



Fratelli tutti

Summary

Shadows over the closed world (Ch. 1) are spreading everywhere, leaving injured people by the roadside, cast out and discarded. The shadows plunge humanity into confusion, loneliness, and desolation. When we come upon **an injured stranger on the road** (Ch. 2), we can assume one of two attitudes: we can pass by or we can stop to help. The type of person we are and the type of political, social or religious group we belong to will be defined by whether we include or exclude the injured stranger.

God is universal love, and as long as we are part of that love and share in it, we are called to universal fraternity, which is openness to all. There are no "others," no "them," there is only "us". We want, with God and in God, an **open world** (Ch. 3), a world without walls, without borders, without people rejected, without strangers. To achieve this world, we must have an **open heart** (Ch. 4). We need to experience social friendship, seek what is morally good, and practice a social ethic because we know we are part of a universal fraternity. We are called to solidarity, encounter, and gratuitousness.

To create an open world with an open heart, it is necessary to engage in politics, and a **better kind of politics** (Ch. 5) is essential. Politics for the common and universal good. Politics that is "popular" because it is for and with the people. It is politics with social charity that seeks human dignity. The politics of men and women who practice political love by integrating the economy with the social and cultural fabric into a consistent and life-giving human project.

Knowing how to **dialogue** is the way to open the world and build **social friendship** (Ch. 6) which manifests an open heart and provides the basis for a better politics. Dialogue seeks and respects the truth. Dialogue gives rise to the culture of encounter, which becomes a way of life, a passionate desire. Whoever dialogues is generous, recognizing and respecting the other.

But it is not enough just to engage in encounter. We have to face the reality of the injuries of past mis-encounters, and so we have to establish and walk the **paths of re-encounter** (Ch. 7). We need to heal the wounds, which requires seeking and offering

forgiveness. To forgive is not to forget. We need to be daring and start from the truth—the recognition of historical truth—which is the inseparable companion of

justice and mercy. All this is indispensable for advancing towards peace. Conflict is inevitable on the road to peace, but violence is inadmissible. That is why war is a recourse that must be rejected, and the death penalty a practice that must be eliminated.

The different religions of the world recognize human beings as God's creatures. As creatures, we are in a relationship of fraternity. **The religions** are called to the **service of fraternity in the world** (Ch. 8). In dialogue and with hearts open to the world, we can establish social friendship and fraternity. In our openness to the Father of all, we recognize our universal condition as brothers and sisters. For Christians, the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that is what inspires our actions and commitments. This path of fraternity also has a Mother called Mary.

Faced with those injured by the shadows of a closed world and still lying by the roadside, we are invited by Pope Francis to make our own the world's desire for fraternity, starting with the recognition that we are “*Fratelli tutti*”, **brothers and sisters all**.

Q&A

1. Is the Pope proposing to build an immanentist inter-religion that eliminates the specificity of faith?

On the contrary, the Pope sets out to address the concrete problems that this world poses to the very heart of the Christian faith: the transcendence of universal love that leads to the promotion of a real universal fraternity, spurred by the call to become sons and daughters in the Son. Clearly, the light that permeates all of his writing is the Gospel parable of the "Good Samaritan". (56)

2. According to its title, *Fratelli tutti* proposes a message only to men, "brothers". After talking extensively about the importance of women, why hasn't the Pope made a gesture to address his encyclical letter to both "brothers and sisters"?

“*Fratelli tutti*” is a literal quotation from Francis of Assisi, who, as the Pope immediately explains: “...addressed his *brothers and sisters* and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel.” (1)

3. The US Presidential elections are less than a month away, in a strongly polarized society. Does the Pope want to say something to Americans in a clear message that is perceived to be anti-Trump?

Obviously the Pope wants to say something to USA citizens with or without elections, as he also wants to say something to Europe, Latin America, Asia, the rest of the Americas and the whole world. Moreover, it is clear that his interlocutor is not a specific person.

His interlocutor is the modern society that is dehumanized, sick and left wounded by all the new forms of "civilized" inhumanity. (chap. 1)

4. What does "social encyclical" mean and why doesn't the Pope write about Christian theology or doctrine alone?

The whole text is precisely about Christian theology and doctrine; however, it is necessary to emphasize that "Christian" means both personal and social. In fact, both dimensions are inseparable from the Gospel because both dimensions constitute love and "God is love."

5. The Pope claims that he was inspired by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb for this Encyclical letter. Since when have other religions become involved in writing documents of the Magisterium of the Church? Is this necessary? (5)

The Pope never mentions the word "inspiration", but he says that he was "encouraged", which is not the same thing. In fact, he drew his inspiration from his own experience of faith in a broken world, as it is for the Grand Imam. It is a Catholic encyclical addressed to the entire human family.

6. When the Pope says "Let us dream as a single human family", is he proposing a form of universalism? Should we all be equal? (8)

For a Christian, it is not a question that we "must" all be equal, because we *are* all equal, in that we are all children of the same Father. This equality is the source of the *inalienable dignity* of every human being. And the concrete implications of this common dignity are clearly laid out in the Encyclical.

7. The document has a very negative tone, criticizing everything that is new, modern and technological. What correctives does the Pope propose and what is the Church or the Pope doing to work out solutions?

This is by no means a criticism of *everything* that is new, modern and technological; rather, it criticizes what is inhumane, violent, degrading and exclusionary about them. With the exception of the first chapter, which lays out the problems, and the second chapter, which is catechetical and calls for conversion, the rest of the Encyclical proposes *possible* paths that can lead us to fraternity and social friendship.

8. The document criticizes "market freedom" and other economic forms. Is the Pope an economist? What data or reports did he use to base his opinions, that are so unlike an encyclical? (32)

It is not an "economic" criticism of neo-liberal economy, but an evangelical criticism of the harmful and criminal consequences that the prevailing economic model has on the largest part of humanity.

9. The new technology tools are great allies of young people. Why does the Pope insist on describing them as "digital campaigns of hatred and destruction"? Isn't this too harsh? (42)

These are tools used by the young and adults too, and no one is immune to falling victim to hatred and destructive desires. No tool is immune from misuse. One can never be too harsh in criticizing the negative sides of a tool that can be used and is used destructively, either consciously or unconsciously. As a matter of fact, criticism brings to light concrete situations and encourages us to find solutions:

“The bigger risk does not come from specific objects, material realities... but from the way that they are used” (160).

10. Some of the Pope's proposals seem to have a socialist and communist focus. How does he plan to create a world with land for all, to give a house and work to everyone? Would he prefer a single totalitarian government? (126)

This is a Christian vision of the society and economy, following the lines of the Social Doctrine of the Church. What is being proposed in the Encyclical is a new modality of human coexistence with an open horizon built on the openness of Christian faith.

11. Why does the Pope address the themes of populism and liberalism in a document on fraternity? Why should we know a Pope's political opinion? (156)

The Pope writes about populism and liberalism because both have proven incapable of promoting social coexistence, centred on the inviolable dignity of every human being, that is truly inclusive, formative of the human person as such, and effective in the fight against poverty, injustice and exclusion. The perspective of faith directs politics to be the concrete realization of the "civilization of love".

12. Is the Pope suggesting the abolition of private property so that we become "more brothers"? (120)

No. The Social Doctrine of the Church underlines that private property is subject to the principle of the common use of the gifts of creation and, therefore, the fundamentally social purpose of private property.

13. The Encyclical hardly ever mentions God and Christ. Everything seems to revolve around social and humanitarian issues. Where is the horizon for all Catholics and why does the Church act as an NGO?

The Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* does nothing but speak of God and Christ, because it is about love, and it is through Jesus of Nazareth that we know that God is love. Talking of “sacrifices born of love” is to talk of the relationship between God and all human beings, it means to talk of the historical life of Jesus himself. Basically, love touches the great issues of human coexistence, and the true humanity manifested in Jesus Christ. This is the only horizon for Catholics.

14. *Fratelli tutti* seems to put all religions on an equal footing. Is it more important for the Pope that we are all equal than that we follow Christ? (271)

The Encyclical makes no such statement. We are all equal because we are created in the image and likeness of God, therefore, we are brothers and sisters in the Son. This is the teaching of Christ and the theme of *Fratelli tutti*. The different religions “based on their respect for each human person as a creature called to be a child of God, contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society”. (271)