

ENCYCLICAL LETTER
FRATELLI TUTTI
OF THE HOLY FATHER
FRANCIS
ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP

CHAPTER FIVE

A BETTER KIND OF POLITICS

154. The development of a global community of fraternity based on the practice of social friendship on the part of peoples and nations calls for a better kind of politics, one truly at the service of the common good. Sadly, politics today often takes forms that hinder progress towards a different world.

FORMS OF POPULISM AND LIBERALISM

155. Lack of concern for the vulnerable can hide behind a populism that exploits them demagogically for its own purposes, or a liberalism that serves the economic interests of the powerful. In both cases, it becomes difficult to envisage an open world that makes room for everyone, including the most vulnerable, and shows respect for different cultures.

Popular vs. populist

156. In recent years, the words “populism” and “populist” have invaded the communications media and everyday conversation. As a result, they have lost whatever value they might have had, and have become another source of polarization in an already divided society. Efforts are made to classify entire peoples, groups, societies and governments as “populist” or not. Nowadays it has become impossible for someone to express a view on any subject without being categorized one way or the other, either to be unfairly discredited or to be praised to the skies.

157. The attempt to see populism as a key for interpreting social reality is problematic in another way: it disregards the legitimate meaning of the word “people”. Any effort to remove this concept from common parlance could lead to the elimination of the very notion of democracy as “government by the people”. If we wish to maintain that society is more than a mere aggregate of individuals, the term “people” proves necessary. There are social phenomena that create majorities, as well as megatrends and communitarian aspirations. Men and women are capable of coming up with shared goals that transcend their differences and can thus engage in a common endeavour. Then too, it is extremely difficult to carry out a long-term project unless it becomes a collective aspiration. All these factors lie behind our use of the words “people” and “popular”. Unless they are taken into account – together with a sound critique of demagoguery – a fundamental aspect of social reality would be overlooked.

158. Here, there can be a misunderstanding. “‘People’ is not a logical category, nor is it a mystical category, if by that we mean that everything the people does is good, or that the people is an ‘angelic’ reality. Rather, it is a mythic category... When you have to explain what you mean by people, you use logical categories for the sake of explanation, and necessarily so. Yet in that way you cannot explain what it means to belong to a people. The word ‘people’ has a deeper meaning that cannot be set forth in purely logical terms. To be part of a people is to be part of a shared identity arising from social and cultural bonds. And that is not something automatic, but rather a slow, difficult process... of advancing towards a common project”. [132]

159. "Popular" leaders, those capable of interpreting the feelings and cultural dynamics of a people, and significant trends in society, do exist. The service they provide by their efforts to unite and lead can become the basis of an enduring vision of transformation and growth that would also include making room for others in the pursuit of the common good. But this can degenerate into an unhealthy "populism" when individuals are able to exploit politically a people's culture, under whatever ideological banner, for their own personal advantage or continuing grip on power. Or when, at other times, they seek popularity by appealing to the basest and most selfish inclinations of certain sectors of the population. This becomes all the more serious when, whether in cruder or more subtle forms, it leads to the usurpation of institutions and laws.

160. Closed populist groups distort the word "people", since they are not talking about a true people. The concept of "people" is in fact open-ended. A living and dynamic people, a people with a future, is one constantly open to a new synthesis through its ability to welcome differences. In this way, it does not deny its proper identity, but is open to being mobilized, challenged, broadened and enriched by others, and thus to further growth and development.

161. Another sign of the decline of popular leadership is concern for short-term advantage. One meets popular demands for the sake of gaining votes or support, but without advancing in an arduous and constant effort to generate the resources people need to develop and earn a living by their own efforts and creativity. In this regard, I have made it clear that "I have no intention of proposing an irresponsible populism".^[133] Eliminating inequality requires an economic growth that can help to tap each region's potential and thus guarantee a sustainable equality.^[134] At the same time, it follows that "welfare projects, which meet certain urgent needs, should be considered merely temporary responses".^[135]

162. The biggest issue is employment. The truly "popular" thing – since it promotes the good of the people – is to provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us: our talents, our initiative and our innate resources. This is the finest help we can give to the poor, the best path to a life of dignity. Hence my insistence that, "helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work".^[136] Since production systems may change, political systems must keep working to structure society in such a way that everyone has a chance to contribute his or her own talents and efforts. For "there is no poverty worse than that which takes away work and the dignity of work".^[137] In a genuinely developed society, work is an essential dimension of social life, for it is not only a means of earning one's daily bread, but also of personal growth, the building of healthy relationships, self-expression and the exchange of gifts. Work gives us a sense of shared responsibility for the development of the world, and ultimately, for our life as a people.

The benefits and limits of liberal approaches

163. The concept of a "people", which naturally entails a positive view of community and cultural bonds, is usually rejected by individualistic liberal approaches, which view society as merely the sum of coexisting interests. One speaks of respect for freedom, but without roots in a shared narrative; in certain contexts, those who defend the rights of the most vulnerable members of society tend to be criticized as populists. The notion of a people is considered an abstract construct, something that does not really exist. But this is to create a needless dichotomy. Neither the notion of "people" nor that of "neighbour" can be considered purely abstract or romantic, in such a way that social organization, science and civic institutions can be rejected or treated with contempt.^[138]

164. Charity, on the other hand, unites both dimensions – the abstract and the institutional – since it calls for an effective process of historical change that embraces everything: institutions, law,

technology, experience, professional expertise, scientific analysis, administrative procedures, and so forth. For that matter, "private life cannot exist unless it is protected by public order. A domestic hearth has no real warmth unless it is safeguarded by law, by a state of tranquillity founded on law, and enjoys a minimum of wellbeing ensured by the division of labour, commercial exchange, social justice and political citizenship".^[139]

165. True charity is capable of incorporating all these elements in its concern for others. In the case of personal encounters, including those involving a distant or forgotten brother or sister, it can do so by employing all the resources that the institutions of an organized, free and creative society are capable of generating. Even the Good Samaritan, for example, needed to have a nearby inn that could provide the help that he was personally unable to offer. Love of neighbour is concrete and squanders none of the resources needed to bring about historical change that can benefit the poor and disadvantaged. At times, however, leftist ideologies or social doctrines linked to individualistic ways of acting and ineffective procedures affect only a few, while the majority of those left behind remain dependent on the goodwill of others. This demonstrates the need for a greater spirit of fraternity, but also a more efficient worldwide organization to help resolve the problems plaguing the abandoned who are suffering and dying in poor countries. It also shows that there is no one solution, no single acceptable methodology, no economic recipe that can be applied indiscriminately to all. Even the most rigorous scientific studies can propose different courses of action.

166. Everything, then, depends on our ability to see the need for a change of heart, attitudes and lifestyles. Otherwise, political propaganda, the media and the shapers of public opinion will continue to promote an individualistic and uncritical culture subservient to unregulated economic interests and societal institutions at the service of those who already enjoy too much power. My criticism of the technocratic paradigm involves more than simply thinking that if we control its excesses everything will be fine. The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities or institutions, but from the way that they are used. It has to do with human weakness, the proclivity to selfishness that is part of what the Christian tradition refers to as "concupiscence": the human inclination to be concerned only with myself, my group, my own petty interests. Concupiscence is not a flaw limited to our own day. It has been present from the beginning of humanity, and has simply changed and taken on different forms down the ages, using whatever means each moment of history can provide. Concupiscence, however, can be overcome with the help of God.

167. Education and upbringing, concern for others, a well-integrated view of life and spiritual growth: all these are essential for quality human relationships and for enabling society itself to react against injustices, aberrations and abuses of economic, technological, political and media power. Some liberal approaches ignore this factor of human weakness; they envisage a world that follows a determined order and is capable by itself of ensuring a bright future and providing solutions for every problem.

168. The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith. Whatever the challenge, this impoverished and repetitive school of thought always offers the same recipes. 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. It is imperative to have a proactive economic policy directed at "promoting an economy that favours productive diversity and business creativity"^[140] and makes it possible for jobs to be created and not cut. Financial speculation fundamentally aimed at quick profit continues to wreak havoc. Indeed, "without internal forms of solidarity and mutual trust, the market cannot completely fulfil its proper economic function. And today this trust has ceased to exist".^[141] The

story did not end the way it was meant to, and the dogmatic formulae of prevailing economic theory proved not to be infallible. The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom. It has also shown that, in addition to recovering a sound political life that is not subject to the dictates of finance, “we must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need”.[\[142\]](#)

169. In some closed and monochrome economic approaches, for example, there seems to be no place for popular movements that unite the unemployed, temporary and informal workers and many others who do not easily find a place in existing structures. Yet those movements manage various forms of popular economy and of community production. What is needed is a model of social, political and economic participation “that can include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny”, while also ensuring that “these experiences of solidarity which grow up from below, from the subsoil of the planet – can come together, be more coordinated, keep on meeting one another”.[\[143\]](#) This, however, must happen in a way that will not betray their distinctive way of acting as “sowers of change, promoters of a process involving millions of actions, great and small, creatively intertwined like words in a poem”.[\[144\]](#) In that sense, such movements are “social poets” that, in their own way, work, propose, promote and liberate. They help make possible an integral human development that goes beyond “the idea of social policies being a policy *for* the poor, but never *with* the poor and never *of* the poor, much less part of a project that reunites peoples”.[\[145\]](#) They may be troublesome, and certain “theorists” may find it hard to classify them, yet we must find the courage to acknowledge that, without them, “democracy atrophies, turns into a mere word, a formality; it loses its representative character and becomes disembodied, since it leaves out the people in their daily struggle for dignity, in the building of their future”.[\[146\]](#)

INTERNATIONAL POWER

170. I would once more observe that “the financial crisis of 2007-08 provided an opportunity to develop a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles, and new ways of regulating speculative financial practices and virtual wealth. But the response to the crisis did not include rethinking the outdated criteria which continue to rule the world”.[\[147\]](#) Indeed, it appears that the actual strategies developed worldwide in the wake of the crisis fostered greater individualism, less integration and increased freedom for the truly powerful, who always find a way to escape unscathed.

171. I would also insist that “to give to each his own – to cite the classic definition of justice – means that no human individual or group can consider itself absolute, entitled to bypass the dignity and the rights of other individuals or their social groupings. The effective distribution of power (especially political, economic, defence-related and technological power) among a plurality of subjects, and the creation of a juridical system for regulating claims and interests, are one concrete way of limiting power. Yet today’s world presents us with many false rights and – at the same time – broad sectors which are vulnerable, victims of power badly exercised”.[\[148\]](#)

172. The twenty-first century “is witnessing a weakening of the power of nation states, chiefly because the economic and financial sectors, being transnational, tend to prevail over the political. Given this situation, it is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments, and empowered to impose sanctions”.[\[149\]](#) When we talk about the possibility of some form of world authority regulated by law,[\[150\]](#) we need not necessarily think of a personal authority. Still, such an authority ought at least to promote more effective world organizations,

equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty and the sure defence of fundamental human rights.

173. In this regard, I would also note the need for a reform of “the United Nations Organization, and likewise of economic institutions and international finance, so that the concept of the family of nations can acquire real teeth”.^[151] Needless to say, this calls for clear legal limits to avoid power being co-opted only by a few countries and to prevent cultural impositions or a restriction of the basic freedoms of weaker nations on the basis of ideological differences. For “the international community is a juridical community founded on the sovereignty of each member state, without bonds of subordination that deny or limit its independence”.^[152] At the same time, “the work of the United Nations, according to the principles set forth in the Preamble and the first Articles of its founding Charter, can be seen as the development and promotion of the rule of law, based on the realization that justice is an essential condition for achieving the ideal of universal fraternity... There is a need to ensure the uncontested rule of law and tireless recourse to negotiation, mediation and arbitration, as proposed by the Charter of the United Nations, which constitutes truly a fundamental juridical norm”.^[153] There is need to prevent this Organization from being delegitimized, since its problems and shortcomings are capable of being jointly addressed and resolved.

174. Courage and generosity are needed in order freely to establish shared goals and to ensure the worldwide observance of certain essential norms. For this to be truly useful, it is essential to uphold “the need to be faithful to agreements undertaken (*pacta sunt servanda*)”,^[154] and to avoid the “temptation to appeal to the law of force rather than to the force of law”.^[155] This means reinforcing the “normative instruments for the peaceful resolution of controversies... so as to strengthen their scope and binding force”.^[156] Among these normative instruments, preference should be given to multilateral agreements between states, because, more than bilateral agreements, they guarantee the promotion of a truly universal common good and the protection of weaker states.

175. Providentially, many groups and organizations within civil society help to compensate for the shortcomings of the international community, its lack of coordination in complex situations, its lack of attention to fundamental human rights and to the critical needs of certain groups. Here we can see a concrete application of the principle of subsidiarity, which justifies the participation and activity of communities and organizations on lower levels as a means of integrating and complementing the activity of the state. These groups and organizations often carry out commendable efforts in the service of the common good and their members at times show true heroism, revealing something of the grandeur of which our humanity is still capable.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CHARITY

176. For many people today, politics is a distasteful word, often due to the mistakes, corruption and inefficiency of some politicians. There are also attempts to discredit politics, to replace it with economics or to twist it to one ideology or another. Yet can our world function without politics? Can there be an effective process of growth towards universal fraternity and social peace without a sound political life?^[157]

The politics we need

177. Here I would once more observe that “politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the dictates of an efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy”.^[158] Although misuse of power, corruption, disregard for law and inefficiency must clearly be rejected, “economics without politics cannot be justified, since this would make it impossible to favour other ways of handling the various aspects of the present

crisis".[159] Instead, "what is needed is a politics which is far-sighted and capable of a new, integral and interdisciplinary approach to handling the different aspects of the crisis".[160] In other words, a "healthy politics... capable of reforming and coordinating institutions, promoting best practices and overcoming undue pressure and bureaucratic inertia".[161] We cannot expect economics to do this, nor can we allow economics to take over the real power of the state.

178. In the face of many petty forms of politics focused on immediate interests, I would repeat that "true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good. Political powers do not find it easy to assume this duty in the work of nation-building",[162] much less in forging a common project for the human family, now and in the future. Thinking of those who will come after us does not serve electoral purposes, yet it is what authentic justice demands. As the Bishops of Portugal have taught, the earth "is lent to each generation, to be handed on to the generation that follows".[163]

179. Global society is suffering from grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes. Much needs to change, through fundamental reform and major renewal. Only a healthy politics, involving the most diverse sectors and skills, is capable of overseeing this process. An economy that is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme directed to the common good could pave the way for "different possibilities which do not involve stifling human creativity and its ideals of progress, but rather directing that energy along new channels".[164]

Political love

180. Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. 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".[165] This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity.[166] Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as "a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity, inasmuch as it seeks the common good".[167]

181. 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)".[168] 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".[169] For this reason, charity finds expression not only in close and intimate relationships but also in "macro-relationships: social, economic and political".[170]

182. This political charity is born of a social awareness that transcends every individualistic mindset: "'Social charity makes us love the common good', it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons, but also in the social dimension that unites them".[171] Each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people; at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person. "People" and "person" are correlative terms. Nonetheless, there are attempts nowadays to reduce persons to isolated individuals easily manipulated by powers pursuing spurious interests. Good politics will seek ways of building communities at every level of social life, in order to recalibrate and reorient globalization and thus avoid its disruptive effects.

Effective love

183. "Social love"^[172] makes it possible to advance towards a civilization of love, to which all of us can feel called. Charity, with its impulse to universality, is capable of building a new world.^[173] No mere sentiment, it is the best means of discovering effective paths of development for everyone. Social love is a "force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today's world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations and legal systems from within".^[174]

184. Charity is at the heart of every healthy and open society, yet today "it is easily dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and giving direction to moral responsibility".^[175] Charity, when accompanied by a commitment to the truth, is much more than personal feeling, and consequently need not "fall prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions".^[176] Indeed its close relation to truth fosters its universality and preserves it from being "confined to a narrow field devoid of relationships".^[177] Otherwise, it would be "excluded from the plans and processes of promoting human development of universal range, in dialogue between knowledge and praxis".^[178] Without truth, emotion lacks relational and social content. Charity's openness to truth thus protects it from "a fideism that deprives it of its human and universal breadth".^[179]

185. Charity needs the light of the truth that we constantly seek. "That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith",^[180] and does not admit any form of relativism. Yet it also respects the development of the sciences and their essential contribution to finding the surest and most practical means of achieving the desired results. For when the good of others is at stake, good intentions are not enough. Concrete efforts must be made to bring about whatever they and their nations need for the sake of their development.

THE EXERCISE OF POLITICAL LOVE

186. There is a kind of love that is "elicited": its acts proceed directly from the virtue of charity and are directed to individuals and peoples. There is also a "commanded" love, expressed in those acts of charity that spur people to create more sound institutions, more just regulations, more supportive structures.^[181] It follows that "it is an equally indispensable act of love to strive to organize and structure society so that one's neighbour will not find himself in poverty".^[182] 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.

Sacrifices born of love

187. This charity, which is the spiritual heart of politics, is always a preferential love shown to those in greatest need; it undergirds everything we do on their behalf.^[183] Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity, respected in their identity and culture, and thus truly integrated into society. That gaze is at the heart of the authentic spirit of politics. It sees paths open up that are different from those of a soulless pragmatism. It makes us realize that "the scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilize the poor and render them tame and inoffensive. How sad it is when we find, behind allegedly altruistic works, the other being reduced to passivity".^[184] What are needed are new pathways of self-expression and participation in society. Education serves these by making it possible for each human being to shape his or her own future. Here too we see the importance of the principle of *subsidiarity*, which is inseparable from the principle of *solidarity*.

188. These considerations help us recognize the urgent need to combat all that threatens or violates fundamental human rights. Politicians are called to “tend to the needs of individuals and peoples. To tend those in need takes strength and tenderness, effort and generosity in the midst of a functionalistic and privatized mindset that inexorably leads to a ‘throwaway culture’... It involves taking responsibility for the present with its situations of utter marginalization and anguish, and being capable of bestowing dignity upon it”.^[185] It will likewise inspire intense efforts to ensure that “everything be done to protect the status and dignity of the human person”.^[186] Politicians are doers, builders with ambitious goals, possessed of a broad, realistic and pragmatic gaze that looks beyond their own borders. Their biggest concern should not be about a drop in the polls, but about finding effective solutions to “the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion, with its baneful consequences: human trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism and international organized crime. Such is the magnitude of these situations, and their toll in innocent lives, that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism that would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against all these scourges”.^[187] This includes taking intelligent advantage of the immense resources offered by technological development.

189. We are still far from a globalization of the most basic of human rights. That is why world politics needs to make the effective elimination of hunger one of its foremost and imperative goals. Indeed, “when financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger. At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. Hunger is criminal; food is an inalienable right”.^[188] Often, as we carry on our semantic or ideological disputes, we allow our brothers and sisters to die of hunger and thirst, without shelter or access to health care. Alongside these basic needs that remain unmet, trafficking in persons represents another source of shame for humanity, one that international politics, moving beyond fine speeches and good intentions, must no longer tolerate. These things are essential; they can no longer be deferred.

A love that integrates and unites

190. Political charity is also expressed in a spirit of openness to everyone. Government leaders should be the first to make the sacrifices that foster encounter and to seek convergence on at least some issues. They should be ready to listen to other points of view and to make room for everyone. Through sacrifice and patience, they can help to create a beautiful polyhedral reality in which everyone has a place. Here, economic negotiations do not work. Something else is required: an exchange of gifts for the common good. It may seem naïve and utopian, yet we cannot renounce this lofty aim.

191. At a time when various forms of fundamentalist intolerance are damaging relationships between individuals, groups and peoples, let us be committed to living and teaching the value of respect for others, a love capable of welcoming differences, and the priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, practices and even sins. Even as forms of fanaticism, closedmindedness and social and cultural fragmentation proliferate in present-day society, a good politician will take the first step and insist that different voices be heard. Disagreements may well give rise to conflicts, but uniformity proves stifling and leads to cultural decay. May we not be content with being enclosed in one fragment of reality.

192. In this regard, Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb and I have called upon “the architects of international policy and world economy to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood”.^[189] When a specific policy sows hatred and fear towards other nations in the

name of its own country's welfare, there is need to be concerned, to react in time and immediately to correct the course.

FRUITFULNESS OVER RESULTS

193. Apart from their tireless activity, politicians are also men and women. They are called to practice love in their daily interpersonal relationships. As persons, they need to consider that "the modern world, with its technical advances, tends increasingly to functionalize the satisfaction of human desires, now classified and subdivided among different services. Less and less will people be called by name, less and less will this unique being be treated as a person with his or her own feelings, sufferings, problems, joys and family. Their illnesses will be known only in order to cure them, their financial needs only to provide for them, their lack of a home only to give them lodging, their desires for recreation and entertainment only to satisfy them". Yet it must never be forgotten that "loving the most insignificant of human beings as a brother, as if there were no one else in the world but him, cannot be considered a waste of time".^[190]

194. Politics too must make room for a tender love of others. "What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes real. A movement that starts from our heart and reaches the eyes, the ears and the hands... Tenderness is the path of choice for the strongest, most courageous men and women".^[191] Amid the daily concerns of political life, "the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a 'right' to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them".^[192]

195. All this can help us realize that what is important is not constantly achieving great results, since these are not always possible. In political activity, we should remember that, "appearances notwithstanding, every person is immensely holy and deserves our love. Consequently, if I can help at least one person to have a better life, that already justifies the offering of my life. It is a wonderful thing to be God's faithful people. We achieve fulfilment when we break down walls and our hearts are filled with faces and names!"^[193] The great goals of our dreams and plans may only be achieved in part. Yet beyond this, those who love, and who no longer view politics merely as a quest for power, "may be sure that none of our acts of love will be lost, nor any of our acts of sincere concern for others. No single act of love for God will be lost, no generous effort is meaningless, no painful endurance is wasted. All of these encircle our world like a vital force".^[194]

196. For this reason, it is truly noble to place our hope in the hidden power of the seeds of goodness we sow, and thus to initiate processes whose fruits will be reaped by others. Good politics combines love with hope and with confidence in the reserves of goodness present in human hearts. Indeed, "authentic political life, built upon respect for law and frank dialogue between individuals, is constantly renewed whenever there is a realization that every woman and man, and every new generation, brings the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies".^[195]

197. Viewed in this way, politics is something more noble than posturing, marketing and media spin. These sow nothing but division, conflict and a bleak cynicism incapable of mobilizing people to pursue a common goal. At times, in thinking of the future, we do well to ask ourselves, "Why I am doing this?", "What is my real aim?" For as time goes on, reflecting on the past, the questions will not be: "How many people endorsed me?", "How many voted for me?", "How many had a positive image of me?" The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, "How much love did I put into my work?" "What did I do for the progress of our people?" "What mark did I leave on the life of society?" "What real bonds did I create?" "What positive forces did I unleash?" "How much social peace did I sow?" "What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?"