



### **"Fratelli tutti": ideas for the pastoral care of migrants**

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The Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti" (FT) is dedicated to fraternity and social friendship, which the Holy Father counts among his constant concerns. The close link between these themes and issues related to migrants, refugees, displaced persons and victims of trafficking is highlighted in the introductory words of the document, which explain how Pope Francis wanted to draw inspiration from the example of the Poor Man of Assisi. Saint Francis, in fact, promised himself to walk "alongside the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the discarded, the last" (FT, 2), among whom, as the Pope himself makes clear in the following points, the most vulnerable subjects of human mobility must be counted. Francis of Assisi, moreover, demonstrated a "heart without boundaries, capable of going beyond the distances due to origin, nationality, colour or religion" (Ft, 3), open to foreigners.

Still in the introductory part, Pope Francis underlines how the condition of itinerancy in this world characterizes all human beings, who are "wayfarers made of the same human flesh" (Ft, 8), who can dream together. But this wonderful potential is today opposed by a "culture of walls" (FT, 27), which prevents, even physically, the encounter with people of different cultures.

Observing the frontiers of the contemporary world, there are, unfortunately, many systematic violations of human dignity, caused by political and economic will against migrants and international cooperation (FT, 37). Often migrants, deceived by the illusions of Western culture, become victims of the speculations of traffickers. Their departure impoverishes even more their country of origin, which has often failed to guarantee them the right not to migrate (FT, 38). In the countries of arrival there is a growing political exploitation of the fear of the other and there are again those regrettable episodes of racism and xenophobia that seemed to be past history (FT, 39).

The Holy Father is convinced that migration is a fundamental element of humanity's future and a clear opportunity to put the human person back at the center (FT, 40). The fear of the other, though natural and instinctive, must not undermine the capacity for encounter that makes us grow as people (FT, 41). "Enlarging the heart to the stranger" becomes, then, an imperative for the growth of all. Sacred Scripture is rich in biblical quotations in this sense (FT, 61). But so are references to the temptation to close oneself off to foreigners, to others, a temptation that has characterized the Church since its beginnings (FT, 62).

According to Pope Francis, the correct attitude of the Christian towards the foreigner - as indeed towards all vulnerable "neighbours" - is well exemplified in the parable of the Good Samaritan (FT, 81). The

encounter between the rescuer and the needy leaves no room for ideological manipulation and pushes both protagonists to overcome barriers (FT, 82-83). The Good Samaritan shows a heart capable of identifying with the suffering of the other, beyond differences, and of recognizing Jesus Christ present in his neighbour (FT, 84). It is a recognition that gives the other an infinite dignity, a true encounter with Jesus Christ (FT, 85). But it is also an encounter with humanity beyond the group to which it belongs (FT, 90); it is a coming together that means going beyond national and regional borders to discover oneself part of a community of brothers and sisters who care for one another (FT, 96).

The Holy Father reiterates that the long-term objective is to prevent people from having to emigrate, guaranteeing the right to find at home the conditions to develop fully. But until this is assured, it will be necessary to respect everyone's right to find a place where they can fully develop as a person and as a family, putting into practice four verbs: welcome, protect, promote and integrate (FT, 129). Especially in cases of humanitarian crises, solidarity between peoples must be translated into very concrete actions (FT, 130), which guarantee all human beings a "full citizenship" in this world (FT, 131). But this requires global governance of migration, with medium and long-term projects that go beyond the emergency (FT, 132).

The encounter with the other, with the foreigner, is enriching because it is an encounter with the different, which we do not yet know (FT, 133). It is because the encounter with diversity makes cultures and civilizations grow (FT, 134). It is so because, especially when characterized by free and generous welcome, it makes humanity grow (FT; 139-141). The encounter with the other does not annul the identity of the host but strengthens it and transforms it into a gift (143). Localistic narcissisms hide insecurity and fear towards others (FT, 146). Looking at others one understands oneself better (FT, 147). Identity and culture are dynamic realities that feed on the encounter with the other (FT, 148); the relationship with others is, in fact, constitutively necessary to achieve full human fulfilment (FT, 150). The human family comes before the constitution of national groups (FT, 149).

The importance of the meeting must also be considered from a regional geographical perspective, where the cordial relationship with the neighbour (FT, 151) becomes a convivial relationship with the neighbouring country (FT, 152), which helps to become aware of one's own limits and the inevitable interconnection with others: no isolated nation is capable of ensuring the common good (FT, 153).

The Holy Father also does not miss this opportunity to condemn trafficking in human beings, which should be one of the greatest concerns of a ruler (FT, 188). The slave trade, which has sadly marked past history, unfortunately continues to happen (FT, 248).