



## **FRATERNITY: A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION AND OF RENEWAL FOR DEMOCRACY AND FOR PEACE**

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The highly symbolic figure of the "Good Samaritan", who takes care of the wounded and abandoned man on the side of the road, offers Pope Francis' reflection on fraternity an essential reference for thinking about fraternal relations and political life. The second part of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti" (in particular chapters 5 and 6), in fact, gives politics a decisive place.

It is a question of avoiding that fraternity be restricted to the realm of interpersonal relations. Politics is the place of encounter, dialogue and shared responsibility. It is the very definition of democracy: a space where everyone can express themselves and participate in decision-making, for the common good and justice.

Democracy, as a project and as a political practice, is the vision of this "open" world (cf. chapter 3 of the Encyclical) which goes beyond the "closed" world of individualistic interests alone and considers the other, with its richness and weaknesses.

"There is (also) an aspect of the universal openness of love which is not geographical but existential. There is (also) an aspect of the universal openness of love which is not geographical but existential. It is the daily capacity to widen my circle, to reach those whom I do not spontaneously consider to be part of my centre of interests, even if they are close to me. Moreover, every sister or brother who is suffering, abandoned or ignored by my society, is an existential stranger, even if he or she is a native of the country" (Fratelli tutti, François, 2020, n.97).

The democratic space is the "open place" where meeting is made possible, where words can be spoken and exchanged without fear, where human rights and mutual duties are honoured and updated.

"Social friendship", which is the other name for fraternity, care and benevolence and the search for the right relationship, is not a weak attitude but a strong moral posture, which refuses to disdain the other - the weakest in particular - and which opens up to the construction of a "co-responsibility".

"A better policy, placed at the service of the true common good, is necessary to allow the development of a world community, capable of achieving fraternity from peoples and nations that live in social friendship" (Fratelli tutti, n. 154).

This mutual hospitality, proper to friendship, makes us sensitive to the words of the other, to the respect of our promises and to the need for forgiveness, which allows us not to lock the other - individual, people or community - into a tendentious or truncated image. Hospitality, experienced as reciprocity, sheds light on our international cooperation projects and the challenges of solidarity with migrants and refugees, shattered by war and violence. In this respect, we must be wary of populisms that appropriate and sometimes confiscate popular hope, for power-seeking purposes... Reflection on community belonging cannot be closed on sectarian and exclusive communitarianism. On the contrary, it must magnify the richness of social plurality and the chance of pluralism, which brings into play the diversity of approaches and interpretations.

Above all, the common good, which calls for the happy deployment of talents for the good of the community, must be seen as the condition and the horizon of peace. Seeking peace means taking care of our ties, of the human rights that safeguard the dignity of persons, our memory and our hope.

"To be part of a people is to be part of a common identity, made up of social and cultural ties. And this is not something automatic, quite the contrary: it is a slow, difficult process... towards a common project" (Fratelli tutti, n.158: Extract from a quotation by Antonio Spadaro, *Las huellas de un pastor. Una conversación con el Papa Francisco*, in: Jorge Maria Bergoglio - Papa Francisco, *En tus ojos esta mi palabra. Homilías y discursos de Buenos Aires (1999-2013)*, Publicaciones Claretianas, Madrid (2017), pp.24-25).

To speak of time and "slow process", about fraternity and political life, is to inscribe oneself in a moral journey that is never satisfied with the current state of the world. It is about a profound transformation of people and institutions. The one cannot evolve without the other. Thus peace must be presented as the aim of "good politics" (cf. Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2019), but also as the expression of charity accomplished.

"True charity is capable of integrating all this [privacy, legality, minimum welfare, trade, social justice, political citizenship] in its deployment and must be manifested in interpersonal encounter; it is also capable of reaching out to a brother and sister who are distant, even ignored, through the various resources that the institutions of an organised, free and creative society are able to create" (Fratelli tutti, n. 165).

Charity cannot therefore be reduced to the mere relationship of help and assistance. It is justice, hope and love in action. This, it is easy to understand, concerns local and regional, national, international and world community realities. We are from both a world and a village. In both dimensions (global and local), mutual consideration and the future of peace are at stake.

"Any commitment in this sense becomes a supreme exercise of charity. In fact, an individual can help a person in need, but when he joins with others to create social processes of fraternity and justice for all, he enters 'the field of the greatest charity, political charity' (Pius XI, Discourse to the Italian Catholic University Federation (18 December 1927): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 December 1927) p.3)" (Fratelli tutti, n.180).