



ENCYCLICAL LETTER

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# FRATELLI TUTTI

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*Of the Holy Father Francis*  
On fraternity and social friendship

## An overview of the Encyclical

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# Introduction

Inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis gives us *Fratelli tutti*, a proposal for a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel. It is a call to love others as brothers and sisters, even when they are far from us; it is a call to open fraternity (FT 1), to recognizing and loving every person with a love without borders; it is a call to encounter others in a way that is capable of overcoming all distance and every temptation to engage in disputes, impositions, or submissions (FT 3).

*Fratelli Tutti* does not claim to offer a complete teaching on fraternal love, but seeks rather to consider its universal scope (FT 6).

COVID-19 forced the Pope to interrupt his writing of *Fratelli Tutti*. This pandemic has exposed our false securities, our fragmentation, and our inability to work together (FT 7).

In the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or to ignore others, *Fratelli Tutti* is an invitation to respond to God's call with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship (FT 6).

The Holy Father hopes that, in these times, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity by acknowledging the dignity of each and every human person (FT 8).

## Resource

The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) is using the *Overview of the Pope's Encyclical Fratelli Tutti*, written by and found on the website of the Vatican's Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development, [www.humandevelopment.va](http://www.humandevelopment.va), as the Outline for each Chapter. The National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW) adds its own Reflection and Call to Action to each chapter. It is our hope that you will use each Chapter as a study guide for yourself or as a group study.



# CHAPTER 1

## DARK CLOUDS OVER A CLOSED WORLD

The first chapter describes for us the dark clouds over a closed world; these clouds extend to all parts of the world, hindering the development of universal fraternity (FT 9); they are the circumstances that leave many people wounded by the roadside, discarded and rejected. The clouds plunge humanity into confusion, isolation, and desolation.

The dreams of a united Europe and an integrated Latin America, among others, appear to be shattered (FT 10). Myopic nationalism prospers, selfishness grows, and our social sense is lost (FT 11). Expressions like “opening up to the world” have been co-opted by the economic and financial sectors. A culture is being imposed that unifies the world but divides people and nations. Individuals are reduced to being consumers and spectators. Globalized society makes us more like neighbors, but it does not make us brothers and sisters. We are more alone than ever (FT 12).

Historical consciousness has sunken into the shadows; human freedom claims that it can create everything from scratch; we are urged to consume without limits and to embrace an empty individualism that ignores and scorns history (FT 13).

New forms of cultural colonization extend their reach ever farther; native peoples lose their ancient traditions and end up robbed of their very soul, losing not only their spiritual identity but also their moral integrity (FT 14).

Under the dark shadows of this ever more tightly closed world, precious words like democracy, freedom, justice, and unity are manipulated and emptied of meaning (FT 14). We see people sowing despair and discouragement, hyperbole, extremism, and polarization—these are the strategies for dominating and gaining control over people. The system denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion. Politics has been turned into marketing (FT 15).

Some parts of our human family are readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence. Persons considered no longer productive or useful are disregarded and discounted by this throwaway culture (FT 18) that prevails beneath the dark clouds of our closed world. Inequality of rights (FT 22) and new forms of slavery (FT 24) continue to exist. We are experiencing a “third world war fought piecemeal” (FT 25). We no longer have common horizons that unite us (FT 26). New fears and conflicts are arising, and new walls being built to prevent our encounter with others (FT 27). There is a moral deterioration and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility; there is a growing sense of frustration, isolation and despair (FT 29).

We are victims of the illusion that we are all-powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat (FT 30).

The absence of human dignity is clearly evident at national borders, where countless thousands of refugees are trying to escape war, persecution, and natural catastrophes. While they seek opportunities for themselves and their families, some political regimes do everything in their power to prevent the arrival of migrants (FT 37), considering them unworthy of fraternal love (FT 39).

Faced with all these problems, we are tempted to isolate ourselves and withdraw into our own interests, but this can never be the way to restore hope and bring about renewal. The path we must follow is being closer to others; it is the culture of encounter (FT 30).

The COVID-19 pandemic has revived the sense that we are a global community (FT 32). We are called to rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies, and above all the meaning of our existence (FT 33).

We experience the illusion of being in close communication with others. Distances are shortened to the point that we no longer have the right to privacy. In the digital world, respect for others is disintegrating, and even as we dismiss, ignore, or keep others distant, we can shamelessly peer into every detail of their lives (FT 42).

Digital campaigns of hatred and destruction emerge from the shadows (FT 43). Social aggression expands without shame (FT 44), while lies and manipulation proliferate. Destructive forms of fanaticism are promoted, even by religious persons and Catholic media (FT 46).

Despite these dark clouds, we need to be aware of the many new paths of hope, for God continues to sow abundant seeds of goodness in our human family (FT 54). The Pope reminds us that love, justice, and solidarity are not achieved once and for all; they have to be built day by day (FT 11).

The Holy Father calls us to hope. All men and women experience a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfilment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice, and love. Hope can look

beyond personal convenience, security, and the trade-offs that limit our horizons, and open us up to grand ideals (FT 55).

**Reflection: *NCCW Education Committee – by Diane Tugander***

Let's bring this closer to us. What dark clouds are you living under? Many are experiencing dark clouds of isolation due to this pandemic or possibly self-imposed. Could the dark cloud be a loss of freedoms, traditions or is it the loss or disconnection of family? Some may feel they are no longer a productive part of society and go down a deep hole of despair or depression. Do you feel cast aside by society?

When the Government separated families seeking asylum at the borders, there were consequences. They were seeking safety and freedom. Where did we go wrong? Instead, we created fear and despair.

Another dark cloud is the one many cannot get out from under – This digital world we live in today rests heavy on many; everyone knows everyone's business! This cloud draws in our young people, it is an avenue of the evil of human trafficking and in many cases, it breeds hate and ignores privacy. We need to rethink our use of this digital world and use it for the good it can do.

To come out of these dark clouds, we need HOPE. We need to reach out to others in the spirit of trust, goodwill and love. We need to follow what is said in Romans 13:9 ...all the commandments are summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

**Call to Action:**

1. When did I experience dark clouds in my life? How did I find the light – Hope?
2. What can I do to help turn off the negative/dark digital influence around me? By what means can I educate those within my personal circle to use this powerful tool for good?
3. How can I bring Hope to those who are lost?



## CHAPTER 2

# A STRANGER ON THE ROAD

There is a stranger on the road, wounded and cast aside amid the dark clouds of a closed world. Faced with this reality, there are two attitudes we can take: we can pass by on the other side, or we can stop and be moved by pity. The type of person we are or the type of political, social, or religious movement we belong to will be determined by whether we embrace the injured stranger or abandon him.

The Pope offers us the parable of the Good Samaritan as a ray of light in the darkness (FT 56). The parable takes us back to an earlier question, “Where is your brother?” (Gen 4,9). God leaves no room for an appeal to determinism or fatalism as a justification for our indifference. Instead, he encourages us to create a different culture, one in which we resolve our conflicts and care for one another (FT 57) because we all have one Creator who is the defender of the rights of all.

We are moved and called to expand our hearts to embrace the foreigner. It is a call to fraternal love that extends from the oldest text of the Bible to the New Testament (FT 61). Love does not care if a wounded brother or sister comes from one place or another. Love shatters chains and builds bridges; it enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home. Love exudes compassion and dignity (FT 62).

The parable tells of the “abandoned” traveler lying injured on the road. Only one person stopped, approached the man, and cared for him personally; he spent his own money to provide for his needs; he gave him his time (FT 63).

A sick society is tempted to ignore others, look the other way, and pass by as if unaware of the reality. It doesn't want to be bothered by sentiment; it refuses to waste time with the problems of others. It is built on an indifference to pain (FT 64).

Pope Francis calls us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our own nations and of the entire world. He summons us to be builders of a new social bond and to be aware that the existence of each and every individual is deeply tied to that of others: life is not simply time that passes; life is a time for interactions (FT 66). We are called to rebuild our hurting world, to form a community of men and women who identify with the vulnerability of others, who reject a society of exclusion, and who act instead as neighbors, lifting up and rehabilitating the fallen for the sake of the common good (FT 67).

The decision to include or exclude those lying wounded along the roadside can serve as a criterion for judging every economic, political, social and religious project (FT 69). The story of the Good Samaritan is constantly being repeated. We can see this clearly as social and political inertia is turning many parts of our world into a desolate byway, even as domestic and international disputes and the theft of opportunities are leaving great numbers of the marginalized stranded on the roadside. Today, we can begin again: Pope Francis calls us to take an active part in healing and renewing our troubled societies. We must foster what is good and place ourselves at its service (FT 77). We can start from below and, case by case, act at the most concrete and local levels (FT 78).

Difficulties are opportunities for growth, not excuses for a glum resignation. We are called to unite as a family that is stronger than the sum of its individual members. For the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts (FT 78). Reconciliation will give us new life and set us all free from fear (FT 78).

Finally, Jesus transforms the form of the question by asking what it means to be a "neighbor" to others. He calls us to be neighbors to everyone, even to those who are distant (FT 81). We are called to practice a universal love that is able to overcome historical prejudices, cultural barriers, and petty interests (FT 82).

It is important that catechesis and preaching 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 (FT 86). Only in this way will we be able to conceive and give birth to an open world, sweeping away all the dark clouds of our tightly closed world.

### **Reflection: NCCW Education Committee – by Ellen Bachman**

The message from Christ is so clear, and here we are centuries later with the same behavior. We have to ask ourselves why? We know the teachings. We know the parable about the Good

Samaritan. It applies today more than ever as we are in the midst of a worldwide pandemic. We see the Good Samaritan in the medical profession that works without rest, putting themselves in harm's way as they try to figure out the Corona virus. These are the good Samaritans. But why isn't the world reaching out to each other with supplies and comfort? They are the ones that passed by the man lying on the roadside injured and alone. They chose not to see him. There will always be a need in the world and there will always be surplus that could be shared. We are our Brother's Keeper...

As we witnessed the protests around the world, we watched some of them turn into riots. There was a woman who stood up to the crowd and said, you are destroying our community and the people who live here – Stop! How brave... But there were no supporters helping her. They all looked the other way.

Everyday God puts opportunities in our path to show his love and caring for all of us. It is our choice to decide whether or not we take those opportunities. Sometimes it's easy. We can call someone just to say I was thinking about you. We can talk to our children and grandchildren about how God works in our life (evangelization and education). Sometimes the opportunity may be to stand up to prejudice and injustice – not so easy. We have to be brave knowing that God is with us – it is He who asks us to be His love and compassion on earth. To follow the plan He laid out for us with His teachings. If not you... Who?

**Call to Action:**

1. When did I fail to act with love and kindness when that opportunity was given to me?
2. What can I do to change the direction of the world? What one thing would make a difference? Can I really change the world?
3. What one experience of yours can you relate to, that is similar to the parable about the Good Samaritan?





## CHAPTER 3

# ENVISAGING AND ENGENDERING AN OPEN WORLD

God is universal love, and since we are part of that love and share it, we are called to universal fraternity, which is openness. There are no “others,” no “them”; there is only “us.” Human beings can live, develop, and find fulfilment only in the sincere gift of themselves to others; they cannot fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons. No one can experience the value of living without having real faces to love (FT 87).

Life exists where there is bonding, communion, and fraternity. Life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity (FT 87). Every healthy, authentic relationship opens us to others; we cannot reduce our lives to ourselves or to relationships with a small group (FT 89).

Hospitality is one specific way of opening ourselves and encountering others (FT 90). The spiritual stature of a person’s life is measured by love, which is the criterion for the definitive decision about a human life’s worth. The greatest danger lies in failing to love (FT 92). Love is more than just benevolent actions; these have their source in a union that is directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful beyond their physical or moral appearance. Only this way of relating to one another makes a social friendship possible that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all (FT 94).

Here, we see the seeds of a vocation to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another (FT 96). This universal openness is existential rather than geographical; it has to do with our daily efforts to expand our circle of friends, to reach out toward the margins, to include those whom I do not naturally consider a part of my circle of interests even though they are close to me.

Every brother or sister in need, when abandoned or ignored by the society in which I live, becomes an existential foreigner (FT 97). There are persons who are treated as “hidden exiles,” persons with disabilities who feel that they exist without belonging and without participating. They may be citizens with full rights, yet they are treated like foreigners in their own country (FT 98).

A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of “social friendship,” the condition of possibility for universal openness (FT 99). The future is not monochrome: our human family needs to learn to live together in harmony and peace, without having to be all exactly alike (FT 100).

Those who form social groups that exclude any outside presence that disturbs their identity and style of life thereby also exclude the possibility of becoming neighbors; they can only be “associates”, partners in the pursuit of particular interests (FT 102).

Fraternity is not born only of a climate of respect for individual liberties, or even of a certain administratively guaranteed equality (FT 103). Nor is it achieved by an abstract proclamation that “all men and women are equal”. Instead, it is the result of conscious and careful cultivation of fraternity (FT 104).

Social friendship and universal fraternity necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere (FT 106); every human being is valuable and has the right to live with dignity and to achieve integral development. That basic right cannot be denied by any country (FT 110).

To achieve these ideals, Pope Francis calls us to do what is good for ourselves and for the whole human family and thus to advance together towards an authentic and integral growth (FT 113). He calls us to solidarity, to thinking and acting in terms of community.

Solidarity means giving the lives of all priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It means combatting the structural causes of poverty and inequality; it means remedying the lack of work, land and housing; it means struggling against the denial of social and labor rights (FT 116). All other rights having to do with the goods necessary for the integral fulfilment of persons, including that of private property or any other type of property, should in no way hinder these rights but should actively facilitate their fulfilment (FT 120).

No one can remain excluded (FT 121). Development must ensure human rights—personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples (FT 122). Business

activity should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty (FT 123).

We will have peace only when we are able to provide land, housing, and work for all. Real and lasting peace will be possible only on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of the whole human family (FT 127).

**Reflection: *NCCW Education Committee – by Beth Mahoney***

Pope Francis had a focus on St. Francis of Assisi when he wrote this encyclical. St. Francis' view of the church was wide and enormous; a vast openness to all who wanted to follow God. St. Francis heard the word of God say "rebuild my Church." It wasn't necessarily the structure of the building but rather the people within the Church. Pope Francis is calling us, envisaging and engendering an open world, to have our hands and arms wide open. We are called to look at how we interact with others who are in our inner circle, but more importantly those who are in the outer circle. It takes a huge amount of love to embrace someone who had wronged us. It takes a massive amount of hospitality to be ready to accept our brothers and sisters whom we do not agree with or have differences with, yet we are called to form a community with them.

The universal openness to which Pope Francis refers, calls for us to broaden our circle of friends. To accomplish this, we must first abandon our own needs and wants to make room for those whom we are called to welcome into our sphere of friendship. St. Francis knew what it would take to expand this vision and embrace this openness. He knew how to gather people together to build this church which will hold all who desire to follow God. This fraternity that Pope Francis refers to can only happen when we recognize that every single person is a true image of God and is fundamentally a part of this open world already. We have the challenge to actually facilitate their fulfilment in this open world.

Here lies the challenge for each one of us. There are times when we would just as soon keep our inner circle tight. It is less of a hassle and does not take a lot of energy to remain with those who like the same things and believe the same way. We are challenged to break open the tight circle. Get out of our comfort zone and expand our reach so we cannot close in on ourselves but embrace the hands of those who will reconfigure our circle. Our challenge is to open wide the world by imagining and stimulating the day when every human being is seen in the likeness and image of our loving God. What a world this would be when that day comes.

**Call to Action:**

1. How do I expand my inner circle of friends?
2. What beliefs or thoughts would I need to let go of to live the open world concept?
3. What things am I already doing to live the examples of St. Francis to help rebuild the church?



## **CHAPTER 4**

# **A HEART OPEN TO THE WHOLE WORLD**

We experience social friendship, we seek what is morally good, and we practice social ethics because we know that we belong to a universal family. We are called to encounter, solidarity, and gratuitousness.

The conviction that all human beings are brothers and sisters forces us to see things in a new light and to develop new responses (FT 128). When our neighbor happens to be an immigrant, complex challenges arise. As long as no substantial progress is made to avoid unnecessary migrations—and that means creating the conditions needed for a dignified life and integral development in the countries of origin—we are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs, and where they can find personal fulfillment (FT 129).

We must do our best to welcome, protect, promote, and integrate those who arrive. To that end, we should increase and simplify the granting of visas, adopt programs of sponsorship, open humanitarian corridors, provide housing, guarantee personal security, grant access to basic services, and ensure consular assistance, among other things (FT 130).

The arrival of persons who are different from us becomes a gift when we receive them with open hearts and allow them to be true to themselves (FT 134).

Gratuitousness is the ability to do things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense (FT 139). Only a social and political culture that is imbued with a spirit of gratuitous acceptance will have a future (FT 141).

There must be a healthy tension between the global and the local. 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 (FT 142). It is impossible to be "local" in a healthy way without being sincerely open to the universal, without feeling challenged by what is happening in other places, without openness to enrichment by other cultures.

Every healthy culture is open and welcoming (FT 146). The world grows and is filled with new beauty, thanks to the successive syntheses produced between cultures that are open and free (FT 148). Human beings are limited beings but are themselves limitless (FT 150).

### **Reflection: NCCW Education Committee – by Coreen Glen**

"In order to belong to a universal family, we must embrace solidarity and gratuitousness, especially in regard to immigrants." What is Pope Francis calling us to do?

Using a simple metaphor, by using solidarity and gratuitousness, can we, as patches of discarded, used fabric, when stitched together create a beautiful quilt? If a group of people show solidarity, they show support for each other or for another group, especially in political or international affairs.

How does "gratuitous" apply to immigration? Gratuitous is described in the dictionary as, "given, done, bestowed, or obtained without charge or payment; free; voluntary." In other words, an action is done simply because it is in itself good, in this case toward others. As we try to apply these definitions to our reality, we cannot apply them locally if we do not apply them globally. Nor can we apply them globally if we cannot apply them to our own family, neighborhood and community. But the operative word (or challenge) is how can we, as individuals, practice this solidarity and this gratuitousness?

The third letter of St. John, verses 5-8 tells us, "You are faithful in all you do for the brothers and sisters, especially for strangers: ... We ought to support such persons, so that we may be co-workers in the truth." Gratuitousness and solidarity will result in truth - seeing each other with new eyes. Our first step is to live a life in which Jesus is operational. Have you truly been grafted on to the vine, or do you have reservations? It's easy to talk about us all being brothers, but when it comes time to act, can we do it? Can we remember that all of us were wanderers at some time in our lives, either physically, emotionally or spiritually? Can we remember that Christ gave his life for that one stranger as if he were the only person in the world?

Are we able to "walk in the shoes" of the alien? In John 15:13 we read, "I have laid down my life for you, now lay down your life for your brothers and sisters." Can we do that? Yes, if we believe St. Paul's letter to the Philippians: 4:13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." When we can truly live that phrase, then we are ready to address and