

SANTHOME MISSION

Vol 28, No. 1 | Jan 2021



FRATELLI TUTTI BROTHERS ALL





Vol 28, No. 1
January 2021

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EDITORIAL



One of the most recent documents that has been intensely discussed and meticulously studied around the globe is *Fratelli Tutti*, the third Encyclical of Pope Francis. One finds many a reason behind the popularity and acceptance of this encyclical. It has a universal appeal, as it is an exhortation to all people of goodwill, not confining it only to the Catholics. Being different from other encyclicals that are dogmatic, liturgical, pastoral or missionary, *Fratelli Tutti* is a social encyclical with most of its references and footnotes coming from secular sources and rather than from the Sacred Scripture and Catholic tradition. Far from being a simple presentation of facts, this encyclical, impregnated with innovative thoughts and highly inspiring ideas, is a radical admonition or warning that demands serious consideration and firm action, challenging the reader to reflect, live and let live in the postmodern world today.

Through *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis tells us that the whole of humankind finds itself in a serious crisis, necessitating us all to stand united, lest the whole of humanity be annihilated from the face of the earth. Humankind dreams of a united world, but it is only a shattered dream today as we increasingly observe signs of regression, aggressive nationalism, selfishness and loss of social sense. Such dominating and dehumanizing factors as cultural colonization, globalization deformation of concepts, indifference towards the common good, throw away culture and disparity of rights hinder universal fraternity. Pope Francis has apprehensions concerning despair, the culture of walls, progress without a shared roadmap of goods and concern for self at the expense of the well-being of the human family that shroud humanity. Despite these dark clouds, we need to tread the unconventional and less travelled path of hope,

trusting the goodness of the human family. Pope Francis, therefore, calls for solidarity and communion among all peoples of the earth.

Pope Francis positively responds to the dark clouds of despair that shroud the world with the parable of Good Samaritan. Regretting the Jewish and Christian exclusivist tendency, he urges one and all to break the barrier and embrace the foreigner. Authentic faith expresses itself not only in cultic worship but also in acts of kindness towards the neighbour. The parable of Good Samaritan, relevant in today's postmodern society, challenges one to rebuild the broken world by imitating the Good Samaritan.

What Pope Francis envisages is an open world of universal fraternity. This openness is existential rather than geographical and therefore, true and lasting fulfilment is found only in the gift of ourselves to others as brothers and sisters. The human family that so formed must learn to live in harmony and not in uniformity. Existential foreigners abound around us today. They are often abandoned, unseen or unnoticed, as if in hidden exile, like the mentally and physically challenged, the elderly etc. Pope reiterates their intrinsic worth as well as human rights, conceiving them an integral part of the human family.

Human persons need to grow together authentically and integrally and pass on values. He demands ethics in international relationships and calls people to solidarity where they think and act in terms of community, give priority to human life and fight the structural causes of poverty and inequality. The goods and resources of a country shall not be denied to the needy even if they happen to be foreigners. Pope calls for a heart open to the whole world and says that lasting peace in the world is possible only with the global ethics of solidarity with the whole human family.

Migration is often in search of better possibilities, healthier living conditions and safer financial status. By enhancing such better conditions and giving better opportunities in one's own country, nations can discourage migration. Till that happens, the rights of all people must be respected, giving them what they need. Pope's idea of migration can be summarized in four words: welcome, protect, promote and integrate. Closing the boundaries of a country in the guise of safety and protection might carry the idea that the poor are futile and the rich are their generous benefactors. The beauty of the world is unity in diversity and the different others might be a gift for us, allowing mutual growth.

Pope speaks of a positive and kind politics that serves the common good, recognizes the importance and dignity of all and gives them the possibility of full personal growth, helping the poor to lead a dignified life through work. The world needs to develop a great spirit of fraternity for the people who are suffering due to poverty and wars and politics is one of the best forms of charity. It must seek the common good by acting against social exclusivism, marketing of organs and tissues, weapons and drugs, sexual exploitation, organized crime, terrorism etc.

The guiding spirit in social relationships should be dialogue, peace and harmony. Dialogue is to be kept in approaching, speaking, listening, knowing and understanding one another. The human society shall allow the differences to coexist, complement, illuminate and enrich, recognizing the right of all to be different. It stands in need of paths of peace to heal wounds and peacemakers to initiate the process of healing. It needs to accept the past with forgiveness and not fill the future with hatred as peace is often linked to forgiveness. It is possible to love the oppressors and help them change, leading finally to stop all oppression. War is the negation of all rights, a failure of politics and humanity and a defeat before the forces of evil. There is no just war or just killing like the death penalty.

According to Pope Francis, religions are at the service of humanity. Fraternity is achieved with an openness to God, the Father of all, affirming the transcendent dignity of all human beings. Thus, religions must help people see each other as brothers and sisters. Calling for inter-religious dialogue, Pope says that the Church must be a source of reconciliation in the world, moving forth from its places of worship to accompany life and sustain hope, building bridges and breaking walls.

Pope's concern, in this encyclical, is to bring about solidarity and communion of humankind. That is why it is a social encyclical that talks about human society and analyses it. In its analysis, he perceives the crisis in the world and observes the tragedy as well as its outcome, not being carried away by the progress in the world. Then, he shares his ideas to make a better world through better social life, better politics and better religion.

The present issue of Santhome Mission, being inspired by *Fratelli Tutti*, points to the *Ad Gentes* Mission of the MST. Rev. Fr Jose Palakeel, in his article *Ecclesial Mission in Fratelli Tutti*, focuses on the vision and mission of the Church in the document. Dialogue is one of the major topics in *Fratelli Tutti* and Rev. Fr M D Thomas analyses it, in his article *Relations with the People of Other Faiths*, in the context of inter-religious dialogue. Contextualizing this encyclical through a missionary perspective, Rev. Fr Joby Njalliyil deals with the *Fraternal Overtones in Fratelli Tutti for the Apostolates of the MST*. Rev. Fr Emmanuel Manikombel tries to bring out the radicality inherent and explicit in *Fratelli Tutti*, writing on the *Radical Ramification of Fratelli Tutti for the Future Mission*. Let us read, reflect and live this issue of Santhome Mission, being inspired to reach people beyond all barriers.

Fr Francis Kureeckal MST

Chief Editor

The background of the entire page is a vibrant sunset sky with orange, red, and purple hues. On the left side, there is a black silhouette of a church tower with a cross on top. The tower has a dome and several arched openings. The sun is visible in the lower right quadrant, partially obscured by the tower's silhouette.

Mission and Church in **FRATELLI TUTTI** An Avant-garde Perspective

Fr Joseph Palakeel MST

Fratelli Tutti, the third encyclical of Pope Francis, is a clarion call to a concerted action for redeeming humanity from the tribulations plaguing humankind in the third millennium. *Fratelli Tutti* (FT *hereafter*) is a comprehensive and systematic presentation of his vision of man, already expressed in his homilies, speeches, statements and other writings. Pope Francis invites all humans to live and work as a family, through a personal and socio-political conversion, in order to respond creatively to the needs of the 21st century. As such, a timely sequel to *Laudato si* and *Evangeliu Guadium*, we find in this encyclical a futuristic vision for an integrated human ecology.



FT is addressed to the entire humanity and not just to the Christians or believers. Affirming integral ecology and global solidarity of humans, Pope Francis has emerged as the Pope for all as is evident from the wide reception of this document. It is more a social encyclical addressed to all humans of good will. We find in it a Christian political philosophy dealing with capital punishment, peace building, war and other problems facing humanity. Unlike other encyclicals, FT rarely mentions the name of Jesus Christ or make reference to the Bible or speak about directly on Church or her mission or evangelizing mission, and is, as such, less theological. This is worrisome for many a Catholic. Nevertheless, on closer examination, we can find that all his foundational principles from the Bible and revelation and there is an embedded theology of man and an unspoken ecclesial vision that gradually unfolds in this encyclical as he elaborates his vision for the humanity.

In this article I am trying to lay out the unspoken ecclesial vision and theology of mission couched in this social treatise. Rooted in *Gaudium et Spes*, FT lays out a new and larger vision of Church as possible agent of unification of humanity. Similarly, basing human fraternity on the paternity of God the Father and the divine filiation of all humans,

Pope Francis has expanded the principles of Christian anthropology to entire humanity and has widened the scope of evangelization. This is theologically insightful and relevant. Pope Francis has expanded the very idea of catholic church by envisioning a church encompassing everyone on earth, irrespective of religions and affiliations. This vision will take some time to resonate well with traditional Catholics as well as the larger world.

1. A Brief Outline Of FT

FT is inspired by the Franciscan “vision of a fraternal society”. St Francis of Assisi sought to live in harmony with nature and with human beings and proposed it to his followers as “a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel” (FT1, 4). Like St Franc is himself, issues of human fraternity and encyclical is to “contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity”.

FT begins with an analysis of the state of the world in chapter 1 and a succinct elucidation of the parable of the Good Samaritan in chapter 2 as the core paradigm for fraternal engagement in the world. Next, the Pope presents his fundamental vision for human fraternity and social friendship in chapters 3 and 4. These chapters are foundational



to Francis' approach to humanity and its problems. Herein he argues that "the spiritual stature of a person's life is measured by love," and hence, this love must extend beyond family, tribe and nation to strangers, migrants and all people into a social friendship where the worth of every person is acknowledged. In the subsequent chapters 5-7, he lays out a political philosophy based on socio-cultural values which obliges to see all human beings as brothers and sisters and treat everyone with kindness and respect. Chapter 8 on the role of religion in building fraternity is especially useful for embarking upon ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. The key insights in chapters 3, 4 and 8 are engaged in this article to articulate the ecclesial-missionary vision of Pope Francis for unification of the whole humanity.

2. Human Solidarity: A Fraternity Resulting From Filiation

The theological foundation for human fraternity and solidarity is the double paternity-filiation bond

shared by all humans. As creator God is the father of all humans. This is the ultimate ground of human fraternity and human solidarity. So also, biblically, all humans are sons and daughters of the same parents Adam and Eve. And in Christian perspective, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, has united himself with the whole human family by his saving mission. Pope Francis' vision of human fraternity is, no doubt, based on paternity-filiation is, thus, deep-rooted in solid theological, anthropological and Christological insights.

2.1. Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of all Humans

FT states clearly that the Fatherhood of God is the foundation of all human fraternity: "As believers, we are convinced that, without openness to the Father of all, there will be no solid and stable reasons for an appeal to fraternity" (FT 272). Human person is "a creature called to be a child of God" (FT 271). This theological conviction is the foundation of respect for each human person and is indispensable to contribute significantly to building fraternity and defending justice in society.

Christian faith considers God as the Father of all human beings and all humans as children of God. God is the Father of all by creation. Although God as creator does not literally mean this, Biblical and theological teaching ascribes this meaning. Hence divine filiation is the ground of all forms of human fraternity. All religions that believe in a creator too have such a belief. No human fraternity is possible without divine filiation based on the paternity of God. The absence of God leads to the decline of man and of humanity.. Pope Benedict XVI, at Inter-religious meet in Assisi, October 27, 2011 stated the following: "The God whom we Christians believe is the creator and Father of all, and from him all people are brothers and sisters and form one single family". Theological foundation of human solidarity is the Fatherhood of God.

2.2. Children of one Earthly Father

The second ground of human fraternity is an anthropological motive: Biblical faith states that God created Adam and Eve and placed them in paradise with the command to multiply and inhabit the earth and all humans are progeny from the same parents. The affirmation in the *Acts of the Apostles* that “from one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth” (Acts 17:26), indicates this theological concept of the unity of human race as one family, bound by a common descent. Humans are created by God to live in communion and in community. Man and woman were created to live as “one flesh” or in perfect communion. In all societies, the family bond is considered as the primary entity of all human communities, which extend into tribe, nation and world community. Strong families build strong communities and strong communities build strong nations. Many social problems that afflict communities are traced back to dysfunctional families.

Tracing their origin to one family, all humans are brothers and sisters and are called to live in fraternal solidarity. However, sin disrupted the intended communion, already in the lives of the first parents and their offspring. We find Adam and Eve blaming each other immediately after the sin and their progeny engage in fratricide, violating the basic principle of fraternity with serious consequences for the whole humanity. All the conflicts, wars and genocides witnessed in history can be traced back to this primordial fratricide narrated in *Genesis*. Pope Francis observes that “in today’s world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia” (FT30). He observes further that world today “lacks a shared roadmap, we increasingly sense that “the gap between concern for one’s personal well-being and the prosperity of the larger human family” FT31). A truly Christian vision of God and humanity provides an effective spiritual and social basis for a World Family.



2.3. Fraternity Restored in Christ

We have seen that the original human fraternity by creation was battered by human sin of pride, greed and hatred. The evil legacy of the first brothers - Cain and Abel – keep creating enemies within family, society, nation and among nations. Sin has led to division and scattering of entire humanity, as depicted by the biblical narrative on the vain human endeavor to build a tower at Babel (Gen 11:1ff). This man-made situation of utter discord and degradation is reversed and the original paternity-filiation and fraternity are restored by Jesus, the Son of God who became human. Christ united himself with entire humanity and has restored the lost filiation and fraternity: “In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.” (CCC1).

Apart from Christ, we cannot speak of human fraternity and solidarity. All humans belong to the family of God through the incarnation (GS22, RH 13,14) of the Son and the working of the Holy Spirit. Hence, we are truly brothers and sisters without distinction of caste, religion, language or nationality: “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Through Christ and the Holy Spirit, humanity is once again gathered into one family of God in the Church and have become once for all ‘friends of the Son’ (Jn 15: 15) and sons in the Son. From a Christian perspective, Church is the locus of the restored human community and the ultimate model of human fraternity and solidarity.

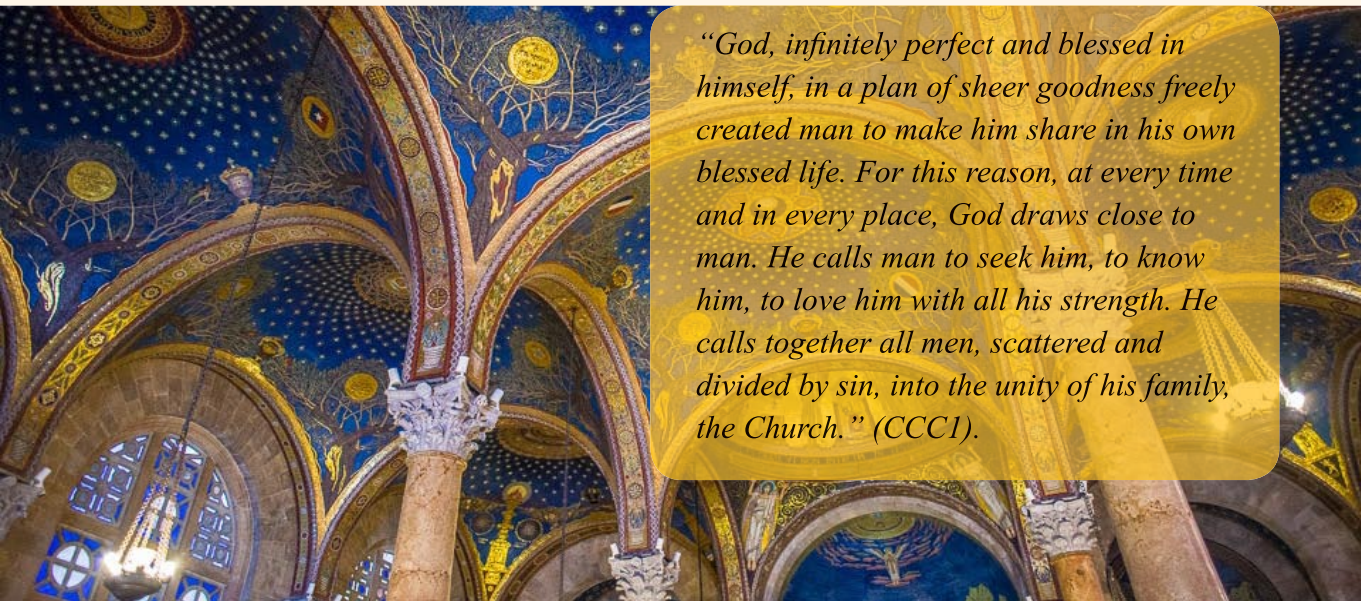
3. Church As Gathering Of Peoples

The theological, anthropological and Christological arguments for human fraternity and solidarity converge in the Church according to the Catholic theology. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that God's plan of salvation of man includes the Church as the earthly communion of the human fraternity: "He [God] calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church" (CCC1). The beginning of the Church on Pentecost gives a clear indication of the reversal of the 'scattering' of Babel (Gen 11:8-10) and the 'gathering' of people of all languages, cultures and nationalities (Acts 2:8-11) in order to form the kingdom of God on earth. The church is the 'gathering' of peoples to engender a community in firm fraternal solidarity. The portrayal of the Early Church in Acts intimates this: "... those who accepted his message were baptized; They were continually and faithfully devoting themselves to the instruction of the apostles, and to *fellowship, to eating meals together and to prayers*" (Acts 2:41-42). Peter speaks of it as the unique path to "be saved from this crooked and unjust generation!" (Acts 2:39), namely, to restore the original fraternity and solidarity impaired by the corruption of sin. Thus the Church is the symbol of the new humanity wherein fraternity and solidarity are found restored completely.

The name Church, originating from the Latin *Ecclesia* (Greek *Ekklesia*), literally means the community of believers in Jesus who are called out by God to live the values of the Kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus. It initially meant that the Christians have been called from the world into a relationship with Christ. However, overemphasis on the idea of "called out" or "called together" gradually began to gather exclusivist signification in terms of Christian community vis-à-vis people of other religions. Subsequent application of reductionist metaphors like 'Noah's ark' to the idea of Church deepened and broadened the imprint of an exclusive community, a perfect society, distinct from the general humanity, who became the target of proselytization through missionary activity.

In an inclusive conception, Church is the universal sacrament of salvation, namely, the emblematic gathering of the new people of God and not an exclusive community of privileged people. It is through conversion, personal and social, that one enters this community. Early Christian community lived in the *ecclesia* pattern, together in communities, holding all things common, under the government of God through His anointed leaders. (Acts 2:42). This original Christian community is a model of Christian solidarity. Its vocation is to live the communion and spread the word of salvation to entire humanity and bring all humans into fellowship "with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ" (1Jn 1:3).

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church." (CCC1).



Pope Francis, through FT, is seeking to offer the Christian *ecclesial* archetype of human solidarity as a model of governance (politics), economics and ethics for the entire humanity. Speaking of the Church and evangelization, he has the broader aspirations of humankind too in his mind. He is attentive to the signs of the time and engages the world in conversation on ecology, migration, global poverty injustice, and proper governance. Thus the ecclesial vision of Pope Francis in FT is not reductionist rendering of the church into one among many religious and socio-political systems, but a conscious positioning of the Church as the visible community of redeemed humanity – capable of being a model to governance in both polity and economics. He broadens the understanding and role of Church taking theological cue from *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* combined. There is, thus, a larger vision of Church embedded in this encyclical –discernible to diligent Catholics and shocking to conventional ones. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Kingdom of God by word and deed and invite all humans to live the renewed fraternity beyond family, tribe, nation and even religious groupings (Cf. FT chs 3-4).

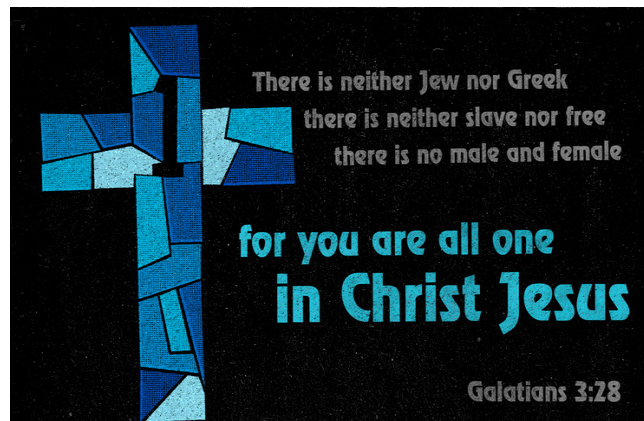
4. Mission As Call For Universal Human Fraternity

The Church, as the community of those who live under the reign of God, is missionary by her very nature. The Good News about the new humanity and restored fraternity of all should be proclaimed to the entire humanity. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God and commanded his disciples to proclaim the reign of God “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Christ constituted the Church as the community of witness to the God-intended humanity, restored in Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit of unity. Hence every human being on earth has the right to know about Christ the new Adam and to become a new creation in Christ (2Cor 5:17). According to Second Vatican Council, the nature of the Church as the universal



sacrament of salvation is the underpinning for evangelization.

FT is an exhortation to all men and women of good will to overcome the ‘scattering’ caused by self-centred individualism, greedy consumerism, collective indifference and callous crimes of war, terrorism and fanaticism. It is also an open invitation to become partners in the new human solidarity and fraternity instated on Pentecost. Above all, FT is an appeal to enter into the kingdom of God through individual and social conversion. Thus FT, in itself, is the Good News, in the twenty-first century sense, as the document addresses the urgent needs of humanity today and offers a way out, through an integral human ecology of renewed commitment to the humans and to the entire creation. Mission of the Church is to bring about the kingdom of God here on earth and to prepare humanity for the eschatological coming of the kingdom of God.



SANTHOME MISSION

It is true that FT does not directly speak of evangelization. Nonetheless, the enlarged vision of the Church and her mission, as laid out above, enriches the concept of evangelization of the global community. FT speaks of personal and social conversion and a total renewal of humanity – it is evangelization *per se*. Today the children of one God are divided by nations, ideologies, politics. The only way to stay together is dialogue or an encounter with openness to transcend all differences and to find common ground in the multi-level fraternity we share as children of one and the same heavenly Father. Inter-religious, inter-cultural, inter-national dialogue can lead to deeper knowledge of self and own religion as well as greater appreciation for others and help establish friendship, harmony, peace and solidarity (FT95). Here, the prayer of Jesus “that all maybe one” (Jn 17:21) shall be applied to evangelization to point to a global *ecumenism* among all humans who are originally brothers and sisters through divine and human filiation, yet find themselves estranged from one another. FT does not elaborate on evangelization but presents the evangelizing mission of the Church as the duty “to offer common witness to the love of God for all people by working together in the service of humanity” (FT280). Evangelization takes the form of multi-level dialogue, among different individuals, societies, religions, nations and all people of good will to bring the whole humanity to *Christian* solidarity.

Conclusion

A vibrant appreciation of our common humanity based on divine and human paternity-filiation makes *Fratelli Tutti* inspiring and challenging both theologically and politically. By extending an “invitation to dialogue among people of good will” (FT 6) and envisaging “a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance,” Pope Francis has widened the scope of Church and her evangelizing mission to be agent of universal communion of humanity based on love of God and love of neighbor. Asserting the dignity of all humans and the need to work for the good for all,

FT stands out as a mission statement based on Christian theological and anthropological vision: “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” (FT8).



Church fulfils the natural human desire to form various unions – family, tribe, state, nation – and elevates it into a mysterious unity based on Trinitarian communion. Isolated from God and others, humans cannot realize the fullness of life. The good news is that God has invited all humans into divine communion through Christ and the Holy Spirit. The Church is the divinely chosen locus of that communion on earth and evangelization is the divinely commissioned action of sharing the Good News of salvation to all. The challenge today is to create conditions for the Church to become a place of dialogue and a witness to life-giving fraternity as intended by God.

RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS

Fr Dr M. D. Thomas MST



Introduction

Faith is integral to human life on earth. But, it is not the same for all individuals and groups. Therefore, there is always the ‘other’ in the sector of faith, as in other realms. Now, do I dare to reduce the other to a potential ‘me’ or do I have to consider the reality of another entity other than me and enter into friendly relations with him or her? Well, there is a call for unlearning and relearning the way we conceive human being as well as God and live our faith. It is also a call for enlarging the horizons of our lives, lest the dignity and the sacredness of the divine, along with the human, get fragmented or shrunk and lost. At the end of the day, the ‘social character’ in the humans demands ‘friendly relations’ with people of other faiths. These are some insights this article vouches to examine, explore and explain.

1. Notional Considerations

The notions connected to relation, relations, relationship and the social character that make them possible, along with their basic or inner sense compose the base of our discussion on the main title above. Notional considerations unearth in brief and make clear the implications of the key words in question.

1.1. Relation or Relations

‘Relation or relations’ could be described as ‘connection between two or more things’. It is the ‘various connections, association, involvement, alliance or friendship in which persons are brought together’. It is ‘the way people, groups, countries, etc. feel about or behave towards the other’. In other words, it is ‘social, political or personal connections or dealings between or among individuals, groups, nations’, and the like. As per the focus of the relation, relation could be personal relations, foreign relations, public relations, business relations, social relations, and the like.

1.2. Relation/s and Relationship

Relation/s and relationship have the following nuance between them. ‘Relation’ refers to the ‘way to the connection or the way things are connected’, while ‘relationship’ refers to the ‘connection itself or the sense of relation’. The difference is not spacious. But, while ‘relations’ describe larger contexts, like countries, cities, companies and large families, ‘relationship’ is used for smaller groups of people, making things more personal or human. For instance, relation, in science, refers to the ‘interconnections between and among the parts of a system’, like neuron in the brain cells. Relationship, in databases, is a ‘situation that exists between two relational database tables’.

1.3. Relations and the Social Character of Life

Relation or relations is rooted in the ‘social character’ of life. Manifestly, the social fiber admits degrees, dimensions and gradations. The humans stand atop in the ‘collective sense’, which is the core shared element in them that cannot be parted with, as ‘homo sapiens’, rational animals or social beings. That amounts to state that ‘relation or relations’ is the direct outcome of the social character. While human beings are born and they pass away as individuals, they are born from the society, live in the society and even for the society. Only together, can the humans make the best ‘social sense’ out of their lives.

2. The Backdrop of the Theme in Question

The theme in question has a significant backdrop that paved the way for evolving a Christian and a truly catholic thought in the Catholic tradition. This thought launched the runway for a family culture, in the larger context, for the Catholic and Christian mission to take off its course for the future. The

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2.1. The Second World Catholic Council of Vatican

The sixties of the twentieth century made history anew and thus marked a new beginning, not only for the Catholic Christian community, but also for the other Christian communities and people or communities of all faiths, religious or not religious. The Catholic Church emerged then as an adult and pioneered the 'new wave of inter-faith relations or dialogue', first time in the history of the world. 'Nostra Aetate', meaning 'in our time', was the name of that significant document, which thoroughly shook the entire religious world, the

secular world as well, with a distinctive 'culture of inter' among the humans. 'Interface, interaction, interchange and cross-border relations' are a few of the catchphrases of this core culture of the believers, humans as well.

2.2. Christianity Back to Its Roots

Pope Francis, the most brilliant and down-to-earth pope of the modern times, observed, 'the Second Vatican Council was a serious attempt to take the Church back to its roots'. The roots of Christianity would mean 'the human-divine person of Jesus Christ and his amazingly sublime values', which ceaselessly glow with a sense of 'good news', by way of a loving openness to and acceptance of one and all, beyond all borders. The document, along with the entire Council, was a clarion call for a 'restart' and a 'refresh' of Christianity. It could even be said as 'the second coming of Jesus' and therefore 'the second phase of Christianity'. 'A new way of being Christian' was its revitalizing maxim that emerged from the above epoch-making event. 'Being a humane and relational Christian' in the essentially plural world was the call of the hour, too.



2.3. Nostra Aetate and Its Genius

The ground-breaking and thought-provoking realization Nostra Aetate presented before Christians, all human beings as well, reads thus, “if Christians treat other individuals, groups and peoples in a manner that is not befitting sisters and brothers, they have no right to call God their Father”. That makes it mandatory for Catholics to extend ‘fraternal behavior’ to people of all faiths and affiliations. Discriminating persons on any ground would be a major violation of the Christian faith in God the Father, whom Jesus revealed, as one who sends sunshine and rains on the good and the evil alike (Mt 5.45). The breach of the above ‘ethics’ would land Catholics and Christians the tragic fate of finding themselves out of the campus, as rendered faithless. That would amount to state that Christians have to necessarily engage in friendly dialogue or interaction with people of all communities, religious and not religious as well as Christian and other. Such is the revolutionary genius of the above document.

2.4. Credits in the New Dimension and Style of Mission

It is heartening to note that, taking impetus from the Council, several Councils at the Pontifical level and Commissions at the national level of the Church (CBCI in India) were launched, for promoting dialogue with people of other religions as well as Churches. Several Institutes and Commissions were established by Congregations and Dioceses, too. Seminaries started courses on ‘ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue’ and hundreds of scholars emerged, who wrote several books and articles on the diverse areas of the theme. Lots of sessions of interaction were organized, involving leaders and members of all communities of faith, too. Some individuals and institutes made outstanding contribution in the area, at local, national and international levels, with a considerable impact, noticeably so. These efforts motivated lots of people in other communities to initiate similar efforts, as well, efforts that were perhaps more applied to the social context than ever before.

2.5. A Theoretical Setback in the New Mission

All the same, it has to be admitted with deep regret that on the whole the Christian community at the level of the leadership took a ‘back seat’ in this great mission. A bird’s eye view of the reasons could be the following. The new area of the mission was to engage in ‘dialogue, inter-religious dialogue or interfaith dialogue’. The word ‘dialogue’, used independently, sounded too classical or ambiguous. ‘Inter-religious dialogue’ had too much of a theological connotation and so was understood to be the business of theologians. Theologians, by way of theorizing it, seem to have complicated it more than necessary, unfortunately so. ‘Inter-faith dialogue’ was slightly simpler, but still was thought of as something only scholars or leaders could attempt. As a result, the above mission was not owned by most heads and



members of the Catholic and even Christian community, either for not understanding it properly or for finding it difficult or not to the taste or to the ultimate advantage of doing what a 'screw driver' could do.

2.6. Practical Prospects of the Mission of Relations

The main title of this article, 'relations with people of other faiths', suggests clearly a Christian and a catholic (all-embracing) mission, human mission too, within the reach of every person. Promoting 'friendly relations' with all human beings has various degrees, grades, levels and dimensions and one of them or some of them can suit all

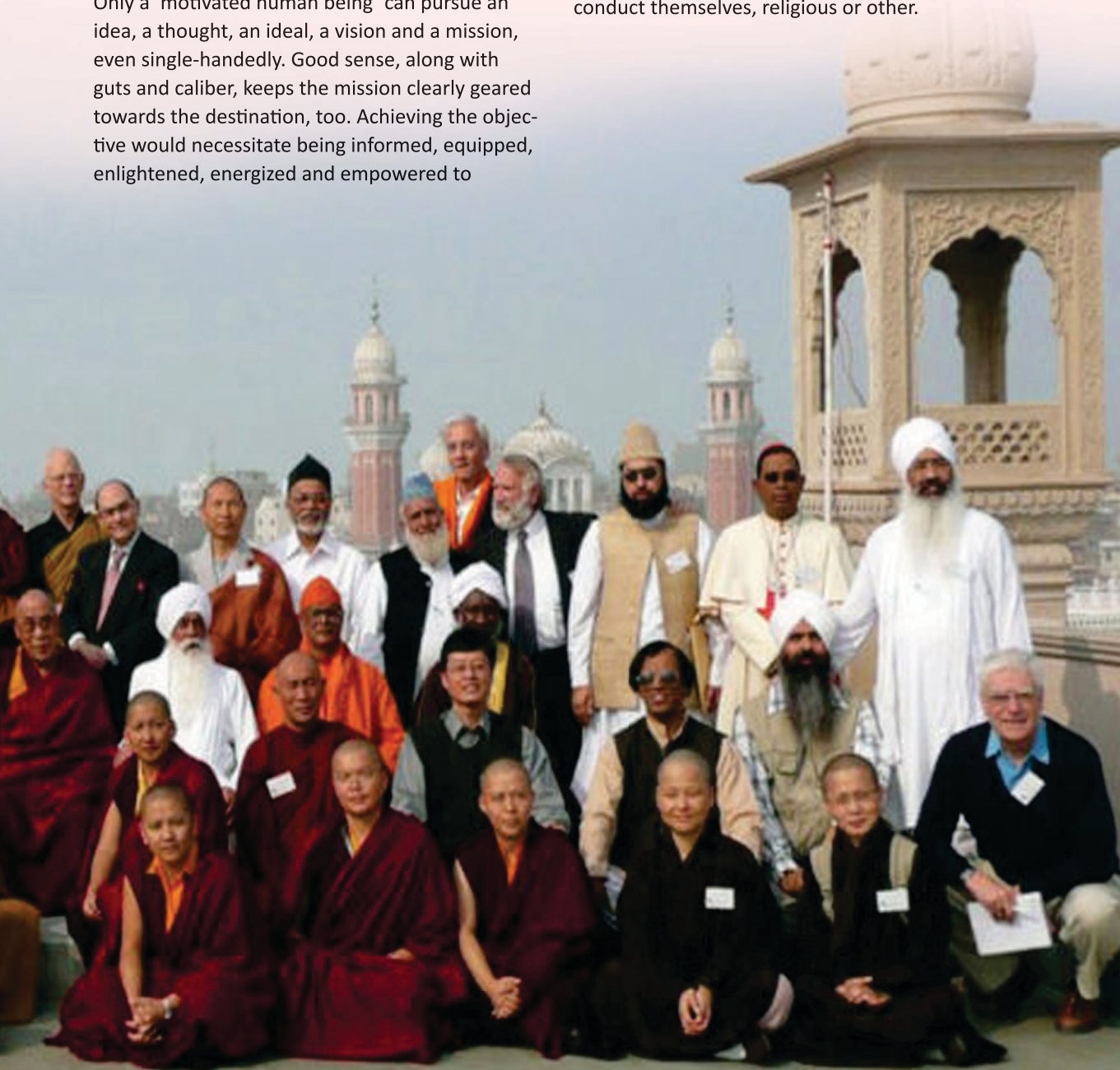
peoples, irrespective of gender, age, education, position, class, caste, creed, and the like. 'Good human relations' is everyone's cup of tea and people of all persuasions will equally relish it, as well. 'Good relations are the outcome of faith, in the real sense of the term, too. Language is the 'door' to enter into the world of the other, and therefore, proficiency in the national and/or regional language/s of the country will go remarkably a long way in fostering relations with people of any affiliation or level who would come on one's way in life. However, it is the mindset of the believer that matters, how he or she conceives faith, God, other, life, mission, and the like. 'Travelling the path oneself' will reveal to the Christian and all believers that the lasting prospects of the mission of promoting friendly relations are highly promising and is the closest to the mind of Jesus.



3. Conceptual Motivations

The basic role of the concept is to motivate and inspire the humans in a certain direction, purposefully so. An idea can change the world. In fact, only an idea can evoke real change in human beings. Law and fear of punishment, along with goody-goody instructions, devotions and observances, can do only temporary patchworks. Only a 'motivated human being' can pursue an idea, a thought, an ideal, a vision and a mission, even single-handedly. Good sense, along with guts and caliber, keeps the mission clearly geared towards the destination, too. Achieving the objective would necessitate being informed, equipped, enlightened, energized and empowered to

shoulder a mission and to translate the same in to the various routines of lives, even unsupported and un-collaborated. It is a motivated concept that facilitates the above process into fulfilling an effective mission. The current concept is socially motivated and it is strongly inclined to promoting 'good relations with people of other faiths and affiliations', irrespective of the fact there is a world of difference in the way individuals, families, institutions, communities and nations conduct themselves, religious or other.



3.1. Relations – Friendships and Partnerships

In line with the linguistic and notional implications cited above, a few of the crystal forms of relation could be ‘acquaintance, friendship, partnership and fellowship’ among believers of all faiths and associations. Relations branch out into ‘interpersonal, inter-family, inter-institutional, inter-community, inter-national relations’, along with its major and minor offshoots, like ‘inter-faith, inter-religious, inter-ideological, inter-linguistic, inter-disciplinary, inter-gender, inter-age, inter-caste, inter-class, inter-tribal and inter-cultural’ relations. Relation/s is an attitudinal mindset, in which sentiments of ‘goodwill, respect, appreciation, esteem, understanding, love, care, help, cooperation’, etc guide the destinies of friendship with other believers, thinkers and followers.

Relation or friendship can prosper only on ‘equal footing’, which is above considerations of superior and inferior, right and wrong, good and bad, powerful and weak and rich and poor. Good relations are ‘inclusive, interactive, participatory, collaborative and harmonious’ in character and they usher in friendships and partnerships in life, which can last much more than the calculable span of life. What is required is a talent for building bridges, however distant the gap of ‘difference’ between the pillars.

3.2. The Other – Friend, Brother/Sister, Better Half

The ‘other’ is he or she who exists or is present in addition to me. He or she is not the same as me, but is clearly ‘different’ from me. Male and female are a case in point. Male is not female and female



is not male, and are not supposed to be either. Both are different from each other. Both reflect the divine image. Even as clearly defined individual human beings with different identity, dignity and role, they share the same human nature. In a similar fashion, the other individual, even in one's own tradition, has a different or different dimension of faith, experience, ideology, perception of life, and so on, along with a clear identity and dignity, but either of them shares the same human nature. They are not enemies to each other, and not meant to be. They are intended to be friends, companions and co-pilgrims, as extension of one's own being. The difference in each other is not a negative factor, but is an element of enrichment. The 'others' together, like the colours in the rainbow, make sense collectively, true to their social quality. The reciprocal value in being brotherly-sisterly/friendly, even better half, one to another,

is what defines and qualifies the other. Such a 'beauty in difference or diversity' is fundamentally intended by the Creator. It couldn't be otherwise, at any rate.

3.3. People – Family, Community, Nation, Society

Human beings exist as individuals and groups, at the same time. Groups can be family, institution, institute, organization, forum, community, nation and society, along with its sub-units. 'People' is composed of a collection of individuals, small or big. Every individual who joins the group is an 'other'. Living alone in the physical sense does not mean being cut off from the people, family, community or society. Living together in a group does not guarantee being a family, community or a society, too. 'Staying tuned to each other' with a



unity of purpose and mutual bonding, leading to relation or friendship makes the difference. The dignity and merit of being a people, family, community, nation or society is inherent in balancing the equation between 'one and many', like 'one body with many parts', which is a perfect blend of rights and duties as well as the best paradigm of dimensions of difference in an effective interplay. The spirit of 'unity in diversity' and 'diversity in unity', as a collection of several 'other's, defines the moral fiber of being 'a people, a family or a community'. This is a divinely oriented 'ethics' by itself, the core ethics of being human and humane.

3.4. Faith – Inter-faith, Harmony among Faiths, the Divine in Full

More often than not, faith is understood to be the sole property of the religious sector. But, as a matter of fact, it is not so. Being a religious doesn't guarantee having a qualitative faith. Being not a religious can never rule out having a meritorious faith either. To say the least, everyone has a faith, religious or other. Faith is larger than religion. Faith is a perception, an idea, a conviction, a trust, a commitment to the power above, a devotion to one's conscience, and the like. A scientist or a thinker also is dedicated to the supreme energy or knowledge beyond him or her. Moreover, faith is plural and three-sided in its character. It has individual, social and spiritual facets, as faith in oneself, faith in the other and faith in God, all existing as one shared but single reality. It is inclusive, relational, interactive, participatory, collaborative and complementary, necessarily so. The spirit of being one, as in a musical concert, articulates what faith is all about. Therefore, faith can exist meaningfully only in unison and it is geared towards 'interfaith, multi-faith, all faiths and harmony among faiths'. 'Sharing with' the other the best of my values, along with 'sharing in' the best values of the other' is the dynamics of a living and sensible faith. Only when one is able to live the 'ethics' of such 'collective sense' in faith, one's hearts, minds and spirits will be large enough to contain God or the divine, in the real sense of the term, or in full. Well,



divinity, along with humanity, is much larger than religion and even faith. That is the logic of life, human life in special, which finds its expression in friendly relations.

4. The Mission of Human Relations

The idea of the 'mission' has evolved from the Christian world, to be more exact, from Jesus Christ who, with a singular vision, performed a unique and universal mission in the world, which became a 'paradigm par excellence'. While being a Jew, he emerged beyond the Jewish religion, beyond religion itself, blending all that the human and divine realities can contain, a 'mission of human relations'. A brother and friend to one and all, even as a teacher and master beyond comparison, a man for all seasons and a singular revolutionary to that effect, he became an unparalleled epitome for the mission of making good relations with one and all, radiating the divine effectively,



outstandingly so. The mission of human relations has to be applied to every person, institution, community, entity and context, in favour of strengthening the relational network of the family of God across the globe.

4.1. The Foundational Values and Directives of Jesus

Jesus articulated in a crystal clear way the 'ethics of human relations', by way of the human, relational and reciprocal 'culture of inter', 'do to the other what you would have him or her do to you' (Mt 7.12). This 'golden rule' governs the dynamics of inter-personal, inter-family and inter-community relations, irrespective of all differences the human world can gather. Further, Jesus summarized all his values of love into a paradigm of 'human-divine blend', 'whatever you did to one of the least of these sisters and brothers of mine, you did to me' (Mt 25.40). The relations with the humans, even the so called least, are balanced with the divine world, that too, on an 'equal

footing' in effect. Pope John Paul illustrated the dynamics of this culture further when he addressed People of Other Religions (Madras, 1986), "By dialogue, we let God be present in our midst, for as we open ourselves to one another, we open ourselves to God". Being open to one and all, without discrimination and leading to good relations, is the Christian and human way to approach God, the God of all, positively so, and definitely not otherwise.

4.2. The Latest Papal Guidelines for the Christian Mission of Social Relations

In the recent encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti', meaning 'fraternity and social friendship', Pope Francis luminously underscores the mission of promoting relations with everyone in an outstanding way. The above words were coined by Saint Francis of Assisi to address his brothers and sisters and they intensely radiate the flavour of the 'good news' of Jesus Christ, markedly so. Further, the Joint Declaration of Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, in Abu Dhabi, 2019, reads "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters". The deep commitment to the brotherly and sisterly sentiments reflected therein make a clarion call to transcend all sorts of difference, distance and otherness, religious or other, and to touch upon the realm of social friendship, beyond all human-made and silly borders. This 'maxim of relations' summarizes all that the humans can gather during their sojourn on earth as well as the sublime values Jesus lived and taught, towards launching a culture of a 'human-divine pursuit of life', even much beyond or different from the religious jargons.

4.3. 'Making the Family of God the Father on Earth' – the Umbrella Outcome of the Mission

Grounded in the filial experience of God as 'Father', Jesus became fraternally incarnate to every person,



as an elder brother, a Master, a friend, a companion, a healer, a giver of new life, and the like, all these roles in the spirit of 'he does all things well' (Mk 7.37). In point of fact, the mission Jesus launched was truly catholic and all-embracing, 'making the family of God the Father on earth', the 'mission par excellence' and a 'mission with a difference', for Catholics, Christians, for all faiths and for all humans, for all times as well. Therefore, all human beings are daughters and sons of the same Heavenly Father and are sisters, brothers and friends, one to another, beyond the human-made borders of high and low, right and wrong, first and last, and the like. That would amount to conclude that 'promoting friendly relations with people of all faiths, ideologies and cultures' is the real Christian mission, in the larger context. All other dimensions and details of the Christian mission have to be conducted in such a way that this 'larger ethics' is not violated and, at the same time, ultimately accomplish the 'paternal-filial-fraternal' style of family relations of God the Father on earth. Commitment to the larger mission of making a 'family of families', an 'institutions of institutions', a 'community of communities', a 'nation of nations' and a human society that is 'charged with the divine nerve' is the call of the hour.

Conclusion

'External relations' define the larger social fiber of nations, communities, families, institutions and individuals. Establishing, maintaining and promoting friendly relations with all 'others' is the litmus test of a faith that is worth being had, too. The 'ethics' of good relations, leading to 'fraternal friendship and cooperation' with people of all communities, especially well-meaning persons, in view of making a better nation and society, is the right response to the challenging context of the bitterly viruses around as well as the rightly motivating insights and divinely charged human values of Jesus. The Christian community is called to rise above tendencies of making 'islands', 'parallel lines' and 'cobwebs' as well as of 'cutting the limbs to suit the ready-made churchy coat', in the name of the mission of Jesus. Rather, it will do well 'delving deep and large' in to the ocean of the human and environmental world of the very same Creator of all, God the Father, after the fashion of Jesus Christ. Committing oneself to opening the large umbrella of God the Father or the Creator of the entire creation for all the humans and beings to gather together in relations, I believe, will be the way of giving due credit to the dignity of being born as well as to the giver of life.

The author, a Ph.D. in Hindi Literature, on a multi-disciplinary theme 'Kabeer and Christian Thought', is a scholar; a leader and an active promoter of 'cross-cultural perspectives, inter-faith relations and social harmony', and is a writer, speaker and a social analyst to that effect. He was Diocesan Director of Institute of Religion and Culture, Ujjain, National Director of Commission for Religious Harmony, CBCI, New Delhi, and Editor of multi-faith journal 'Fellowship'. Currently, he is Founder Director of Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies, New Delhi. He can be contacted at 'mdthomas53@gmail.com'.



Rev. Fr Joseph Kochayankanal

(A Pioneer Member of the MST)

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Mother: Annamma (+1999)

Siblings

K.C. Philipose (late)

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K.C. Jacob

K.C. Baby (late)

Education

Primary School: St Mary's L.P School, Ittiyappara

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Minor Seminary: Good Shepherd Minor Seminary, Pala (1955-58)

Philosophy and Theology: Sacred Heart Seminary, Poonamallee (1958-1961)

Ordination: 01-12-1964, By Bishop Vayalil in Mumbai (During the Eucharistic Congress)

Promise of Incorporation into the MST: 19 May 1970

Appointments

1965-1967: **Asst. Vicar**, St Mary's Church, Teekoy, Pala

1967-1968: **Asst. Vicar**, Sacred Heart Church, Poovarany, Pala

1968-1969: **Asst. Vicar**, St Thomas Cathedral, Pala

1969-1971: **Vicar**, St Dominic Church, Mundankal, Pala

1971-1972: **Vicar**, St Antony's Church, Vellikulam, Pala

1972-1973: **Vicar**, Lourdes Matha Church, Chennai, Pala

1973-1981: **Priest in charge**, St Xavier Church, Nagda Ujjain (Constructed Church, Presbytery, Convent and School)

1981-1983: **Manager**, Deepti Gardens, Palakkad Vicar, St Joseph's Church, Kollamkod (Diocese of Palakkad)

1983- 1988: **IV Councillor of MST** (May 1983- October 1983) and Treasurer General of MST (Deepti Bhavan, Melampara)

1988-1994: **Procurator**, Diocese of Ujjain

1995-1997: **Priest in charge**, St Joseph's Church, Narasingarh, Ujjain

1998-1999: **Decennial Break**

1999-2001: St Mary's Church, Rajagarh, Ujjain

2001- 2008: **II Councillor and Procurator** of St Paul Region, Ujjain (Resided at Regional House, Mendya, Ujjain)

2008-2013: **Spiritual Director**, Ruhalya Seminary, Ujjain (Philosophy Section)

2013-2020: **Retirement at Aaraam**(Priest-home), Deepti Bhavan (from May 2013)



Fraternal
Overtones of
Fratelli Tutti
for the Apostolates
of **M**ST

Fr Sebastian Njalliyil MST



1. Humanity as the Centrality of Mission

Fratelli Tutti places human persons -irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, gender and other disparities as the sole reason for the mission of the Church. It is out of love for humanity that the mission originated and the whole universe is craving for humane interventions and approaches (FT 6; 286). Through our diverse apostolates, the MST holds a legacy of reaching out to people of all kinds, especially by showing forth the merciful face of Jesus. All our apostolates have the origin from the love for the neighbor which finds itself on the love of God. Our multi-faceted ministries share the love of God with all strata of humanity, and the humanity we serve determine the nature of the apostolate (C 2b).

Our flexibility in undertaking any apostolate for any cultural group is a sign that we have been successful in comprehending the universal and wholistic implications of the mission for the people and committing ourselves to the same in manifold ways. Let us be proud that we have been living this heightened spirit of mission for the past 53 years in history, even before it was articulated by *Fratelli Tutti*. However, in any case, if we are to dust out the lost pride of mission, let us not be hesitant to do that in haste. Pope Francis reminds us that “isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests are never the way to bring about renewal”(FT 30). Constant reminders are essential to set and reset our priorities and approaches wherein ‘people’ are the prime and the only focus of our mission. His overwhelming discourse on fraternity in the encyclical enlightens this focus further.

2. Fraternity as the Law of Mission

Not only the radical adherence of St Francis to Christ, love for the poor and gratitude for the environment but also the virtues of fraternity and social friendship which the Saint upheld have

What has *Fratelli Tutti* – a social encyclical of Pope Francis – to do with the Missionary Society of St Thomas the Apostle (MST) that aims for mission *ad gentes*? As members of a Society of Apostolic Life, we are called “to live a life after the pattern of the lives of the apostles of Christ, i.e., an apostolic life lived and expressed by way of communion and witnessing”(Proposed Draft of the *MST Constitutions and Directives* – C&D, C.43) which we manifest individually and collectively through our involvement in numerous apostolates of diverse nature in different parts of this planet. Reading the lines of *Fratelli Tutti* (FT) and reading it between the lines, I am fascinated by its force that can drive us towards the kind of apostolic finality which the MST aspires for; and I am compelled to say that it is not any less than a missionary encyclical. Revisiting the missionary-apostolic initiatives of the MST through the eyes of *Fratelli Tutti*, here I attempt to unveil certain strengths and shades of our activities and approaches in continuing the mission of Christ in the contemporary times.

motivated Jorge Mario Bergoglio to prefer his papal name as 'Francis.' In Fratelli Tutti the Pope also refers other exemplars of fraternal commitment in the persons of Martin Luther King Junior; Mahatma Gandhi, Desmond Tutu and Blessed Charles de Foucauld. Addressing 'all people of good will,' Pope Francis aims to engage the whole world in dialogue (FT 6). He wants to give a new way of being the Church on earth by expounding the inevitability of fraternity and social friendship, without which the Church will be doing a mission different from the mission of Christ.

Through our apostolates, we share the fraternal love which was manifested to its maximum in the selfless love of God through Jesus; and it is the only way to restore hope. Presenting Francis of Assisi as a model, the Pope writes that Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that God is love and those who abide in love abide in God (1Jn 4:16). In this way, he became the father to all and considered the universe as a fraternal society. Bringing peace and harmony in the living contexts, esteeming the human dignity and spreading the message of peace are fundamental to the mission of Christ and if our apostolic activities do not function on fraternal love, it is away from the mission we are called for (FT 4). Pope Francis exhorts us to turn away from a 'throwaway culture' and a culture of indifference; and instead, to embrace 'a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions,' a culture where everyone is included and no one is expendable (FT 215).

Pope Francis has been urging the Church to 'go out' into the peripheries of existence and to care for those who are left behind. Every Christian has the vocation and mission as our brothers' and our sisters' keeper, just like Cain was responsible for his brother Abel. Their sufferings and innocent blood sheds cry out to heaven. Indeed, "only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a

father" (FT 4). In chapter two, the Pope discusses Jesus' famous Parable of the Good Samaritan and applies the lessons not just to our own individual hearts but also to international relations, in terms of how we care for those who are suffering. The parable of the Good Samaritan should be an inspiring daily life experience for each one of us. We have around us the 'robbed' people (FT 72). It also portrays an interior struggle that each one of us has in our lives (FT 69). We are to carefully look at the passers-by. The Pope says: "Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment" (FT 77). The MSTs are trying to be Good Samaritans to all strata of humanity and our apostolic activities become truly missionary to the level of manifestation of fraternal love in our involvements.



3. Brightening the Silver-linings in the Dark Clouds of our Missions

Dark clouds of the human contexts where MSTs are engaged in collective mission work call us to bring forth hope to people. Pope Francis clearly acknowledges the dark clouds that block universal fraternity such as war, polarization, consumerism, modern slavery, abortion, euthanasia, racism, unemployment, poverty etc. Persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled,' not yet useful – like the unborn, or no longer needed – like the elderly. We are grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with waste of food, which is deplorable in the extreme" (FT 18).

The unjust situations have made it difficult for us to relate to each other as members of the same-family. We objectify other human beings and their problems and let them become a 'them' rather than an 'us.' Ideologies of economic self-interest tend to domineer the common good. Public conversation and communication are being poisoned. There continue to be many forms of discrimination. There is a widespread disrespect for vulnerable human beings. We are living during a time of much uncertainty. The recent pandemic Covid-19 reveals the common fragility and the unjust structures and systems that place all of us and especially the most vulnerable at risk. Many worrying situations in the missions such as unemployment, poverty, cast system, formulation of laws targeting the missionary apostolates, growth of extreme right wings, religious fundamentalism, dilution of



constitutional values, etc. urge us work for establishing the kingdom of God. We need to have resourceful hearts and minds to brighten the silver-linings of the dark clouds that our communities face.

4. MST Apostolates and the Vision of Fratelli Tutti

The MST has the vision of reaching out to all strata of humanity with the purpose of ‘mission ad gentes.’ Taking inspiration from *Redemptoris Missio* 89, the C&D of MST clearly says that following the example of Jesus, the members shall reach out to all strata of humanity to establish God’s Kingdom with preferential option for the poor and the needy...The missionary as a universal brother shall overcome “barriers and divisions of race, caste, or ideology. He is a sign of God’s love in the world — a love without exclusion or particularity” (RM 89, C&D 47).

The C&D of MST invites each member to be a ‘universal brother’ including everybody in the circle of love. “No one is useless and no one is expendable” (FT 215) in our missionary journey. The MSTs take inspiration from Apostle Thomas who touched the wounds of Jesus proclaiming, “My Lord and My God” (Jn 20:28). The touching of the sacred wounds of Jesus after the resurrection reminded him of the piercing of Jesus’ side with a lance and the flow of water and blood from there. This experience was a realization for Thomas that “God carries with him the imprints of Human Wounds” (*Thomasine Missionary Spirituality*, p. 35). By caring for the wounds of the people, we serve and care for the Lord Himself.

The MSTs have “to live a life after the pattern of the lives of the apostles of Christ, i.e. an apostolic life lived and expressed by way of communion and witnessing” (C43, Draft Copy of Revised C&D) by taking up various “...apostolates of kerygma i.e. proclamation and diakonia i.e. service (Cf. Acts 3:32-35), considering the needs of the time



and place and the availability of resources, both human and material” (Cf. C2b and C. 51 Draft Copy of Revised C&D). Through the apostolate of proclamation (kerygma) we aim at spreading the Word of God to the whole creation and sharing the life giving and liberating message of Christ for the redemption of creation (Cf. Mk 16:15; Rom 8:22). Through various apostolates of service such as education, training and rehabilitation of the differently abled, healing ministry, empowerment of women, farmers, care and protection of the children in need, caring for the aged, protection of environment, promotion of sustainable agriculture, etc. we engage in spreading the merciful of Jesus (Cf. C2). The missionary apostolates focused on kerygma and diakonia are the signs of fraternal love towards humanity and the MST vision and mission are highly matching with the spirit of Fratelli Tutti. The action required at this juncture is to introspect and ensure that our collective and



individual missionary efforts consistently manifest the love of God and neighbour and that our call to facilitate fraternal living in this planet is properly fulfilled.

5. FT's Calls for Missionary Discernments

With its emphasis on fraternal and inclusive attitudes of being the Church in the contemporary world, the encyclical calls for making right discernments in our apostolic commitments. "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). Fratelli Tutti is an invitation for the MSTs to appraise our present style of mission work. Like the chance traveller in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we need to have a pure

and simple desire to be a community, constant and tireless in the effort to include, integrate and lift up the fallen. I point out a few areas in our missionary context which require repairs to better manifest fraternity in our apostolates and place the following thoughts for your practical consideration.

a. Moving from Sympathy to Empathy

Sympathy is the distant and indifferent expression of sorrow or regret for the sufferings of another. It does not require moral investment from the one who expresses it. Empathy, on the other hand, is to enter into and share the sufferings of the other. We express empathy when we allow ourselves to be vulnerable and suffer with the sufferer, not merely expressing our distress at their suffering but participating in it. There is a call in Fratelli Tutti to participate in the suffering of the differently abled, sick, children in need, aged, exploited and poor women, poor farmers and the weaker sections of humanity. We are to be in their shoes and feel their sufferings and pain for ourselves. We are to shed tears if they are crying. Many of our apostolates may not reach the desired goal mainly due to this lack of empathy. Today's world is in need of missionaries like Mother Mary who said to the Lord 'they are in need of wine.' Mary could understand the unavailability of the wine in the family only when she went into the lives of the family members. To say 'they are in need of so and so,' we are to go into the lives of the people with empathy. When the MSTs are sensitive to the needs of the people we serve and be able to feel with them, it is impossible for us to aspire for luxuries and to engage extravagance in our lifestyle.



b. From Professionalism to Charity

The world today is branded with professionals and ‘being professional’ has become the mantra for being successful. This thought has even crept into the Church. It is true that, we have to be professionals because professionalism brings discipline and order to our apostolate. But at the same time, it brings legalism sidelining charity and empathy. Professionalism always looks for 100% success in the field but charity on the other hand cares for people. The encyclical upholds this idea very much. In a true sense, today’s world is not in need of professionals but of those who have a charitable heart. Saint Mother Theresa used to say that we are called – not to be successful but faithful. The professional expertise should only be an added flavor; charity should be glittered effusively through our professional expertise. But in all matters, not success but love for the human person shall drive our priority in the mission.

c. From Institutions to Peripheries

Pope Francis is challenging the disciples to move outside of their comfort zones. The ‘lifestyle’ to which we are all called has been challenged by an opposite logic: that of the ‘throw-away culture,’ which includes the temptation to build “walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent the encounter with other cultures, with other people” (FT 27). Often times, we get tied up with running the programmes of our institutions, having little time to encounter and personally interact with people in our immediacy. Promoting a culture of encounter is a clear goal of the encyclical, because we, as a Society of missionaries, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning programmes that include everyone” (FT 215-216). The encyclical challenges us to bring the Gospel to people in need around our institutions— both geographical-ly and existentially through experiencing the pain and sufferings of the needy. If the institutions turn as walls not as bridges to reach out to the people



d. From Activism to Action and Contemplation

Missionaries are not activists but persons of prayer with dynamism and action. We are supposed to intercede for the people we serve. We need to have a life of action blended with prayer. If we are really convinced that the people whom we serve are our own siblings since all of us are sons and daughters of the same God, we cannot but offer the struggles of our people on ‘the altars’ of our churches. The touch of Jesus for the leper, the presence of Jesus for Martha, the look of Jesus on Peter and the love of Jesus for John shall solely be expressed through our service. Actions followed from contemplation are powerful weapons sharpened with love, compassion and joy. If we undertake the apostolates as our responsibility to the Lord and to the people around, they cannot be called sheer activities, but our essential commitments.

and if the world truly belongs to everyone,
then it matters little whether my neighbor
was born in my country or elsewhere."

-- Pope Francis, "Fratelli Tutti"



Conclusion

We shall not fail to stop at peoples' injuries. Pope warns: "several persons passed him (wounded person) by, but failed to stop. These were people holding important social positions, yet lacking in real concern for the common good. They would not waste a couple of minutes caring for the injured man, or even in calling for help"(FT 63). We the missionaries of the MST should "...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). There is a doctrinal clarity about our fraternal vision and mission in our C&D, but the real challenge is to translate them into the reality of our everyday existence.

Fratelli Tutti reminds us that every instance of human necessity invites to pause and proceed for appropriate action, than to pass by. Let us pray with Pope Francis, "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" (FT 287).



RADICAL MISSION IMPLICATIONS OF FRATELLI TU

Fr Lijo Manikombel MST



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*“We may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words”
(FT 6).*

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Introduction

Holy Father Pope Francis on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi released the third encyclical of his pontificate **Fratelli Tutti** and it discusses the theme of fraternity and social friendship. It has become one of the most discussed encyclicals and people of all faiths and beliefs appreciated it. The Pope invites everyone to have an unconditional love for our brothers and sisters irrespective of all differences and to strive for the promotion of the common good of all as one human family. In this encyclical the Pope exhorts us that “we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words” (FT 6).

Relevance of the Encyclical

Fratelli Tutti is an encyclical of our time and very relevant in today’s world. It is addressed to all people of good will and all are reminded of the necessity of living in fraternal love and to work together as brothers and sisters for the common good. It is written and released in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic and it encourages everyone to

be more loving and caring towards our brothers and sisters. Though there are dark clouds present in the world through a sense of global community, compassion, healthy openness, charity, kindness, forgiveness, dialogue, sacrifice and love we can maintain fraternity and social friendship in the world. Thus the encyclical addresses the present day problems and suggests solutions too.

Radical Ramification of the Encyclical

The encyclical presents a counter culture as in the beatitudes. It is a loving reminder calling us to come out of one’s own self and to work for our brothers and sisters keeping in mind the common good of the humanity and the universe. In the first chapter **Dark Clouds over a Closed World** Pope Francis presents his thoughts on what holds the humanity back from blossoming into one universal fraternity. In the modern world due to selfishness and loss of social sense, the values such as goodness, justice and solidarity suffer. We tend to ignore the cry of our brothers and sisters. Value given to human persons especially to the poor, the elderly and the disabled is getting diminished. People and nations tend to embrace a throw away culture. We speak a lot about human rights but many forms of injustice and exploitation exist in the society.

*“Politics must make room for a tender love of others” (FT 194).
Politicians should ask themselves “How much love did I put into my work” (FT 197).*

War, terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecutions etc. cause fear in the minds of people. The Pope also speaks about fear of immigrants, sufferings of migrants, superficiality of digital connection that can lead to aggression and polarization etc.

Though many dark clouds exist, Pope Francis invites everyone to a renewed hope and asks us to make our life more beautiful and worthwhile. Covid-19 pandemic reminded us that we are a global community. We can overcome the dark clouds by maintaining a healthy openness and by holding on to values that are essential. The Pope calls us to recognize what is essential to give meaning to our life and to the lives of others and to practice them.

In the second chapter **A Stranger on the Road** the willingness of the Samaritan to be with the needy is highlighted and the Good Samaritan is shown as a model of fraternal love. The Pope speaks about our general tendency of avoiding the needy. There are no justifications for our indifference to our brothers and sisters. It is our responsibility to play our role in renewing and supporting our troubled societies without expecting any recognition or gratitude. Pope Francis is inviting us to make ourselves present crossing all cultural and historical barriers and to be contributors than onlookers.

In the third and fourth chapters namely **Envisaging and Engendering an Open World** and **A Heart Open to the Whole World** the Pope makes us reflect over the necessity of moving beyond ourselves. Real love seeks the best in others, it creates the openness and the ability to accept others as they are. The Pope expresses his concern about migrants and the related issues too. He says migrants are to be welcomed, protected, promoted and integrated.

It is a call to love everyone irrespective of their origin, background or abilities and to learn to treat others with equal dignity. We need to ensure that everyone lives with dignity, mature in moral values and opportunities are distributed equally to develop integrally.

In the Fifth chapter **A Better kind of Politics** the Pope says that the present world politics is corrupt, authoritarian, and dictatorial. It seeks for short term advantages. But true politics serves the common good. Thus Pope Francis is presenting a politics of love and charity. The Pope invites us to a social and political order whose soul is social charity. "Politics must make room for a tender love of others" (FT 194). Politicians should ask themselves "How much love did I put into my work" (FT 197).



*“we may prove
capable of responding
with a new vision of
fraternity and social
friendship that will not
remain at the level of
words”
(FT 6).*



In the last three chapters namely **Dialogue and Friendship in Society, Paths of Renewed Encounter and Religions at the Service of Fraternity in our World** the Pope encourages us to build a world of fraternity through dialogue, encounter and unity. Dialogue has a prominent role in creating a new culture of fraternity. We are advised to make kindness a culture within the society and it can have far reaching effects. The Pope says that there is the necessity of curing the wounds and restoring peace. Truth, justice and mercy are essential for

building peace and truth should lead to reconciliation and forgiveness. We are challenged to work together with the members of other religions for the common good, to uplift the poor and to establish universal fraternity.

Application of the Encyclical in Our Missionary Life

Our mission is the continuation of the mission of Jesus. Jesus himself has declared why he came to



this world. He came to bring Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of Lord's favor (Lk 4:18-19). The Pope through the encyclical is also asking us to do the same. Sharing of Good News is sharing of God's love.

In this Covid era as our brothers and sisters are going through hard times, we through our various apostolates should allow them to experience God's love for them, comfort and console them. People

should be able to feel through our ministries that the Church is with them and they shall not feel abandoned. We need to make serious efforts to reach out to the poor and the oppressed. The pandemic has made their number enormous and this demands a great effort. Due to the pandemic many are left jobless, many experience financial problems, many suffer from mental disorders etc. and we should be Good Samaritans to them. It is time for us to ask ourselves whether we are really concerned about our brothers and sisters around us. Do we have time for them?

As every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally, we through our institutions should promote the dignity and value of human persons and earn courage to raise voice when fundamental rights are curtailed. We still need to improve more and find out fitting methods to help individuals and societies to mature in moral values. It is time to change our approach to migrants.

***“He came to bring
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We need to have more openness to them. We have to learn to see differences as opportunities to grow. In all our decision making the voice of the poor should have a prominent place. Through our educational institutions we need to help the students to have a well-integrated view of life and we should enable them to challenge the causes of injustices and aberrations as well as the abuses of economic, technological, political and media power.

The elimination of hunger and poverty should be given the primary importance in all our efforts to bring about social development. As millions of people suffer and die from hunger in the world, we must respect food, shall not waste it and we need to promote a minimalist lifestyle. In this Covid era we must make room for a tender love of others. We should make use of all the opportunities for dialogue.

That can lead us to work together for the common good and to work for establishing social peace. We need to find out ways to work together with other religions too for the same cause.

Conclusion

Fratelli Tutti encourages us to reflect on some important aspects of our life such as solidarity, human rights, responsibility towards our brothers and sisters. Thus the encyclical exhorts all people of good will to adopt a life of unconditional love, generosity, kindness and compassion, and to open up a series of possibilities in the midst of the dark clouds of the pandemic to awaken hope and to work together to establish fraternity and friendship in the universe. Imbibing inspiration from the words of the Holy Father let us strive together to establish God's kingdom on earth.



MST PRIESTLY ORDINATIONS 2020 - 2021



Fr Thomas Kizhakkemuriyil



Fr Thomas Thottaplackal



Fr George Elamthuruthiyil



Fr Kurian Vazhuthanappallyil



Fr Sebastian Keeranchira



Fr Antony Akkattu



Fr Mathew Chirayil



Fr Joseph Chamakkalayil



Fr Augustine Kuttipalackal



**Fr Joseph
Puthusseryputhenpurayil**



**Fr Chackochan
Moosariparambil**

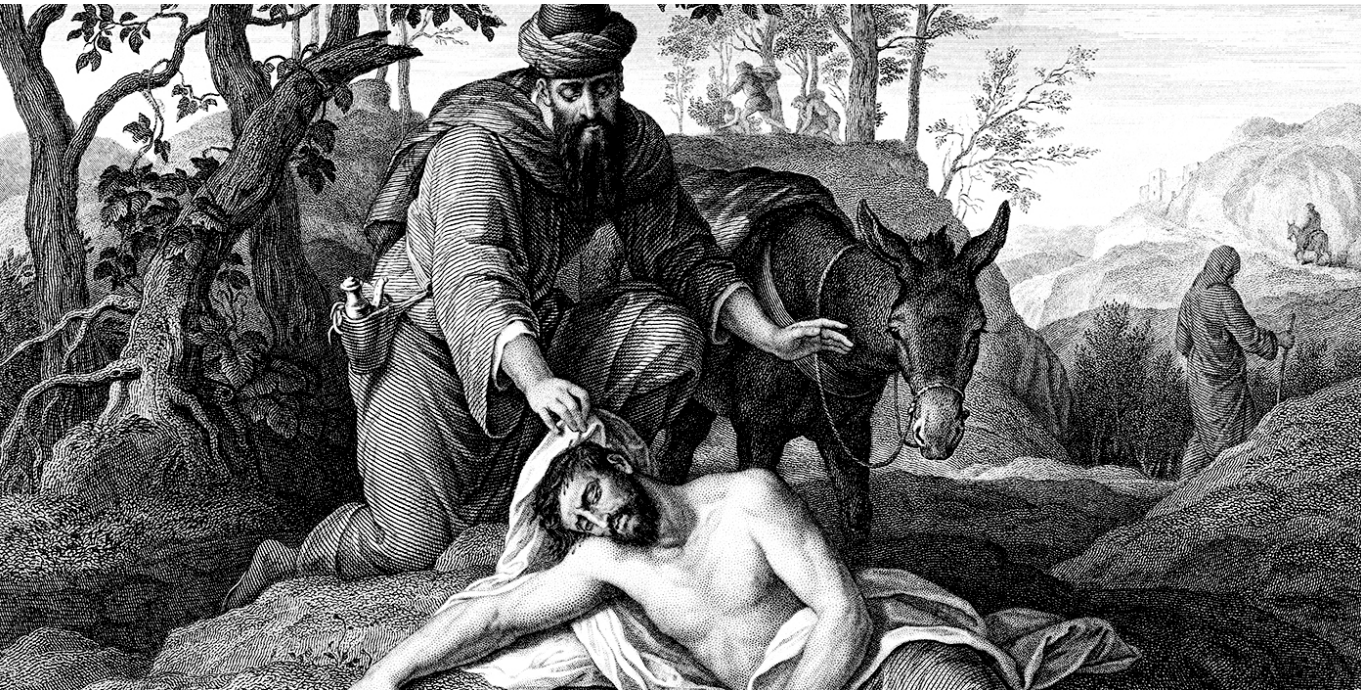
**“GO INTO ALL THE
WORLD AND PREACH
THE GOSPEL TO THE
WHOLE CREATION”.**

**A reminder that
we are all called to love each other.**

“ *The parable [of the Good Samaritan] does not indulge in abstract moralizing, nor is its message merely social and ethical. It speaks to us of an essential and often forgotten aspect of our common humanity: **we were created for a fulfillment that can only be found in love.** We cannot be indifferent to suffering; we cannot allow anyone to go through life as an outcast. Instead, we should feel indignant, challenged to emerge from our comfortable isolation and to be changed by our contact with human suffering. That is the meaning of dignity.* ”



Fratelli Tutti No. 68



(For private circulation only)

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