

## Reading from Below: Selections from Pope Francis

---

### **The Joy of the Gospel (Apostolic Exhortation, published in 2013)**

Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel,” [52] and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that “there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor.”

*I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures.*

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points?

*One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. The current financial crisis can make us overlook the fact that it originated in a profound human crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human person! We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. The worldwide crisis affecting finance and the economy lays bare their imbalances and, above all, their lack of real concern for human beings; man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption.*

As long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, [173] no solution will be found for the world’s problems or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of social ills.

*Any Church community, if it thinks it can comfortably go its own way without creative concern and effective cooperation in helping the poor to live with dignity and reaching out to everyone, will also risk breaking down, however much it may talk about social issues or criticize governments. It will easily drift into a spiritual worldliness camouflaged by religious practices, unproductive meetings and empty talk.*

**Address to the third “World Meeting of Popular Movements” (November 2016)**

This relationship (between a people and democracy) should be natural and fluid, but it risks being deformed to the point of being unrecognizable. The breach between the peoples and our current forms of democracy is growing ever greater, due to the enormous power of the financial and media sectors that would seem to dominate them. Popular movements, I know, are not political parties, and I would say that, in great measure, this is what makes them so valuable, since they express a distinct, dynamic and vital form of social participation in public life.

*The idea of social policies being a policy for the poor, but never with the poor and never of the poor, much less part of a project which can bring people back together, sometimes strikes me as a kind of brightly-painted dust bin to contain the refuse of the system. But if, on the basis of your being rooted alongside your neighbours, your daily experiences and your barrios and regions, your organization of community work, your one-on-one relationships, you dare to question “macro-relations;” when you protest, when you lift your voice and presume to point out to the powerful a more integral approach, then you become intolerable. You become intolerable because you are casting off the straitjacket and entering the realm of the great decisions that some presume to monopolize in small castes. Thus, democracy atrophies, turns into a slogan, a formality; it loses its representative character and becomes disembodied, since it leaves out the people in their daily struggle for dignity, in the building of their future.*

**Comments at the second “World Meeting of Popular Movements” (Bolivia, July 2015)**

The future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of the great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their capacity to organize. It is in their hands, which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change.