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MC A

Art and Fraternity

Fraternity

Lasting mutual feeling of affection and benevolence; the natural and spiritual bond that exists among humanity.

Art

Art, in its broadest sense, includes all human activity – performed individually or collectively – which leads to forms of creativity and aesthetic expression, relying on technical devices, innate abilities, and acquired and behavioral norms arising from study and from experience. Therefore art is a language, with the ability to convey emotions and messages.

In its most sublime meaning, art is the aesthetic expression of the inner life and of the human soul. It reflects the opinions, feelings and thoughts of the artist in the social, moral, cultural, ethical or religious sphere of their historical period.

Fraternity, an affectionate relationship with the people and places of real life

“Fraternity between all men and women ... shows us how to dream ... together ... as a single human family .. as children of the same earth which is our common home” (FT, 8). Moreover, fraternity means “enduring relationship of affection.” This definition encompasses also the affectionate relationship with places – those of our heritage and those of our lived experience. This feeling does not only concern a relationship between people, but also with things, streets, town squares, buildings, and above all, nature. When we talk about the environment, for example, we also refer to “a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it” (LS, 139). Between us and nature, between us and the environment, there is a relationship, a bond, a connection. From the point of view of “integral ecology” (cf. LS, 137-162), which takes us “to the heart of what it is to be human” (LS, 11), we cannot consider the human being outside of this emotional and relational

dimension with its environment and with others.

This lasting relationship of affection has been lost and replaced by an exclusive relationship with money, with an anthropocentric personal ambition that no longer leaves room for an idea of fraternity but for a form of selfishness and wealth not to be shared with others. As Pope Francis writes in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, “we fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real” (*FT*, 33).

We have considered nature – the trees, the animals, the plants, the air – as something exclusively for us, for our consumption, without realizing that all this living world is essential to our survival and that we humans are just part of an immense and fragile balance of life. “We are called to “till and keep” the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15). “Tilling” refers to cultivating, ploughing or working, while “keeping” means caring, protecting, overseeing and preserving. This implies a relationship of mutual responsibility between human beings and nature” (*LS*, 67). We cannot ignore that “everything is interconnected,” that: “[e]verything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth” (*LS*, 92.).

Art, nature, fraternity

The perception of this love that connects us, of this bond of profound fraternity with people and with creation, has always required a way of being expressed, made explicit, represented and proclaimed. What is art if not the expression of this deep bond? Music tells us how we have interpreted the world around us: the roar of thunder, the fractures of ice, the wind, the sounds of the forest, the rain, or the silence of the deep seas. There I recall again the Pope, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*: “The various arts, and poetry in particular, have found inspiration in [the Amazon’s] water, its forests, its seething life, as well as its cultural diversity and its ecological and social challenges.” (*QA*, 35).

How much of what surrounds us has been transformed into a new human language, reinterpreted in an artistic form! And together with that language of ours, we have crossed throughout time with the emotions, feelings, and fears that art has given us. In this sense, art has united us, it has made us share our time together in our human journey. Even life, in fact, can be considered, and can become, art, "*the art of encounter*" (*FT*, 215), as Pope Francis writes.

And on the relationship of fraternity with nature, it is necessary today more than ever to rediscover that lasting affection. Art today looks at this relationship with great sensitivity precisely because the artist, in freedom, searches for sensitive, contradictory themes, and even of suffering, *which helps us to understand our time from a different point of view, and to face the future.*

Architecture and fraternity

Architecture, too, searches for this new relationship of fraternity, a lasting relationship — after decades of enmity with nature, it seeks to begin an entirely new relationship. We have transformed a common good into an end in itself by denying the profound sense of its social role. For too long, architecture has been a commodity, a consumer product, denying its deeper nature of relationship with the climate and social context. Pope Francis writes again: “If architecture reflects the spirit of an age, our megastructures and drab apartment blocks express the spirit of globalized technology, where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony.” (*LS*, 113).

Fortunately, architecture in recent years has been trying to recover the relationship with the environment, not to impose a unique architectural paradigm but to adapt the design of buildings to places, each with a different culture and spirituality. Even religious architecture, precisely because of its profoundly spiritual function, is called to set an example and embody the need to unite architecture and environment. The [*Living Chapels*](#) movement, to which I too had the honor of contributing, is a beautiful symbol of this.

Thinking of fraternity starting from the city

As art, architecture can therefore be used as a means to recover a relationship of fraternity. We see it in the growing resilience of communities that want to understand and participate in the

transformations that are happening in their regions, actively adding value to the purpose of that which is built. It is a building process for all people.

Architecture has to rethink its relationship with creating modern cities, especially with what we disparagingly call the periphery, thought of as solely infrastructure (*the hardware*), and not for community building (*the software*). This type of architecture represents the loss of a vision of the community and the common good. We read again in *Laudato Si'*: “*Many cities are huge, inefficient structures, excessively wasteful of energy and water. Neighbourhoods, even those recently built, are congested, chaotic and lacking in sufficient green space. We were not meant to be inundated by cement, asphalt, glass and metal, and deprived of physical contact with nature.*” (LS, 44). Today, we have understood the profound sense of living together and the places we build are the representation of this need. Even in peripheral places, in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, there are phenomena of resilience. The need for people to express themselves manifests despite the many difficulties; to delegate to artists, whether rappers or street artists, their sense of unease and so build identity around those expressions.

This difficult year has also taught us what our deepest needs are: friendship, nature, solidarity. Cities pose a fundamental problem to all three: how can we return to the city as an opportunity, as a dream of humanity, and not as a nightmare filled with environmental issues and social disparities?

What will be the new representation of a new world, of a fraternal city, in solidarity, attentive to others, a city that looks to a lasting relationship with nature? I am thinking of the commitment of artists and architects who, against a logic only of the market or of exhausting media visibility, try to insert a first step of change into their daily commitment. We will not be able to change everything immediately, and not even by constructing false environmental alibis. We, **all of us**, must, with humility and determination, step by step, change the course of our recent and future history by walking together.

Art as a key to rethinking economic and political relations

Great economic development, while increasing human possibilities in many areas, has left behind many inadequacies. The economic growth of the few has in fact created an unprecedented level of

inequality, the immense growth of cities (cf. *LS*, 44) has in fact contributed to inequality and the destruction of natural resources. There is a need for art to find new ways, new paths of fraternity, because "[t]he marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith. Whatever the challenge, this impoverished and repetitive school of thought always offers the same recipes." (*FT*, 168). We cannot live in a perfect world, but neither can we live in a world that we are consciously destroying.

We have gone from dreams to illusions, from utopias to falsely happy cities, from ambitions to frustrations. Then the calls of the artists, their gaze, become important. The rediscovery of the authenticity of the artistic expressions of the most remote communities, the artistic value of artifacts, of the tools of manual work, are manifested without being in opposition to digital work. How much art and culture is there behind a gesture, behind the dexterity of the ceramist who builds a teapot, or the craftsperson who makes the violin, or the blacksmith who welds metal, or the glassblower who creates extraordinary objects with air? And it's not just a question of practical tools, but of **culture**. We can now express ourselves in a more complex and contemporary way; we have many more possibilities and more accessible resources. Yet at the same time we can rediscover our cultural values, our diversity, our roots; a cultural ecosystem that differs from economic globalization. He invites us to learn from the Amazonian peoples to imbue human relationships from the surrounding nature, perceiving nature – and I would add the environment more generally, which can also be our city – as a reality that integrates society and culture, as an extension of the personal, family and social group body (*QA*, 20).

It is important to place this renewed awareness of art as a manifestation and expression of the bond of fraternity. This bond unites us at the service not only of our economic system, but also of politics, the *best policy* of which Pope Francis speaks so affectionately in his latest encyclical, the politics that builds bonds of fraternity. It is no coincidence that the Holy Father invites everyone to be "artisans" of peace (cf. *FT*, 231), dedicating just as much care to the construction of peace as the glassblower dedicated to their work, without hesitation; as the potter, to build peace with our hands. Pope Francis also calls upon the political world, the institutions, to be "architects" of peace, an appeal that as an architect I interpret as the need to design peace by putting the common good at the center.

Art as a key to rethinking social relations and education

The challenges we face now will remain before us for the next thirty years – environmental, social, innovation and transition issues in a new ecological era, and the role of today's youth, who cannot clearly see their future. The call of the President of the *European Commission* Ursula von der Leyen [to a new Bauhaus](#) is interesting and unexpected: it indicates the way to creativity, art, and the role of artists, architects, engineers and designers in interpreting the epochal change that is on its way, particularly through innovation, creativity and culture. Yet, there will no longer be solely technological innovation, without humanistic thinking. Without reflection from the creative worlds, innovation ends up serving itself and not real social change. The recent and worrying phenomena of the development of an increasingly scientific education is a sign that must be understood and interpreted. Martha Nussbaum's work explains this very well in her book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*. The constant reduction of artistic teachings in education at all levels is worrying precisely because it builds a society where the only mirage is economic success. Of 100 start-ups, 98 die before reaching success, which reveals the creation of a society of disappointments, of unattainable expectations, and the lack of opportunity for people to express themselves for who they are, for what we think is our vocation.

The mirage of the era of success is, in fact, the story of a great social failure. Strengthening the educational structure through the study of artistic subjects, painting, dance, music, and humanities builds up a society more aware of its abilities, shaped by subjects freer to choose and to know how they are and what they are truly capable of, for themselves and others. This consideration makes us reflect on how art and artistic expression are a form of care and innovation in society, as opposed to the economic vision alone. And we see this in the universal languages without barriers of the artistic worlds: music, in any form, touches us all and unites us, unites our feelings; or how a painting or an installation creates in us a different interpretation that makes us reflect, induces us to build a critical thought. Architecture is a powerful weapon with different implications, for better or for worse. We are united in a town square against someone or to defend someone, we are united in music through the construction of the Opera House, and those emotions are also the signal that we are all deeply connected not only by our role and social status but in the depths of our soul, in a transversal way that makes us feel somehow united and equal.

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They were all brothers and sisters at Woodstock, we were all united at the Pope's youth rallies, so are youth around the world who come together on *Fridays for Future* to protest climate change. In that moment we feel that wonderful feeling of being together, **all of us**. These events are expressions of our sensitivity, our feelings, our desires and it is through creativity that we manage to amaze and excite ourselves. I remember with emotion my visit to the Sydney Opera House, a building that gives no room for words because you cannot describe the beauty of that architecture or the profound and dramatic emotion of seeing Picasso's Guernica, where that drama is visible; it enters into our bodies and touches our deepest feelings.

The theater, in the silence of the room, makes us feel like a single body, as if the music told us deep down the need to communicate, to share that expression that does not need words but sounds. This is the magic of humankind, who has tried in its history to use art as a maximum inner expression and to transform it into a **bond of fraternity**.

Bologna, January 1, 2021

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