Columns
Horizons
Social Justice



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Last August, in front of a crowd of 500,000 people gathered in Lisbon, Portugal, from across the globe, Pope Francis led a chant of "Todos, todos, todos." "Everyone! Everyone! Everyone!" "There is space for everyone," he said, "and when there isn't, please, let's work so that there is."

In my political ministry with Network, the lobby for Catholic social justice, this refrain of "todos, todos, todos" has come up frequently since Francis spoke those words. As I sit with those words, "todos, todos, todos," I imagine their promise. I think most of us — no matter where we come from, what we look like, or what religion we follow (if any) — can imagine their promise.

At the root of our being, this is what we all long for — to belong, to be part of that "todos, todos, todos." This is, as Francis was saying, the call of the church, that is, the people of God.

As author Rachel Held Evans put it in her memoir Searching for Sunday: Loving, Leaving, and Finding the Church, "This is what God's kingdom is like: a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered at a table, not because they are rich or worthy or good, but because they are hungry, because they said yes. And there's always room for more."

Todos, todos, todos.

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Everyone is welcome at the table. Everyone has food to eat. Everyone experiences safety and shelter. Everyone has an opportunity to contribute and to develop their own gifts and talents.

Our world these days seems so far from that. We the people are hurting. We're isolated from each other. Far too many people struggle to afford housing or healthcare or food — or all three. Meanwhile, according to a recent report from Oxfam, the world's five richest people have more than doubled their wealth since 2020 while nearly 5 billion people have been made poorer in that same time frame.

The system works for a few people at the expense of the many. It's up to us — the many — to come together to change the system. Whether we are Black, Brown, or white, rich or poor, we can come together to build a better world for all of us — no exceptions!

A few years ago, citizens from across the nation — Black, Brown, and white, city-dwellers and rural residents — came together to win cash in the hands of struggling people, support for small businesses struggling in the midst of the pandemic, and the most transformative supports for ending climate change our nation has ever seen. The Inflation Reduction Act made our families and communities more financially secure and helped to protect us from the worst impacts of climate change.

A few years prior to that, citizens in my hometown of Indianapolis came together to build a bus rapid transit system. Members of the middle-class and low-income workers who rely on public transit to get around the city came together to say that public transit is good for all of us — and they won concrete improvements to our city.



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There are stories like this from across the nation — stories of what we can build together when we come together across the identities that some want to use to divide us, when we proclaim that we are stronger together and we deserve to have a say in the kind of nation we live in, the kind of nation we are building together.

At Network, our Build Anew policy agenda calls us to dismantle systemic racism, cultivate inclusive community, root our economy in solidarity, and transform our politics.

Our politics are already starting to get messy as we move far-too-quickly into the 2024 election season. As we see this messiness going on around us, may we remember the promise of our humanity: the things that unite us are stronger than the things that divide us. I hope you'll join us in whatever ways are open to you in taking action to transform our politics — to be bold, visionary and inclusive.

It will take all of us.

Todos, todos, todos.