

WHERE PETER IS PRESENTS

FRATELLI TUTTI

ENCYCLICAL LETTER OF **THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS**
ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP

STUDY GUIDE



chapter introductions and reflection questions
for small groups or individual study

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“Fratelli Tutti”. With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.

POPE FRANCIS

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INTRODUCTION

On the eve of the feast of St. Francis of Assisi (October 3, 2020) Pope Francis signed the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* at the saint's tomb. The title of this encyclical comes from the words of St. Francis and means "brothers all." "With these words," the pope says, "Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel" (FT 1). The document is a reflection on human fraternity and social friendship as the antidote for the social problems of this world.

Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me (Matthew 25:45).

In the introduction, Pope Francis names two inspirations for this encyclical. The first is St. Francis himself, who was also the inspiration for his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si* and indeed the inspiration for his entire pontificate. The second is the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, by whom the pope has "felt particularly encouraged" and with whom in Abu Dhabi he signed a joint declaration, the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, that stated, "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters" (5).

Fratelli Tutti is a social encyclical, that is, it concerns the Church's social doctrine, which is a part of the Church's long-standing moral teaching. Social morality is present throughout all of Scripture. In the Old Testament, God often repeats the command to treat the most vulnerable—the widow, the orphan, the poor, the foreigner—with preferential justice and mercy. God also calls his people to radical economic justice, including the forgiveness of all debts every fifty years and the prohibition on charging any interest on loans.

The necessity of social morality isn't reduced in the New Testament; rather the opposite is true. Jesus identifies himself with the most vulnerable and is clear that our treatment of them is the criteria for our eternal salvation: "Amen, I say to you, what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me" (Matthew 25:45). As the letter of St. James makes clear, this bar for how we are expected to treat the poor is not lowered as the Church grows:

Come now, you rich, weep and wail over your impending miseries. Your wealth has rotted away, your clothes have become moth-eaten, your gold and silver have corroded, and that corrosion will be a testimony against you; it will devour your flesh like a fire. You have stored up treasure for the last days. Behold, the wages you withheld from the workers who harvested your fields are crying aloud, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. (James 5:1-4)

Church Tradition has long incorporated this message of charity as well, with St. Ambrose writing in the fourth century, “You are not making a gift of what is yours to the poor man, but you are giving him back what is his. You have been appropriating things that are meant to be for the common use of everyone. The earth belongs to everyone, not to the rich.” Likewise, St. John Chrysostom taught that “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. the goods we possess are not ours, but theirs.”

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII formally compiled the social and economic teachings of the past centuries into his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to address the oppression of laborers and the rise of new ideologies in the modern industrial society. Since then, popes of every generation have contributed to the Church’s social teaching, responding to the needs of their time and the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, “The Church’s social teaching comprises a body of doctrine, which is articulated as the Church interprets events in the course of history, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, in the light of the whole of what has been revealed by Jesus Christ” (CCC 2422).

In this context, *Fratelli Tutti* is the work of the Holy Father reading the signs of the times and, assisted by the Holy Spirit, proposing solutions. This encyclical is an invitation to “dream together” of a world firmly grounded on the dignity of all persons, and this invitation isn’t just extended to Christians, but to everyone: “Although I have written it from the Christian convictions that inspire and sustain me, I have sought to make this reflection an invitation to dialogue among all people of good will” (6). Through Pope Francis, God is showing us the antidote to the viruses of selfishness, violence, and prejudice so prevalent in the world and in our own hearts. The pope prompts us to reject “a mindset that despises the limit that another’s value imposes” (*Let Us Dream* 34). This attitude that refuses to accept the dignity of others is tragically present in all of us.

This resource offers short introductions and reflection questions for every chapter of *Fratelli Tutti* that can be used individually or in small groups. The goal isn’t simply to help you understand what Pope Francis is saying, but to prompt and encourage you to apply his teaching and wrestle with the implications of this encyclical in your life. Be forewarned: although grounded in Scripture and Tradition, the pope’s teaching may strike some as countercultural or even radical. He himself acknowledges that it might be seen as “wildly unrealistic” (127).

Nevertheless, we invite you to view every passage that challenges your ideology and lifestyle as an opportunity to ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart and reconsider your choices in order to empower you to live “a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.”

We hope you are as inspired by the encyclical as we were.

Reflection Questions

1. What expectations or presumptions do I have about this encyclical going into it?
2. What do I think will be the most personally challenging teaching for me?
3. Do I believe that the Holy Spirit wants to speak to me through this encyclical? Am I open to being challenged and surprised?

1: DARK CLOUDS OVER A CLOSED WORLD

Pope Francis opens the first chapter of *Fratelli Tutti* with a frank assessment of a world in turmoil. In it, he challenges us to acknowledge the many serious issues currently preventing us from living as true brothers and sisters with common goals. While there were promising movements of unity and fraternity among nations and peoples not so long ago, we seem to have collectively forgotten the lessons of our shared past. Rather than growing in collaboration and virtue, we are showing “signs of a certain regression” (11). We ignore history and have allowed false ideas of freedom to drive us to a radical individualism and a concerning rise in nationalism.

In a particular way, chapter one provides our Holy Father’s insight into the ways humanity suffers from the effects of what the Church calls “structures of sin”. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that “sins give rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to divine goodness” (CCC 1869). Aiming for the reader’s personal conviction, first and foremost in the opening paragraphs of this encyclical, our Holy Father points to the ways a myriad of personal sins have given rise to widespread systemic injustice. He speaks of racism, abortion, xenophobia, elder abuse, disregard for the environment, and modern forms of slavery.

In doing so, he returns to an oft-repeated theme of his pontificate: that the underlying cause of so many of these problems is that we live our lives as part of a throwaway culture, with the dignity of human persons often cast aside in favor of a crude utilitarian view of the economy and of humanity itself (22). Because of this, we see an increasingly cynical form of globalism that neglects authentic fraternity and instead offers “cool, comfortable, and globalized indifference” (30). Later in the chapter, Pope Francis laments the increased aggression we see in both online communication and the media. He emphasizes the importance of taking the time to listen to one another in order to combat the frantic pace that permeates digital discourse (48).

Only through a ministry of presence modeled after St. Francis of Assisi do we truly hear one another and the voice of God. Despite all the problems identified in this first chapter, room for hope remains. After paternal admonishments and lengthy descriptions of fractured communities, the Holy Father concludes by reminding us that God is good and continues to bestow His goodness upon humanity. What is more, our shared longing for fulfillment and connection will compel us forward on a path of renewed hope and charity if we open our hearts to the transformation our Lord so deeply desires.

Reflection Questions

1. Do I find any of Pope Francis’s descriptions of current affairs particularly challenging? Why?
2. In what ways have my own personal attitudes and sins contributed to the greater structures of sin described in this chapter?
3. Are there areas where I lack hope, where I don’t believe God can bring good from a situation? What’s the first step to accepting the hope God wants to give me?

2: A STRANGER ON THE ROAD

In the second chapter of *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis highlights the moral relevance of the Good Samaritan parable in our present time of crisis. Much more than just the story of a kind man whom we should emulate, this parable provides Jesus' insight into the deep connections that bond all humans as brothers and sisters. The Pope's approach highlights two facets of this story that shed light on fraternity today. First, referencing Matthew 25, Francis affirms that Christ is present in each of our brothers and sisters who are suffering. Christ shows his abounding love for the sick, hungry and lonely by identifying himself with them, conferring "infinite dignity" upon them (85). Second, but related to the first, the Pope teaches that we share in Christ's humanity just as Christ shares in the humanity of the downtrodden.

Because of this great truth of our Faith, we can say that the suffering of any one of us, whether in our own communities or on the other side of the world, is the suffering of each and all of us. If Jesus' words are to have their fullness in our Church, therefore, those experiencing pain and suffering—whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual—can never be excluded or ignored. "Where is your brother?" God asks Cain in the book of Genesis (57). With this parable, Jesus provides the answer: our brothers and sisters are all around us, lying by the roadside, beaten and bruised.

Leaning on his Jesuit spirituality, Francis presents the parable to us anew and invites us to prayerfully put ourselves into the story. While we might be familiar with the plot, the pope wants us to dive deeper and uncover hidden motivations and prejudices in each of the characters. More than the other chapters in this encyclical, chapter two is intended to be prayed with as much as it's meant to be read and studied. If we are honest with ourselves, we have to acknowledge that we are not often the Good Samaritan.

Many of us identify with the one who is beaten and robbed, our suffering ignored and our very existence pushed to the margins. Might we not also take a moment to consider the times we have been one of the passers-by? The Holy Father calls us out for our tendency to turn a blind eye to the problems in the world, reminding us that "Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders" (69). Pope Francis teaches in this chapter that fraternity can become a "vocation," a calling that shakes us from our sinful habits (66). The only "solution" to the problems that ail this world is a deep, abiding love that transcends status, privilege, wealth, religion, race, and nationality. As the parable of the Good Samaritan reveals, our vocation is to love as our father does, recognizing the inherent dignity of all human beings

Reflection Questions

1. In what situations in my life have I been a passer-by? In what situations have I been a robber?
2. Do I really believe Jesus is in those on the margins in my life?
3. What are concrete ways I can be a Good Samaritan for those who are inconvenient ?

3: ENVISAGING AND ENGENDERING AN OPEN WORLD

Pope Francis ends chapter two with a key teaching: “If we go to the ultimate source of that love which is the very life of the triune God, we encounter in the community of the three divine Persons the origin and perfect model of all life in society” (85). When we say that human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, we are declaring that every person is made in the image and likeness of not just of an individual deity, but of a community of three divine Persons. In chapter three, the pope presents an anthropology based on this teaching and lays out some of its implications. He challenges us to stop viewing things as fallen human beings do, but as God does. He also quotes St. Thomas describing the love made possible by God’s grace as a “movement outwards towards another, whereby we consider ‘the beloved as somehow united to ourselves’” (93).

Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except “in the sincere gift of self to others”. Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: “I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others”. No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love (87).

The inner life of the Holy Trinity comprises the giving and receiving of love between the divine Persons. Because we are made in God’s image and likeness, the need to love and serve others is built into our very nature. As Pope Francis states, “Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfillment except ‘in the sincere gift of self to others’” (87). At the core of each person is the desire to go outside of ourselves to know and love others and every attempt to stifle that desire, to close ourselves off in isolation or exclusive groups, is harmful to ourselves and to the community.

In this context, the “spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love,” and even apparent virtues like “fortitude, sobriety, hard work” will fail to “fulfill the commandments” if they lack love (91-92). Love also compels us to see and serve others as they are, not as we wish they were, regardless of who they are, where they live, or the value they bring to our life.

That we are made in the image and likeness of God is often invoked to claim our individual dignity and freedom. This is true. However, because we are made in the image and likeness of a Divine Community we must reject any sort of individualism that sets individual rights against the good of others. Seeing and taking responsibility for the individual worth of every person is essential for fraternity. The virtue of solidarity is essential. It makes us aware of our responsibility “for the fragility of others” and moves us to “set aside” our own desires and goals “before the concrete gaze of those who are most vulnerable” (115). By practicing solidarity, we become like the Good Samaritan, as Jesus instructs us to do.

This anthropology also has profound implications for how we use the wealth and resources entrusted to us. Invoking the ancient teaching of the universal destination of goods, the pope is clear that the rights to private property and to national borders are not absolute and that we have an obligation to use our possessions and land for the good of others. The common right every person has to the goods necessary for them to flourish precedes and restricts the rights to private property and national borders (120-126).

At the end of this chapter, Pope Francis acknowledges that his proposals call “for an alternative way of thinking,” otherwise they “will sound wildly unrealistic” (127). However, if we are willing to dream together of a world firmly grounded on the dignity of all persons, “we can rise to the challenge of envisaging a new humanity. We can aspire to a world that provides land, housing and work for all” (127).

Reflection Questions

1. Do I believe that I am made by love and for love? Does that belief change how I view myself and my neighbor?
2. In what ways do I use my individual rights to serve the common good? In what ways do I not?
3. How do I feel about the idea that private property and national borders are not absolute and am I willing to allow the Lord into any areas of disagreement?

4: A HEART OPEN TO THE WHOLE WORLD

Chapter four discusses some of the practical political applications of universal fraternity. Pope Francis defines how we should view one of the central political challenges of our time: immigration. We are a long way from creating a world in which no one would need to migrate; in the meantime, the Catholic Church teaches that everyone has the right to migrate to “meet their basic needs and those of their families” (129). Therefore, we Christians must “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate” migrants into our countries and communities.

A number of legal protections for migrants are needed, such as the granting of visas; access to housing, education, and employment; and, for those who have long been in their new country, citizenship. Far from being a threat, immigrants enrich a country: their presence is “a gift” (133). Cultures are enriched by mutual encounter with one another, and Pope Francis specifically mentions how Latino immigrants have enriched the United States, as well as how Jewish immigrants blessed his home country of Argentina (135). Even if this were not so, we would still be obliged—as the pope reminds us—to follow the biblical command “to welcome the stranger, even though this brings us no immediate tangible benefit” (139).

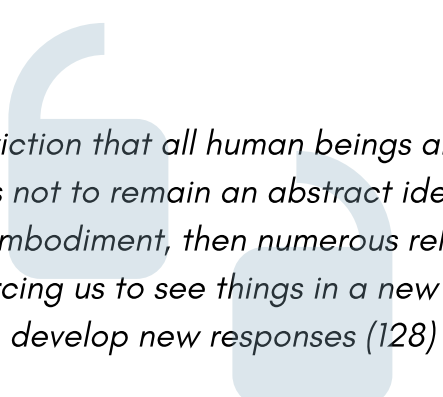
Foundational to *Fratelli Tutti* is the premise that all of humanity is interconnected. The suffering or impoverishment in one area of the globe will not stay confined there: “we are either all saved together or no one is saved” (137). Globalization has created a global economy, in which poorer countries need to be given a fair shake and “an effective voice in shared decision-making” (Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* 67, quoted in *Fratelli Tutti* 138). Pope Francis, in view of the economic disparity between nations, emphasizes a more positive meaning to the rights of property, where the wealthy of the world must “care for and cultivate something that [they] possess, in such a way that it can contribute to the good of all” (143).

Unfortunately this Christian worldview today is usually rejected by individualistic liberal approaches (163) which see immigrants as “usurpers who have nothing to offer” (141). “Born of a certain insecurity and fear,” it “desires to erect walls” (146). Catholics must reject nationalism which views society as merely the sum of coexisting interests (163) and welcome immigrants with love.



Yet it is also important to stay grounded in the local, to avoid losing one's own cultural identity and patrimony and falling victim to "a false openness to the universal, born of the shallowness of those lacking insight into the genius of their native land" (145). "I can welcome others who are different, and value the unique contribution they have to make, only if I am rooted in my own people and culture. [...] The common good likewise requires that we protect and love our native land" (143).

Rejecting nationalism does not mean rejecting patriotism! Cultural enrichment is a two-way street: we do not discard our own culture as if to adopt someone else's. On the contrary, learning about the good in other cultures enhances our love and appreciation for the good in our own. It is a "healthy and enriching exchange" (144). By extension, the same is true of the Catholic Church's engagement with churches and religions. Far from "watering down" (cf. 151) one's own beliefs, each side must hold its own beliefs firmly for authentic dialogue to be possible. Only then can one culture (or religion) "be nourished" by another (148).



If the conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters is not to remain an abstract idea but to find concrete embodiment, then numerous related issues emerge, forcing us to see things in a new light and to develop new responses (128)

Reflection Questions

1. How do I treat the immigrants I meet in my life? Do I believe immigrants have the same rights as I do?
2. How do I learn about other cultures?
3. What do I most appreciate and love about my own culture and country?

5: A BETTER KIND OF POLITICS

Pope Francis's use of the term "political love" in this chapter may sound strange, given that these days we often associate politics with argument, conflict, or even deception. That this idea is so foreign to us should make us pause. Is our political life supposed to be so divisive? The pope shows us that there is another way to approach public life, and that we can use politics to serve the common good without excluding anyone.

We act in service of the theological virtue of charity through love, and this includes acts of political love. Sometimes we engage in acts of individual charity, such as buying a meal for a homeless person, visiting someone who is sick, or donating to a worthy cause. These are what Pope Francis refers to as "elicited" acts of charity. We can also, however, engage in acts of charity that are less direct and personal but no less important: "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" (186). This latter form of charity, which is "commanded," or indirect, is the basis of political love and should be the basis of our political life.

One of the problems we face is that political love, because it is not exercised in a direct way, is sometimes difficult to recognize. We don't often see the results right away. In some cases, political love sets in motion processes that may take decades to show results, and it is only the disasters or suffering we fail to prevent that make headlines. Nevertheless, it is part of the calling of all Christians, including Christian politicians, to serve the common good even if that means a lack of recognition or reward. As the Holy Father reminds us, "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" (196).

Right now, our politicians are failing us in many ways. The two dominant ideologies, populism and liberalism, each fail to represent "the people" properly and tend to harm the vulnerable and benefit the powerful. Populism, which sets "the people" against outsider groups or those considered elites, is a form of exploitation used by demagogues in order to rally support.



At the same time, the proponents of some forms of liberalism, such as economic “neoliberalism,” see society as a mere collection of self-interested individuals and think of the “the people” as an abstract idea separate from lived reality. Populism thus creates a false sense of human fraternity through shared hatreds, while liberalism threatens to dismantle the idea of fraternity altogether. We become part of a people by working and living together, and by developing a shared identity, but “the people” should be open to diversity and change, not closed off. One of the pillars of developing a healthy sense of “the people” is making sure that all have dignified work.

Popular leaders who cultivate a healthy sense of “the people” can and do exist. There are also political parties and movements that engage in acts of political love, though such examples are all too rare. Too often we take the cynical view that political love is unrealistic, and that politics is about pursuing self-interest through sheer force or tactical maneuvering. However, Francis is adamant: “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.” (180)

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?” (197)

Reflection Questions

1. What are the first images or ideas that come to mind when I hear the word “politics”? Are they connected in any way to love and charity?
2. What might political love look like in a local, national, or global context? What is my role in political life?
3. Am I ever cynical about politics? Has reading this chapter changed my mind in any way?

6: DIALOGUE AND FRIENDSHIP IN SOCIETY

In the media (and especially on social media) we find few examples of real dialogue. Instead, we hear and see people arguing endlessly on behalf of their own interests, using rhetoric to battle their opponents. Truth has become something we seek to impose on others, rather than something we work to discover together.

We can even see this tendency within the Church, in the ways we approach and engage with those who do not share our beliefs. Some even consider calls for dialogue to be a sign of weakness or an excuse to avoid boldly proclaiming the truth and condemning falsehood. However, Pope Francis suggests that we fool ourselves if we see those with whom we disagree as mere dupes of false ideologies or fake religions. Worse, when we do this, we blind ourselves to the possibility that others may have access to parts of the truth that we have overlooked and may see things that we don't. Francis writes that "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" (203). Being Catholic grounds us in the truth of faith, but it does not provide us with the whole truth about human life. Thus, we can always learn from others, and we should never let our confidence in our convictions fill us with a destructive pride.

Real dialogue is much more than abstract debate or back-and-forth arguing. It is a complex process involving quiet and contemplation as much as actual speech: "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'" (198). This one sentence almost provides us with a program for facilitating dialogue. It involves listening and observing as much as it involves speaking, and one of the most crucial goals is to arrive at mutual understanding and the establishment of areas of agreement. Differences, though they cannot be ignored, should be made secondary to truths that unite.

We need constantly to ensure that present-day forms of communication are in fact guiding us to generous encounter with others, to honest pursuit of the whole truth, to service, to closeness to the underprivileged and to the promotion of the common good (205).

Dialogue can facilitate the social and political change we need to foster human fraternity. Through dialogue, we can discover those things that bring us together on a fundamental human level. As Pope Francis says, “Inherent in the nature of human beings and society there exist certain basic structures to support our development and survival” (212). If we ignore these basic structures, we can easily let ideological differences deprive us of our humanity—a threat that has always lingered over human endeavors and that we certainly still face today.

“The heroes of the future,” the pope predicts, “will be those who can break with this unhealthy mindset and determine respectfully to promote truthfulness, aside from personal interest. God willing, such heroes are quietly emerging, even now, in the midst of our society” (202). It’s hard to find such heroes among the familiar faces of public or political debate that we typically see today, many of whom who seek to “own” or destroy their opponents, but Pope Francis himself has modeled this dialogue-based approach since the beginning of his papacy.

Those who engage in real dialogue take a long view, seeking gradual and meaningful change rather than temporary victories. Against those who would seek to raise new generations of ideological culture-warriors, the Holy Father provides a radical and refreshing alternative: “Let us arm our children with the weapons of dialogue! Let us teach them to fight the good fight of the culture of encounter!” (217)

Reflection Questions

1. Think of the panel discussions we typically see on news programs. Are these examples of true dialogue?
2. How can I foster dialogue between myself and someone with whom I disagree?
3. Are my conversations, in person or online, real dialogues or "parallel monologues"? How can I better embody the values taught in this chapter?



7: PATHS OF RENEWED ENCOUNTER

Truth should not lead to revenge, but rather to reconciliation and forgiveness. Truth means telling families torn apart by pain what happened to their missing relatives. Truth means confessing what happened to minors recruited by cruel and violent people. Truth means recognizing the pain of women who are victims of violence and abuse... Every act of violence committed against a human being is a wound in humanity's flesh; every violent death diminishes us as people... Violence leads to more violence, hatred to more hatred, death to more death. We must break this cycle which seems inescapable (227)

The defining theme of chapter seven of *Fratelli Tutti* is that forgiveness and reconciliation are not passive. They are proactive Christian actions, borne through truthful acknowledgement and recollection of injustice. The Holy Father characterizes the process as threefold, comprising a “penitential memory,” legitimate conflict, and an authentic commitment to work for peace. In this context, forgiveness and reconciliation both contribute to and emerge from a foundation of truth: “Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy” (227). The truth sets us free (John 8:32). Only by recognizing the truth of unjust situations, and by admitting real pain and woundedness, do we have the freedom to forgive and to pursue reconciliation.

Flowing from this foundation of truth, the Holy Father encourages us on the path of peace, reminding us in the process that peace is more than the absence of conflict. It is, rather, genuine social friendship, beginning with the most vulnerable members of society. As a result, peace restores dignity to all persons, however marginalized (233). He likewise encourages us on the path of forgiveness, while insisting that forgiveness does not mean staying quiet in the presence of oppression, but in fact the opposite is true. Forgiveness demands that we stand for justice as a defense of human dignity, but that we do so without fomenting anger in our hearts (241-242). Pope Francis highlights the necessity of healthy conflict to bring about legitimate reconciliation, which like peace, comprises not the absence of disagreement but the presence of respectful dialogue.



The Holy Father further points out that forgiving does not mean forgetting. People who remember wrongs but are committed to peace promote forgiveness by their desire not to perpetuate the cycle of destructive suffering. It is in this spirit that Pope Francis writes what, for some, will be the most challenging words of this chapter—those against war and the death penalty. He reiterates the Church’s teaching of what constitutes just military intervention, then takes it further by declaring, “We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a ‘just war.’ Never again war!” (242) In this context, every war in our current globalized world is a violation of justice and a defeat in the face of evil. Furthermore, we cannot theorize about political conflicts while ignoring the wounded flesh of actual victims.

Pope Francis ends chapter seven with a renewed call for the end to the death penalty worldwide. Quoting Pope St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, he exhorts us to remember that “not even a murderer loses his personal dignity” (269). Promoting the dignity of those who have committed the gravest of evils elevates the dignity of us all. Rather than succumb to a thirst for vengeance, we are called on to live by the words of Jesus: “Put your sword back into its place” (Matthew 26:52).

Reflection Questions

1. Are there people in my life I have a hard time forgiving? How can I invite the Lord into those areas of my heart?
2. What is my reaction to the Holy Father’s call to end all war and to end the death penalty? Why?
3. What are some ways I can work for peace, both locally and globally?

8: RELIGIONS AT THE SERVICE OF FRATERNITY IN OUR WORLD

In the eighth chapter of *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis invites us to consider the ways that the Catholic faith can be a pathway to peace, especially in dialogue with other religions. The Catholic Church has been a witness over its 2000-year history to the enduring love of the Father who invites all of humanity into his family. Remaining focused on the love of God helps to free us from selfishness and ideology and helps to reveal the truth that everyone around us —no matter their religion, race, or nationality—is our brother or sister in Christ.

Rather than a cause for conflict, faith in the enduring love of God is an asset to a healthy society. As a result, Pope Francis warns us of the harm that can come to us when the faithful are excluded from political decision-making. Faith is not a weakness, as some might argue, or a distraction from the real issues. Rather, faith is what keeps us grounded while at the same time God’s love continuously expands our horizons and enriches our vision. The Holy Father says that the Church needs to imitate Mary and “be a Church that serves, that leaves home and goes forth from its places of worship, goes forth from its sacristies, in order to accompany life, to sustain hope, to be the sign of unity... to build bridges, to break down walls, to sow seeds of reconciliation” (276).

This understanding of faith has implications for how we relate to followers of other religions as well. Without giving up any of our own convictions as Christians, we must cooperate with members of other religions for the common good. Global projects require global cooperation! Likewise, we must remember that violence does not lie at the heart of religion but is a fundamentalist distortion of it. Francis insists we have to move past these false ideologies and hold fast to the message of peace that religions have in common thereby recognizing that “universal communion with the entire human family, [is] a vocation of all” (277).

It is worth remembering that this message does not represent a remote ideal for the Holy Father. Rather, he lived it, when together with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb he signed a historic document identifying the moral principles that Christianity and Islam have in common. In that document, they commemorated their shared commitment to peace and a rejection of violence everywhere. Further, to achieve her true identity, quoting from Pope Paul IV, Pope Francis reminds us that the Church seeks, “In the power of the risen Lord ... to give birth to a new world, where all of us are brothers and sisters, where there is room for all those whom our societies discard, where justice and peace are resplendent” (278).

Reflection Questions

1. Am I ever combative in my approach toward other religions?
2. What are some concrete ways I can work with adherents of other faiths to promote the common good?
3. Rejecting violence includes our interior life; do I harbor violent thoughts or attitudes towards those I see as opponents? How can I cooperate with the Lord’s desire to soften my heart?



CONCLUSION

Where do you go from here? Hopefully this encyclical has challenged your ideologies and led you to question the ways you've allowed your politics to influence your values rather than allowing your faith to form your political views. But the Holy Father calls us to go even further. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis teaches us that "realities are more important than ideas" (EG 231). In other words, we cannot remain on the level of words and concepts, but must proceed to address the real things in front of us. Here are two proposals for how to move from the great ideas in this encyclical to actually living "a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel" (1).

First, using the parable of the Good Samaritan as our model, allow the Holy Spirit to guide you in an examination of conscience and to show you how you have been like the robber. Go before Jesus with real honesty and ask him to show you the ways you despise the limits that another's value impose on your life, and the ways you have failed to recognize the infinite dignity of others. Then, repent of that violence in your heart and your actions.

The second step is to push the examination of conscience still further. This means recognizing the ways when, like the priest and Levite, you have chosen personal comfort over helping others. Perhaps you resent being burdened by others, and struggle to find time to play when your child asks, to call your needy friend who could use someone to talk to, or to give freely of your time and wealth to the people you meet in your daily life. Then, repent and pray that God gives you the virtues and graces you need to meet these people where they are.

The final step requires that we make real changes in our lives. They can be small changes at first, but they must be concrete and specific enough to keep us accountable. Remember that staying accountable does not mean pretending that we can do this on our own. While the parable of the Good Samaritan is a clear call for us to act, it's also a proclamation of the kerygma, the good news of God's love and desire to heal and transform us, for we can also understand the parable as allegory.

In such a reading, each of us is the traveler beaten and bruised by Satan and sin. Jesus is the Good Samaritan who finds us, heals our wounds (through the sacraments), brings us to the inn (the Church), and pays for the cost himself (on the cross). It's only from this place that the moral command in this parable becomes possible. Only once we've allowed Jesus to heal and transform us can we in turn do that for others. We can become a Good Samaritan by allowing the Holy Spirit to *make us into* the Good Samaritan.

St. Augustine teaches that through the grace of baptism, not only have we become Christians, we have become Christ himself. Pope Francis expands on this idea in a [2013 Wednesday audience](#). There he says the Holy Spirit "gives us a new perception of others, close and far, seen always as brothers and sisters in Jesus to be respected and loved. The Holy Spirit teaches us to see with the eyes of Christ, to live life as Christ lived, to understand life as Christ understood it."

Pray for the Holy Spirit to make you like the Good Samaritan and cooperate with the Spirit by making concrete choices to love others. We are all brothers and sisters because we all have one Father. We can only love each other as brothers and sisters after we have received and been transformed by our Father's love. We must allow the Holy Spirit to transform our hearts and desires so that we can not only see all people as our brothers and sisters, but we can live and love as Christ does.

FURTHER READING

- Daniel Amiri - ["Digital Connectivity is not enough to Build Bridges"](#)
- Daniel Amiri - [Misreading Francis on Private Property](#)
- Daniel Amiri - [Peace is Achieved in Respectful Conflict](#)
- Daniel Amiri - [Towards an Inclusive Capitalism](#)
- Bishop Barron - [Pope Francis, "Fratelli Tutti," and the Universal Destination of Goods](#)
- Massimo Borghesi - [A New Pacem in Terris](#)
- Rachel Dobbs - [Opening our Hearts to all Our Brothers and Sisters](#)
- Paul Fahey - [Each Country Also Belongs to the Foreigner](#)
- Pedro Gabriel - [A Throwaway Culture is a Culture of Death](#)
- Pedro Gabriel - [Fratelli Tutti - Francis's Most Traditional Document?](#)
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- Pedro Gabriel - [Is Fratelli Tutti a "Leftist" Encyclical?](#)
- Pedro Gabriel - [The Cultural Polyhedron: Pope Francis on Identity and Openness](#)
- Fr. Satish Joseph - [Fratelli Tutti: Pope Francis's Love Letter to the World](#)
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