

Cardinal Czerny: Migrants a key aspect of Pope Francis' magisterium

By Salvatore Cernuzio



Jesuit Cardinal Michael Czerny, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, encapsulates Pope Francis's ten years as head of the universal Church with these keywords: Good Samaritan, common home, siblings all, and migration as a "sacrament" of the whole magisterium, "tangible sign of the times, a sacrament of Jesus's saving action".

He describes how with Pope Francis the Church has become "more inclusive towards the poor, women, the displaced, and the marginalised."

In the following interview with Vatican News, Cardinal Czerny notes how the Church today is "more attentive to creation and open to inter-religious dialogue, more synodal, more merciful and less marked by a culture of clericalism."

Q: We are coming up on the tenth anniversary of the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, Pope Francis. There have been many messages, themes, and challenges throughout his pontificate. How would you sum up this decade of his pastoral service and ministry?

I would sum it up in a few words, such as Good Samaritan, common home, siblings all. These are not abstractions, they are concrete priorities everywhere; they are priorities for leaders, believers, and people of good will, for all those who care about human life and the future of the human family.

Q: How do you see the pontificate going forward in the future in terms of the themes and challenges that Pope Francis' magisterium will focus upon?

I believe that, in the light of the reform of the Roman Curia, the most urgent need is a similar "qualitative leap" in the local churches. This is not a political programme "a priori", but rather a call to the vocation and mission of accompanying the local churches in their priorities, in their necessities.

Q: Precisely by looking at the reform outlined in Praedicate Evangelium, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Development that you head immediately implemented the "missionary

nature" of the Curia desired by Pope Francis by changing its internal structure. How is that process going?

Our main mission is actively to listen to the local churches and all those who embrace the challenge of integral human development. We exist in order to help, encourage, motivate and even constructively criticize; to keep on learning how to respond; in short, to help the Church grow everywhere and offer responses to today's world. The question must be: what are the main issues of concern for the local churches? The poor, care for creation, health, (in)security, migration? So then, let us then develop our responses through mutual relations and dialogue.

Q: The world today is dealing with wars, but also migration. Just recently, a tragedy occurred in southern Italy with the death of more than 70 migrants. You have long experience in the area of migration. How do you respond to what many have described a tragedy that was bound to happen?

It was not a tragedy that had to happen, but rather a tragedy crime that must be denounced. I think it is hypocritical to say it is not possible to find solutions. What seems true, instead, is not wanting to know how to respond, not really wanting to prevent these crimes so-called tragedies. In the Church, starting with Pope Francis, many have pointed this out a thousand times: tragically, there is no surprise in these events, they are very political and to be expected ... as well as very sad.

Q: At a recent Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis made a very strong appeal calling for action to stop human traffickers. Is that the problem here?

This is part of the problem. However, the underlying problem is confusion, even inconsistency in European migration policy. Of these inconsistencies, the traffickers, who are cunning businesspeople, take maximum advantage in order to make their "business" to prosper.

Q: Speaking of migration and going back to this pontificate, one of the most symbolic moments came during the July 2013 visit to Lampedusa, Italy. Since then, the Pope never ceases to draw the world's attention to migration and the plight of people forced to leave their countries...

The theme of migration one could call a "sacrament" of Pope Francis's magisterium. This issue, so concrete, so human and also so "sacred" given its great importance, is one the Pope has been effectively communicating to all the faithful and indeed everyone. The Pope makes it clear

to everyone worldwide how fundamental is the dignity of human life and how essential to help our neighbours. He has made the phenomenon of migration relevant, within which is evident the presence of Jesus, the Holy Family in those who flee. To everyone he opens up the possibility of responding - as Christians and as men and women of goodwill - with his important teaching about how to respond: by welcoming, advocating, protecting and integrating.

Q: In light of recent tragedies, do you think these four responses of Pope Francis have been heard or understood?

Of course, all people understand clearly what the Pope is saying, including those responsible for these "tragedies" which are really crimes, facilitated by political actions and inaction. Please do not to mix the two things... Pope Francis' words reach everyone, believers above all, people who believe in God, in life, in our common home, in our all being siblings. Responding to the Holy Father's words, they do acquiesce or submit to to a cruel and inhuman rejection of their neighbour.

Q: What kind of wish would you make for Pope Francis?

More than a wish, it is my strong desire that he continue to receive the grace and the awareness of our enormous thanks, the gratitude of the whole world, for these ten years that have been changing us for the better.
