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Subject: *Fratelli tutti*

To the Most Rev. Superiors
of the Rogationist Circumscriptions
and To the Rogationist Communities
THEIR HOUSES

Dearest Confreres,

The interests of the Holy Father shall be the fervent interests of my own heart; his words, even those not pronounced “ex-cathedra” or spoken only in simple conversation, shall be for me as pronouncements leading to eternal salvation. These are the words that our Founder invites us to uphold in the 15th Declaration.

Today, in particular, we have the moral duty not only to “pray for him”, as he often urges us but also to draw close to the Pope and to share his deep concerns for the good of the Church and of humanity itself.

The Holy Father addresses this invitation to each of us with his heartfelt Apostolic Exhortation *Fratelli tutti*, on *fraternity and social friendship*.

His words, when reflected well, are not new but are re-proposed and motivated by a new and more serious urgency.

1. From *Evangelii Gaudium*

In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world (November 24, 2013) Pope Francis reminded us that *we have been created in the image of that divine communion, and so we cannot achieve fulfillment or salvation purely by our own efforts.*¹

He then tells us that the Gospel “proposal” *is not merely about our personal relationship with God (...) but it is about loving God who reigns in our world. To the extent that he reigns within us, the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace, and dignity.*²

This evangelical call to universality is better explained to us by the Holy Father: *This is the principle of universality intrinsic to the Gospel, for the Father desires the salvation of every man and woman, and his saving plan consists in “gathering up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:10).*³

Thus, the Pope exclaims: *We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and*

¹ FRANCIS, Ap. Exhort. *Evangelii gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 178.

² *Idem*, 180.

³ *Idem*, 181.

aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.⁴

We have therefore the duty of *solidarity* in the knowledge that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind.⁵ We are invited by the Holy Father to make our own the proclamation of the Brazilian Bishops: *We wish to take up daily the joys and hopes, the difficulties and sorrows of the people, especially of those living in the barrios and the countryside – landless, homeless, lacking food and health care – to the detriment of their rights.*⁶

In choosing the name *Francis*, the saint of Lady Poverty, the Pope has identified the choice of his pontificate: to embrace poverty and the poor.

*For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political, or philosophical one. God shows the poor “his first mercy” (...) We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them (...) We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.*⁷

This invitation of the Pope to universal fraternity has its urgent character in today's context in which we experience the often-catastrophic consequences of climate change. The phenomenon of globalization, which is a lever of progress, if badly governed can have equally dramatic implications, like the pandemic. We need to learn how to govern our common home and the most dramatic effects of its senseless management affect the poor.

Our Father Founder would fully complement the Pope's cry of pain: *How I wish that all of us would hear God's cry: “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4:9). Where is your brother or sister who is enslaved? Where is the brother and sister whom you are killing each day in clandestine warehouses, in rings of prostitution, in children used for begging, in exploiting undocumented labor? Let us not look the other way. There is greater complicity than we think. The issue involves everyone!*⁸

The Pope's gaze from the poor widens to categories of people who are not protected in their rights, sometimes in contrast with economic interests or with narrow and criminal selfishness, referring, in particular, to *unborn children* and the protection of the advancement of *women*. The speech then goes to the senseless exploitation of the resources of creation, and hence the warning: *We human beings are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures (...) Let us not leave in our wake a swath of destruction and death which will affect our own lives and those of future generations.*⁹

Fraternity, solidarity, and the common good find the clearest opposition in the party interests sought with the violence of economic powers and wars themselves. The Pope points the finger at a certain obtuse politics that does not pursue the common good, according to his vocation, but the immediate consent. He says: *Demands involving the distribution of wealth, concern for the poor, and human rights cannot be suppressed under the guise of creating a consensus on paper or a transient peace for a contented minority. The dignity of the human person and the common good rank higher than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, a prophetic voice must be raised.*¹⁰

⁴ *Idem*, 183.

⁵ *Idem*, 190.

⁶ *Idem*, 191.

⁷ *Idem*, 198.

⁸ *Idem*, 211.

⁹ *Idem*, 215.

¹⁰ *Idem*, 218.

These last words constitute a confession, perhaps unconscious but implicit, of the mission that the Pope has assumed, of shaking the consciences of peoples so that they may come to the awareness that the future of mankind and its common home is necessarily linked to the integral development of all. *Fratelli tutti*.

He reminds that *peace is not "simply the absence of warfare, based on a precarious balance of power; it is fashioned by efforts directed day after day towards the establishment of the ordered universe willed by God, with a more perfect justice among men"*. In the end, a peace which is not the result of integral development will be doomed; it will always spawn new conflicts and various forms of violence.¹¹

Fratelli tutti has a universal breath but with its gaze on "fraternity" and "social friendship"; it does not ignore the importance of inter-religious relationship and ecumenism. The Pope gives his suggestion: *If we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service, and witness*.¹² He adds: *Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world, and so it is a duty for Christians as well as other religious communities*.¹³

2. From *Laudato Si'*

The message of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* has been reiterated by Pope Francis, particularly the ecological aspect in his first Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* on the care of the Common Home, issued on May 24, 2015. He affirms: *I have attempted to take stock of our present situation, pointing to the cracks in the planet that we inhabit as well as to the profoundly human causes of environmental degradation*.¹⁴

The Pope invites to start from a global perspective while observing that, *although the summit was a real step forward, and prophetic for its time, its accords have been poorly implemented, due to the lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review, and penalties in cases of non-compliance. The principles which it proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation*.¹⁵

The encyclical recalls that the fight against environmental degradation requires honesty, courage, and responsibility especially from the most powerful and most polluted countries, which end up privileging their national interests over the global common good.¹⁶

Faced with this *impasse*, the Pope earnestly exhorts: *Enforceable international agreements are urgently needed since local authorities are not always capable of effective intervention. Relations between states must be respectful of each other's sovereignty but must also lay down mutually agreed means of averting regional disasters which would eventually affect everyone. Global regulatory norms are needed to impose obligations and prevent unacceptable actions, for example, when powerful companies or countries dump contaminated waste or offshore polluting industries in other countries*.¹⁷

In recent years, with acceleration and a new frequency, we have suffered the consequences of environmental disasters that should be a great warning to accept this prophetic call from Pope Francis, who confirms the previous papal magisterium: *there is an urgent need of a true world political*

¹¹ *Idem*, 219.

¹² *Idem*, 246.

¹³ *Idem*, 250.

¹⁴ FRANCIS, Enc. Letter *Laudato si'* (May 4, 2015), 163.

¹⁵ *Idem*, 166.

¹⁶ Cf. *Idem*, 169.

¹⁷ *Idem*, 173.

authority, as my predecessor Blessed John XXIII indicated some years ago.¹⁸ The Pope insists on the need for concretely operational governance: *Society, through non-governmental organizations and intermediate groups, must put pressure on governments to develop more rigorous regulations, procedures, and controls.*¹⁹

It is surprising to verify that an Encyclical Letter, which usually has a doctrinal and moral slant, and in this case mainly social, comes to propose references and indications on particular concrete aspects, which we cite some:

Honesty and truth are needed in scientific and political discussions; these should not be limited to the issue of whether or not a particular project is permitted by law. (...)

In any discussion about a proposed venture, a number of questions need to be asked in order to discern whether or not it will contribute to genuine integral development. What will it accomplish? Why? Where? When? How? For whom? What are the risks? What are the costs? Who will pay those costs and how? In this discernment, some questions must have higher priority. (...)

Environmental protection cannot be assured solely on the basis of financial calculations of costs and benefits. The environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces. (...)

*A technological and economic development that does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress.*²⁰

We read this concern in the light of the Pope's concern in the face of environmental degradation, which leads to the suffering of the poorest populations and which recalls the well-known Latin saying *Dum Romae consulitur Saguntum expugnatur* (While discussing in Rome the city of Sagunto is conquered). Pope Francis specifies the reasons for his intervention: *I would state once more that the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good.*²¹

As in *Evangelii Gaudium*, regarding world peace, Pope Francis had indicated interreligious dialogue as a necessary condition for world peace, in *Laudato Si'* he invokes it for the protection of creation: *The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity.*²²

3. From the meeting with the Grand Imam in Abu Dhabi

A significant step forward in interreligious dialogue on universal peace and the protection of creation was taken by Pope Francis when, on 4 February 2019, in Abu Dhabi, he signed, together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahamad al-Tayyib, a joint document on *Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*.

We report at the beginning of the preface: *Faith leads the believer to see in the other a brother to be supported and loved. By faith in God, who created the universe, creatures, and all human beings -*

¹⁸ *Idem*, 175.

¹⁹ *Idem*, 179.

²⁰ *Idem*, 183, 185, 190, 194.

²¹ *Idem*, 188.

²² *Idem*, 201.

*equal by His Mercy -, the believer is called to express this human brotherhood, safeguarding creation and the whole universe and supporting every person, especially the neediest and poor.*²³

We see that universal fraternity – *Fratelli tutti* - has highlighted peace that is combined with solidarity and therefore also the safeguarding of creation.

At the beginning of the document, the Supreme Pontiff and the Great Imam enunciate a fundamental principle that they believe must be the basis of the whole process of building a just and solidary world that they intend to pursue: *In the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love, and peace*

Then, again with prophetic language, they feel the duty to warn all men about the social and environmental drift that risks devastating our common home: *We, who believe in God and the final meeting with Him and His judgment, on the basis of our religious and moral responsibility, and through this Document, call upon ourselves, upon the leaders of the world as well as 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 and bring an end to wars, conflicts, environmental decay and the moral and cultural decline that the world is presently experiencing.*

It is very clearly underlined that it is important to found a new culture, which takes time, and at the same time, it adds that we run enormous risks for which, in some areas, it is necessary to intervene *as soon as possible*.

In the document, which intends to make *a profound reflection on our contemporary reality*, appreciation is expressed on the successes of science, technology, medicine, and the wellness industry, but affirms that among the most important causes of the crisis in the modern world, its pains, disasters, and calamities there is *an anesthetized human conscience and the removal of religious values, as well as the predominance of individualism and materialistic philosophies that deify man and place material values in the place of supreme and transcendent principles*.

This denunciation becomes even stronger in a subsequent passage: *We likewise affirm that major political crises, situations of injustice and lack of equitable distribution of natural resources – which only a rich minority benefit from, to the detriment of the majority of the peoples of the earth – have generated, and continue to generate, vast numbers of poor, infirm and deceased persons. This leads to catastrophic crises that various countries have fallen victim to despite their natural resources and the resourcefulness of young people that characterize these nations. In the face of such crises that result in the deaths of millions of children – wasted away from poverty and hunger – there is an unacceptable silence on the international level.*

The Document aims to break this *silence* that persists despite the daily occurrence of phenomena that cry out the urgency to reverse the course to save our humanity and our common home.

The Holy Father and the Great Imam, to reverse the course, *In the name of God declare that they adopt the culture of dialogue as a way; common collaboration as conduct; mutual knowledge as a method and criterion.*

Following this declaration of intent, the Document lists a series of commitments to be shared to promote the culture of dialogue and collaboration.

²³ *A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dabi (4 febrero 2019), in www.vatican.va.

For us Rogationists, it is important what is said in particular, about minors in difficulty: *The protection of the fundamental rights of children to grow up in a family environment, to receive nutrition, education, and support, are duties of the family and society. Such duties must be guaranteed and protected so that they are not overlooked or denied to any child in any part of the world. All those practices that violate the dignity and rights of children must be denounced. It is equally important to be vigilant against the dangers that they are exposed to, particularly in the digital world, and to consider as a crime the trafficking of their innocence and all violations of their youth.*

4. The wide horizon of *Fratelli tutti*

Pope Francis, in the opening pages of the document, makes it clear that he intends to resume and develop the path started: *Issues of human fraternity and social friendship have always been a concern of mine. In recent years, I have spoken of them repeatedly and in different settings. In this Encyclical, I have sought to bring together many of those statements and to situate them in a broader context of reflection. In the preparation of Laudato Si', I had a source of inspiration in my brother Bartholomew, the Orthodox Patriarch, who has spoken forcefully of our need to care for creation. In this case, I have felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom I met in Abu Dhabi, where we declared that "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters". This was no mere diplomatic gesture, but a reflection born of dialogue and common commitment. The present Encyclical takes up and develops some of the great themes raised in the Document that we both signed. I have also incorporated, along with my thoughts, a number of letters, documents, and considerations that I have received from many individuals and groups throughout the world.*²⁴

The Encyclical Letter is not addressed only to Catholics, but also to Christians, to the believers of other religious and, in a word, to men of goodwill, as the Pope explicitly declares: *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 goodwill.*²⁵

The theme of *Fratelli tutti* is clarified by the subtitle, on *fraternity and social friendship*, as the characterizing face of the human person, in his deepest identity and incomparable dignity, and therefore of universal character. Naturally, therefore, it is addressed to "all brothers", to invite them to reflect on their universal brotherhood. The arguments of Pope Francis, for this reason, largely lean on the foundations of reason, but then promptly take a further step by noting that fraternity and social friendship postulate the support of religiosity and faith.

The Pope confesses that the difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves today in a context of globalization, such as climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, should urgently push us to reflect on the theme of universal brotherhood to join forces and face critical situations together. caused by ourselves, taken globally:

*As I was writing this letter, the Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly erupted, exposing our false securities. Aside from the different ways that various countries responded to the crisis, their inability to work together became quite evident. For all our hyper-connectivity, we witnessed a fragmentation that made it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all. Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality.*²⁶

While it is intended to be a strong sound of the alarm, the Encyclical opens to hope, which could appear to be an ideal difficult to achieve and almost a dream, but intends to be based on the reasonableness of humanity which has the possibility of building, together, a better world by finding

²⁴ FRANCIS, Enc. Letter *Fratelli tutti* (October 3, 2020), 5.

²⁵ *Idem*, 6.

²⁶ *Idem*, 7.

strength in fraternity and social friendship: *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 voice, all brothers and sisters.*²⁷

5. Trends that hinder fraternity and social friendship

The Encyclical begins with a careful look at the current situation and focuses on *the shadows of a closed world*.

In his analysis, he observes that, after the divisions and wars of the past, the dream of a solidarity path of nations, which would promote their growth in solidarity was cultivated, but the dream soon vanished. *Local conflicts and disregard for the common good are exploited by the global economy to impose a single cultural model. This culture unifies the world, but divides persons and nations, for “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors, but does not make us brothers”. We are more alone than ever in an increasingly massified world that promotes individual interests and weakens the communitarian dimension of life.*²⁸

We have chosen not to build on our roots and to refuse the spiritual and human wealth that has been handed down through the generations, opting for cultural colonization, which has ended up emptying of meaning or exploiting expressions such as democracy, freedom, justice, unity.²⁹

We renounced a long-term project, with great objectives, for the development of all for the common good and ended up finding ourselves in a clash of interests that pits us all against all. Hence the Pope's warning: To care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves. Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single-family dwelling in a common home.³⁰

The result of this perverse logic is a worldwide discard. The person is not taken as a primary value, especially if disabled, or “if not yet needed” (the unborn) or “if no longer needed” (elderly); the discard leads to unemployment, poverty, racism, lack of equity, poor protection of fundamental rights, forms of slavery.

In today's world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard, and even kill human beings. While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned, or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated.³¹ human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold, and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end.³²

The Encyclical notes that all this leads to conflicts and fears, so the temptation arises to build walls in the heart and on the earth to prevent encounters with other cultures and with other people. Therefore, we are witnessing globalization, with its positive implications, especially in science, technology, and communication, without the capacity for a common route. The Pope makes a strong denunciation: *We can also point to “major political crises, situations of injustice, and the lack of an equitable distribution of natural resources... In the face of such crises that result in the deaths of millions of children – emaciated from poverty and hunger – there is an unacceptable silence on the*

²⁷ *Idem*, 8.

²⁸ *Idem*, 12.

²⁹ Cf. *Idem*, 13 and 14.

³⁰ *Idem*, 17.

³¹ *Idem*, 22.

³² *Idem*, 24.

international level". This panorama, for all its undeniable advances, does not appear to lead to a more humane future.³³ What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable, and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat.³⁴

Pope Francis points out that the pandemic, which has entered our lives, on a global level, has made us aware of being forced to live together and warns us: *The pain, uncertainty, and fear, and the realization of our limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.*³⁵ And he hopes: *God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of "them" and "those", but only "us".*³⁶

A shadow of our time is the drama, which often becomes a tragedy, of migrations, of so many torn lives, which try to escape from wars, poverty, persecutions, or natural disasters, and which are not welcomed by populism or obtuse political visions. The Pope denounces that we act without human dignity on borders: *The notion of "every man for himself" will rapidly degenerate into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic.*³⁷

Looking at today's society cannot escape the great revolution of digital communication, which opens up boundless possibilities, but at the same time can expose you to the risk of dependence, isolation, and progressive loss of contact with concrete reality, hindering the development of authentic interpersonal relationships. Hence the denunciation of the limits of the new media: *Yet they do not really build community; instead, they tend to disguise and expand the very individualism that finds expression in xenophobia and contempt for the vulnerable. Digital connectivity is not enough to build bridges. It is not capable of uniting humanity.*³⁸

The last consideration of the Encyclical on the shadows of our time is indicated as less evident. It is observed that if on the one hand weaker countries look towards stronger countries as goals and models; on the other hand, the latter, instead of promoting the growth of countries that are weaker in their cultural identity, help to demolish their self-esteem to dominate them more easily, forgetting that there is no worse alienation than experiencing not having roots, not belonging to nobody.³⁹

The Pope, in concluding this look at the shadows of our time, opens his heart to hope: *Despite these dark clouds, which may not be ignored, I would like in the following pages to take up and discuss many new paths of hope. God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family. The recent pandemic enabled us to recognize and appreciate once more all those around us who, in the midst of fear, responded by putting their lives on the line. (...) 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. (...) Let us continue, then, to advance along the paths of hope."*⁴⁰

6. Rediscovering fraternity

With *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope intends to give voice to many paths of hope. He confirms the choice of wanting to appeal to all brothers of goodwill but uses two biblical texts capable of enlightening anyone. The good Samaritan who helps the unfortunate, left half dead by the brigands;

³³ *Idem*, 29.

³⁴ *Idem*, 30.

³⁵ *Idem*, 33.

³⁶ *Idem*, 35.

³⁷ *Idem*, 36.

³⁸ *Idem*, 43.

³⁹ Cf. *Idem*, 51 ff.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, 54-55.

the story of Genesis in which God asks Cain to account for the life of his brother Abel. The Encyclical reminds us that *“love shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate; in their place, it builds bridges. Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home... Love exudes compassion and dignity”*.⁴¹

We are encouraged to read in the example of the Good Samaritan the invitation to *rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals. By his actions, the Good Samaritan showed that “the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions.*⁴²

This call to the universal fraternity, which must lead to concrete choices of solidarity among peoples, is addressed by the Pope to each of us, who say we are powerless in the face of these great challenges, but who are called to face them by *starting from below and, case by case, act at the most concrete and local levels, and then expand to the farthest reaches of our countries and our world, with the same care and concern that the Samaritan showed for each of the wounded man’s injuries. Let us seek out others and embrace the world as it is, without fear of pain or a sense of inadequacy, because there we will discover all the goodness that God has planted in human hearts. Difficulties that seem overwhelming are opportunities for growth.*⁴³

This invitation to courageously confront the daily difficulties reminds us of the challenges faced by our Founder at the beginning of his mission in the Avignone Quarter.

Although *Fratelli tutti* is addressed to every man of goodwill, it cannot fail to remind us Christians that we are all *brothers in Christ*, children of God who created us *in his image and likeness*, and therefore such sonship from him, which is love and Trinitarian Communion, is distorted if this identity is lost.⁴⁴

Finally, the Pope invites us to be merciful and broaden our circle: *So this encounter of mercy between a Samaritan and a Jew is highly provocative; it leaves no room for ideological manipulation and challenges us to expand our frontiers. It gives a universal dimension to our call to love, one that transcends all prejudices, all historical and cultural barriers, all petty interests.*⁴⁵

7. Opening of Love

Based on the principle of universal brotherhood, Pope Francis invites us to think and generate an open world. He reminds us that this corresponds to our nature as men, because we reach our fulfillment by communicating with each other and giving ourselves, going “beyond”: *In the depths of every heart, love creates bonds and expands existence, for it draws people out of themselves and towards others.*⁴⁶

In other words, love makes us tend towards universal communion because, due to its very dynamics, it requires a progressive openness, the ability to welcome others, making all the peripheries converge towards a mutual belonging. All this, the Pope tells us, is valid for the various regions and individual countries, in the context of the present globalization.

⁴¹ *Idem*, 62.

⁴² *Idem*, 66.

⁴³ *Idem*, 78.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Idem*, 85 ff.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, 83.

⁴⁶ *Idem*, 88.

*Indeed, the ever-increasing number of interconnections and communications in today's world makes us powerfully aware of the unity and common destiny of the nations. In the dynamics of history, and the diversity of ethnic groups, societies, and cultures, we see the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another.*⁴⁷

We should strive towards societies that are open to integrating everyone, towards a social friendship, which does not lead to homologation, which eliminates the values and cultural wealth of the individual countries. We cultivate freedom, equality, and fraternity, but we must question freedom that does not open up to fraternity. Above all, social friendship must tend to promote people: *Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgment of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere. (...) Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country. (...) Only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity.*⁴⁸

From this fundamental principle also flows the need to promote the moral good of society. *Every society needs to ensure that values are passed on; otherwise, what is handed down are selfishness, violence, corruption in its various forms, indifference, and, ultimately, a life closed to transcendence and entrenched in individual interests.*⁴⁹

And among the values that constitute the precious connective of social life, solidarity has an important place.

At this point, the Encyclical invites us to re-propose the social function of property. The reflection starts from the following consideration: *The world exists for everyone because all of us were born with the same dignity.*⁵⁰ On this premise, the right of private property is upheld which, however, must be reconciled with another priority right: *The principle of the common use of created goods is the "first principle of the whole ethical and social order"; it is a natural and inherent right that takes priority over others.*⁵¹ On these principles, *Fratelli tutti* defends the rights without borders and the rights of peoples.⁵²

8. A heart open to the whole world

Pope Francis needs to deepen the reflection on welcoming migrants and characterizes it with four verbs: *welcome, protect, promote, and integrate*. He specifies that hospitality should be combined with favoring the development of the countries of origin with solidarity policies. He points out that the encounter between peoples and between cultures is an opportunity for enrichment and integral human development for all. He assures us that it is a fruitful exchange and that it must take place in gratuitousness.⁵³ Finally, he notes that hospitality is the mark of maturity and farsightedness of a nation:

*The true worth of the different countries of our world is measured by their ability to think not simply as a country but also as part of the larger human family. This is seen especially in times of crisis. (...) Only a social and political culture that readily and "gratuitously" welcomes others will have a future.*⁵⁴

⁴⁷ *Idem*, 96.

⁴⁸ *Idem*, 106, 107 and 110.

⁴⁹ *Idem*, 113.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 118.

⁵¹ *Idem*, 120.

⁵² Cf. *Idem*, 121 ff.

⁵³ Cf. *Idem*, 129 ff.

⁵⁴ *Idem*, 141.

While *Fratelli tutti* turns its gaze to universal solidarity, to the *universal horizon*, at the same time it recalls the need to protect the link with one's roots, to the *local flavor*, because *universal fraternity and social friendship are thus two inseparable and equally vital poles in every society. To separate them would be to disfigure each and to create a dangerous polarization.*⁵⁵

A wise synthesis must be made: *Without encountering and relating to differences, it is hard to achieve a clear and complete understanding even of ourselves and of our native land. Other cultures are not "enemies" from which we need to protect ourselves, but differing reflections of the inexhaustible richness of human life.*⁵⁶ *global society is not the sum total of different countries, but rather the communion that exists among them. The mutual sense of belonging is prior to the emergence of individual groups.*⁵⁷

9. The best policy

The arguments set out up to now by the Encyclical appear all too clear to the point that it seems incomprehensible the reasons why a new order of things is not established at the level of national and supranational choices, which promotes the growth of individual countries and thus favors the making a better world.

Pope Francis bluntly puts his finger on the wound: *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.*⁵⁸

He points out that politics sometimes appears sick of populism or liberalism, attentive to the immediate interest and thus preventing organic growth programs.

The examination of the inadequacies of politics, which should favor the integral realization of people, leads us to turn our gaze to the latter who, while they are the recipients of political choices, is, on the other hand, those who choose the politicians who govern them. Therefore, the solution of problems is not guaranteed by a purely liberal choice but depends on a political action that takes care of the growth of people.

*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.*⁵⁹ *We must put human dignity back at the center and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need.*⁶⁰

Pope Francis cares about the condition of the poor and, in this regard, he gives us in the Encyclical a luminous indication capable of effectively tackling the scourge of poverty. He refers to *social poets* who are dedicated to the poor and he adds: *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."*⁶¹

⁵⁵ *Idem*, 142.

⁵⁶ *Idem*, 147.

⁵⁷ *Idem*, 149.

⁵⁸ *Idem*, 154.

⁵⁹ *Idem*, 167.

⁶⁰ *Idem*, 168.

⁶¹ *Idem*, 169.

This part of *Fratelli tutti*, which in its beginning is critical of a certain policy, ends up presenting precisely *the best policy*. It stresses the need for international bodies to have effective power, to ensure the global common good, and not to take over economic power, to concretize the concept of the family of nations.⁶²

The Pope presents to us the dream of a politics that is not enslaved by ideology, technocracy or economics, which is sensitive to the ecological problem, and expresses itself as *social charity*: *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.*⁶³

10. Dialogue and social friendship

With the theme of the dialogue, *Fratelli tutti* develops the preceding one, that of the best policy. The Pope invites us to create a new culture of social dialogue. He points out that dialogue cannot be ignored if we want to build together and that to strive for a common goal we must assume adherence to objective truths and universally valid principles.

There can be no split between truth and consent. *A society is noble and decent not least for its support of the pursuit of truth and its adherence to the most basic of truths.*⁶⁴

On this basis, the culture of dialogue becomes a culture of encounter. To illustrate the idea of a society that protects the universal common good and that of the individual countries that constitute it, the Encyclical uses the example of the geometric solid called polyhedron, *whose different sides form a variegated unity, in which the whole is greater than the part. The image of a polyhedron can represent a society where differences coexist, complementing, enriching, and reciprocally illuminating one another, even amid disagreements and reservations. Each of us can learn something from others. No one is useless and no one is expendable. This also means finding ways to include those on the peripheries of life. For they have another way of looking at things; they see aspects of reality that are invisible to the centers of power where weighty decisions are made.*⁶⁵

The Pope once again emphasizes the need to pay due attention to the peripheries and, later on, to indigenous peoples. He observes that they have *a different notion of progress, often more humanistic than the modern culture of developed peoples. (...) No authentic, profound, and enduring change is possible unless it starts from different cultures, particularly those of the poor.*⁶⁶

Those who read *Fratelli tutti* cannot but notice the insistence with which Pope Francis returns to the concept of humanism. In this regard, he speaks to us about the humanistic sensitivity of indigenous peoples. By inviting us to collaborate for the construction of a world based on social friendship, he reminds us that we need to start from the rediscovery of a healthy and true humanism. With the Encyclical he addressed men of goodwill but could not help but tell us that it must be a Christian humanism since Christ revealed man to man.⁶⁷

Along this line, Pope Francis ends up inviting us to *recover kindness*. In a particularly succinct way, he repeats to us: *Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say "excuse me", "pardon me", "thank you". Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind*

⁶² Cf. *Idem*, 170 ff.

⁶³ *Idem*, 182.

⁶⁴ *Idem*, 207.

⁶⁵ *Idem*, 215.

⁶⁶ *Idem*, 220.

⁶⁷ Cf. VATICAN COUNCIL II, Past. Const. on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, 22.

*person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference.*⁶⁸

11. Paths of a new encounter in peace and friendship

As Pope Francis moves towards the conclusion of his paternal conversation on *fraternity* and *social friendship*, he tries to summarize the path to be taken in building a world reconciled in a fraternity.

Inspired by Saint Paul, *living according to the truth in love* (Eph 4:15), he recalls the importance of starting again in the truth: *We no longer have use for empty diplomacy, dissimulation, double-speak, hidden agendas, and good manners that mask reality. Those who were fierce enemies have to speak from the stark and clear truth.*⁶⁹ Immediately afterward, Pope Francis recalls that peace intends to overcome conflicts, and specifies that truth must be combined with justice and mercy: *Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. All three together are essential to building peace; each, moreover, prevents the other from being altered.*⁷⁰

Fraternity and universal peace require an *architecture*, and therefore people with broad and far-sighted views, and a “craftsmanship”, made up of men who are open to work for the common good and to overcome daily difficulties and obstacles. *There is an “architecture” of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, but there is also an “art” of peace that involves us all.*⁷¹

In unraveling the entire Encyclical, the Pope was careful to support his arguments with the words of the various episcopal conferences around the world. In our case, for a theme with open wounds in Africa, he reports the thoughts of the Bishops of South Africa: *true reconciliation is achieved proactively, “by forming a new society, a society based on service to others, rather than the desire to dominate; a society based on sharing what one has with others, rather than the selfish scramble by each for as much wealth as possible.*⁷²

Fratelli tutti notes that conflicts must be resolved in order not to become accomplices and observes that *authentic reconciliation does not flee from conflict, but is achieved in conflict, resolving it through dialogue and open, honest, and patient negotiation.*⁷³

On the other hand, one cannot help but keep the memory of the atrocities of wars, such as the Shoah, so that *the conscience of humanity may rise up in the face of every desire for dominance and destruction.*⁷⁴

Wars leave deep wounds that need generous forgiveness to heal, without forgetting. *Free and heartfelt forgiveness is something noble, a reflection of God’s own infinite ability to forgive. (...) Those who truly forgive do not forget. Instead, they choose not to yield to the same destructive force that caused them so much suffering.*⁷⁵

The last pages of the Encyclical are a heartfelt appeal to reject war and the death penalty, which may appear as solutions to two extreme situations, but which are false responses and do not

⁶⁸ *Fratelli tutti*, 224.

⁶⁹ *Idem*, 226.

⁷⁰ *Idem*, 227.

⁷¹ *Idem*, 231.

⁷² *Idem*, 229.

⁷³ *Idem*, 244.

⁷⁴ *Idem*, 249.

⁷⁵ *Idem*, 250.251.

solve the problems they claim to overcome and which *ultimately do no more than introduce new elements of destruction in the fabric of national and global society.*⁷⁶

12. Religions at the service of fraternity in the world

History reminds us that over the centuries there has been the horror of religious wars, which were often caused by other reasons and sought in religion a facade of legitimacy.

Fratelli tutti points out that religion leads us to refer to God as the *father*. As believers, we are convinced that, without an openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity. We are certain that only with this awareness that we are not orphans, but children, can we live in peace with one another.⁷⁷

Pope Francis, however, clarifies that religions, alone, are unable to found fraternity and peace. He explains that in modern totalitarianism the force of power triumphs, and where there is no reference to transcendent truth, by obeying which man acquires his full identity, then there is no sure principle that guarantees just relations between men. He adds:

*The effort to seek God with a sincere heart provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as traveling companions, truly brothers and sisters. We are convinced that “when, in the name of an ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from society, that society ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way, their dignity is trampled and their rights violated.”*⁷⁸

The Pope tells us that conflicts and evils in the world, on closer consideration, are connected to a crisis of values and the marginalization of religiosity.

*It should be acknowledged that “among the most important causes of the crises of the modern world are a desensitized human conscience, a distancing from religious values and the prevailing individualism accompanied by materialistic philosophies that deify the human person and introduce worldly and material values in place of supreme and transcendental principles”. [264] It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and “experts”. Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom.*⁷⁹

From this consideration, of a general nature, Pope Francis draws many consequences. The first is that the Church does not relegate her mission to the private sphere; does not intend to remain on the sidelines in building a better world but works for the promotion of mankind and universal brotherhood, because of all that is human concerns her. She wants to be home with open doors, and like Mary, she wants to be a Church that serves and goes forth, to accompany life.⁸⁰

*Others drink from other sources. For us, the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. From it, there arises, for Christian thought and the action of the Church, the primacy given to relationship, to the encounter with the sacred mystery of the other, to universal communion with the entire human family, as a vocation of all.*⁸¹

Fratelli tutti, then, reminds that religious freedom must be protected among the fundamental rights of the human person, particularly in countries where religious faith is in the minority. *One fundamental human right must not be forgotten in the journey towards fraternity and peace. It is*

⁷⁶ *Idem*, 255.

⁷⁷ *Idem*, 272.

⁷⁸ *Idem*, 274.

⁷⁹ *Idem*, 275.

⁸⁰ Cf. *Idem*. 276.

⁸¹ *Idem*, 277.

religious freedom for believers of all religions. (...) it is possible to find a means of serene, ordered, and peaceful coexistence, accepting our differences and rejoicing that, as children of the one God, we are all brothers and sisters.⁸²

This consideration sheds light on the hope that Christian unity can be found in the Church and, on the other hand, becomes a clear denunciation of perpetration of violence and terrorism in the name of religion:

Sincere and humble worship of God “bears fruit, not in discrimination, hatred, and violence, but respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others, and loving commitment to the welfare of all”. [280] Truly, “whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 Jn 4:8). For this reason, “terrorism (...) is due to an accumulation of incorrect interpretations of religious texts and policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression, and pride. That is why it is so necessary to stop supporting terrorist movements (...) that threaten security and world peace. Such terrorism must be condemned in all its forms and expressions.”⁸³

After this strong condemnation of terrorism, which is a terrible threat to fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis concludes the Encyclical Letter with the appeal made together with the Great Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb and addressed to all men of goodwill: *In the name of God, who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters, to fill the earth and make known the values of goodness, love, and peace.*⁸⁴

13. Dearest Confreres,

Moved by the desire to share with all of you Pope Francis' paternal appeal, with the Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* on *fraternity and social friendship*, I focused on some passages, which can give us a glimpse to the depth and richness of this document, and to encourage us to study it and make it in our communities an instrument for a revision of our life and our apostolate.

In fact, in the Encyclical, there are some very interesting passages to build, strengthen, and promote a true brotherhood and friendship also within our communities. If we live our fraternity and friendship in the Congregation, we will not only be an example for the society, but we will contribute to the construction of a more fraternal world and society.

I would like to leave you with the taste of some of the Pope's sayings, like slogans, which remain in my mind:

“We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity;”⁸⁵ “... a form of constant and febrile bonding that encourages remarkable hostility, insults ... destructive of others.”⁸⁶ “We must not lose our ability to listen.”⁸⁷ “As silence and careful listening disappear... the basic structure of sage human communication is at risk.”⁸⁸ “Together, we can seek the truth in dialogue, in relaxed conversation, or passionate debate.”⁸⁹ “Jesus... asks us not to decide who is close enough to be our neighbor, but rather that we ourselves become neighbors to all.”⁹⁰ “The spiritual stature of a person's life is measured by love.”⁹¹ “What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes

⁸² *Idem*, 279.

⁸³ *Idem*, 283.

⁸⁴ *Idem*, 285.

⁸⁵ *Idem*, 33.

⁸⁶ *Idem*, 44.

⁸⁷ *Idem*, 48.

⁸⁸ *Idem*, 49.

⁸⁹ *Idem*, 50.

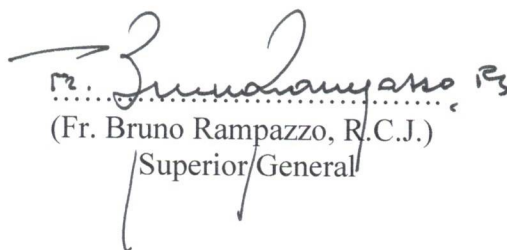
⁹⁰ *Idem*, 80.

⁹¹ *Idem*, 92.

real.”⁹² “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’”.⁹³ “Choose to cultivate kindness.”⁹⁴ “Saint Paul describes kindness as a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). He uses the Greek word *chrestotes*, which describes an attitude that is gentle, pleasant, and supportive, not rude or coarse. ... This way of treating others can take different forms: an act of kindness, a concern not to offend by word or deed, a readiness to alleviate their burdens.”⁹⁵ “Kindness frees us from the cruelty that at times infects human relationships.”⁹⁶

Dearest brothers, I urge you to nourish sentiments of gratitude towards Pope Francis, for this precious gift of his to the Church and the world, with the hope that on our part, as true Brothers, we can offer our contribution to the building of a world that rediscovers *fraternity and social friendship*.

I entrust this wish to the Divine Superiors, through the intercession of our Founder, St. Hannibal Mary Di Francia, and I greet you with affection in the Lord.


.....
(Fr. Bruno Rampazzo, R.C.J.)
Superior General

⁹² *Idem*, 194.

⁹³ *Idem*, 198.

⁹⁴ *Idem*, 222.

⁹⁵ *Idem*, 223.

⁹⁶ *Idem*, 224.