to being a source and a way for the universal Church. Pope Francis confirms us on the path of a synodal Church, that is, one that is egalitarian, participatory and in solidarity.

It is not a question of converting anyone, but of living the values of Jesus with all men and women of good will. Participation in social and political life is indispensable. It is necessary to accompany the change of system with a personal conversion because we ourselves support the system that impoverishes us. We must respond to two challenges: human suffering and the loss of the meaning of life. We will continue to take care of the Common House, the popular economy, alternative health care, socio-political participation and formation... "

In that Meeting we felt that what Jesus said was being fulfilled: "Do not fear, little flock! It seemed good to your Father to reveal to you the secrets of the Kingdom."

Pedro Pierre

Traduction Elizabeth Bécot