



## Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti*: *On Fraternity and Social Friendship*

A study guide by the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

*"Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all."*

**- Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti***

*Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* is the last installment in a trilogy of writings by Pope Francis. First, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel) focuses on repairing the Church. Next, *Laudato Si'* (Praised Be) examines repairing the planet. Now, *Fratelli Tutti* (Brothers and Sisters All) explores building a culture of peace and dialogue in order to work together to care for each other.

Over eight chapters and 92 pages, the Holy Father offers a remedy against self-destruction and despair, which includes an openness to love, charity, and kindness, and a rejection of war, nuclear weapons and the death penalty. Like *Laudato Si'*, *Fratelli Tutti* is a social encyclical, where the pope applies the moral teachings of the Church to the social and economic challenges of the current day. Also like *Laudato Si'*, this encyclical is inspired by the life of St. Francis of Assisi, who responded to the Church and the world in his time, and is structured using the three-part See-Judge-Act method.

In this study guide, we offer key points and quotes from each chapter of *Fratelli Tutti*, along with reflection questions and the two prayers that Pope Francis includes at the end of the encyclical. We hope this guide enables individuals and small groups to learn Pope Francis' teachings and use them to build peace and solidarity in your relationships, community, and world.

– Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
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## Introduction

*“It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Fraternity between all men and women (8).”*

From the very first words, Pope Francis teaches us the way of St. Francis of Assisi, who called all people his brothers and sisters (“fratelli tutti”), and was a “saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy” who inspired this encyclical, as he did *Laudato Si’*.

By calling for a love that “transcends the barriers of geography and distance” and by crossing Crusade lines to meet with the Sultan of Egypt, St. Francis demonstrated his openness of heart and commitment to peace at a time of great power struggles and violence – not unlike today.

Just as St. Francis sought to live in harmony with all, Pope Francis calls us to value fraternity and friendship across all boundaries and division, as he and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb demonstrated when

they signed the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in Abu Dhabi in 2019.

While Pope Francis started writing this encyclical before the pandemic, the urgency of his teaching on fraternity became even more clear given the inability of countries to work together to resolve yet another problem that affects us all. Anyone who thinks the only lesson to learn from this time is to improve or reform current systems “is denying reality,” the pope says. We need a rebirth of “universal aspiration to fraternity.”

### Reflection Questions:

What do you know about the life of St. Francis of Assisi? How did he address the challenges of his time?



## Chapter 1: Dark Clouds Over a Closed World

*“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. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together (32).”*

Pope Francis gives a thorough description of the darkness he sees in the world today. First, political systems are regressing and the profit-based economic model “does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings.”

Second, there is a culture of indifference. By employing a strategy of ridicule, suspicion, and relentless criticism, one group can dominate and exclude another, creating a permanent state of disagreement, confrontation and even violence. The loneliness, fear and insecurity experienced by those who feel excluded are easy targets for “mafias” (i.e. gangs). Also, human rights are not universally respected, especially for women.

This culture of indifference especially affects the unborn, disabled, and elderly. Though connected globally, we do not see our brothers and sisters as our neighbors. This is most apparent in the absence of dignity for migrants at our borders and for many people impacted by the pandemic.

Pope Francis wants to strengthen the idea of social friendship and social peace in the face of an all-pervasive social violence, which he sees running through the economy, politics, and even through social media.

### Reflection Questions:

How has the pandemic impacted you? Have you experienced a revived sense of community?



## Chapter 2: A Stranger on the Road

*“Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders (69).”*

The challenges named in the previous chapter highlight the need to reconsider our priorities on a personal, communal, and global level, before it is too late. We can only succeed when we come together in love as sisters and brothers, with care like that shown by the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37).

The Good Samaritan is a parable about a Jewish traveler who is stripped, beaten, and left wounded alongside the road. First a Jewish priest and then a Levite come by, but both avoid the man. Finally, a Samaritan happens upon the traveler. Samaritans and Jews despised each other, but the Samaritan helps the injured man. Jesus is described as telling the parable in response to the question from a lawyer, "And who is my neighbor?" The neighbor is the one who shows mercy to the injured man—the Good Samaritan.

The parable is a lesson not solely about charity, but also a transformative encounter of mercy. The pope provides a detailed description of each character in the story so the reader can ask “Who am I, who are we, in this story?”

So, who is my neighbor? Francis concludes this chapter by calling for catechesis and preaching that "speak more directly and clearly about the social meaning of existence, the fraternal dimension of spirituality, our conviction of the inalienable dignity of each person and our reasons for loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters."

### Reflection Questions:

Have you ever experienced such an “encounter of mercy”?



## Chapter 3: Envisaging and Engendering an Open World

*“All of us, as believers, need to recognize that love takes first place: love must never be put at risk, and the greatest danger lies in failing to love (92).”*

This chapter presents the pope's teaching about love, which is essential to his approach to fraternity and social friendship. "The spiritual stature of a person's life is measured by love," he writes (92). This love must grow beyond family and nation to include strangers and all people — into a friendship where the worth of every person is acknowledged.

Fraternity grows into a universal love that promotes others when human connections are consciously cultivated through education in dialogue in order to defeat the “virus” of “radical individualism,” as well as recognition of the values of reciprocity and mutual enrichment. Based on universal love and recognition of the inherent dignity of every person, we have an obligation to ensure that every person has sufficient opportunities

for integral development. Francis says this requires a “re-envisioning of the social role of property” to ensure each person has what is necessary to live with dignity.

The right to private property, Pope Francis says, "can only be considered a secondary natural right" to the “universal destination of all goods,” or the idea that God’s gift of creation belongs to all. This principle applies to the international sphere as well, where “a territory’s goods must not be denied to a needy person coming from elsewhere (124).”

### Reflection Questions:

In what ways can your local community put human dignity at the center of social and economic life?



## Chapter 4: A Heart Open to the Whole World

*“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 (141).”*

In this chapter, Pope Francis explores the moral and social implications of having a “heart open to the whole world.”

Pope Francis first considers immigration, explaining that until the conditions which force people to migrate are collectively addressed, nations should have a fundamental openness to welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating their “neighbor,” the migrant or refugee. Immigrants bringing new cultures into society should be regarded as a gift, and cultural differences should not be erased but celebrated.

Pope Francis describes how, especially in the era of globalization, “mutual assistance between countries proves enriching for each” (137). This is true in terms of cultural exchange and the cooperation which is needed to address poverty in parts of the world.

He calls for a “fraternal gratuitousness” that is not based merely on commercial exchange but on true concern for the wellbeing of those in other nations.

Francis acknowledges the “innate tension between localization and globalization,” but says that each has its place. “We need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground (142).” He says, “Universal fraternity and [local] social friendship are thus two inseparable and equally vital poles in every society.”

### Reflection Questions:

How do you feel called to cultivate a “heart open to the whole world”?



## Chapter 5: A Better Kind of Politics

*“The marketplace, by itself, cannot resolve every problem, however much we are asked to believe this dogma of neoliberal faith... The fragility of world systems in the face of the pandemic has demonstrated that not everything can be resolved by market freedom ... we must put human dignity back at the center... (168).”*

A “better kind of politics,” Pope Francis says, is “truly at the service of the common good” and truly open to people, which makes it one of the most valuable forms of charity (154). Francis goes to lengths to explain the problems with the “populism” of today, which exploits the vulnerable for short-term gains. Likewise, he criticizes a form of liberalism which “serves the economic interests of the powerful.”

A better kind of politics also protects work, tackles poverty, and aims to find solutions to social problems which deny fundamental human rights, including hunger, human trafficking and other social exclusions.

Pope Francis repeats a critique that the international community wasted an opportunity for reform after the financial crisis of 2007-08. “Indeed, it appears that the actual strategies developed...fostered greater indi-

vidualism, less integration and increased freedom for the truly powerful, who always find a way to escape unscathed (170).” Francis also notes the need for reform at the United Nations and international finance institutions, so “the family of nations can acquire real teeth (173).”

He closes by repeating lines from *Laudato Si'*: “politics must not be subject to the economy” and “true statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good (178).” Finally, Francis says politics can be a noble act when centered on the human dignity of all brothers and sisters.

### Reflection Questions:

What do you think are the first steps to building a “better kind of politics?” How can you contribute?



## Chapter 6: Dialogue and Friendship in Society

*“...[Once] kindness becomes a culture within society it transforms lifestyles, relationships and the ways ideas are discussed and compared. Kindness facilitates the quest for consensus; it opens new paths where hostility and conflict would burn all bridges” (224).*

The Holy Father explains that authentic dialogue is necessary for building a better world. Pope Francis first addresses the shortcomings of discourse in social and journalistic media, which he says can foster a “feverish exchange of opinions” or “parallel monologues” rather than true dialogue (202). “Social dialogue” requires interlocutors who each deeply respect the other’s experiences and values.

Dialogue can help us lead to “social consensus” based on facts and reasoning, but more importantly, it can help us recognize fundamental truths upon which we base our societies’ moral principles. Absent moral reasoning and authentic search for truth, we lose the grounding of the meaning of life and human dignity. Pope Francis calls for the careful cultivation of a

“culture of encounter” which can help us transcend our divisions and differences as we work together to pursue the common good. Such a culture is hard-won, requiring effort and sacrifice from all of us.

He closes the chapter by calling us to “recover kindness” in a renewed, enriched sense – a kindness which is an antidote to indifference, based not merely on civility but on genuine concern for others.

### Reflection Questions:

Have you ever experienced such a “culture of encounter?” What would it look like to cultivate it in your own neighborhood or community?



## Chapter 7: Paths of Renewed Encounter

*“Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible” (235).*

Pope Francis calls for peacemakers to forge new paths of healing and “renewed encounter” in our fractured world. He begins by explaining that building peace requires “starting anew from the truth,” or facing the reality of the harm done.

The Holy Father writes that, in the difficult work of building a peaceful society, “[there] is an ‘architecture’ of peace, to which different institutions of society contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, but there is also an ‘art’ of peace that involves us all,” including ordinary people and especially the most vulnerable (231).

Pope Francis describes the importance of reconciliation and its relationship to forgiveness, explaining that while forgiveness is central to Christianity, it does not mean forgetting harm done and it cannot be required of victims. Memory is important; we cannot forget tragedies such as the Holocaust or the atomic bombings in Japan, lest we repeat these catastrophic mistakes.

Finally, Pope Francis develops the Church’s teaching on the irrationality of the “false answers” of the death penalty and war, including the use or threat of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. In the modern world “[we] can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits... it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a ‘just war (258).’”

Likewise, he says the use of the death penalty makes no sense in a world where it is possible to keep society safe without it. Pope Francis clearly states the Church’s opposition to the use of the death penalty.

### Reflection Questions:

How can you be involved in the “art” of building peace in your community or society?



## Chapter 8: Religions at the Service of Fraternity in Our World

*“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 (272).”*

Pope Francis shares his belief and hope that the religions of the world can be at the “service of fraternity.” He writes, “we, the believers of the different religions, know that our witness to God benefits our societies. The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters (274).” People of faith are called to work together to build bridges and seek the common good.

Because religious tradition provides the transcendental values that are the bedrock of social morality, the Church “does not restrict her mission to the private sphere,” nor “remain on the sidelines” in the building of a better world, but rather seeks to “reawaken the spiritual energy’ that can contribute to the betterment of society (276).” Francis reiterates that, while the Church proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, it “esteems the way in which God

works in other religions” and “rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions,” affirming especially that which contributes to the common good (277).

Pope Francis believes that “a journey of peace is possible between religions” and that violence is a “distortion” of our fundamental religious convictions (281-282). Based on his encounter with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, he makes an appeal for peace, justice, and fraternity among people of faith. To conclude he names several others whose work inspired the encyclical, including Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Tutu and Blessed Charles de Foucauld.

**Reflection Questions:**  
Have you had an encounter with someone of another faith that made you feel we are “brothers and sisters all?”



### Prayers from Pope Francis

#### 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.  
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.

#### 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.