

Rejoice in the Lord

By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark

Pope Francis addresses all God's family in *Fratelli Tutti*

The day following his visit to Assisi on October 3, 2020, the Vatican published a new encyclical by Pope Francis. The encyclical's title, *Fratelli tutti*, is taken from St. Francis who used these words as a term of endearment to "address his brothers and sisters" and to propose to them "a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel" (*Fratelli tutti*, #1).

This new social encyclical speaks to all members of the human family, reminding us that we are sisters and brothers regardless of our race, ethnicity, social status or country of origin. As the Holy Father writes, "If every human being possesses an inalienable dignity, if all people are my brothers and sisters, and if the world truly belongs to everyone," the Holy Father says, "then it matters little whether my neighbor was born in my country or elsewhere (*Fratelli tutti*, #125).



The social problems addressed by Pope Francis in *Fratelli tutti* are complex, but they all stem from a simple root cause. We have forgotten, or we never learned, that we are all members of God's family. Whatever our differences may be, we remain united as brothers and sisters who share the same dignity inextricably bound to one another because we are all made in the image and likeness of God our Father.

Pope Francis emphasizes that "Although I have written [this encyclical] 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." Dialogue is key. Too often we avoid speaking to each other, and we don't listen, especially to those who are different from us. The Holy Father wants to change our "attempts to eliminate or ignore others" by calling us all together for simple, heartfelt conversation.

Fratelli tutti is divided into eight sections:

- **Dark clouds cover the earth**—a reflection on the serious social ills we face today including the manipulation and deformation of concepts such as democracy, freedom, justice; the loss of the meaning of the social community and history; selfishness and indifference toward the common good; the prevalence of a market logic based on profit and the culture of waste;

unemployment, racism, poverty; the disparity of rights and its aberrations such as slavery, trafficking, women subjugated and then forced to abort, organ trafficking (10-24). *Fratelli tutti* deals with global problems that call for global actions, sounding the alarm against a “culture of walls” that favors the proliferation of organized crime, fueled by fear and loneliness (27-28).

- **Strangers on the road**— *Fratelli tutti* shows how the parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us to recognize the face of Jesus in all our brothers and sisters and to become neighbors to others (81), overcoming prejudices, personal interests, historic and cultural barriers. We all, in fact, are co-responsible in creating a society that is able to include, integrate and lift up those who have fallen or are suffering (77). Love builds bridges and “we were made for love” (88),
- **A Vision of an open world**—the need to go “outside the self” in order to find true love and happiness, opening ourselves up to the other according to the dynamism of charity which makes us tend toward “universal fulfillment” (95). Acknowledging that the spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love, which always “takes first place” and leads us to seek better for the life of the other, far from all selfishness (92-93).
- **An open heart**—the importance of welcoming strangers, especially “in response to those who are fleeing grave humanitarian crises” The right to live with dignity cannot be denied to anyone, and since rights have no borders, no one can remain excluded, regardless of where they are born (121). We are called to consider “an ethics of international relations” (126), because every country also belongs to foreigners and the goods of the territory cannot be denied to those who are in need and come from another place. Thus, the natural right to private property will be secondary to the principal of the universal destination of created goods (120).
- **A better kind of politics**—centered on human dignity and dedicated to the common good of all. A new form of political thinking which represents one of the most valuable forms of charity because it is placed at the service of the common good (180) and recognizes the importance of people, understood as an open category, available for discussion and dialogue (160).
- **Dialogue and friendship**—recognizing life as “the art of encounter” with all our sisters and brothers, acknowledging “the miracle of kindness shining in the midst of darkness”. No one is useless and no one is expendable” (215). True dialogue, indeed, is what allows one to respect the point of view of others, their legitimate interests and, above all, the truth of human dignity. Relativism is not a solution because without universal principals and moral norms that prohibit intrinsic evil, laws become merely arbitrary impositions (206). From this perspective, a particular role falls to the media which, without exploiting human weaknesses or drawing out the worst in us, must be directed toward generous encounter and to closeness with the least, promoting proximity and the sense of human family (205).
- **Paths of renewed encounter**— fostering peace and forgiveness while never forgetting the horrors of human cruelty and war. Thus, peace is an “art” that involves and regards everyone and in which each one must do his or her part. Peace-building is “an open-ended

endeavor, a never-ending task” and thus it is important to place the human person, his or her dignity and the common good at the centre of all activity (230-232). Forgiveness is linked to peace: we must love everyone, without exception but loving an oppressor means helping him to change and not allowing him to continue oppressing his neighbor.

- **Religion and fraternity**—true religion as a source of unity, not division, and as a means of achieving human fraternity, dialogue, common cooperation and mutual understanding. Thus, “deplorable” acts, such as acts of terrorism, are not due to religion but to erroneous interpretations of religious texts, as well as “policies linked to hunger, poverty, injustice, oppression”. Terrorism must not be supported with either money or weapons, much less with media coverage, because it is an international crime against security and world peace, and as such must be condemned (282-283). At the same time *Fratelli tutti* underscores that a journey of peace among religions is possible and that it is therefore necessary to guarantee religious freedom, a fundamental human right for all believers (279).

Fratelli tutti faithfully reflects the teaching of St. Francis of Assisi because its central theme is unity with all creation and our solidarity with all members of the human family created in the image and likeness of God. The pope acknowledges that living this way—in accordance with Gospel values—is not easy, but the need is urgent, and God’s grace makes all things possible.

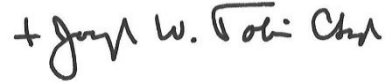
Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has welcomed the new encyclical calling it an important contribution to the Church’s rich tradition of social doctrine. According to Archbishop Gomez:

Pope Francis’ teaching here is profound and beautiful: God our Father has created every human being with equal sanctity and dignity, equal rights and duties, and our Creator calls us to form a single human family in which we live as brothers and sisters. God’s plan for humanity, the Pope reminds us, has implications for every aspect of our lives — from how we treat one another in our personal relationships, to how we organize and operate our societies and economies. In analyzing conditions in the world today, the Holy Father provides us with a powerful and urgent vision for the moral renewal of politics and political and economic institutions from the local level to the global level, calling us to build a common future that truly serves the good of the human person.

Pope Francis concludes his new encyclical with two prayers: “A Prayer to the Creator” and “An Ecumenical Christian Prayer.” Both call for a renewed sense of sisterhood and brotherhood among all members of the human family. Both seek “a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war” wherein we can discover Christ in each person regardless of who they are or where they come from.

Everyone should read *Fratelli tutti*. It is a genuinely Christian reflection on the beauty of all God's creation and our responsibility as family to care for one another and for our common home.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,



Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
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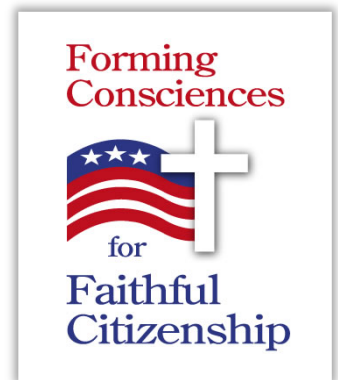
Statement on Faithful Citizenship

Sept. 16, 2020

Cardinal Tobin has neither endorsed nor opposed any candidate running for public office. He has simply reminded Catholics of our responsibility to take part in the elective process.

Cardinal Tobin echoes the USCCB's guidance on "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," which recognizes that Catholics often face difficult decisions about how to vote as well as the need for a properly formed conscience in order to make a selection that respects the tenets of our faith. A Catholic cannot vote for a political candidate because he or she supports an issue considered an intrinsically evil act, such as abortion, euthanasia, deliberately subjecting workers or the poor to subhuman living conditions or assisted suicide. At the same time, a voter should not use a candidate's opposition to an intrinsic evil to justify indifference or inattentiveness to other important moral issues involving human life and dignity. 'A Catholic who rejects a candidate's unacceptable position on policies promoting an intrinsically evil act may decide to vote for that candidate for other morally grave reasons. Voting in this way would be permitted only for truly grave moral reasons, not to advance narrow interests or partisan preferences or to ignore a fundamental moral evil' (cf. "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" nn. 34, 35).

-- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship. www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/faithful-citizenship/upload/forming-cons...





“Fratelli tutti”: Professor Anna Rowlands presents the new encyclical

A six-member panel presented Pope Francis’s new Encyclical, "Fratelli tutti", on Sunday morning October 6 in the Vatican's new Synod Hall. Amongst them was Professor Anna Rowlands, Professor of Catholic Social Thought and Practice, University of Durham (UK). Please find below the full text of her presentation:

The Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* is about love and attention – the kind of attention that brings a broken and bleeding world back to health. It is a social meditation on the Good Samaritan, who recognizes love and attention as the preeminent law, and models for us creative social friendship.

Pope Francis asks us to gaze at the world similarly, such that we come to see the basic, indispensable relation of all things and people, near and far. In its simplicity of call, *Fratelli tutti* is a devastating challenge to our ecological, political, economic and social life. But above all it is a proclamation of an ineradicable, joyful truth, presented here as a well-spring for a fatigued world.

This letter is not a coolly detached critique. Its spiritual discipline sees the humanizing task this way: to be truly human is to be willing to look at the world in its beauty and its pain, to listen deeply through human encounters to the griefs and the joys of one’s age and to take these into oneself, to carry them as one’s own.

The notion that all created life shares its origin in God the Father, and that in Christ we become sisters and brothers, bonded in dignity, care, and friendship, is one of the oldest social teachings of Christianity. The names at the heart of this letter are those of the scriptures: we are brothers, sisters, neighbors, friends. The early Christians shaped their views of money, community, and politics based on this vision. That a theme so ancient is spoken with such urgency now is because Pope Francis fears a detachment from the view that we are all really responsible for all, all related to all, all entitled to a just share of what has been given for the good of all. It is not a mockable fantasy to believe this. He writes with grief about the cultural cynicism and impoverishment limiting our social imaginations. It is not absurd to acknowledge kinship beyond borders, to crave cultures where social bonds are respected and encounter and dialogue are practiced.

Fratelli tutti makes clear that universal fraternity and social friendship must be practiced together. Failure to do this abounds. Globalization proclaims universal values but fails to practice encounter and attention – especially, to difference and the most vulnerable. Digital communications trade on our hunger for connection but distort it, producing a febrile bondedness built on binaries of likes and dislikes, and commodified by powerful interests. Populism appeals to the desire for stability, rootedness, and rewarding work, but lets hostility distort these desires. Liberalism imagines freedom in terms of the self-interested individual and discounts our deeply inter-connected lives. We forget what enables societies to endure and renew. These are our false materialisms.

This letter has its roots in a specific interfaith encounter. It is unashamed about its religious character and call. A transcendent truth is not a burden, but a gift securing the roots of our action. It can reduce the anxiety we feel about taking risks together for the transformation of our world. Faith is our wellspring. It is part of how we can name and move beyond the grieving indifference of our age.

For this reason, the encyclical is clear about the weight of responsibility borne by religious communities. Religious groups are caught up in the digital and market cultures that harm us. Inexcusably, religious leaders have been slow to condemn unjust practices, past and present. Religion too stands in need of repentance and renewal. Fratelli tutti exhorts religions to be models of dialogue, brokers of peace, and bearers of the message of transcendent love to a hungry, cynical and uprooted world.

Echoing the Abu Dhabi statement, the encyclical restates the absolute dignity of the human person, over which no political preference, no ‘law’ of the market can take precedence. Here Pope Francis highlights the treatment of migrants. He notes the biblical commands to welcome the stranger, the benefits that come with encounters between cultures, and the invitation to sheer gratuitous love. But he also extends earlier social teaching on the universal destination of goods, making clear that nations are entitled to their land, wealth and property insofar as this enables all humankind to access the means for survival and fulfillment.

A nation bears obligations to the whole human family and not merely towards its own citizens. Dignity, solidarity, and the universal destination of material goods are the hallmarks of this teaching. Pope Francis warns against closed forms of populism, but he upholds the importance of seeing ourselves as ‘a people’. Following St Augustine, he reminds us that to become ‘a people’ is based on encountering each other in dialogue, face to face and side by side. Together we negotiate the enduring common loves we wish to live by. This is a dynamic unfinished process of social peace building, one that is the fruit of a genuine search for, and exchange of, truths. A culture is only healthy to the extent that it remains open to others. This renewal of political cultures happens only with, not for the most marginalized. The role of grassroots movements is key to this participation.

The naming of God as our kin, and ourselves as kin and kind in this image, is love-language. There are other ways of naming God. But the message Pope Francis wishes us to hear for this moment is that we are made fully human by what draws us beyond ourselves. What makes this possible is a divine love, open to all, that births, bonds, bridges and endlessly renews. This love cannot be erased or disposed of, and it is the basis of Pope Francis’s call to us with St Francis’s words of loving attention: ‘Fratelli tutti’... – Vatican News, October 6, 2020 (www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2020-10/pope-francis-encyclical-fratelli-tutti-professor-rowlands.html)

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope

Yesterday [October 3, 2020], I was in Assisi to sign the new encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship. I offered it to God on the tomb of Saint Francis who inspired it as in the preceding Encyclical *Laudato si'*. "



"The signs of the times show clearly that human fraternity and the care of creation form the sole way toward integral development and peace, as already indicated by the saintly Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II."

May St. Francis accompany the journey of fraternity in the Church, between believers of all religions between and all people.

My Prayer for You

I wish to make my own this lovely prayer composed by Pope Francis for his new encyclical, *Fratelli tutti*:


A 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.

Franciscus



ENCYCLICAL "FRATELLI TUTTI"

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

+ *Joseph W. Tobin*

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