

Dreaming of a fraternal world - 1

Pope Francis has given us three significant encyclicals. 'The Joy of the Gospel' - on proclaiming the Gospel in the world today; 'Laudato Sí - on care for our common home' and more recently 'Fratelli Tutti' - on fraternity and social friendship. During the weeks of Lent, we want to reflect together on Fratelli tutti. It is a summary of his ideas, sermons and speeches, a kind of testament, in which he presents his vision of how the world can be shaped according to God's plan.

Some have called this vision utopian. But perhaps this is exactly what we need in the church and in society today. We all have many short-term goals, but no vision of what the purpose and meaning of life is. Our society is busy with a thousand problems and projects, but lacks a narrative, a vision of the future. This is what Pope Francis offers in Fratelli tutti. He is following in the footsteps of the great prophets who gave the people of Israel a vision of the future and thus hope in difficult times. With the 'good news' of the Kingdom of God Jesus gives God's vision of the future and shows us ways to contribute to this plan of God. The Pope draws inspiration from his namesake, St Francis, who lived in harmony with all creatures, all people and God.

Quotes

- Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters. *Fratelli tutti 2*
- There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship, given Francis' poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be travelled and their differences of language, culture and religion. *Fratelli tutti 3*
- Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that "God is love and those who abide in love abide in God" (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. *Fratelli tutti 4*
- It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity... Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all. *Fratelli tutti 8*

**Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings
equal in dignity:
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dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier
societies and a more dignified
world, a world without hunger,
poverty, violence and war.**





DARK CLOUDS OVER A CLOSED WORLD - 2

Fratelli Tutti describes a world where all see each other and act as brothers and sisters, a world as God wants it. The real world we live in is far away from that. It is dominated by power struggles between nations, parties and politicians, even between religious communities. In the economy and in the workplace, people compete with each other instead of cooperating. Families, marriages and friendships are breaking up due to envy and strife.

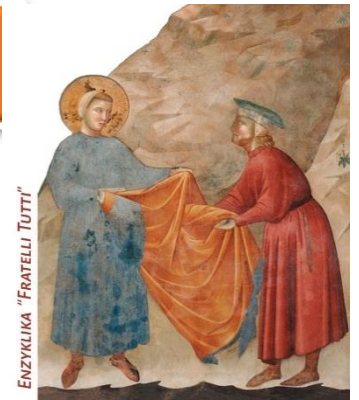
Francis addresses several negative developments: the levelling of the different cultures through globalisation; the loss of a historical awareness; the growing inequality; the problem of migration; the negative sides of digital media. Despite all this, there are also signs of hope.

Quotes

- Society becomes ever more globalized; it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers. Fratelli Tutti 12
- We have grown indifferent to all kinds of **wastefulness**, starting with the waste of food, which is deplorable in the extreme«. Fratelli Tutti 18
- Wealth has increased, but together with inequality, with the result that “**new forms of poverty** are emerging... While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated... Whether by coercion, or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. 21.22.24
- **Migrations**, more than ever before, will play a pivotal role in the future of our world... Aided by its great cultural and religious heritage, it has the means to defend the centrality of the human person and to find the right balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to assure assistance and acceptance to migrants. 40
- **Digital media** can expose people to the risk of addiction, isolation and a gradual loss of contact with concrete reality, blocking the development of authentic interpersonal relationships. They lack the physical gestures, facial expressions, moments of silence, body language and even the smells, the trembling of hands, the blushes and perspiration that speak to us and are a part of human communication.... The flood of information at our fingertips does not make for greater wisdom. 43.50
- At times, the frantic pace of the modern world prevents us from **listening** attentively to what another person is saying. Halfway through, we interrupt him and want to contradict what he has not even finished saying. We must not lose our ability to listen. 48
- Despite these dark clouds, which may not be ignored, I would like in the following pages to take up and discuss many new paths of hope. For God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family... **Hope** is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile. Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope.! 54.55

***May our hearts be open to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects, and shared dreams.
Amen.***

Fratelli Tutti



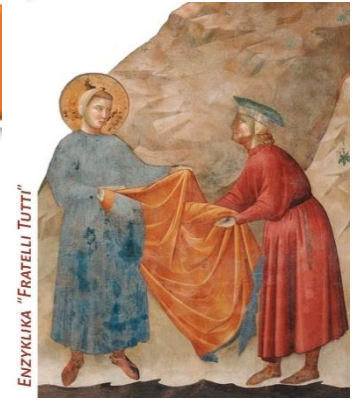
Which side are we on? - 3

After Pope Francis has shown how little we think and act like brothers and sisters in many areas, he calls us to take a clear position on the side of "the poor, the suffering and wounded people". To show us what charity and fraternity mean in concrete terms, Fratelli Tutti offers in the 2nd chapter a profound meditation on the ancient and complex parable of the 'Good Samaritan'. The role of the various actors in the drama confronts us with the question on which side we ourselves are: Do we close our eyes to the suffering and misery in the world and pass by, or do we take the time to turn to the wounded people we encounter and stand by them as best we can? It is the old question of God to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" It is worth taking some time during Lent to meditate this second chapter of 'Fratelli Tutti'.

Quotes

- Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in answer to the question: **Who is my neighbour?** The word "neighbour", in the society of Jesus' time, usually meant those nearest us... He asks us not to decide who is close enough to be our neighbour, but rather that we ourselves become neighbours to all. Fratelli tutti 80
- Several persons passed him by, but failed to stop. Only **one person stopped**, approached the man and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs. He also gave him something that in our frenetic world we cling to tightly: he **gave him his time**. Fratelli tutti 63
- Jesus chose to start when the robbery has already taken place, lest we dwell on the crime itself or the thieves who committed it. Yet we know them well... The real question is this: will we abandon the injured man and run to take refuge from the violence, or will we pursue the thieves?... The Samaritan who stopped along the way departed without expecting any recognition or gratitude. His effort to assist another person gave him great satisfaction in life and before his God... Fratelli tutti 72.79
- "Robbers" usually find secret allies in those who "pass by and look the other way". There is a certain interplay between those who manipulate and cheat society, and those who, while claiming to be detached and impartial critics, live off that system and its benefits. Fratelli tutti 75
- The parable asks us to take a closer look at **the passers-by**... They were religious, devoted to the worship of God: a priest and a Levite... Belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God... "Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold". Do you wish to honour the body of the Saviour? Do not despise it when it is naked. Do not honour it in church with silk vestments while outside it is naked and numb with cold".
(St John Chrysostom) Paradoxically, those who claim to be unbelievers can sometimes put God's will into practice better than believers. Fratelli tutti 74
- There are only **two kinds of people**: those who care for someone who is suffering and those who pass by; those who bend down to help and those who look the other way and hurry off. Fratelli tutti 70
- **Which of these persons do you identify with?** This question, blunt as it is, is direct and incisive. Which of these characters do you resemble? We need to acknowledge that we are constantly tempted to ignore others, especially the weak... We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly. Fratelli tutti 64 Fratelli tutti 64

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel, discovering Christ in each human being, recognizing him crucified in the sufferings of the abandoned and forgotten of our world, and risen in each brother or sister who makes a new start. Fratelli Tutti



A better kind of politics – 4

When we hear the word charity, we think of care and help for the needy, the suffering and the poor. For Pope Francis, love that addresses the structural causes of suffering and poverty is also important. "Political love" means working for a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. The encyclical identifies the problems and proposes solutions. The task of politics is to better regulate the power of the economy and the financial markets where they cause poverty and inequality; to give the poor not only alms but work to enable them to lead a life of dignity; to strengthen or create efficient international structures to defend the global common good against the claims of powerful interest groups. The Pope emphasises the primacy of the common good over the individual right to property and warns against destructive ideologies, especially the seduction of nationalist populism and the excesses of rampant neoliberalism. Lent is an invitation to better understand the interconnections of global structures of injustice and to work for change.

Quotes

- For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the field of charity at its most vast, namely **political charity**. This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity...
Fratelli tutti 180
- Every commitment inspired by the Church's social doctrine is derived from charity, which according to the teaching of Jesus is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40). This means acknowledging that love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. *Fratelli tutti 181*
- It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering. If someone helps an elderly person cross a river, that is a fine act of charity. The politician, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and that too is an act of charity. While one person can help another by providing something to eat, the politician creates a job for that other person, and thus practices a lofty form of charity that ennobles his or her political activity. *Fratelli tutti 186*
- **The world exists for everyone because** all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of colour, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all... **The right to private property** can only be considered a secondary natural right, derived from the principle of the universal destination of created goods. *FT 118+ 119*
- Closed **populist groups** distort the word "people", since they are not talking about a true people. **Neoliberalism** simply reproduces itself by resorting to the magic theories of "spillover" or "trickle" – without using the name – as the only solution to societal problems. There is little appreciation of the fact that the alleged "spillover" does not resolve the inequality that gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society. *Fratelli tutti 160 + 168*

Lord, Father of our human family,

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Dialogue and friendship in society - 5

In Fratelli Tutti, Pope Francis gives us a vision of a fraternal humanity. What are the concrete steps on the way to this ideal? Reconciliation and understanding for other people, cultures and religions becomes possible through personal encounters and open dialogue. The centuries-old arch-enmity between Germany and France was overcome in a short time by getting to know each other, through school exchanges, community partnerships and joint political dialogue on a peaceful future for Europe. In friendly and open encounters with people of other cultures and religions, we overcome our racial, ethnic and social prejudices and discover what we have in common as human beings and as children of the same father as well as our responsibility for our "common house". In view of the current number of conflicts in the world, the Pope emphasises the need for reconciliation. He goes into detail about conditions that can break the growing spiral of violence. In view of the devastating destruction of modern weapons, he considers the classical criteria for a just war no longer tenable and the death penalty inadmissible.

Quotes

- Approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground: all these things are summed up in the one word **"dialogue"**. If we want to encounter and help one another, we have to dialogue. *Fratelli tutti 198*
- **A country flourishes** when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture, technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture. *Fratelli tutti 199*
- Authentic social dialogue involves the ability to **respect the other's point of view** and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns... Differences are creative; they create tension and in the resolution of tension lies humanity's progress. *Fratelli tutti 203*
- Violence leads to more violence, hatred to more hatred, death to more death. **We must break this cycle** which seems inescapable... Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible. *Fratelli tutti 227 + 235*
- It is no easy task to overcome **the bitter legacy of injustices**, hostility and mistrust left by conflict. ... This does not mean impunity. Justice is properly sought solely out of love of justice itself, out of respect for the victims, as a means of preventing new crimes and protecting the common good, not as an alleged outlet for personal anger. Forgiveness is precisely what enables us to pursue justice without falling into a spiral of revenge or the injustice of forgetting. *Ft 243 +252*
- At issue is whether the development of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and the enormous and growing possibilities offered by new technologies, have granted **war** an uncontrollable destructive power over great numbers of innocent civilians... We can no longer think of war as a solution because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. The **death penalty** is inadmissible, and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide. *Ft 258*
- It is not a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. What is important is to **create processes of encounter**, processes that build a people that can accept differences.
- Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!! *Ft 217*

Pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace. Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war. Fratelli Tutti



Religions at the service of humanity in our world - 6

All religions proclaim a message of peace. At the same time, all of them, including Buddhism and Christianity, have a long, painful history of violence, leading some to believe that religion is harmful to society. Christianity, too, has a shameful history of religious wars, forced proselytization and discrimination against dissenters. Religion has a great potential to contribute to peace as well as a tendency to legitimise violence. Pope Francis reminds us of the basis of a lived fraternity: the awareness that all human beings are children of the same Father. Above all, the Second Vatican Council encouraged Christians to value other religions and to enter into a fruitful dialogue with them. The Pope recalls personalities from all religions who have worked non-violently for universal brotherhood, such as Francis of Assisi, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu and Charles de Foucauld. He quotes extensively the 'Document of Fraternity' written recently by him and the Grand Imam Al-Tayyib. Pope Francis pleads for religious freedom as a condition for peaceful coexistence between religions.

Quotes

- **The Church esteems** the ways in which God works in **other religions** and rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for their manner of life and conduct, their precepts and doctrines which... often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women. *Fratelli Tutti 277*
- God does not see with his eyes, **God sees with his heart**. And God's love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion. Even if they are atheists, his love is the same. When the last day comes, and there is sufficient light to see things as they really are, we are going to find ourselves quite surprised. *FT 281*
- **Sincere and humble worship of God** bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all. *Fratelli tutti 283*
- In these pages of reflection on universal fraternity, I felt inspired particularly by Saint **Francis of Assisi**, but also by others of our brothers and sisters who are not Catholics: **Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Gandhi** and many more. Yet I would like to conclude by mentioning another person of deep faith who, drawing upon his intense experience of God, made a journey of transformation towards feeling a brother to all. I am speaking of Blessed **Charles de Foucauld**. *FT 286*
- In my fraternal **meeting with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb**, we resolutely [declared] that religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, nor must they incite violence or the shedding of blood. These tragic realities are the consequence of a deviation from religious teachings. They result from a political manipulation of religions and from interpretations made by religious groups who, in the course of history, have taken advantage of the power of religious sentiment in the hearts of men and women. God, the Almighty, has no need to be defended by anyone and does not want his name to be used to terrorize people. *Fratelli tutti 285*
- One **fundamental human right** must not be forgotten in the journey towards fraternity and peace. It is **religious freedom** for believers of all religions. That freedom proclaims that we can build harmony and understanding between different cultures and religions. It also testifies to the fact that, since the important things we share are so many, it is possible to find a means of serene, ordered and peaceful coexistence, accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters. *Fratelli tutti 279*

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty, reflected in all the peoples of the earth, so that we may discover anew that all are important and all are necessary, different faces of the one humanity that God so loves. *Fratelli Tutti*