

Encyclical Letter

Fratelli Tutti

Franciscus

Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.



First Chapter: *Dark clouds over a closed world*

The first chapter is an analysis of the contemporary world, which is marked by despair, mistrust, polarization, new forms of "enslavement", the deterioration of ethics and the temptation to abandon those who are weakest. The encyclical proposes a path of closeness and encounter, which will be detailed in the next seven chapters.

"Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day." (11)

"Local conflicts and disregard for the common good are exploited by the global economy in order 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 neighbours, but does not make us brothers"." (12)

"As a result, there is a growing loss of the sense of history, which leads to even further breakup. A kind of "deconstructionism", whereby human freedom claims to create everything starting from zero." "That is how various ideologies operate: they destroy (or deconstruct) all differences so that they can reign unopposed." (13) "These are the new forms of cultural colonization." (14)

"The best way to dominate and gain control over people is to spread despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending certain values." (15)

"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." (17)

"We have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with the waste of food, which is deplorable in the extreme." (18)

"This panorama, for all its undeniable advances, does not appear to lead to a more humane future." (29) "Isolation and withdrawal into one's own interests are never the way to restore hope and bring about renewal. Rather, it is closeness; it is the culture of encounter." (30)

"True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all." "As I said in those days, "the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities..." (32)

"The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own 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." (33)

"If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life. If only we might rediscover once for all that we need one another." (35)

"Certain populist political regimes, as well as certain liberal economic approaches, maintain that an influx of migrants is to be prevented at all costs." (37)

"I realize that some people are hesitant and fearful with regard to migrants. I consider this part of our natural instinct of self-defense. Yet it is also true that an individual and a people are only fruitful and productive if they are able to develop a creative openness to others." (41)

“While closed and intolerant attitudes towards others are on the rise, distances are otherwise shrinking or disappearing to the point that the right to privacy scarcely exists.” (42)

“Even as individuals maintain their comfortable consumerist isolation, they can choose a form of constant and febrile bonding that encourages remarkable hostility, insults, abuse, defamation and verbal violence destructive of others.” “Social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices.” (44)

“Together, we can seek the truth in dialogue, in relaxed conversation or in passionate debate. To do so calls for perseverance; it entails moments of silence and suffering, yet it can patiently embrace the broader experience of individuals and peoples.” (50)

“Certain economically prosperous countries tend to be proposed as cultural models for less developed countries; instead, each of those countries should be helped to grow in its own distinct way.” (51)

“We forget that “there is no worse form of alienation than to feel uprooted, belonging to no one. A land will be fruitful, and its people bear fruit and give birth to the future, only to the extent that it can foster a sense of belonging among its members.” (53)

“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. For God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family.” (54)

Second Chapter: *A stranger on the road*

Based on the parable of the "Good Samaritan" who helps a complete stranger, the Pope proposes that we "become close" to others. We should not be indifferent, but rather collaborate, according to the place each of us occupies in society.

“The previous chapter should not be read as a cool and detached description of today’s problems, for “the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ.”” “Although this Letter is addressed to all people of good will, regardless of their religious convictions, the parable [of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)] is one that any of us can relate to and find challenging.” (56)

“The call to fraternal love echoes throughout the New Testament:
(Gal 5:14) (1 Jn 2:10-11) (1 Jn 3:14) (1 Jn 4:20).” (61)

“In this context, we can better understand the significance of the parable of the Good Samaritan.” “For “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”.” (62)

“Which of these persons do you identify with? This question, blunt as it is, is direct and incisive. Which of these characters do you resemble? We need to acknowledge that we are constantly tempted to ignore others, especially the weak.” (64)

“The parable eloquently presents the basic decision we need to make in order to rebuild our wounded world. In the face of so much pain and suffering, our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan.” (67)

“The parable shows us how a community can be rebuilt by men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others.” (67) “Finally, I would note that in another passage of the Gospel Jesus says: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me”.” (84)

“Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in answer to the question: Who is my neighbor? The word “neighbor”, in the society of Jesus’ time, usually meant those nearest us.” (80)

“We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people’s troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment.” (77)

Third Chapter: *Envisaging and engendering an open world*

The third chapter proposes let progress reach "the peripheries", i.e. those who are most fragile and excluded from society. It calls for the promotion of human development and respect for the right of all to live in dignity by tackling the structural causes of poverty.

“Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except “in the sincere gift of self to others”.” (87)

““Life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we claim to be self-sufficient and live as islands: in these attitudes, death prevails”.” (87)

“People can develop certain habits that might appear as moral values: fortitude, sobriety, hard work and similar virtues. Yet if the acts of the various moral virtues are to be rightly directed, one needs to take into account the extent to which they foster openness and union with others. That is made possible by the charity that God infuses. Without charity, we may perhaps possess only apparent virtues, incapable of sustaining life in common.” (91)

“Our **affection** for others makes us freely desire to seek their good.” (93) “Those actions have their source in a union increasingly directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful apart from their physical or moral appearances.” (94) “All this originates in a sense of esteem, an appreciation of the value of the other. This is ultimately the idea behind the word “charity”: those who are loved are “dear” to me; “they are considered of great value”.” (93) “Our love for others, for who they *are*, moves us to seek the best for their lives.” (94)

“Racism is a virus that quickly mutates and, instead of disappearing, goes into hiding, and lurks in waiting.” (97) “I would like to mention some of those “hidden exiles” who are treated as foreign bodies in society. Many persons with disabilities “feel that they exist without belonging and without participating”.” “Our concern should be not only to care for them but to ensure their “active participation in the civil and ecclesial community”.” (98)

“A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called “**social friendship**”. Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible.” (99)

“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.” (113)

“Solidarity finds concrete expression in service, which can take a variety of forms in an effort to care for others. And service in great part means “caring for vulnerability, for the vulnerable members of our families, our society, our people”.” “Service always looks to their faces, touches their flesh, senses their closeness and even, in some cases, ‘suffers’ that closeness and tries to help them. Service is never ideological, for we do not serve ideas, we serve people.” (115)

“Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community.” “It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labor rights.” (116)

Fourth Chapter: *A heart open to the whole world*

For migrants, the Pope proposes a world order that will help the development of all countries. He proposes to welcome, protect, promote and integrate all migrants, not only those who are of economic value to rich countries.

“Ideally, unnecessary migration ought to be avoided; this entails creating in countries of origin the conditions needed for a dignified life and integral development.” (129)

“Our response to the arrival of migrating persons can be summarized by four words: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. For “it is not a case of implementing welfare programs from the top down, but rather of undertaking a journey together, through these four actions”.” (129)

“The arrival of those who are different, coming from other ways of life and cultures, can be a gift, for “the stories of migrants are always stories of an encounter between individuals and between cultures. For the communities and societies to which they come, migrants bring an opportunity for enrichment and the integral human development of all”.” (133)

“Indeed, when we open our hearts to those who are different, this enables them, while continuing to be themselves, to develop in new ways.” (134)

“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.” (141)

“A healthy culture, on the other hand, is open and welcoming by its very nature; indeed, “a culture without universal values is not truly a culture”.” (146)

“Let us realize that as our minds and hearts narrow, the less capable we become of understanding the world around us.” (147)

Questions for reflection:

1. What practical actions do you think you could take to foster solidarity in your environment? Mention the three that you consider most important.
2. What does the parable of the Good Samaritan invite us to do? In which circles should we work as Vincentians (families, people from the same country, foreigners)? For each one you have chosen, mention how we should work.
3. Do you think that the concepts of solidarity and service expressed in the Encyclical are fundamental principles of our Vincentian charism? How did St Vincent live according to them?
4. The Pope invites us to take four actions towards migrants who come to our countries: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. What actions could you implement in your group to put this into practice?

Encyclical Letter

Fratelli Tutti

Franciscus

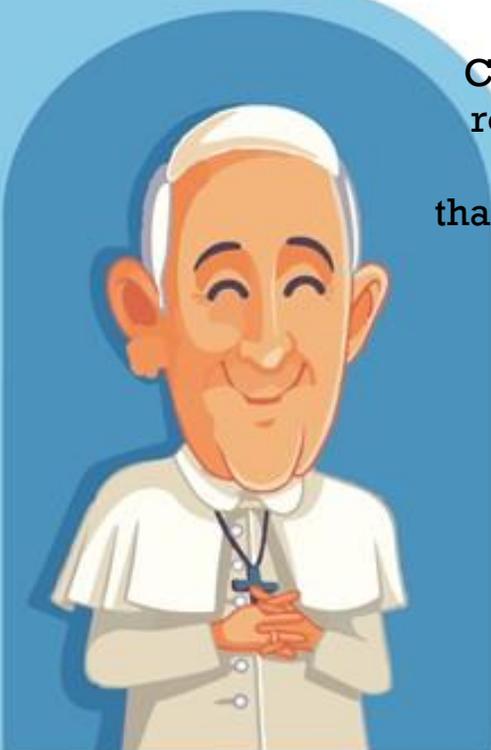
An Ecumenical Christian Prayer

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognizing him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves.

Amen.



Chapter Five: *A better kind of politics*

The fifth chapter talks about good politics that serves the common good, does not seek personal approval in polls, discusses issues openly and involves interdisciplinary dialogue.

“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.” (154)

“The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom. It has also shown that, in addition to recovering a sound political life that is not subject to the dictates of finance, “we must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need”.” (168)

Effective love comes from social love: “Social love is a “force capable of inspiring new ways of approaching the problems of today’s world, of profoundly renewing structures, social organizations and legal systems from within”.” (183)

“There is a kind of love that is “elicited”: its acts proceed directly from the virtue of charity and are directed to individuals and peoples. There is also a “commanded” love, expressed in those acts of charity that spur people to create more sound institutions, more just regulations, more supportive structures.” ... “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 charity, which is the spiritual heart of politics, is always a preferential love shown to those in greatest need; it undergirds everything we do on their behalf. Only a gaze transformed by charity can enable the dignity of others to be recognized and, as a consequence, the poor to be acknowledged and valued in their dignity.” (187)

“Politics too must make room for a tender love of others. “What is tenderness? It is love that draws near and becomes real”.” ... “Amid the daily concerns of political life, “the smallest, the weakest, the poorest should touch our hearts: indeed, they have a ‘right’ to appeal to our heart and soul. They are our brothers and sisters, and as such we must love and care for them”.” (194)

“Good politics combines love with hope and with confidence in the reserves of goodness present in human hearts.” (196)

Chapter Six: *Dialogue and friendship in society*

Chapter six deals with dialogue that involves approaching, listening, respect, knowledge and understanding, and condemns aggression on social networks.

We need dialogue to understand and help each other. “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)

“Dialogue needs to be enriched and illumined by clear thinking, rational arguments ... nor can it exclude the conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld.” (211)

“Social peace demands hard work, craftsmanship.” (217) It involves seeing all points of view. It implies recognising in the other the right to be himself or herself and to be different. Lack of dialogue often means that no one is concerned with the common good, but only with individualistic interests.

The Pope has repeatedly invited us to the culture of encounter where we can all learn something from each other, however small and unusable it may seem. “To speak of a “culture of encounter” means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone.” (216)

“Kindness frees us from the cruelty that at times infects human relationships, from the anxiety that prevents us from thinking of others, from the frantic flurry of activity that forgets that others also have a right to be happy.” (224)

Chapter Seven: *Paths of renewed encounter*

The seventh chapter reflects on the value and promotion of peace that is linked to truth, justice and mercy. The aim of peace is to form a society based on service to others and on the search for reconciliation and mutual development.

“In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter” (225) where there have been offences. ““It is a patient effort to seek truth and justice, to honour the memory of victims and to open the way, step by step, to a shared hope stronger than the desire for vengeance”.” (226)

“The path to peace does not mean making society blandly uniform, but getting people to work together, side-by-side, in pursuing goals that benefit everyone.” ... ““We should never confine others to what they may have said or done, but value them for the promise that they embody”, a promise that always brings with it a spark of new hope.” (228)

“There is an “architecture” of peace, ... but there is also an “art” of peace that involves us all.” (231) “This requires us to place at the centre of all political, social and economic activity the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good.” (232)

“Often, the more vulnerable members of society are the victims of unfair generalizations.” (234) Our obligation as Christians is to seek reunion with the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of society.

The Pope tells us: “There are two extreme situations that may come to be seen as solutions in especially dramatic circumstances, without realizing that they are false answers that do not resolve the problems they are meant to solve and ultimately do no more than introduce new elements of destruction in the fabric of national and global society. These are war and the death penalty.” (255)

Chapter Eight: *Religions at the service of fraternity in our world*

In the eighth chapter, the Pope proposes that religions be at the service of fraternity in the world, that is, that they fulfil their social function of recognizing us in our diversity, building bridges and breaking down walls that separate us.

“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)

“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”.” (272)

Pope Francis calls for the respect of religious freedom. This freedom proclaims that we can find good understanding between different cultures and religions. “A journey of peace is possible between religions. Its point of departure must be God’s way of seeing things. “God does not see with his eyes, God sees with his heart. And God’s love is the same for everyone, regardless of religion. Even if they are atheists, his love is the same”.” (281)

““Each one of us is called to be an artisan of peace, by uniting and not dividing, by extinguishing hatred and not holding on to it, by opening paths of dialogue and not by constructing new walls”.” (284)

With regards to violence and religious terrorism, he tells us: “Sincere and humble worship of God “bears fruit not in discrimination, hatred and violence, but in respect for the sacredness of life, respect for the dignity and freedom of others”.” (283)

Commentary

Let us dream as one people with the same human flesh, as children of the same land that shelters us all, each one with the richness of his or her faith or convictions, each one with his or her own voice, all brothers and sisters.

The path of fraternity has a Mother, Mary. She, with the power of the Risen Lord, wants to give light to a new world where we are all brothers and sisters, where there is room for every neglected person in our societies, where justice and peace shine forth.

Questions for reflection:

1. The Pope tells us: “Good politics combines love with hope and ... confidence” (196). Think of some concrete actions that we, as AIC volunteers, could take in our environment.
2. What attitudes do you think need to be strengthened in your Vincentian group in order to achieve the authentic social dialogue that the Encyclical invites us to have?
3. Perhaps in your country there are large groups that you perceive to be divided at this time (e.g., by politics, by religion, by diverse ideologies...). What actions could you take to generate processes of healing and reunion?
4. What conclusions do you draw from reading this Encyclical that could improve your Vincentian work?