



Reflexive synthesis of the Social Encyclical "Fratelli Tutti" of the Holy Father Francis

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Introduction

Fraternity and social friendship are the ways indicated by the Holy Father to build a better, fairer, more fraternal, more prosperous, more peaceful and more reconciled world, with the commitment of all, peoples and institutions. He forcefully recalls the opposition to war, the death penalty, the violation of the right to life and the globalisation of indifference. What are the great ideals but also the concrete paths that can be taken by those who want to build a more just and fraternal world in their daily relations, in their social life, in political life, in institutions? This is the question that Fratelli tutti wants to answer, which the Pope presents as a "social encyclical".

1. Context of the encyclical: in the continuation of the integral ecology of Saint Francis of Assisi

After having given the Church the encyclical "Lumen Fidei" in 2013, Pope Francis raised the awareness of the Church and the world about the complex issues surrounding the reality of integral ecology with the encyclical "Laudato Si" in 2015. He has just continued his work with his encyclical letter "Fratelli Tutti" on "fraternity and social friendship". We feel that the Holy Father has been and remains deeply informed by the inspiration of St. Francis of Assisi whose name he adopted for his ministry as Holy Father. This Encyclical Letter was given in Assisi at the tomb of St. Francis on October 3, 2020, the *eve* of the Feast of the *Poverello*. It was then published on October 4, 2020. It takes its title from the Admonitions of

St. Francis of Assisi, who used these words "in addressing all his brothers and sisters, to propose to them a way of life to the taste of the Gospel" (FT1). The encyclical aims to promote a worldwide aspiration to fraternity and social friendship. "When I was writing this letter, suddenly the pandemic of Covid-19 broke out, exposing our false certainties", writes the Holy Father Francis. But the world health crisis has shown that "no one saves himself" and that the moment has truly arrived to "dream of one and the same humanity" in which we are "all brothers" (FT7-8).

The letter is also clearly dependent on all the experience lived by the Holy Father in the preparation and holding of the fraternal meeting with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb of Al Azhar in Cairo which led to the joint signing of the *"Document on Fraternity for World Peace and Common Coexistence"*, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 4 February 2019. The Pope refers to it on a number of occasions in the text of the encyclical letter. In the development of the encyclical, the Holy Father paints a bleak picture of the world, the street people of hope and the prospects for a way out.

2. Some trends that hinder the promotion of the fraternity

Among the tendencies that constitute a dark picture of the world or what the Holy Father calls "the shadows of a closed world", it is necessary to highlight the failed efforts to overcome divisions, to promote peace and communion. The encyclical also focuses on the many distortions of the contemporary age: the manipulation and distortion of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; selfishness and disinterest in the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste; unemployment, racism, poverty ; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery in all its forms, trafficking, women who are exploited and then forced to abort, the falling birth rate, the abandonment of elderly people to painful loneliness, the obsession to reduce labour costs without taking into account the serious consequences that this entails, racism, economic rules that have proved effective for growth but not for integral human development, organ trafficking. The Pope returns to the fact that "our world is progressing in a dichotomy devoid of meaning, with the pretension of guaranteeing stability and peace on the basis of false security supported by a mentality of fear and mistrust" FT26. This is how "the temptation to create a culture of walls reappears, to build walls, walls in the heart, walls erected on the earth to avoid this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And whoever raises a wall, whoever builds a wall, will end up being a slave within the walls

he has built, deprived of horizons. On this soil of closure, "a fertile ground for mafia groups is created". They assert themselves, in fact, by presenting themselves as the "protectors" of the forgotten, often with the help of various aids, as they pursue their criminal interests. There is a typically Mafia pedagogy which, with a false community mystique, creates bonds of dependence and subordination from which it is very difficult to free oneself" (FT10- 28).

We thus find ourselves in a climate of deterioration of the ethics that condition international action and a weakening of spiritual values and the sense of responsibility. "... turning our backs on the great fraternal values leads to a kind of cynicism" with a reflex of isolation and withdrawal into oneself and one's own interests. The sense of closeness and encounter is waning.

Continuing his analysis of the current situation, the Pope raises the question of migrants in its various forms by questioning the xenophobic mentality of closure and withdrawal which is quite widespread today, generating a climate of fear that deprives people of the desire and the ability to meet others.

The quality of the meeting of complementarity is not promoted there. "The functioning of many platforms always ends up favouring meetings between people who think in the same way, preventing differences from being confronted. These closed circuits facilitate the dissemination of false information and false news, fomenting prejudice and hatred" (FT30-45). These are global problems that require global actions. However, there is no shortage of hopeful street people.

3. Paths of hope

Faced with so many shadows, however, the encyclical responds with a shining example, that of the Good Samaritan, "A stranger on the road". In it, the Pope stresses that in a sick society that turns its back on pain and is "illiterate" in caring for the weakest and most fragile (FT64-65), we are all called to be close to the other (FT81), overcoming prejudices and personal interests. All of us, in fact, are co-responsible for building a society that knows how to include, integrate and relieve those who suffer (FT77). Love builds bridges and we "are made for love" (FT88), adds the Pope, urging Christians in particular to recognise Christ in the face of the excluded (FT85). The Holy Father Francis also takes as his starting point the experience of those people who have been able to maintain confidence in the future in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic: "doctors, nurses, pharmacists, supermarket

employees, cleaners, assistants, transporters, men and women who work to provide essential services and security, volunteers, priests, consecrated persons ... who have understood that no one saves himself alone" (FT54).

The Pope therefore invites hope and wishes to see the world develop "that which is great, which fills the heart and lifts up the spirit towards great things, such as truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love" (FT55). The principle of the capacity to love according to "a universal dimension" is also taken up in the third chapter, "Thinking and managing an open world". Francis exhorts us to "come out of ourselves" in order to find in others "an increase in being" (FT88), opening ourselves to our neighbour according to the dynamism of charity which makes us tend towards "universal communion" (FT95).

Fundamentally, the encyclical recalls that the spiritual stature of human life is defined by the love that leads us to seek the best for the life of the other (92-93). The sense of solidarity and fraternity is born in families, which must be protected in their "primary and inescapable educational mission" (FT114).

4. An important path towards a more fraternal world: The best policy

The Holy Father speaks of the best politics that represents one of the most precious forms of charity because it places itself at the service of the common good (FT180) and recognises the importance of the people, understood as an open category, available for debate and dialogue (FT160). This is the meaning of the people indicated by the Holy Father, who opposes "populism", which ignores the legitimacy of the notion of "people", creating consensus in order to use it at its own service (FT159).

But the best policy is also one that protects work, an "inescapable dimension of social life" and seeks to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to develop their own capacities (FT162). The real anti-poverty strategy, the encyclical argues, is not simply to contain the natives, but to promote them from the perspective of solidarity and subsidiarity (FT187). Moreover, the duty of the policy is to find a solution to everything that stands in the way of fundamental human rights, such as social exclusion, trafficking in human organs, tissues, weapons and drugs, sexual exploitation, slavery, terrorism and organised crime. The Pope reiterates a strong call for the elimination of trafficking, "a shame for humanity", and of hunger, which is "a crime" because food is an "inalienable right" (FT188-189).

The policy that is needed, the Holy Father stresses again, is one that is centred on human

dignity and not subject to finance, because "not everything can be solved with the freedom of the market". The "ravages" caused by financial speculation have demonstrated this (FT168). Popular movements are therefore of particular importance. They must be involved in society, in a coordinated way, provoking a "torrent of moral energy". This is the way to move from a policy directed "towards" the poor to a policy made "with" them and coming from them (FT169).

Another wish in the encyclical concerns the reform of the UN: given the predominance of the economic dimension, the UN's duty will be to give concrete expression to the concept of the "family of nations" by working for the common good, the eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights. By ensuring "untiring recourse to negotiation, good offices and arbitration", the UN must promote the force of law over the law of force, states the papal document (FT173-175).

Conclusion: the Abu Dhabi Appeal on "Brotherhood".

The encyclical letter Fratelli Tutti ends by quoting the joint declaration of the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb and Pope Francis appealing to the world to condemn deviations from religious teachings that generate feelings of hatred, hostility, extremism and violence. In this declaration, the two religious leaders advocate human brotherhood by affirming that they have made the option "to adopt the culture of dialogue as a path; collaboration as a means of guidance; (FT287) The Pope acknowledges that he felt stimulated by other brothers who are not Catholics, such as Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi and many others. The Pope also recalls the experience of Charles de Foucauld in his desire for the total gift of his person to God towards identification with the last, the abandoned, in the depths of the African desert.

"If we do not learn to live together as brothers, we will die together like idiots" Martin Luther King

THANK YOU

[translated with DeepL]