

What Francesco's Jubilee of Mercy Offers the World

Massimo Milone * (January 15, 2016)



Almost three years after the Pope was elected by a Conclave, with the Jubilee of Mercy Francesco offers the world the possibility of reawakening to life

In Rome there is a man named Francis. With disarming and wise modesty, he has resuscitated a Church interested not in abstract, metaphysical, dogmatic Christianity, but one rooted in reality. Francesco walks with the people. He is in Rome, and in the world, for believers and nonbelievers. Now, two years after the Conclave elected him Pope, with the Jubilee of Mercy he offers the world the possibility of reawakening to life.

The 'Revolution of the Spirit'

Francis is leading a "revolution of the Spirit." We should have intuited as much on day one, when he decided to go by a name that symbolizes a remorseful and missionary church. The Lord said to Francis of Assisi, "Go and repair my house, which you see is falling into ruin." That is what Pope Bergoglio is doing. His heart goes out to the remote, the needy, the poor. "For me,



[Francis of Assisi] was a man of poverty, a man of peace, and a man who loved and protected creation. These days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? We must improve it. How I would like the Church to be poor and for the poor!"

Shall he succeed?

In a powerful encyclical before the Jubilee, Pope Francis again showed us how that name is the key to understanding our Pontiff. We stand before a radical figure who proposes to revive a community which, though crippled, has strong roots. Shall he succeed? We're certain of it. In Assisi the other Francis never tired of trying. And his work, miracles notwithstanding, was no less arduous than the work undertaken by the new Pontiff. Yet he succeeded. Today Francis of Assisi is one of the most venerated saints in the world. Today in Rome Francis is warming hearts and paving roads both inside and outside the Church. He travels streets both geographically and existentially marginal. His decision to open the Holy Door in Bangui, Africa, demonstrates extraordinary prescience. Francis fills squares as well as churches. Old words like mercy, truth, beauty and goodness reacquire their original meaning—without superfluties, ambiguities or deception.

Mercy and the drama of poverty

"Christ is the heart of the Church," he said to six thousand journalists following his election. And now during the Jubilee he reminds us "Mercy is the architrave holding up the life of the Church," adding, "it is my deep desire that during the Jubilee Christians everywhere reflect upon the corporal and spiritual mercy works. It will be a way of reawakening our consciousness—so often immune to the dramas of poverty—and entering more deeply the heart of the Gospel where the poor are privileged by divine mercy."

The responsibility of the media

The media was met with a warning and an additional responsibility. Will we be able to fulfill it? "You have the ability to deduce and convey the expectations and needs of our time," said Pope Francis during his first meeting with the press, "remembering, however, that the actions of the Church correspond to a logic that is not only nor even chiefly political. The Church is truth, goodness, beauty..." The Jubilee will be a first major test bed, bearing in mind that, as Pope Francis warned, "new cultures continue to emerge in these enormous human geographies where Christians no longer seek to promote or generate meaning but instead receive other languages, symbols, messages and paradigms that offer new approaches to life that often run contrary to the Gospel of Christ."

The meaning of human story

Therefore the Church, like an old hospital, in the middle of the sea, is caught between historical conflicts and the solitude of modern man, between anxiety and hope. And it reestablishes, two thousand years later, the relevance of the Gospel for profoundly changed and essentially indifferent societies nevertheless seeking a meaning and moral to the human story. Crossing the Holy Doors in Rome and the world may mean finding a sturdy anchor.

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