

Don't make anybody steal your hope!

This is my greeting to all of you.

The regional conference is an important moment for the life of WUCWO because it is the place where each region focuses on the main challenges the continent is facing. North America still represents a point of reference, a sort of dream where you can fulfill your expectations.

WUCWO members have chosen to work together, to walk together at world level as well as at regional level. We are aware of being a public association of faithful: this means to work within the Church and with the Church at all levels giving voice to all themes connected with "Love in action" as we decided in our last general assembly.

As WUCWO we have assumed the commitment to study and deepen our knowledge of the Social Teaching of the Church in order to be active and operate according to our Christian values and we need to continue and help also other people in our communities to know the Social Teaching. This year WUCWO according to our plan of action will carry on the commitment women and peace. How important it is especially in this historical moment! Pope Francis last Wednesday during the morning Mass invited everybody to pray continuously for peace in Middle East.

We need to work for peace steadily enlightened by our faith. In Lumen Fidei 51 it is said "the light of faith is concretely placed at the service of justice, law and peace. The light of faith is capable of enhancing the richness of human relations, their ability to endure, to be trustworthy, to enrich our life together.... Faith is truly a good for everyone; it is a common good."

Last year, Pope Benedict, during a meeting in Rome celebrating Ecclesia in America the post synodal exhortation, lists the challenges you are facing in your continent and says "secularism and different religious groups are expanding on all sides, giving rise to numerous problems. Education and the promotion of a culture of life is of fundamental urgency in the face of the diffusion of a mentality which offends the dignity of the person and neither favours nor protects the institution of marriage and of family life.... The witness of your faith will be more eloquent and incisive, and you will grow in unity in the fulfilment of your apostolate. A renewed missionary spirit and zealous generosity in your commitment will be an irreplaceable contribution to

what the universal Church expects and needs from the Church in America (Pope Benedict to the conference in Rome 9-12-2012)

“Nowadays, in America as elsewhere in the world, a model of society appears to be emerging in which the powerful predominate, setting aside and even eliminating the powerless: I am thinking here of unborn children, helpless victims of abortion; the elderly and incurably ill, subjected at times to euthanasia; and the many other people relegated to the margins of society by consumerism and materialism. Nor can I fail to mention the unnecessary recourse to the death penalty when other “bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons. ” (63EiA)

To face all these challenges the role of lay faithful is fundamental “The renewal of the Church in America will not be possible without the active presence of the laity. Therefore, they are largely responsible for the future of the Church” (44EiA) consider how much responsibility you have! The vocation of lay faithful as mentioned in Lumen Gentium n12 has two fields where it can be fulfilled:

On a continent marked by competition and aggressiveness, unbridled consumerism and corruption, lay people are called to embody deeply evangelical values such as mercy, forgiveness, honesty, transparency of heart and patience in difficult situations. What is expected from the laity is a great creative effort in activities and works demonstrating a life in harmony with the Gospel”.

America needs lay Christians able to assume roles of leadership in society. It is urgent to train men and women who, in keeping with their vocation, can influence public life, and direct it to the common good. For this, they must be formed in the truths and values of the Church's social teaching, and in the basic notions of a theology of the laity.”

There is a second area in which many lay faithful are called to work, and this can be called “intra-ecclesial”. A good number of lay people in America legitimately aspire to contribute their talents and charisms “to the building of the ecclesial community as delegates of the word, catechists, visitors to the sick and the imprisoned, group leaders, etc. ... There is a need to promote positive cooperation by properly trained lay men and women in different activities within the Church, while avoiding any confusion with the ordained ministries.”

There is also a specific paragraph n45, dedicated to women in America .

“Particular attention needs to be given to the vocation of women. ... Without this contribution, we would miss the enrichment which only the “feminine

genius" can bring to the life of the Church and to society. To fail to recognize this would be an historic injustice, especially in America, if we consider the contribution which women have made to the material and cultural development of the continent, just as they have in handing down and preserving the faith. Indeed, "their role was decisive, above all in consecrated life, in education and in health care".

Unfortunately, in many parts of America women still meet forms of discrimination. It can be said that the face of the poor in America is also the face of many women. ... The Church feels the duty to defend the human dignity which belongs to every person, and "denounces discrimination, sexual abuse and male domination as actions contrary to God's plan".

The Church throughout America feels committed to show greater concern for women and to defend them "so that society in America can better support family life based on marriage, better protect motherhood and show greater respect for the dignity of all women". There is a need to help women in America to take an active and responsible role in the Church's life and mission, and also to acknowledge the need for the wisdom and cooperation of women in leadership roles within American society.

I urge you to offer your talents in order to contribute to a better society based on values of respect, honesty, solidarity.

The exhortation insists very much on the theme of solidarity: n52 states "Taking the Gospel as its starting-point, a culture of solidarity needs to be promoted, capable of inspiring timely initiatives in support of the poor and the outcast, especially refugees forced to leave their villages and lands in order to flee violence. The Church in America must encourage the international agencies of the continent to establish an economic order dominated not only by the profit motive but also by the pursuit of the common good of nations and of the international community, the equitable distribution of goods and the integral development of peoples." This was said in before 2000 when we weren't still aware of the harms created by such neo-liberal economy without rules, without morals, which has created such a disaster all over the world.

EiA encourages the Catholics to " find in the Church's social doctrine (once again we are in spirit of communion with our pastors since we have decided to study it and make people know) an answer which serves as a starting-point in the search for practical solutions. ...The complex social reality of the continent is a fruitful field for the analysis and application of the universal principles contained in this doctrine" n54

The Church in America is called not only to promote greater integration between nations, thus helping to create an authentic globalized culture of solidarity, but also to cooperate with every legitimate means in reducing the negative effects of globalization, such as the domination of the powerful over

the weak, especially in the economic sphere, and the loss of the values of local cultures in favor of a misconstrued homogenization (55)

There is a lot of work to be assumed. As women committed in the Church we still have a long way to go, but others before us started and we have to continue. This year the goal of WUCWO activity is peace in action and we all know how much work it is necessary to build peace in every reality from family, neighborhood, countries to all the world. We also know the power of prayer for peace, last September 7th when all the world was united with the Holy Father for the vigil of prayer for peace in the Middle East we experienced our strength.

I encourage all of you to be sowers of hope. This is the theme of our next general assembly where I wish I can meet all of you together with many sisters from all over the world. Please bring my warmest greetings to the members of your organizations and pray also for me and all board members.

I want to greet you with the prayer Pope Francis said at the end of one of his Angelus: "Let us ask Mary to help us to respond to violence, to conflict and to war, with the power of dialogue, reconciliation and love. She is our mother: may she help us to find peace; all of us are her children! Help us, Mary, to overcome this most difficult moment and to dedicate ourselves each day to building in every situation an authentic culture of encounter and peace. Mary, Queen of Peace, pray for us!"

God bless you all!

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