

Politics, Essential Dimension Of Civil Coexistence

POPE FRANCIS

In his speech in Cesena's Piazza del Popolo on October 1, 2017, Pope Francis offered us a vision of politics that we find will be vital in facing the upcoming elections. We propose his words as a working hypothesis for all, to be verified in each person's encounters and dialogues with whomever they meet.

The square is an emblematic place, where the aspirations of individuals meet with the needs, expectations and dreams of the entire citizenry; where particular groups become aware that their wishes must be harmonized with those of the collective. I would say – allow me this image – in this square the common good of all is molded; here one works for the common good of all. This harmonization of one's own desires with those of the community forms the common good. In this square it is learned that, without pursuing the common good with consistency, effort and intelligence, even individuals are unable to claim their rights and realize their most noble aspirations, as the ordered and civil space in which they live and work would be reduced.

The centrality of the square thus conveys the message that it is essential *for us all to work together for the common good*. This is the foundation of the *good governance of the city*, which makes it beautiful, healthy and welcoming, a crossroads of initiatives and the motor of sustainable and integral development.

A political life that increases the involvement of the people

This square, like all the other squares in Italy, recalls the need, for the life of the community, for *good politics*; not that which serves individual ambitions or the arrogance of factions or centers of interests. A political life that is neither servant nor master, but rather a friend and collaborator; neither fearful nor averse, but rather responsible and therefore courageous and prudent at the same time; that increases the involvement of the people, their progressive inclusion and participation; that does not leave any categories at the margins, that does not sack and pollute natural resources; indeed these are not a bottomless pit but rather a treasure given to us by God to be used with intelligence and respect. A political life that knows how to harmonize the legitimate aspirations of individuals and groups, keeping the rudder firmly orientated towards the interest of the citizenry as a whole.

This is the authentic face of politics and its reason for existence: an inestimable service to the good of the entire collective. And this is the reason why the social doctrine of the Church considers it a noble form of charity. I therefore invite the young, and not so young, to prepare themselves adequately and commit themselves personally in this field, thus adopting from the outset the perspective of the common good and rejecting even





the slightest form of corruption. Corruption is the woodworm of the political vocation. Corruption does not allow civilization to grow. And the good politician bears his own cross when he wants to be good, because he must very often set aside his own personal ideas in order to take the initiatives of others and harmonize them, bring them together, so that it is indeed the common good that is carried ahead. In this sense, the good politician always ends up being a “martyr” to service, because he sets aside his own ideas but does not abandon them; he brings them into discussion with all to go towards the common good, and this is very good.

Trying to act in person instead of observing from the balcony

From this square I invite you to consider the nobility of political action on behalf and in favor of the people, who recognize themselves in a shared history and values and ask for tranquility in life and orderly development. I invite you demand from the protagonists of public life coherent efforts, preparation, moral righteousness, capacity for initiative, farsightedness, patience and strength of heart in facing today’s challenges, without however claiming an impossible perfection. And when a politician makes a mistake, may he have the strength of heart to say: “I made a mistake, I am sorry, let’s move on.” And this is noble! Human and historic events and the complexity of problems do not permit everything to be resolved, and immediately. The magic wand does not work in politics! A healthy realism knows that even the best political class cannot resolve all issues in a flash. To realize this, all one must do is try to act in person instead of limiting oneself to observing and criticizing other people’s work from the balcony. And this is a fault, when criticism is not constructive. If a politician makes a mistake, tell him, there are many ways of telling him: “But, I think that this would be better in this way, that way...”. And do not watch from the balcony, observe from the balcony waiting for him to fail. No, this does not construct civil life. We will thus find the strength to assume our responsibilities, at the same time understanding that, even with God’s help and the collaboration of men, mistakes will be made. We all make mistakes. “I am sorry, I made a mistake. Let’s get back on the right track and carry on.”

Ready to make the good of all people prevail over that of one side

I would like to say to you, and to everyone: rediscover, once again today, the value of this essential dimension of civil coexistence and make your contribution, ready to make the good of all people prevail over that of one side; ready to acknowledge that every idea must be confirmed and adjusted in the comparison with reality; ready to acknowledge that it is fundamental to begin initiatives by generating broad collaborations, rather than focusing on the specific offices. Be demanding with yourselves and with others, knowing that conscientious effort preceded by suitable preparation will bear fruit and increase the good, and even the happiness of people. Listen to everyone; everyone has the right to make his voice heard, but listen especially to the young and the elderly. The young, because they have the strength to carry things ahead, and the elderly, because they have the wisdom of life, and they have the authority to say to the young – young politicians too – “Listen, you are mistaken in this, take another route, think about it.” This relationship between the elderly and the young is a treasure that we must restore. Today is the time of the young? Yes, this is half true: it is also the time of the elderly. Today is the time in politics for dialogue between the young and the elderly. Please, take this route.

Politicians who truly care about society, the people and the good of the poor

Politics has seemed in these years at times to retreat in the face of the aggressiveness and pervasiveness of other forms of power, such as those of finance and the media. It is necessary to raise up again the rights of good politics, its independence, and its specific ability to serve the common good, acting so as to diminish inequality, promoting with concrete measures the good of families, providing a solid framework of rights and duties, balancing them both, and making them effective for everyone. The people, who recognize themselves in their own ethos and culture, expect of good politics the defense and harmonious development of this heritage and of their best potential. Let us pray that the Lord inspire good politicians, who truly care about society, the people and the good of the poor.

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