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L'Espresso

Settimo Cielo

di Sandro Magister

A Pope With the "Myth" of the People

A CESARE E A DIO

CHIESA E POLITICA Nei pontificati di Giovanni Paolo II, Benedetto XVI e Francesco Anagni, sala della ragione SABATO 30 NOVEMBRE - DOMENICA 1 DICEMBRE 2019

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The following text is the talk that Sandro Magister gave at the study conference held on Saturday, November 30 and Sunday, December 1 in Anagni, in the Sala della Ragione, at the initiative of the Fondazione Magna

Carta, on the theme: "To Cesar and to God. Church and politics in the pontificates of John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis." Concluding with Magister's reply at the end of the debate].].

THE POLITICAL VISION OF POPE FRANCIS by Sandro Magister Anagni, November 30 2019 The political vision of Pope Francis has its roots above all in his life experience, in Argentina.

those years was in exile in Madrid. He became the spiritual director of of the

young Peronists of the Guardia de Hierro, who had a powerful presence at

testament that Perón wanted to leave after his death. And for all of this he

drew the ferocious hostility of a good half of the Argentine Jesuits, more leftist

was put up for sale in order to stabilize the finances of the Society of Jesus, to

than he, especially after he surrendered the Universidad del Salvador, which

Precociously appointed novice master, the then 34-year-old Bergoglio completely espoused the cause of bringing back Juan Domingo Perón, who in

the Jesuit Universidad del Salvador. And he continued this militancy after his surprise appointment as provincial superior of the Jesuits of Argentina in

1973, the same year in which Perón returned to the country and won his triumphant reelection. Bergoglio was among the writers of the "Modelo nacional," the political

none other than his friends of the Guardia de Hierro.

It was in those years that the future pope developed the "myth" - his word - of the people as protagonist of history. A word that by its nature is innocent and a bearer of innocence, a people with the innate right to "tierra, techo, trabajo" and that he sees as overlapping with the "santo pueblo fiel de Dios." THE "MYTH" OF THE PEOPLE But in addition to his experience of life, Bergoglio's political vision also took shape thanks to the instruction of a teacher, as he confided to the French sociologist Dominique Wolton in a book-length interview that Wolton also edited, entitled "Politique et societé," released in 2017:

"There is a thinker that you should read: Rodolfo Kusch, a German who lived in northwestern Argentina, an excellent philosopher and anthropologist. He made one thing clear: that the word 'people' is not a logical word. It is a mythical word. It is not possible to speak of people logically, because that would mean making only a description. In order to understand a people, to understand what are the values of this people, one must enter into the spirit, into the heart, into the work, into the history, and into the myth of its tradition. This point is truly at the basis of the theology called 'of the people.' That is to say, to go with the people, see how it expresses itself. This distinction is

important. The people is not a logical category, it is a mythical category."

So according to Bergoglio, "it takes a myth to understand the people." And he

"popular movements." He has done it three times so far: the first time in Rome

speeches, of around thirty pages each, which when put together now form the

has recounted this myth, as pope, above all when he called around him the

in 2014, the second in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in 2015, the third

again in Rome, in 2016. Every time he rouses the audience with endless

The movements that Francis calls to himself are not ones that he created,

they preexist him. There is nothing overtly Catholic about them. They are in

gatherings in Seattle and Porto Alegre. Plus the multitude of rejects from

which the pope sees bursting forth "that torrent of moral energy which springs

part the heirs of the memorable anti-capitalist and anti-globalization

WITH THE "POPULAR MOVEMENTS"

political manifesto of this pope.

Islamic terrorism.

TWO CONTRADICTIONS

the politics of Pope Francis.

Ernst & Young, from Promontory to KPMG.

from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny." It is to these "discards of society" that Francis entrusts a future made of land, of housing, of work for all. Thanks to a process of their rise to power that "transcends the logical proceedings of formal democracy." To the "popular movements," on November 5, the pope said that the time has come to make a leap in politics, in order "to revitalize and recast the democracies, which are experiencing a genuine crisis." In short, to upend the powerful from their thrones. The powers against which the people of the excluded are rebelling, in the vision of the pope, are "the economic systems that in order to survive must

wage war and thus restore economic balance," they are "the economy that

But here already there emerges a contradiction between words and deeds, in

Because while he preaches ceaselessly against the rich Devourers - whom

he never identifies and calls by name - the richest men in the world and the

superpowers of finance come thronging to be received by him. And he not

only welcomes them with wide-open arms, but he heaps praises upon them.

In the initial phase of his pontificate, in order to get the curia and its balance

and expensive management and financial services firms, from McKinsey to

sheets back into shape, Francis called to the Vatican the world's most famous

kills". This is his key for explaining the "piecemeal world war" and even

He praised Christine Lagarde, received repeatedly when she was at the head of the International Monetary Fund, as "an intelligent woman who maintains that money must be at the service of humanity, and not the other way around." He received in highly visible audiences, accepting in front of the cameras their substantial offerings of money, Tim Cook of Apple, Eric Schmidt of Google, Kevin Systrom of Instagram. He accepted the financing of Paul Allen of

Microsoft and of the Mexican magnate Carlos Slim, for many years at the top

narrative that Bergoglio continually presents of a world in which "the rich keep

And then there is a second contradiction, between - on one side - the

getting richer and the poor keep getting poorer," in a crescendo of the

concentration of wealth into the hands of the very few and of a deliberate

extension of poverty to ever wider segments of the population, and - on the

Suffice it to say that, according to the figures furnished by the World Bank, in

1990 47 percent of the world's population lived on less than 1.9 dollars a day.

In 2015, twenty-five years later, it was less than 10 percent. In China, over the

same span of time, those living in conditions of extreme poverty dropped from

of the "Forbes" ranking of the richest people in the world.

other side - the incontestable data of the statistics.

THE "BUEN VIVIR" OF THE AMAZON

"disciplining" and "taming" these peoples.

tribes found expression as follows:

61 to 4 percent.

For more than three years Francis has not gathered around him the "popular movements." But simply because his populism has changed its "focus," which has shifted to the Amazonian tribes. In the speech with which he opened the work of the synod for the Amazon

last October 7, the pope returned to his Argentine experience of the 1980s,

when, he said, "a slogan, 'civilization and barbarism,' served at the time to

divide, to annihilate most of the original peoples." And today, he continued,

paraguayanos, los paraguas, los cabecitas negras," identifying barbarism in

peoples "on tiptoe, respecting their history, their cultures, their style of living

In the final document of the synod, at number 9, the "myth" of the Amazonian

"The search for life in abundance by the indigenous Amazonian peoples is

them. One more reason why we should instead approach the Amazonian

well," with no more "ideological colonizations" and the presumption of

what is taken to be civilization continues to rage against the "bolitas, los

embodied in what they call 'buen vivir' and is fully realized in the Beatitudes. This is a matter of living in harmony with oneself, with nature, with human beings and with the supreme being, since there is an intercommunication among the whole cosmos, where there are no excluders nor excluded." This exaltation of the native innocence, as earthly paradise or as the Rousseauian "noble savage," of the Amazonian tribes, must also be seen as the origin of the parasynodal affair - for some a scandal - of the prostrations in front of wooden statuettes depicting a nude and pregnant woman, identified by the pope himself as "Pachamama," the Incan divinity of mother earth.

Francis has denied that this was a surrender to "idolatrous temptations," and

in a postsynodal public audience he presented as an example the conduct of

Saint Paul concerning the gods of ancient Greece, not taking into account

Not only that. The exaltation of the "buen vivir" of the Amazonian tribes has

acritically accepting practices like infanticide and the selective elimination of

adults and elderly judged as incompatible with the demands of the community.

These in fact are the exact words spoken on October 15, in the Vatican press

anthropologist Marcia María de Oliveira, one of the 25 official associates of

"There are some communities that establish some collective procedures or

initiatives of birth control. It is all in relationship with the size of the family and

the extent of the groups. All is based on conservation, survival, food supply,

been pushed by some bishops and experts of the synod to the point of

room, with imperturbable nonjudgmental detachment, by the Brazilian

however that the apostle carried out in regard to idolatry a radical critical

exercise, entirely absent in the abovementioned affair.

the special secretaries of the synod for the Amazon:

the number of persons who make up the group... It also has a lot to do with internal relations, to what extent that child, that elderly person, that adult person is capable of following the group in what are its movements." **POLITICAL TRIBUNALS** With the populist thread of Pope Francis's politics there can also be woven two of his recent speeches of a juridical character. The first was addressed on June 5 2019 to a summit of Latin American

magistrates gathered at the Vatican, with extensive references to the second

of the three addressed to the "popular movements," the one given in Bolivia,

one of the Argentine judges present, Raúl Eugenio Zaffaroni, a prominent

of a "critical theory" of criminology that traces the genesis of crime and the

nature of justice back to the structure of the social classes and to inequality.

"There is no democracy with hunger, there is no progress with poverty, there

is no justice with inequality": this is how Francis summarized his vision, to

The second speech is from last November 15 and was addressed by the

pope to the participants at a congress of the International Association of

speculative knowledge" and with this of "overlooking the facts of reality,"

meaning that "divinized market" which in the name of the maximization of

to oppose the macro-criminality of the corporations," with which the pope

imprisonment, overcrowding and torture in the prisons, arbitrariness and

associates "the punitive irrationality that manifests itself in mass

abuses by the security forces, expansion of the area of criminality,

profit produces only "exclusion." Jurists should instead "use their knowledge

In it Francis accused criminal science of making itself comfortable in "merely

thunderous applause.

Penal Law.

figure, member of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, and supporter

and plainly written by a hand not his own even if in full agreement, perhaps by

criminalization of social protest, abuse of preventive imprisonment." The idea doesn't even seem to occur to Francis that this "punitive irrationality" is typical not of a "divinized market," but rather of countries like China, where the market is under the supervision of a pervasive and liberticidal political dictatorship. Francis came back to this speech to cite it during the press conference on the flight back from his trip to Japan. The same press conference during which -

questioned about the financial turbulence that is shaking the Vatican - he

stated that he personally promoted and authorized in word or writing the

initiatives of the pontifical magistracy and gendarmerie, thereby making a

FOR A "FRANCISCAN" ECONOMY

to the dicastery for the laity, family and life.

for the spring of 2020.

hash of the golden distinction between judicial power and executive power.

Lastly two appendices, connected to two events scheduled by Pope Francis

The first will see gathered in Assisi from March 26 to 28 thousands of aspiring

economists from all over the world, for "a festival of the economy of the young

with the pope, a middle way between Greta Thunberg and the powerful of the

earth," as announced by the main organizer, Luigino Bruni, a member of the

In the letter of invitation to the event, Francis proposed nothing less than "a

pact to change the current economy" and to replace it with an "Economy of

Among the figures who have already confirmed their presence, in addition to

inevitable guest at every Vatican event concerning the economy and ecology,

Francis" (read: Saint Francis of Assisi, but with a ready double meaning).

Bruni and Stefano Zamagni, president of the pontifical academy of social

sciences, there will be the Nobel laureates Amartya Sen and Muhammad

Yunus, the Malthusian economist Jeffrey Sachs, in this pontificate an

Carlo Petrini, founder of Slow Food and previously a personal guest of

Shiva, as lauded within the circle of the "popular movements" (she

SCHOOLS OF SOCIETY, BUT NOT OF JESUS

sort of Christian specificity.

Vatican City.

Maradona.

with the world itself."

SUBMISSION TO THE WORLD

IN REPLY TO THE OBJECTIONS

silence.

"very tense" by witnesses.

Amanpour.

Francis?

field of education, to whatever religion they may belong.

Bergoglio at the synod for the Amazon, and the Indian ecologist Vandana

Focolare movement, professor of political economy at the LUMSA and adviser

participated in their third worldwide gathering) as she is discredited by the scientific community worthy of this name. Curiously, Vandana Shiva and Carlo Petrini anticipated by three years the punitive sanction against the sin of "ecocide" that Francis has said he wants to introduce into the catechism, in the second of the speeches to jurists cited above. In October of 2016, in fact, both one and the other staged in Holland, at the AIA, a mock trial in which they sentenced in absentia, for this very crime, the multinational biotech firm Monsanto.

The second event is scheduled for May 14 2020 at the Vatican, and will be

open to "all public figures" who "are engaged at the worldwide level" in the

It comes as no surprise that a pope like Jorge Mario Bergoglio who is part of

should have at heart the schooling and formation of the new generations. But

the Society of Jesus - for centuries a major educator of the ruling classes -

what is striking is the complete absence from his educational project of any

In the video message with which Francis launched the initiative, there is not

And the religions? These too grouped together and neutralized in an indistinct

"dialogue." In order to "reclaim the terrain from discrimination" the pope refers

to the document "on human brotherhood" which he signed on February 4

"pluralism and the diversity of religions" are seen as "willed by God in His

2019 with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, a document in which even the

wisdom, through which He created human beings."

the slightest verbal trace of God, nor of Jesus, nor of the Church. The

home," universal solidarity," "fraternity," "convergence," "welcome"...

dominant formula is "new humanism," with its accompaniment of "shared

The new development of this initiative of Francis consists precisely in the fact that it is the first time a pope has made his own and taken the lead in a global educational pact that is so radically secularized. But here, once again, Bergoglio is drawing upon his Argentine background. It

was in Buenos Aires, in fact, that he founded a network of "escuelas de

2015 became a pious foundation of pontifical right with headquarters in

Of the "pious," however, there is nothing to be found. In the numerous

speeches Francis has given to the "Scholas," the silence on the Christian

Vanished as well. In the meetings of "Scholas Occurrentes," complete with

audiences with the pope, the guests are stars of entertainment and sports,

from George Clooney to Richard Gere, from Lionel Messi to Diego Armando

This secular flattening is not marginal, in the political vision of Pope Francis.

Catholicism "in the indistinct," to interpret "the intimate missionary vocation of

Catholicism toward the world as equivalent to the need to become confused

Only that in the world, beginning in the second half of the 1900s, there is

In "Corriere della Sera" of last October 2 Ernesto Galli della Loggia hit the

mark when he recognized in this pontificate the tendency to dissolve

God, on Jesus and on the Gospel is almost sepulchral. And the saints?

vecinos," neighborhood schools, expanded little by little to other cities and

nations, to the point of becoming today a network of half a million schools on

five continents, called "Scholas Occurrentes," schools for encounter, which in

imposing itself "an ethical ideology of naturalistic inspiration" made of individual rights, of pacifism, of environmentalism, of anti-Semitism, which to religious discourse, when it does not exclude it altogether, assigns only a subordinate place, decorative. So when Pope Francis lays down every trait of the Church's historical identity and assimilates it with the ideology and language of the world, he is making a very, very risky choice. He would like to make the world Christian, with the serious danger instead of making the Church worldly.

(s. m.) In the course of the discussion some have objected that Francis also

says and does many other things - and in stark contrast - with respect to the

profile that I have sketched of him. As for example last November 29, when

the pope denounced the frequent and disastrous "judicial overreach in areas

It is true. Pope Francis does not fail to denounce in strong terms abortion,

euthanasia, "gender" ideology, sometimes in even stronger words - "hitmen,"

These condemnations of his, however, receive very little coverage in media

The reason is the "when" and the "how" of these words spoken by the pope.

circles. And Francis knows it, but it is as if he accustoms himself to this

not their own" in a question of life and death like euthanasia.

"assassins"... - than those used by his predecessors.

To understand how decisive the modalities of communication are for the sake of its coverage and efficacy, it could be instructive to consider what happened in 1994, before and during the international conference for population and development convened in Cairo by the United Nations. The objective of that conference was to "ensure reproductive rights," a formula that John Paul II translated as "the systemic death of the unborn." That pope, as the event drew near, spoke very strong words in defense of life and the family in a sequence of several Sunday "Angelus," called

ambassadors to the Vatican, sent to UN officials a memorandum with all of his

objections, received American president Bill Clinton in an audience called

The result was that the Cairo conference became in the worldwide media a

pitched battle of the pope against the powerful of the world, for or against

abortion, contraceptives, and sterilization. I was there and I remember that

even the most famous war correspondents came, for CNN Christiane

Apart from the choice of times and interlocutors to get some statements amplified or silenced by the media, I would say that at its foundation is not the Aristotelian principle of noncontradiction, but rather a sort of principle of contradiction.

On many questions, some of them crucial, Francis systematically says and

does not say, retracts, contradicts himself. Often within a single statement.

response to the question of a Protestant woman who asked him if she could

Memorable, when he went to visit the Lutheran church in Rome, is his

Coming back to today, what is instead the form of the "magisterium" of Pope

receive communion when she went to Mass with her Catholic husband. The pope said a little of everything to her: yes, no, I don't know, you work it out... The result was that from then on in the Catholic Church everyone does as he pleases. Francis justifies this wordiness of his with the intention of setting in motion

"processes" of exploration and evolution of doctrine, in which he judges it as

"Amoris Laetitia," with its absence of clarity in authorizing or not authorizing

communion for the divorced and remarried, is an emblem of this magisterium of "process." When some cardinals presented to him the "dubia" thereby generated, he did not respond.

But that's just the point, he couldn't respond. Those cardinals had fully

O

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grasped the essence of his magisterium. Condividi: 📑 📒 🔀 🔞 🛅

wrong to fix the outcome beforehand.

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