

# LODGING, LABOR, LAND: A REFLECTION ON THE POPE'S UN SPEECH

September 25, 2015

Today, Pope Francis became the fifth Pope to Address the United Nations in celebration of the UN's 70th Year. I want to highlight one small section that meant a lot to my heart.

"Government leaders must do everything possible to ensure that all can have the minimum spiritual and material means needed to live in dignity and to create and support a family, which is the primary cell of any social development. In practical terms, this absolute minimum has three names: lodging, labour, and land; and one spiritual name: spiritual freedom, which includes religious freedom, the right to education and other civil rights."

*Pope Francis, UN Address, Sept 25, 2015.*

I'm not a Government Leader, but I am leader. I'm encouraged to use the Pope's intellectual clarity to better prioritize the work that I need to do inside my family, inside my parish and inside my local community. I live in West Virginia. I go to church in Western Maryland. I live in a place where the poverty is long standing and chronic. I'm actually living, inside the poor state where I went to High School, because the housing situation inside the Washington D.C. Metro area is insane.

When I heard the Pope talk about the basic need for the human family to have housing, I felt hope. I felt a sense of purpose. A family with young children needs privacy and stability. I realized that all the intense home improvement work we are doing to fix up a 850 square foot house built in 1950 and make it an elegant, and useful home for a family of 8 is part of the Pope's blueprint for a healthy society.

If I had my choice, I would have bought a \$650,000 Town House that was minutes from my husband's work in Rockville, Maryland (a Northern DC suburb) that was turn key ready and did not involve my husband watching You Tube Videos on cement floor tile installation while our 1 year is teething.

When I hear the Pope talk, its like he's reminding that my life is part of a bigger struggle. The vast majority of Americans can't afford a mortgage on a \$650,000 house. There has to be a different option. Our journey is to reclaim old housing in a location that is not very hip. I look around and I celebrate different solutions to the "lodging" crisis, for example, the Tiny House movement.

Moving forward after this speech, I'm going to celebrate our home with more passion. I know that this tiny place is a minimum requirement for my family's ability to function. I want to celebrate our small victories at making our house feel like home, the rosemary growing in a pot ready for use on chicken and my husband's new skill at hanging dry wall. I'm happy that our house is really hard won, because it makes it easier to see and help our neighbors.

After the Pope's UN Speech, I'm not going to join another Social Justice Committee Meeting at church. I am making myself a small sign (I'm married to a graphic artists, that what we do in our house) that says "Lodging, Labor, Land" and I'm keeping my eye on the ball that the Pope has set. I need to be concerned about Housing, Jobs, and Land. I need to make sure that all of us have access to decent housing in my area. I need to keep praying for jobs and encouraging the people that I know and love to find meaningful work. I live in an area surrounded by farmers. I love farmers, but I never talk to them. I ususally feel to shy as a former City Kid because I don't know the "lingo." I feel like our Pope told me personally, "land" is really important, protecting the land, having safe agricultural practices, and protecting the health of our National Park and Forests.

I'm still volunteering at the Food Pantry. I'm still donating money to build wells in Africa. The call that I hear from my Pope is to go deeper into my own local community, and work in prayerful solidarity with the families in Africa and the fishermen in India, to make this World just. I want to help create a world that is easier for family life. It's beautiful to be reminded that my tiny, individual work in my town is connected to the urgent needs of the entire planet.

Thank you, Papa!

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To read the Pope's entire speech and hear your own individual action plan in his words, read here.

For more reflections during the Papal Visit from the Catholic Women Blogger Network series, "A Walk In Words With Pope Francis," please visit here.

Handout received from Jim Grant during item 1-L (16-549) heard on May 12, 2016



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