



On the Encyclical Fratelli Tutti



Webinar – 4 March 2021

Fraternal love is a feeling potentially shared by all human beings. Yet it needs to be highlighted and developed in all its dimensions, including human relationships in the public sphere. Christianity is all about fraternal love. In the Social Doctrine of the Church “social friendship” is considered as the necessary inner impetus for economic, social and cultural institutions to achieve their goal, which is to foster and implement the requirements of human dignity and the common good.

Fraternal feelings can be experienced as the highest level of personal and social morality, a full accomplishment of what is best in our common humanity.

All through history huge progress has been achieved by recognizing the dignity, equality and value of all human persons in international declarations. Globalization as such is a step towards the mutual interaction of persons and nations searching for a set of common values and institutions on which to build their exchanges. The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed our common vulnerability and the need for a common effort to overcome it.

On a personal scale fraternity is challenged by individualism and selfishness. Fraternity is experienced by each person. It grows from our natural desire to help others in their basic needs. Many deep-rooted ideologies have to be ruled out. Current liberalism is based on the assumption that human beings are moved by their individual interests and that the market can regulate their selfishness and greed. The social construct is thought to be based on distrust of other people, who are seen as competitors. After half a century of increasing awareness of the universality of human rights, we are witnessing everywhere groups and nations stepping back behind real or virtual walls. The very notion of human universality is being challenged. The division of the world during the Cold War has now given way to a division for the dominion of the world.

Fraternity implies the sense of sharing a common destiny with others. It is a call to build a universal society on shared principles and values. Fraternity can only be understood as flowing from a common filiation. Where there is a common father and mother there are children entitled to share the same heritage. The basic principle of the common destiny of the goods of the earth is coherent with the call to human fraternity.

The scope of our work should be to single out the steps to be undertaken in order to implement the requirements of human fraternity in the public space.

1. The cultural sphere is paramount for fraternity. In each culture and religion there are references to be explored and enhanced, showing that fraternity is a universal value often hidden behind individualism, nationalism and hostility to strangers. The main lever to improve the feeling of fraternity among human beings is the inner spiritual world of each person. Christianity stands for the supreme value of love, understood as self-commitment to the well-being of others, starting with one's family, neighbourhood, nation, and community of nations. This attention to the inner potentialities of each person would also prevent us from giving too much attention to

the “uniformity of thought” of media propaganda encouraged by a materialistic ideology and by multinationals based on economic profit, and would give space to one’s spiritual freedom.

2. The economy. Is the economic system able to integrate the principles of the priority of each person, the common good and sustainable integral development? The economy cannot be left to run blindly, without the guidance of ethics of human happiness and sustainable development. Efforts have been made in some places. The so-called eco-social market economy meets more closely the vision of the Social Doctrine of the Church, which even calls for a “universal power” able to regulate the overwhelming role of the financial economy in investments, labour transfer and technology. Technology should not only benefit the more developed groups and nations but be made available to the neediest. There will be fraternity when our technological and economic capacity endeavours to fill the huge gap between super-developed and poorly developed countries. The use of technology and artificial intelligence in manufacturing and distribution of goods should not abolish but create jobs for all, as well as providing more leisure time for the cultivation of spiritual and human values, thus fostering autonomy and dignity for all human persons. The challenge is huge.

3. Is humanity able to develop more rationality and social friendship in political life? The political sphere is the mediation between values such as fraternity and the economic system. Many nations are threatened by populism fuelled by the media and fake news. In some contexts, the basic human rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, expression and association are not respected. Corruption devastates social institutions. Democracy should stand for alternating those in power and create a culture of service instead of domination. A great deal can be achieved by applying the principle of subsidiarity: more local autonomy, local production and consumption, more respect for local cultural specificities. To meet the universal challenge of fraternity, local fraternity is needed.

The workshop could be divided into three parts: the economic, political and cultural challenges of fraternity in a world of increasing fear of what is different.