
Fratelli tutti: all things human are our concern

Fratelli tutti is a paternal Letter. As an Encyclical it is a Circular letter addressed to the entire Church, but it also aims to reach out to all men and women in the world with the loving care of a father who calls upon all to express "a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance." In fact, only "fraternal openness", rooted in the inalienable principle of human dignity, is conducive to fulfilling and developing together a new humanity based on mutual respect, welcome, care, one that ensures housing, employment and solidarity to all. "Lasting peace - writes the Pope - will only be possible on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family" (n.127).

Pope Francis has gifted us with a unique document.

St. Francis guided and inspired the Holy Father to write *Laudato Si'*, a prophetic reminder to human conscience to embrace reality with regard to the respect due to the common home that we live in, entrusted to us as its administrators and not as its owners. With *Fratelli tutti* Pope Francis opens a new window enabling us to gaze towards distant horizons, awakening fraternal love within us, coupled by a pragmatic analysis of the world we live in, leading us to ask ourselves which world we want to build and leave to the next generations. The social issues are many and complex. However, there is a very specific underlying rationale. The Pope writes to the whole world, not only to the Church, using a twofold linguistic register. On the one hand, he speaks to Christians recalling the founding values that flow from the Word of God in the wake of the vibrant ecclesial Tradition, on the other he addresses all men and women of good will by communicating in a secular way, whereby the common ground of anthropology is taken as the meeting point. Francis challenges us to jointly confront our present reality and urges us to choose who we want to be and on which side we want to stand with full, mature and conscious awareness. We are all called into question, we are all protagonists, no one is spectator. *The Pope himself takes a firm and courageous stance, just like Jesus and the prophets, without tergiversating, with a capacity for analysis and understanding that contemplates different perspectives, denouncing the elements that contaminate the human gaze: single-minded thinking, ideological and convenient decisions motivated by economic and selfish goals that result in the instrumental use of the human person and deprive of meaning the very tenets of shared ethical principles.* While in *Laudato Si'* the common home we live in is the realm for reflection and transformation, in *Fratelli tutti* that realm is our own flesh. It is a social Encyclical seeking to foster dialogue - another fundamental word - among all people of good will (n.6). The first chapter, dealing with the dark clouds over a closed world, underlines the extent to which technological and scientific progress fails to reflect human and ethical growth at global level. On the contrary, we are confronted with a dramatic retrograde step as human family, endangering our historical achievements, taking them for granted, lacking in memory and overlooking our common roots. "Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day", the Pope writes (n.11). We are witnessing a cultural dictatorship, whereby an economy disconnected from fundamental ethical values drives politics into dangerous drifts, exploiting local conflicts with disregard for the common good "in order to impose a single cultural model", where individuals "become mere consumers or bystanders" (n.12). The Pope provides us with several ways out, notably the development of "critical thinking." *With great sensitivity he proceeds to analyze some very specific aspects, such as the idea that world poverty is declining because it is measured according to bygone benchmarks, thereby distorting the real picture of what is consumed daily under the Skies, even in the relationship between poor and rich countries. Numerous themes are given prominence and broached.* We should be surprised and saddened by the fact that it is necessary to reaffirm pre-established values and principles being they are currently being overlooked. In fact, while a number of present-day urgent and unprecedented circumstances

are being nobly addressed, the Pope finds himself forced to reaffirm the "fundamentals" of a shared ethics and anthropology that - as incredible as it may seem – have dramatically strayed from the right path over the course of our recent history. Indeed, in the year 2020 there remains a pressing need to discuss reaffirming the principles enshrined in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, namely, the relevance of genuine dialogue characterized by moments of silence and careful listening, by encounter as a source of richness, by respect for minorities and cultures, preservation of historical memory, social friendship as a fundamental path for peace, concrete and fruitful love transformed into deeds rather than mere speculation, cooperation, solidarity and subsidiarity, clarity of priorities versus secondary issues, dynamics that indicate that a life sentence is a secret death penalty, that the death penalty is inadmissible and that never again must we speak of a "just war", the dignity of work, overcoming certain imposed conceptions and utilitarian notions that form the grounds for a throwaway culture... *This Encyclical opens our lungs enabling us to breathe fully, expanding on the great human family, tearing down every potential wall and indifference as the only way forward. The rereading of the parable of the Good Samaritan is paradigmatic and is conveyed with secular style, so as to reach out to all, to believers of other religions and non-believers alike, albeit with different registers and modalities, offering a horizon of meaning we can all identify with.* Every thought is inspired by two guiding principles: the dignity of the human person and the importance of human relations as a constitutive part of man, which can be fully accomplished only through relations marked by authenticity, reciprocity and self-giving. Human dignity, integral human development, being-in-relation, the gift of self, which culminates in authentic love, are the pillars of the encyclical. However, there are many other elements, such as the invitation to "cultivate kindness", which stir renewed vigilance on our being true Christians and - first and foremost - men and women capable of living without ever manipulating and being manipulated by others. *Human beings and then saints*: this could be an appropriate synthesis; or *truly human*, treasuring the unique patrimony of great humanity thanks to the journey undertaken so far, without denying our own roots - as the Pope writes - but sharing all that is good and beautiful, that we Christians in particular have through the Gospel and the encounter with the Risen Christ, in the knowledge that - as St. Paul VI wrote - "all things human are our concern."

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