



IFCU TALKS

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**FROM "LAUDATO SI" TO "FRATELLI TUTTI".
THE DEPLOYMENT OF A RECONCILIATION THINKING**

**Presentation of some major axes of Pope Francis' thought,
from the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti".
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*Msgr. Bruno-Marie DUFFE
Secretary of the Dicastery for the Promotion
of the Integral Human Development
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DARING FRATERNITY AGAINST A BACKDROP OF CRISES

Introductory reflections

The spirit of the text of the Encyclical "Laudato si" - on the safeguarding of the common house - (2015) has frequently been presented on the basis of this excerpt from the text (nos. 48 and 49), where the link between ecological and social crisis is presented as decisive.

" Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*" (L.S. n° 49).

The spirit of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti" - on fraternity and social friendship - could be presented from an essential aspiration for mutual recognition, shared by all those who have an intelligence of the heart, on watch, in attention and in action... in the manner of Francis

of Assisi, which remains the constant reference of Pope Francis, from one encyclical to the next.

Drawing on the decisive experience of two fraternal encounters that marked his Pontificate, with his "brother" Bartholomew, Orthodox Patriarch "who promoted with great vigor the safeguarding of Creation" and with the Great Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Meeting in Abu Dhabi, with whom Pope Francis co-signed "The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," (February 4, 2019), Francis himself presents this reflection on fraternity and social friendship as "a dream" and a "vow". It is difficult not to think of the four dreams of the Exhortation "Querida Amazonia", following the Synod on Amazonia. It is difficult not to inscribe these dreams in the biblical tradition of dreams or visions or in the memory of Pastor Martin Luther King's "Dream"...

"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. Fraternity between all men and women. "Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation... We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together". (Speech at the Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting with Young People, Skopje - Northern Macedonia (May 7, 2019). Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers 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. " (n° 8)

A new look at our land, our common home, a new look at the other, the brother or sister in humanity: it is a living awareness of what connects us, among the living. This call to universal consciousness is a constant in Francis' thinking since the first Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" (2013). It is a question of thinking about the responsibility that we all bear, each and every one of us, in the construction, at times the re-construction of the "we" that we have lost or mistreated... Rediscovering the "other" and the "we": that "other" that our injustice has wounded and left on the side of the road and that "we" that is the link that connects us all.

We could say that the two encyclicals are the two chapters of the same spiritual testament or the two lungs of the same moral breath: the earth and the brother, Creation and community. It is a question of knowing how to think and live a care and a look that makes reconciliation possible, with Creation and with the brothers.

To develop this thought and to live this dream, we can evoke :

- The call to "come out" of one's inward-looking attitude in order to live the experience of the encounter, in truth;
- The call to "consent" to "make the detour" towards the "wounded man";
- The call to deploy a collective and "political" consciousness that links the local and the global;

- Finally, the call to "live fraternity and peace" in paths of listening and dialogue, patient and persevering.

1. FROM THE CLOSED WORLD OF INDIVIDUALISM TO THE TRANSCENDENT AND LIBERATING TRUTH: THE STAKES OF THE "CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER".

The major line of differentiation that runs through the entire text of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti" distinguishes, in a strong way, the "closed world" from individualistic withdrawal - whether this individualism is the work of an individual or of a "self-centered" social group, whose essential concern is the management of its particular interests and benefits (financial or political) - and the consideration of otherness, with its wealth and with its wounds.

This line of meaning highlights "anachronistic" conflicts and "narrow" nationalisms (Cf. F.T. No. 11) as well as a weakening of law, human rights, social justice and democracy (Cf. F.T. No. 14). It is a fact: individualism constantly deconstructs mutual recognition and can come to instrumentalize the relationship between people. Thus we can see how inequalities unfold and grow, leaving on the sidelines those who have not been able to benefit from development or who have been hurt by life.

The most visible expression of this unequal individualism is to be seen in unlimited consumption, alongside poverty and the uprooting of those who have nothing to survive on. (Cf. F.T. n° 36, 37, 38, 39, 40). This world of production, consumption and communication is very often the world of illusion where manipulation and aggressiveness are linked.

The challenge of fraternity begins with the consideration of the other, with his history, his suffering, his aspirations and his fundamental rights. It is a matter of taking "time to sit down" to listen to the history of a person or a community, its experience and its hope. Listening in fact breaks with the often false and illusory character of permanent but uncritical communication, in which one event chases away another and in which fear is often amplified in the face of the otherness of the stranger, the migrant, the exile (Cf. F.T. n°41, 42). We have often lost the silence necessary to listen. Even if we are, it seems, closer, in and through the phenomenon of globalization, through the immediacy of our means of information, we are not, for all that, brothers. Fraternity requires time for hospitality and mutual discovery.

To sit down to listen to the voice of God and the voice of the poorest: the voice of God in the history of the poorest... To accept to listen, in particular, to what can destroy self-esteem, in the logic of domination (Cf. F.T. n°52).

To listen in order to seek the truth together, in patience and perseverance. For we need to consider otherness and truth: the truth of our human condition which needs the dialogue; but also the transcendent truth of a Logos who "comes to make his home with us".

We will be careful to underline and keep in mind this perspective which takes shape from the first chapter of the text of the Encyclical and which links encounter, listening, dialogue and the search for truth. This line opens existence to being - to use the expression dear to the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel, to whom the Pope refers explicitly - and rehabilitates

an approach to truth that inhabits and transcends the condition of humanity. In order to open oneself to this liberating transcendence, a moral condition is required: consenting to meet the a/other. For it is both the other in humanity and the absolutely Other that we encounter in the brother, in the friend. The encounter is the experience through which the question of truth opens up (again), never reducible to interpretation alone but which is the source and realization of humanity in each and everyone.

The invitation to hope which is articulated to this existential and essential couple "otherness and truth" highlights the challenge of fraternity which echoes, in every human being, an expectation and a desire that characterizes him;

"I invite everyone to renewed hope, for hope "speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... [...]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". (Cf. Extraordinary moment of prayer in times of epidemic (March 27, 2020)... Message for the 4th World Day of the Poor 2020 (June 13, 2020), no. 6) (F.T. n° 55)

2. THE PARADIGMATIC FIGURE OF THE "GOOD SAMARITAN" AND THE DETOUR FOR IDENTIFICATION

The evocation of the "Good Samaritan" explicitly develops the problem of proximity. Who is my neighbor? asks Jesus' interlocutor (Lk 10:29-37). Who can I be close to? The question will be amplified and, as if radicalized, with that other question of Francis in the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti: " Which of these persons do you identify with? "(F.T. n° 64). We think here of the question of Francis in Lampedusa, in front of the Mediterranean, which has become the tomb of the migrants: "Who cried for them? "

This approach, with its both psychological and spiritual dimension, wants to highlight that "the close one" is the one to whom I become close. The other approaches me but my freedom is engaged in this identification which is the process by which I find myself in the other? In this respect, we can say that the true encounter does not consist in losing oneself in the other but in finding oneself through and with the other. And finally discovering each other. It is the other that reveals me to myself. From then on, it is a question of thinking together identity and fraternity.

The parable is presented as an "icon" (F.T. No. 67) that links fragility and closeness and that invites us not to leave anyone "on the sidelines", on the side of the road, behind (F.T. No. 67). Icon of transcendence, mysterious and vulnerable. Paradigm of the necessary "detour", that which the "Good Samaritan" makes to approach the wounded man. It is in fact the physical, social and spiritual movement by which man approaches the other, makes himself the close one, through compassion and care, and recognizes himself in the other, in his fragility. In chapter 5 of the Encyclical, dedicated to the political dimension of charity, the

Pope speaks, in a surprising and moving way, of "tenderness" which is benevolence and love for human frailty.

It will obviously be difficult to remain insensitive to the interpretation that - says the text of the Encyclical - we all have something of the wounded man, of the robber (the aggressor), of those who pass by and of the Good Samaritan himself (F.T. no. 69). In the context of a health crisis, we cannot fail to think of those who take on the pain of others and whom Francis called "the Gospel of life". But we will keep in mind the dividing line that runs through our consciousness, between the temptation to look away so as not to be touched and the properly fraternal desire to care, to lift up, to include and to love.

Starting from this strong reference that contains what we could call an evangelical matrix of fraternity, we can ask ourselves the following questions:

- Under what conditions can the "we," which is the experience of recognition and sensitive, moral and mutual understanding, be stronger than the "I" of individualism?
- Under what conditions can the unlikely encounter between Jew and Samaritan open up to this love that transcends particularisms?
- Under what conditions can our preaching, our catechesis and our commitment, as disciples of Christ, bring to light and act upon this primary conviction of the dignity of the wounded, abandoned or excluded person, which is stronger than any discrimination?

The icon of the parable depicts "the wounded man" and "the brother" who both belong to the same humanity, insofar as they both bear within themselves the same image of God the Creator.

The paradigm of the Good Samaritan is, without a doubt, to be seen in "the detour", the "going out of oneself" which also speaks of one's own humanity, inasmuch as it is capable of translating into action the references affirmed in the professions of faith, to the point of changing one's itinerary when necessary... It is no longer a question of speaking only of the moral value of fraternal love, but of accomplishing an authentic love that consents to complementarity : "I am here for and with you; we need each other". The act of love is gratuitous and hospitable: the loved one has a price for me, a great price.

"This is ultimately the idea behind the word "charity": those who are loved are "dear" to me; "they are considered of great value" (St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica I-II, Q.26, art. 3, resp.). And "the love whereby someone becomes pleasing (*grata*) to another is the reason why the latter bestows something on him freely (*gratis*)"(F.T. n° 93)

3. FRATERNITY: A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND RENEWAL FOR DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

The highly symbolic figure of the "Good Samaritan", who takes care of the wounded and abandoned man on the side of the road, gives Pope Francis' reflection an essential reference point for thinking about fraternal relations and political life today. The second part of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti", especially chapters 5 and 6, gives politics a decisive place in the promotion of fraternity.

It is a question of avoiding that the fraternity be restricted to the realm of interpersonal relations. Political life is, par excellence, the place of encounter, dialogue and shared responsibility. It is the very definition of democracy: a space where everyone can express themselves and participate in decision-making, for the common good and justice.

Democracy, as a project and as a political practice, is a translation into action of the vision of the "open world" (see F.T. Chap. 3), which goes beyond the "closed world" of individualistic interests alone and considers the other, with his or her sensitivity, opinion and proposals.

" Hence there is an aspect of universal openness in love that is existential rather than geographical. It has to do with our daily efforts to expand our circle of friends, to reach those who, even though they are close to me, I do not naturally consider a part of my circle of interests. Every brother or sister in need, when abandoned or ignored by the society in which I live, becomes an existential foreigner, even though born in the same country. "(F.T. n° 97).

The democratic space is the "open place" where the meeting is made possible and where the word can be spoken and exchanged without fear, where mutual human rights and duties are honored and actualized.

Social friendship", which is the other name for fraternity, care, benevolence and the search for the right relationship, is not a weak attitude but a strong moral posture, which refuses contempt - especially of the weakest - and which opens to the construction of what can be called "co-responsibility".

" 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." (F.T. n° 154).

This mutual hospitality, proper to friendship, makes one sensitive to the word of the other, to the respect of promises and to the need for forgiveness; a forgiveness that makes it possible not to lock the other - individual, people or community - into a tendentious or truncated image. Hospitality, experienced as reciprocity, enlightens our local and international cooperation projects. The challenges of solidarity with migrants and refugees, often shattered by war, misery and violence, find, in this respect, a light that allows us to link law and complementarity. Migrants are not reducible to their situation as migrants: they are people with talents and they carry with them charisms that are opportunities for the future of humanity. In this regard, we must be wary of populisms and protectionist nationalisms, which appropriate and can come to confiscate popular hope, amplifying fears for electoral purposes. Reflection on community belonging cannot close on sectarian communitarianism and exclusive protectionism. On the contrary, it must, on the contrary, magnify the richness of social plurality and the richness of pluralism which brings into play the diversity of approaches and interpretations.

Above all, the common good, which calls for the happy deployment of talents for the good of the community, must be considered as the condition and the horizon of peace. In thinking

about the common good, there is sharing (social justice and sharing of goods), justice (consideration of the person in his or her dignity and rights) and communion (horizon of the Kingdom promised in Christ). Seeking peace, therefore, means taking care of our ties, human rights, memory and hope.

" 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". (F.T. No. 158: extract from a quotation by Antonio Spadaro, *Las huellas de un pastor; una conversacion con el Papa Francisco*, in "Jorge Maria Bergoglio - Papa Francisco, En tus ojos esta mi palabra. Homelías y discursos de Buenos Aires (1999 - 2013)", Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid, 2017, pp. 24-25).

To speak of time and "slow process," about fraternity and politics, is to inscribe oneself in a moral journey that is never satisfied with the current state of the world. It is a participation in the profound transformation of people and institutions; one cannot evolve without the other. Thus peace can be presented as the aim of "good politics" (Cf. Message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2019), but also as the expression of charity accomplished.

" 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. (F.T. no. 165).

4. TO PROMOTE JOURNEYS FOR FRATERNITY AND PEACE

If the experience and hope of fraternity consists in moving from a "closed world" to an "open world" and from fear to trust, the first requirement of fraternity is hospitality: "the sacred duty of hospitality. For hospitality is the act by which we stand "on the threshold of the door" and we "go out" to welcome the other, to welcome the gift of the encounter and the message carried by the host (the one we receive). (Cf. F.T. n°90). Here we think, of course, of Abraham's experience at the Oak of Mamre (Gen. 18), when he stands at the entrance of his tent and asks the passer-by(s) to do him the honor of entering to share with him the goat and the flower of flour. Here we find the joy of identifying with the other and the gratuitousness by which we express that the other is precious to us.

Expressed in terms of values, rights and duties, we can say that fraternity offers a dimension of meaning and full realization to freedom and equality. Without fraternity, we can remain alone, with our individual freedom; but it is fraternity that allows us to "come out" of our solitude (F.T. Nos. 103, 107, 110).

The paths of fraternity open up when we choose service, care and the common and shared destination of created goods, as taught by the Fathers of the first centuries: Basil of Caesarea, Ambrose of Milan, Augustine of Hippo. This "universal destination of goods" founds and actualizes the other rights - rights of persons and rights of peoples - to enjoy the land, its resources and the goods produced. Fraternity, in its universal sense, gives meaning and opens up to another logic, breaking with all appropriation, the logic of community: a shared roof, a common land, a work for each one, at the service of all.

At a time when individualism or protectionist particularisms prove incapable of admiring the promises of others, fraternity offers to those who live it in truth a profound joy that widens the gaze and gives full capacity to the "polyhedron" of the shared richness of paths and cultures (Cf. F.T. no. 215). Each face of the polyhedron illuminates the richness of Truth.

In an even more "active" way, it is appropriate, with this Encyclical, to speak of fraternity as a path, a journey of humanity that can open up to peace. In Chapter 5, dedicated to politics, the Pope reminds us that it is possible to help a person, but it is also possible to "create social and political processes of justice" (Cf. F.T. no. 180-186). The journeys of fraternity concern solidarity, education, politics and the exercise of subsidiarity, which is a shared responsibility. (Cf. **The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together**, Abu Dhabi - February 4, 2019).

Social friendship requires the primordial option of dialogue: receiving and giving - between citizens, between actors in collective life, between knowledge and between cultures (Cf. F.T. n°199 - 202). We need to think about and implement processes of encounter (Cf. F.T. n° 217), placed under the sign of benevolence (Cf. F.T. n° 223).

This path of fraternity is a path of historical truth. We must offer the truth to individuals and families wounded in their flesh and in their memory, when some of their own have been mistreated or have disappeared in fratricidal struggles. This is the condition for reconciliation and peace. In this regard, we must speak of a "proactive" reconciliation (F.T. No. 229). To forgive is never to forget; we need to talk about the Shoah, the unspeakable sufferings of Hiroshima, Nagasaki, genocides and dictatorships. Neither forgetting nor relativizing (Cf. F.T. Nos. 247, 248, 249) but breaking the vicious circle of violence and its ideological justification. To finally allow the human community and each human being to emerge from violence.

For there can be no justification for war, even for a noble cause, just as there can be no justification for deterrence - which is only a dressed form of the threat - or for the possession of weapons, nuclear or conventional. For the murderous logic of war is a sign of the failure of politics, of dialogue and of humanity itself (Cf. F.T. no. 261). And war, as we know, leaves, at the end of the conflict, a world worse than before. There is no justification for any war. The "just war" is a contradictory and senseless concept. The path of peace is never a path of threat, but it is a path of building a common world: neither fear nor

systematic destruction can take up the challenge, still before us, of poverty and underdevelopment. Cf. F.T. n° 262).

In this journey for fraternity and peace, already evoked by Saint John XXIII, in his Encyclical "Pacem in terris", in 1963 and which is mentioned in n° 260 of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti" (N.B.: It is important to read the text of Pacem in terris in its entirety in n° 127 and not in the French translation of Fratelli tutti which is unfortunately truncated, omitting the consideration of the "atomic age").

In this journey, religions are essential actors of dialogue and friendship, to the extent that they open the minds and hearts of men to transcendence and love (Cf. F.T. n° 271).

"Yet we Christians are very much aware that if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth." (F.T. n°277).

Dialogue, religious freedom, mutual listening: this is the call that is at the heart of religions and whose dynamics participate in tracing a path of truth and universality.

This culture of encounter and universal fraternity has its witnesses and heralds whose journey and thought are the spiritual nourishment of those who today intend to take up the challenge of love: Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther King, Desmond Tutu, Mahatma Mohandas Gandhi... and Charles de Foucauld, the one who "wanted in the end to be" the "universal brother.

"Pray to God, [Charles de Foucauld asked a friend], that I may truly be the brother of all souls. In the end, he wanted to be "the universal brother. But it was only by identifying with the last ones that he managed to become the brother of all. May God inspire this dream in each one of us. Amen!" (Cf. F.T. No. 286, end of the text of the Encyclical).