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Francesco's ten years: a very important (and prudent) turning point

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Press release (DEEPL translation from the Italian)

Francesco's ten years: a very important (and prudent) turning point

Pope Francis found himself managing a Church that had been consolidated for almost thirty years on the basis of its own static identity; the Council appeared only in the background as a ritual reminder. The 2013 Conclave recovered after the flattening of that of 2005 which had only had prudence and wanted continuity; now it has finally decided changes imposed by the situation with a man who came "from the end of the world".

Meanwhile in the world in the new millennium war resumed a widespread presence, inequalities were spreading and multilateralism was in serious difficulty. The Church of Rome had to free itself from the pro-Western passivity of its voice on the global scene. Pope Francis immediately wanted to leave the ordinary administration. The first "password" that of the "Church goes out" meant overcoming rigidities and clericalisms, of "it has always been done this way", of faith without engagements because faith is considered above all or only a religious practice (Mass , baptisms, funerals) and because political commitment or political indifference are considered to have a neutral impact on faith. Instead, believers in the world must be the protagonists of the peace that Francis preaches with great force against arms dealers, against those who cynically possess and exhibit nuclear weapons, against the "piecemeal world war" that the most forgotten peoples always suffer, against wars of aggression. A peace, that of Pope Francis, which must be founded on justice. In his message to the Church and to the world, his words in defense of the creation that humanity uses and does not preserve have had a particular role.

The pope, who retains all powers, then had to deal with the management of the great centralized and widespread apparatus of the Church of Rome, from the pedophilia of the clergy to the management of assets, from the causes of saints to the reform of the Curia, from the Mass in Latin to the appointment of bishops and major ethical issues (abortion, end of life, homosexuals…) Bergoglio was unable/unwilling to really intervene on the condition of women in the Church. His interventions, animated by a strong desire to understand and change, have had mixed results to date, against a central structure that is almost always distrustful or hostile. But the vast consensus of a large part of the Christian people has never lacked him and it has manifested itself with reference to his evangelical pastoral care and simplification of issues arising above all from the ecclesiastical system which opposes forms of democratization that the pope cannot or cannot to really question of issues arising above all from the ecclesiastical system which opposes forms of democratization that the pope cannot realize. His preaching extended beyond the Catholic Church, overcoming the stagnation

of ecumenism. He dialogued with Islam signing texts of great impact in the history of spirituality.

Pope Francis' action must continue and finish creating the conditions for never going back.

Rome, 12 March, 2023 NOI SIAMO CHIESA

Attached (DEEPL translation from the Italian)

The reflections and feelings of Noi Siamo Chiesa after ten years of Pope Francis. The Council resumes its march!

The situation in the Church

The ten years of Pope Francis' pontificate - everyone has perceived it - have marked a turning point. This is a very different situation from that of 2005 Conclave when the changeover between Wojtyla and Ratzinger took place under the banner of a substantial continuity. The change was immediately understood. It was about going back to the Council and to its spirit, which had been placed in second order and, then, also forget. Therefore, to reflect on these ten years, one must keep in mind the situation at the beginning: from two popes, with eurocentric ecclesial and personal history, to the pope " from the end of the world" took over. Bergoglio therefore arrived later thirty-five years of substantial stability of the Church at the top in its consolidation settling in front of the changes in the world (albeit with some important moments of credible presence). Therefore , the prevailing line could be reversed which had always been aimed at consolidating its identity, in contrast with respect to the indications of the boundaries that the Council had opened. Pope Bergoglio , of course ,he was faced with a difficult situation; from this one had to start to reflect on what had been done and said in ten years and on future prospects.

Asset management of the Church center was adrift and far from reflecting on the problem of poverty of the Church and in the Church; to this was added the bad (and even dishonest) administration, very hard to eradicate.

And then the power of the curia structures dominated, thanks to the illness of Pope Wojtyla (who refused to renounce the papacy), to roles in the curia that had always been an intrinsic part of the conservative right and the arrogance of Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone , the worst of secretaries of State. In this way, liberation theology had been placed in serious difficulty,and the theologians and theologians of **“**conciliar” inspiration.

Then the problem of pedophilia in the clergy, already established at the beginning of the

century, it exploded even unexpectedly because it involved a vast number of dioceses, so much so that even the United Nations intervened to protect them victims, accusing the Holy See of passivity and reticence.

Bergoglio also found himself living with the pope who declared himself "emeritus", remained against logic and common sense in the Vatican and begins point of reference for those who did not understand the new course (all this beyond the formal certifications). In Italy the Italian Church seemed asleep with the bishops obsequious to their hierarchies dominated by Ruini/Bagnasco, committed to intervening in the public space and defending “non-values” to the bitter end negotiable” (password later canceled by an intervention by Pope Bergoglio).

The situation in the world

The condition of the world, already difficult after 9/11, has worsened with the US invasions (and other western countries) of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, with the intervention in Libya in 2011 (and first in Kosovo in 1999).

Then there was the economic crisis, the increase in inequality, the crisis of multilateralism. In this situation the Catholics, expression of vital energies and everywhere present (even in combative minorities) needed a point of reference that was an expression of spirituality for everyone, who spoke with the words of Jesus, without acting involve in the power of finance and economics or in diplomatic roles or without doing capture in sovereign or ethnic logics. Pope Francis has tried to be this voice in the world disorder, without the complacency of before (with the West, with the Bush presidency, for example) and occupying, in the name of the many situations of suffering andof the suburbs of the whole world, a space that no one else has in the history of these years. Pope Francis considered it important to travel the world with well travels selected and organized that allowed him to be heard and to be the head of a truly universal religious sentiment. The trips were 40 equally distributed on various continents.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio

He represented a current of opinion, internal to the structure and his own Hierarchy, but was now aware that, in spirit and in form, it was necessary to change. There the tensions that ran through the first disciples of Jesus come to mind when it was about opening up to those who did not come from the faith of the Old Testament, proclaimed by Moses and the prophets of Israel. The Argentine Bergoglio was basically isolated from the Vatican center, he went to Rome reluctantly, he didn't speak English: he came therefore elected in contrast to the 2005 Conclave. He was born in a large one metropolis, from a family of Italian emigrants , had lived for years in a ferocious dictatorship, he knew what the

violence of political power was (without having bowed to it, as he is now definitively established). It was part of the rigid and lengthy curriculum of Jesuit studies. Bergoglio had been so present in movements and situations, even dramatic ones, that they have traveled the last century, a human experience of great importance.

The need to overturn the logic of ordinary administration

The first “password” attributable to Pope Francis is that of the “Church output". It was repeated many times until it became a common message for the generality of the Catholic world. It means overcoming rigidities and clericalisms, of "it has always been done this way", of faith without works because faith is considered especially or only religious practice (mass, baptisms, funerals) and why the commitment politics or political indifference are considered to have a neutral impact to faith, ethical choices are often fenced off in individual decisions. The Church – says Bergoglio – must instead go out into the world, we need to re-launch the first words of the Gaudium et spes openness to the world . The believer must be and feel part of a group, of a community: from here comes the proposal of synodality , of listening, of mutual help, of the fraternity. The so-called "movements" no longer have the privileged role of before in the Church, some of these had become sectarian "Churches" governed by a strongly excluding vision hierarchical and even oppressive of religion. In the last years of the pontificate, some of these movements they have not met more protection in the Vatican, they are disciplinary measures were necessary; founders and presidents must lose theirs charismatic roles.

Secularization is not demonized, it can be addressed and bypassed with an attitude of non-submissive dialogue. We are far from harshness and conflict which occurred in the 18th century towards the Enlightenment and then in the 19th century towards the political powers.

Placement in the world

The Church no longer has to be the Vatican or Italian politics. Its structure centralized and present everywhere gives it an authority which, if managed well, like in the case of Pope Francis, it is unique on the world stage and capable of being listened to far beyond what the UN can achieve. The “the entire world is a war” and the “globalization of indifference” are effective messages that intertwine with the protest of the condition of the peripheries of the world. Then the voice of the Church becomes strong, continued, expands to the general question of inequalities, to that of migrations, to that of the climate crisis and of the environment and intervenes in a more specific way with denunciations and with the offer of peacemaking interventions (as now in Ukraine). The political "powerful" of the nations, with which Francesco talks in person, don't listen to him. His

complaints about production and on the arms trade, on wars, the forgotten ones and those clearly visible on the our television screens, express the voice of humanity's best conscience. It's a conscience to which only verbal homage is paid for publicity reasons e of image. In particular the words of Francis, regarding the production, possession and threat of use of nuclear weapons are the most radical among all. The very possession of these weapons - he says – is the greatest sin, they are violence against God, against humanity, against every citizen of the world.

The pedophilia of the clergy is looming

The emergence of the problem in 2002 in Boston was the premise of a unexpected story. We didn't expect it to continue and continue on so widespread and serious (these days are the news from Portugal).

It could only be the top of the Church to intervene. With pope Wojtyla it was done very little, there were above all sensational protections (the Maciel case among all), with Pope Ratzinger started to do something but it was Pope Francis who had to continue, finding themselves faced with widespread and often silent resistance.

Francis established the "Commission for the protection of children" but it is not managed to give it real authority at the Curia (which opposed an intervention on the bishops and the episcopate). The greatest resistance came from the former Holy Office (S. Uffizio). In the 2014 there was the intervention of the UN (by the "Commission on Human Rights of childhood"), then two Cardinals (O'Brien from Scotland and McCarrick from Washington) were dismissed, two independent investigative commissions in France and Germany they have turned these two Churches upside down. The pope has summoned the presidents of the Episcopal Conferences in Rome in February 2019, then issued a Letter Vos estis lux mundi and more. The effectiveness of his interventions there it seems completely insufficient or, in some ways, powerless with respect to the situation. In Chile, Pope Francis covered up for pedophile priests, then made an act of repentance acknowledging that he was misinformed. The situation in Italy is the worst. The bishops reacted with beautiful words of regret in the face of scandals and victims, establishing only diocesan structures for the formation of the clergy. But there remains a silence heavy on the need to investigate the past and deal with victims separately

and independent of the ecclesiastical system. Pope Francis, primate of Italy and bishop of Rome, did not want/could not intervene as the serious situation would have required. This is one of the aspects for which relations with the Italian episcopate have always been tiring.

The important documents

Pope Francis, despite some of his interventions on the hierarchical structure of the Church as an inverted pyramid (at the top there should be the Catholic base at the bottom the yerarchY), he then used the traditional powers attributed to him by authority pontifical as consolidated over the centuries to direct many to the Church documents: three encyclicals, many Apostolic Letters and five Exhortations apostolic. The first text that indicates the tracks of the pontificate is the Exhortation apostolic **Evangelii Gaudium** . In it He proposes, first of all, a goal that will then be completely disregarded. It states “there is an absolute necessity. In essentially it is a question of reducing the role of the center of the Church in favor of particular of the episcopal conferences, also of the regional ones and not only of national ones".

The second encyclical is **Laudato SI** of May 2015. Pope Francis he managed to intertwine evangelical reflection with the situation of the earth as viewed by experts on the state of nature around the world. The pope anticipated the new awareness, which has recently spread, on the worsening situation, on disasters, drought, climate change, black predictions for the future. Catholics are particularly involved in a relatively new commitment to save creation from human intervention.

In the Apostolic Exhortation **Amoris laetitia** Francis pulls the strings of synods on the family of 2014 and 2015. The long text deals with the words of particular effectiveness and empathy of the experience of the family, of the need to relationships of tenderness and not of domination within it but it does not solve the knot that it weighed heavily on the two synods and was the subject of endless discussions. Just in a footnote page you do you accept a second sacramental marriage, that of divorced after a phase of spiritual accompaniment. A contradiction internal to the Church that has not been resolved in our opinion, in an explicit (and evangelical) way.

The encyclical " **Fratelli tutti** " is a complete synthesis of the message of Francis on the questions of peace, inequality, suffering. We think that it expresses the best and most universal trend of the pontificate. The encyclical is therefore "the voice of the voiceless" and also escapes a certain doctrinairism of previous social encyclicals because they "bite" in history.

The Apostolic Exhortation **Querida Amazonia** is beautiful in its large part

where it collects the analyzes made on the difficult situation of the Amazon and on the its cultures in the assemblies and synods held in 2019. It is a struggling but lively Christianity. It asked, for example, to develop an Amazonian-only rite for the Eucharist.

The decisions of the Exhortation **,** however, unfortunately were not accepted by Francis regarding the initiation of the female diaconate and the acceptance of viri probati . This

stop by the Vatican undermines the quality of the Exhortation and is judged by many as a result of Pope Benedict's intervention (directly or indirect) pressed by the curial right that feared and fears positions concerning the German Synod. The green light in the Amazon would have made it well difficult to say no to the German Synod on such a proposal.

The meaning of the Extraordinary Jubilee of 2016 is told in the Apostolic Letter **Misericordia et misera** which “is proposed as a message permanent for Christians and for the Church. It must have a “social character”.

The "World Day of the Poor" is established to be held every year in the middle November. The possibility of forgiveness is expanded for those who have had an abortion or have collaborated in the abortion. It is an important step forward in the practice of mercy that does not express the precepts and rigid norms of the code that do not take into account the experience of the believer.

The management of the Church center

There are powers that belong to the pope and that Francis has carefully observed from mitigating or, at least, from sharing with real consultative structures.

He does not motivate his decisions except episodically and extemporaneously.

On the other hand, these powers come from rules and practices that have centuries of history and they are almost non-abrogable, even if their theological foundation remains well scarce or non-existent. Francis held five Consistories for the appointment of Cardinals and used great discretion. Everyone knows they have been appointed in the Sacred College bishops of the extreme periphery, perhaps of wholly minority Churches.

Decisions that have been seen as a sign of the Spirit circulating where and as you want! And so in Italy some of the main dioceses are without a cardinal.

The pope has absolute discretion also to name the bishops but is forced to refer to the investigations that are made by the curia (dicastery of bishops). As far as we understand in moments of excessive power of the curia, the so-called consortia prevailed (friendships, personal and territorial ties…) or even the different pastoral orientations.

Pope Francis has never reasoned to speak about the criteria of his choices nor even less on their modification and this is not appreciable. There certainly aren't more new bishops who are aligned on positions of immobility.

Big ethical issues

The evolution of the ways of human coexistence (the hierarchy in the family, the protagonism of the children, etc.) also largely in the Catholic world and a new widespread

"lay" culture, the extraordinary progress of medicine, a changed social control (for example with regard to homosexuals…), an increased role of the media exponentially over the past twenty years, the spread of drug use and more have taken place ethical questions to which it is no longer possible to give uniform and rigid answers without adequate consideration of people's experiences, of the context in which the moral behavior of every believer has to be reckoned with. The research, the proposals, the practices, far from a point of view of laxity, have been explored by many theologians and moralists who do not accept convenient solutions and who, in particular, broaden, according to logic and common sense, indications that intertwine individual behavior with that of the Good Samaritan e with that for a just and democratic society. The position of Pope Francis on these issues that have this new emergency (civil unions, abortion, end of life… .) has been traditional, it refers to the catechism. Only on homosexuals did he take a step forward, he opened up to their presence in the Christian community but without also accepting their sexual practice. An obvious contradiction.

Even on abortion his position is traditional and so on the end of life he has never expressed positions of attention to the experience of the seriously suffering person, opening at least to a possible reflection on a "good death".

On all these ethical questions, Francis can be said to be inattentive and far from acknowledging what they are dealing with of new situations and that in the Bible there are no precise indications so much as the rigid ethical norms that are coming now lively proposed are all of ecclesiastical origin. This is very delicate terrain which, more than others, sees the fundamentalist right as the protagonist.

Bergoglio did not however never waged religious wars on these issues as happened in other recent times.

The Saints

Regarding the proclamation of saints Francis he patiently managed the ordinary administration giving breath thus to an aspect of popular religiosity that is not the best. 911 have been in ten years the new saints. We gave a negative opinion on the canonization of the two popes, Roncalli and Wojtyla and then of Montini. This was also the opinion of Cardinal Martini: it is inappropriate to canonize the popes, of any orientation. Francis accepted, convinced or not convinced, a situation that found much consensus, which satisfied many religious orders and which would not had to curb the reform of the Church. There was one exception to the traditional rhythm, that of Bishop Romero, a saint by decision Pope's staff. But he was already holy in the hearts of the people. Francesco instead left the sign of his message, outside of canon law and celebrations in St. Peter's,

going to pray on the tombs of don Mazzolari , don Milani , Tonino Bello and then giving green light for the beatification of don Puglisi .

Reform of the Curia

The reform of the Curia was considered by the cardinals in 2013 as a step important to change the air in Rome. Out Card. Scola, Italian e not homogeneous with the desire for renewal of the Conclave, Francis constituted a Commission of eight cardinals from different continents to draw up a reform project. Pope Francis perhaps thought he was finding easy ground.

The discussions continued for years. A reform project was distributed to the theological faculties but not made public. There were probably conflicts strong, all guiltily unbeknownst to the People of God. Francis found himself entangled in circuits which he didn't want to solve in an authoritative way **.** Waiting for the reform general, has made concrete and positive choices such as the establishment of the “Dicastery for integral human development” or with the establishment of the secretariat for Communication. With the Apostolic Letter **Mitis Judex Dominus Jesus** the bishop was given the role of judge in marriage nullity processes. It's an important innovation whose effectiveness we do not yet know. Maybe it was better to continue the reform of the Curia with partial interventions.

Instead, after nine years of standby, he intervened in March last year.

Pope Francis surprise by authoritatively dismissing the **Praedicate Evangelium** with only the Italian text!

We have written a documented reflection on how the center of the Church according to principles of synodality and communion. We have found that with this reform instead the existing structure is reorganized and consolidated a lot. There collegiality and true synodality do not exist. Some good principles there are affirmed at the outset are at great risk of being ignored. The distribution of competences or mergers or separations between the various dicasteries and the new denominations are only, it seems to us, an efficientist reorganization of an apparatus, not a reform. The soul inspirational, which also belongs to Pope Francis, is not seen or, better, is indicated awords, we'll see what can change.

What about the female presence in the Church?

What doesn't change for now is the absence effectiveness of women in the management of the top of the Church. Some appointment in collaborative position, the acolyte, the lectoratre means well little. It is little more than an image compared to what is in the Church the presence of women in parishes, in catechesis, in works social. In this the

pontificate of Francis don’t have very few merits. Not even the diaconate, which seemed the easiest thing, was accepted! One of the weaknesses of the pontificate, perhaps the greatest, consists in this passivity in placing female presences ad every level and not as exceptions to the norm in the life of the Church.

The ministries attributed to women are still frozen. Francis' footsteps they are substantially steeped in ecclesiastical tradition.

Asset management

Everyone knows that the management of the great patrimony of the Church is one of the issues nagging and difficult in the Vatican. How many interventions are made to put order, to make appointments, to intervene in troubles that also have character criminal!! Francesco intervened with the secretariat for the Economy

to prevent there being areas out of control, starting with the IOR where it is all happened in the past. He tried to centralize the offices of administration and expenditure and control functions. One can expect from a man of the Church that one is always involved in pastoral care of being able to do in consolidated centers of power over time with connections with finance and with the many congregations and associations and foundations who head to Rome, some of which are concerned above all with business?

And all equipped with considerable resources and far from reflection evangelical on how to use goods.

The Mass in Latin

In the area of the fundamentalist the Mass in Latin, albeit not defensible from the theological and pastoral point of view, it has become a symbol of an instrument for aggregating the faithful ready for every denunciation and every recognition themselves to enjoy the only true orthodoxy in the Church. Francis finally, after years of prudence and also because he was aware of the scarce following of the faithful to this liturgy (and that which surrounds it) he signed the **Traditionis Custodes** in which he practically deferred to the bishop's decision permission to celebrate. A necessary decision came too far delay (in 2021) and which, in any case, cancels **Summorum Pontificum** with which Pope Ratzinger had given the green light to the Tridentine rite.

The Christian Churches

The report was posed in a coherent way with the discourse on the outgoing Church with the other Christian Churches and with Islam. At the opening Mass of the pontificate it was present for the first time in history the patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew, in Cuba

in 2016 Francis met Kirill , patriarch from the Russian orthodox church. On October 31, 2016 Pope Francis, going to Lund in Sweden for an ecumenical prayer with the Lutherans (for the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant Reformation) signed a “Joint Declaration in occasion of the Catholic-Lutheran commemoration of the Reformation.” Theecumenical movement has resumed marching with conviction after years of stall. As for Orthodoxy, the serious difficulties arisen due in particular of the contrast between Constantinople and Moscow , are experienced by Francis with suffering. But what can the pope of Rome do to heal that disagreement?

Islam

Another story was the one with Islam in a historical moment in which fringes of it have assumed great importance due to the widespread violence referred to they use . The most important voice of dialogue and reconciliation is that contained in the solemn "Joint Declaration" of Pope Francis and the Grand Sunni Imam Ahmed El-Tayeb of al-Azhar University , Febuary of 2019 in Abu Dhabi. This relationship partially manages to prevent the mutual demonization between Christians and believers in the Koran. It's one of the matches open. Respect for religious freedom everywhere is one of the possible achievements.

In certain Islamic areas (Pakistan, for example, and in sub-Saharan Africa) fundamentalism is a phenomenon that affects Christians. It is widely believed that pope Francis has done a lot to absorb tensions, trying to erase any preunderstanding present in believers that is hostile to belief in the only God common to both religions.

May Francis carry forward the fundamental inspiration of his message

The flow of the life of the Church in these ten years has not had great results tears as in the recent past. In a real world situation difficulty the central message, the evangelical one, of Pope Francis, the message of mercy, peace, fraternity, justice from many it was considered credible and listened to. It was a contribution to all

humanity to which we want to contribute as a small portion of the Church Basic, well aware of the many contradictions that exist in the pontificate and of so many steps forward that he is unable or unwilling to take.

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