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Conference on the Encyclical Letter “Fratelli tutti” of the Holy Father Francis on fraternity and social friendship

This morning, at 10.00, in the Vatican’s New Synod Hall, a conference took place on the Holy Father Francis’ Encyclical Letter “Fratelli tutti” on fraternity and social friendship. The speakers were His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin; His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, M.C.C.J., president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue; Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, secretary general of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity; Professor Anna Rowlands, lecturer in Catholic Social Thought and Practice at the University of Durham in the United Kingdom; and Professor Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Sant’Egidio Community, lecturer in Contemporary History.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention by His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin

1. Upon reading this Encyclical, even the least attentive observer must ask: what is the place and meaning of fraternity in international relations? Anyone interested in how relations are conducted on a global level would expect an answer in terms of statements, regulations, statistics and perhaps even actions. If, on the other hand, we allow ourselves to be guided by how Pope Francis assesses the facts and situations of today, the answer is different: “Global society is suffering from grave structural deficiencies that cannot be resolved by piecemeal solutions or quick fixes” (FT, 179).

The Encyclical not only considers fraternity as an instrument or an ideal; it outlines a culture of fraternity to be applied in international relations. A culture, of course: the image is that of a knowledge from which the method and the objective are developed.

As for the method: fraternity is not a trend or a fashion which develops over time or at a particular time, but rather the result of concrete acts. The Encyclical reminds us of integration between countries, the primacy of rules over force, economic development and cooperation and, above all, the use of dialogue, seen not as an

anaesthetic or an occasional “band-aid”, but as a weapon with a destructive potential far superior to any other armament. In fact, if weapons and with them wars destroy human lives, the environment, and hope, to the point of extinguishing the future of people and communities, dialogue destroys the barriers in the heart and mind, opens up spaces for forgiveness, and promotes reconciliation. Indeed, it is the instrument that justice requires in order to be able to assert itself in its most authentic meaning and import. How much does the absence of dialogue allow international relations to degenerate or rely on the heavy hand of power, allowing opposition and force to prevail! Dialogue, on the other hand, especially when it is “persistent and courageous does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine” (FT, 198). Indeed, looking at international events, dialogue also has victims. Among its victims are those who do not accept the logic of conflicts at all costs, or are seen as naive and inexperienced merely because they dare to look beyond the immediate and partial interests of individual realities that risk ignoring the overall view. Dialogue is a vision that progresses and endures over time. Dialogue requires patience and edges close to martyrdom. This is why the Encyclical refers to dialogue as an instrument of fraternity, which makes those who dialogue different from those “people holding important social positions yet lacking in real concern for the common good, who do not hold in their hearts the common good.” (FT,63)

We are now at the objective. Along with religious visions and various spiritual outlooks, history speaks of fraternity and describes its beauty and its effects; but these are often associated with a slow and difficult path, almost an ideal dimension energized by underlying reforming impulses or revolutionary processes. Another constant temptation is to limit fraternity to a level of individual maturity, reserved exclusively for those who share the same path. According the Encyclical, however, the objective is an ascending path driven by that healthy subsidiarity which starts from the individual and expands to encompass the family, then social and state dimensions, all the way to the international community. As Francis reminds us, this is why “it is necessary to develop not only a spirituality of fraternity but at the same time a more efficient world organisation, to help resolve pressing problems” if fraternity is to be an effective instrument in international relations.” (FT, 165)

2. Understood in this light, fraternity with its method and its objective can contribute to the renewal of principles guiding international life; it can inspire the guidelines necessary for facing new challenges and lead the plurality of actors working at a global level to respond to the needs of the human family. These are actors with a crucial responsibility in terms of politics and shared solutions, especially in the face of realities of war, hunger, underdevelopment, and the destruction of our common home and all its consequences. Such actors are aware of how globalization, confronted by real problems that demand solutions, has displayed even recently only negative aspects. To express this truth, the Pope refers to the experience of the pandemic which has “exposed our false certainties” (FT, 7), when what is needed is action capable of providing answers and not only analysing the facts. This action is still missing and may continue to be lacking, even with everything that research and science achieve each day. It is lacking because “it has become evident that there is an inability to act all together. Although we are hyper-connected, there is a fragmentation which makes it more difficult to solve problems affecting us all” (*Ibid.*).

What we find on today’s international scene is an obvious contradiction between the common good and the tendency to give priority to the interests of States, even individual States; this can stem from a belief in “free zones”, or it can be due to the logic that what is not forbidden is allowed. The result is that “the multitude of the abandoned remain at the mercy of the possible good will of some” (FT, 165). Fraternity is the exact opposite of this: it introduces the idea of general interests, those capable of forming a true solidarity and of changing not only the structure of the international Community but also the dynamics of relationships within it. In fact, once the supremacy of these general interests has been accepted, the sovereignty and independence of each State cease to be absolutes—they must be subject to “the sovereignty of law, knowing that justice is a prerequisite for achieving the ideal of universal brotherhood” (FT, 173). This process is not automatic but requires “courage and generosity to freely establish certain common goals and ensure the worldwide fulfilment of certain essential norms” (FT, 174).

In Francis’s perspective, therefore, fraternity is how to bring to fruition the commitments made according to the ancient adage *pacta sunt servanda*: to concretely respect the legitimately expressed common will; to resolve disputes by means of diplomacy and negotiation and via multilateral institutions; and the broadest desire to achieve “a truly universal common good and the protection of the weakest States” (*Ibid.*).

There is no lack of reference, in this regard, to a constant theme of the Church's social teaching, that of the "government"—*governance*, in today's parlance—of the international Community, its members and its Institutions. Pope Francis, consistent with all his predecessors, supports the need for a "form of world authority regulated by law", but this does not mean "thinking of a personal authority" (FT, 172). Fraternity replaces the centralization of powers with a collegial function—which is not unlike the "synodal" vision applied to the governance of the Church, which Francis embraces—determined by "more effective world organizations, equipped with the power to provide for the global common good, the elimination of hunger and poverty the sure defence of fundamental human rights." (*Ibid.*).

3. Operating in the international reality via the culture of fraternity requires acquiring a method and an objective capable of replacing those paradigms that no longer have the capacity to grapple with the challenges and needs that the international Community meets on its current journey, burdened by fatigue and contradictions. In fact, there is noticeable concern about the will of some to abolish the reasons for and content of multilateralism, which is necessary now more than ever in a world society in which the fragmentation of ideas and decisions reflects an increasing post-globalism. Such an attitude results from an exclusively pragmatic approach that not only forgets principles and rules but also ignores the multiple cries for help that are now constantly and increasingly heard and so can even compromise international stability. These are the oppositions and clashes that degenerate into wars which, due to the complexity of their root causes, are destined to extend over time without immediate and viable solutions. Simply calling out for peace is of little use. Pope Francis tells us that "negotiation often becomes necessary for shaping concrete paths to peace. Yet the processes of change that lead to lasting peace are crafted above all by peoples; each individual can act as an effective leaven by the way he or she lives each day. Great changes are not produced behind desks or in offices." (FT, 231)

As we go through the Encyclical, we feel called to our individual and collective responsibilities in the face of new trends and needs emerging on the international scene. Proclaiming ourselves brothers and sisters and making social friendship our habit are probably not enough. Just as, defining international relations in terms of peace or security, development, or a generic appeal to respect for fundamental rights—are no longer sufficient, despite the fact that in recent decades they have constituted the *raison d'être* of diplomatic action, of the role of multilateral organizations, of the prophetic action of so many figures, of philosophical education, and even a characteristic of the religious dimension.

The effective role of fraternity is disruptive, if you allow me, because it is linked to new concepts that replace peace with peacemakers, development with co-workers, and respect for rights with attention to the needs of each neighbour, be it a person, a people or a community. The theological root of the Encyclical tells us this very clearly in that it revolves around the category of fraternal love, which beyond all belonging, even identity, is capable of concretely realizing itself in the one "who has become a neighbour." (FT, 81). The image of the Good Samaritan is there as a warning and a model.

To the leaders of Nations, to diplomats, to those who work for peace and development, fraternity proposes the transformation of international life from mere co-existence, almost necessary, to a dimension based on that common sense of "humanity" that already now inspires and supports so many international rules and structures, thus promoting effective coexistence. It is the image of a reality in which peoples and persons themselves come to the fore, with an institutional apparatus capable of guaranteeing not particular interests, but the desired world common good (cf. FT, 257).

Fraternity therefore has as its protagonist the human family, which in its relationships and differences travels towards full unity, but with a vision far removed from universalism or abstract sharing, as from certain degenerations of globalization (cf. FT, 100). Through the culture of fraternity, Pope Francis calls each and every one to love the other people, the other nation, as one's own, and thus to build relationships, rules and institutions, while abandoning the illusions of power, isolation, closed visions, selfish and partisan actions—because "the simple sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for all humanity" (FT, 105).

Intervention by His Eminence Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, M.C.C.J.

I am grateful for the opportunity to present the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, dedicated to fraternity and social friendship; it is a precious gift that the Holy Father has given not only to us Catholics but to the whole of humanity.

I greet all the distinguished speakers who have joined with me in presenting this Encyclical, and most especially Dr. Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam, Councilor of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar. He is a dear friend with whom I collaborate on the High Committee for Human Fraternity, formed in August 2019 to give continuity and effectiveness to the objectives spelled out in the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together. His presence here is truly an excellent example of fraternity!

I want to thank Pope Francis publicly, in the name of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue over which I preside, for the impetus he has given to interreligious dialogue since the very beginning of his pontificate.

I cannot read the Encyclical without emotion, especially chapter eight, "Religions at the Service of Fraternity in Our World." I have collaborated with Pope Francis since the beginning of his pontificate, that is, for almost eight years now. I can attest to how much work has been done, even amid undeniable difficulties, including the most recent one, the pandemic caused by COVID-19.

Interreligious dialogue is truly at the heart of the reflections and actions of Pope Francis. In fact, as *Fratelli tutti* states, "The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters" (FT 274).

The very title of the Encyclical expresses a clear desire to address everyone as brothers and sisters. It is an existential reality that Pope Francis calmly takes for granted: we are all brothers and sisters—no one is excluded! Certainly, the path of dialogue among persons of different religious traditions has not just begun. It is part of the Church's original mission, and it has deep roots in the Second Vatican Council.

In seeing respect and friendship as two fundamental attitudes, Pope Francis has opened another door, so that the oxygen of fraternity can enter into the dialogue between persons of different religious traditions, between believers and non-believers, and among all persons of good will.

The Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together, signed by the Pope and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb on 4 February 2019 in Abu Dhabi, represented a milestone in interreligious dialogue, but that was neither the start nor the finish. We are on the road! *Fratelli tutti*, with its far-sighted and merciful perspective, encourages us to tread the common ground of human fraternity. This common ground is a truth that is ancient, but it may sound new in today's world, which is often atrophied by selfishness. Believers of different religious traditions can offer their own valuable contributions to universal fraternity in the societies in which they live. *Fratelli tutti* states: "It is wrong when the only voices to be heard in public debate are those of the powerful and 'experts.' Room needs to be made for reflections born of religious traditions that are the repository of centuries of experience and wisdom" (FT 275). In reality, religious believers are witnesses and bearers of values that can make a great contribution to the building of societies that are healthier and more just. Integrity, fidelity, love of the common good, concern for others (especially the needy), kindness, and mercy are valuable tools that form part of the spiritual treasury of the diverse religions.

Living one's own identity in the "courage of otherness" is the threshold that the Church of Pope Francis is asking us to cross today.

We are asked to take concrete steps along with believers of other religions and with persons of good will, with the hope that we will all feel called to be messengers of peace and builders of communion, especially in these difficult times.

God is the Creator of everyone and everything. We are therefore members of one family and should recognize one another as such. This is the basic criterion that faith offers us for advancing from being merely tolerant to

living together as brothers and sisters.

When Pope Francis invites the different religions to place themselves at the service of fraternity for the good of all humanity, he is announcing a new epoch. Our shared journey opens us up to new light and new creativity, challenging the very heart of every religion. Moreover, fraternity can also become the path for religious beliefs.

In a dehumanized world, in which relations among persons are characterized by indifference and greed, there is need for a new and universal solidarity and a new dialogue based on fraternity. Interreligious dialogue has an essential function in building a civil society that includes everyone and rejects the throwaway culture. The objective of dialogue is to work, in genuine collaboration among all believers, to achieve what is good for all humankind by struggling against all the injustices that still afflict our world and by condemning every type of violence.

Looking toward the future, then, we should take care that religions do not close in upon themselves. While we remain firmly rooted in our own identities as believers, we should resolve, together with all persons of good will and despite our differences, to move forward on the path of human fraternity. In the world there are many religions. From the interreligious perspective, we have to maintain a relation of respect and friendship, as the Pope wishes. This will allow us to defend the equality of all as human beings. We are believers with different visions, and we should not renounce our own identity, but we should call for sincerity of intentions.

Let us again give thanks to Pope Francis because *Fratelli tutti* makes us all feel closer to the love of Christ and the Church, and it encourages us to place ourselves, all together, at the service of the fraternity of this world.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Intervention by Judge Mohamed Mahmoud Abdel Salam

In the name of God, The Clement, The Merciful

Dear guests,

May the peace of God, His Mercy and His Blessings be with you!

Some cities and some peoples are recognizable by important monuments that have become landmarks. The city of Rome is known for St. Peter's dome, here in the Vatican. London has its famous Big Ben and Paris the Eiffel Tower rising up in the sky. New York is known for the Statue of Liberty, Cairo for the Pyramids, the minarets of Al-Azhar and the bell towers of its churches.

Then, two "monuments" of Christianity and Islam have recently arisen, and have joined the ranks of these symbols, providing a new pillar of truth, good, freedom and fraternity. At the mention of "Human Fraternity", free minds and conscious hearts turn to Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al Tayyeb, Sheikh of Al Azhar: these two figures have become, together, a new emblem and a new landmark, not for a particular country, or a particular people. They have become the powerful symbol of a noble idea, the idea of "Human Fraternity", and God, bestowing His mercy on his people, has placed these two illustrious symbols at the service of these supreme human concepts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If growth and renewal follow the rules of life as it is experienced by living beings, then life cannot be complete without thought and creativity. What we are witnessing in the Vatican, starting with its highest authority, proves

that, all things considered, we are moving in the right direction and that the creative and foundational thought of a new vision is heading towards higher horizons in time and space.

After signing the "Document on Human Fraternity", Pope Francis continued his journey, and thus his public or private reflections on the reality of nations came to life. The nations' demand for happiness requires a commitment that is difficult to define because of the various sectors involved, the interests and policies at stake and the contrasts between states and peoples, all of which are problems that put consciences and wills to the test. Drawing his inspiration from this state of affairs and thanks to his clear intuition, the Pope has written clear and courageous words that fear only God, to describe the tragedies of weak, tired and desperate people, and to prescribe the cure for this evil that is difficult to heal, and has hit our modern civilisation to death. This is the origin of the Encyclical that we are celebrating today.

Although I had accompanied the Pope and the Imam in the various stages of the journey of Human Fraternity over the last decade, when I read this Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship, I identified a refined taste, an incisive sensibility and an ability to express the themes of human fraternity to the whole world. It is an appeal to concord to a world in discord, as well as a clear message in favour of both individual and collective harmony with the laws of the universe, the world and life. This notion relies on a clear reasoning that is rooted in the truth and is practicable in real life and in the real world.

Distinguished guests,

As a young Muslim scholar of Shari'a (law), Islam and its sciences, I find myself - with much love and enthusiasm - in agreement with the Pope, and I share every word he has written in the Encyclical. I follow, with satisfaction and hope, all his proposals put forward in a spirit of concern for the rebirth of human fraternity.

In this Encyclical, the Pope warns, in no uncertain terms, against ideologies imbued with selfishness and the loss of social sense, which operate behind the mask of presumed national interests[1], at the same time, he admonishes against the dangers of globalisation and its consequences, which may have brought us closer together, but will certainly not make us brothers and sisters[2].

I was extremely happy as I read the Pope's harsh criticism of what we can define "the end of historical consciousness", with the serious infiltration of this theory in our cultures. This theory relies on the disintegration of the cultural heritage, and the creation of generations that despise their heritage and history with all its cultural richness.[3]

How great is the Pope when he reprimands against this new form of colonialism that can manipulate extremely important and sensitive concepts, such as democracy, freedom, justice and unity, using them as a means of control, domination and arrogance, emptying them of their meaning, sometimes even to justify its actions[4].

How creative he is on human rights, when he highlights the new forms of injustice and exploitation of man and the denial of his dignity[5], injustice against women[6], and the slavery-like conditions that so many people suffer today. The Pope rightly considers that persecution for religious or ethnic reasons, and other violations of human dignity are aspects of a "third world war fought piecemeal".[7]

How great is the Pope when he addresses the root causes of migration and displacement, reiterating that human dignity was lost at the border between Europe and the Third World.[8]

In addition, the Pope raised present-day issues, such as the pandemic and other tragedies in history[9], asking that we rethink our lifestyles and the organisation of our societies.

Unlike what normally happens when I prepare my speeches, I found myself in agreement with the Pope's words. His frankness and clarity in the passages I mentioned enthralled me. This is only a small part of this free thought, which assumes the cause of man and his problems as its own, both in the East as in the West. I am

convinced that this Encyclical, together with the Document on Human Fraternity, will restart the train of history that had stopped at the station of this world order, and was rooted in unreasonableness, injustice, pride and colonial violence. I hope that this Encyclical, together with the Document on Human Fraternity, shall be a strong deterrent against falsehood in all its forms and expressions, and that it can be the basis, or the most important factor for the birth of a new world order, that relies on the sacredness of dignity and human rights - as the Pope said - not on contempt, slavery and the exploitation of man. At the same time, I hope that this Encyclical will reach the hands of politicians and decision-makers alike, and enlighten them to lead the world out of the unreasonable state that it is living today.

Can we contextualise these beautiful ideas and noble concepts in today's real world? I think this is possible. Just people help each other to achieve good and support it.

My colleagues from the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and I want to offer our modest contribution by convening a Forum for 100 young people from different parts of the world. We shall organize study days on this Encyclical in Rome and Abu Dhabi, where the Document on Human Fraternity was announced, but also in Egypt, the country of Al Azhar. Participants shall dedicate themselves to reflect and study the document in an open and in-depth dialogue. In this way, the Encyclical will reach young people of different religions and ethnicities, with the hope that it may be a step in the right direction, towards worldwide human fraternity.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In this decisive phase of human history, we find ourselves at a crossroads between universal fraternity in which humanity rejoices and acute misery that will increase people's suffering and deprivation. The road of fraternity is both old and new. It is renewed and travelled in the shadow of spiritual and moral values, and is governed by the equilibrium and harmony between science and faith, between this world and life to come. Let us therefore support each other on the path of fraternity, mutual knowledge and collaboration in order to reach the destination where our goals and objectives meet, the good of all humanity.

We are in favour of uniting religious energies to tackle discrimination, racism, and hatred. At the same time, we strive for the consolidation of our own doctrine, deepening our own specific aspects and avoiding disunity or disintegration. This is the goal of every person faithful to his or her religion.

Universal fraternity remains - yesterday, today and tomorrow - an absolute necessity for the whole world, and is indispensable for salvation. Because it will give life to a balanced and happy civilization, as it centres on man regardless of skin colour, sex, language and religion.

Finally, I address these words to His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar:

Your efforts and endeavours in favour of human coexistence and world fraternity, that culminated in the Document on Human Fraternity you proclaimed last year in Abu Dhabi - in an unprecedented event in modern history - represent a turning point in the Arab and Muslim world, and a ray of light for the whole world. Every day we see young people meeting around the principles of fraternity and coexistence, and we see an unprecedented openness in the relationships among the faithful of all religions. We also see many people, mentally closed to the members of other religions, beginning to revise their way of thinking.

My colleagues of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and I promise that we shall continue to work faithfully to make this document a reality for all. We shall do so through the concrete and ambitious initiatives of the Committee, that have always received the loyal and sincere support of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, a true Arab leader, who has remained faithful to the commitment that he made to you to implement the principles of the Document on Human Fraternity, so that they may bear the desired fruit to every person on earth, independently from their religion, gender or race.

Thank you Pope Francis for this powerful and courageous Encyclical.

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- [1] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 11.
 - [2] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 12.
 - [3] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 13.
 - [4] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 14.
 - [5] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 22.
 - [6] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 23.
 - [7] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 25.
 - [8] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 41.
 - [9] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", from number 32 to number 36.

Intervention by Professor Anna Rowlands

The Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti* is about love and attention – the kind of attention that brings a broken and bleeding world back to health. It is a social meditation on the Good Samaritan, who recognises love and attention as the preeminent law, and models for us creative social friendship.

Pope Francis asks us to gaze at the world similarly, such that we come to see the basic, indispensable relation of all things and people, near and far. In its simplicity of call, *Fratelli tutti* is a devastating challenge to our ecological, political, economic and social life. But above all it is a proclamation of an ineradicable, joyful truth, presented here as a well-spring for a fatigued world.

This letter is not a coolly detached critique. Its spiritual discipline sees the humanising task this way: to be truly human is to be willing to look at the world in its beauty and its pain, to listen deeply through human encounters to the griefs and the joys of one's age and to take these into oneself, to carry them as one's own.

The notion that all created life shares its origin in God the Father, and that in Christ we become sisters and brothers, bonded in dignity, care, and friendship, is one of the oldest social teachings of Christianity. The names at the heart of this letter are those of the scriptures: we are brothers, sisters, neighbours, friends. The early Christians shaped their views of money, community, and politics based on this vision. That a theme so ancient is spoken with such urgency now is because Pope Francis fears a detachment from the view that we are all really responsible for all, all related to all, all entitled to a just share of what has been given for the good of all. It is not a mockable fantasy to believe this. He writes with grief about the cultural cynicism and impoverishment limiting our social imaginations. It is not absurd to acknowledge kinship beyond borders, to crave cultures where social bonds are respected and encounter and dialogue are practiced.

Fratelli tutti makes clear that universal fraternity and social friendship must be practised together. Failure to do this abounds. Globalisation proclaims universal values but fails to practice encounter and attention – especially, to difference and the most vulnerable. Digital communications trade on our hunger for connection but distort it, producing a febrile bondedness built on binaries of likes and dislikes, and commodified by powerful interests. Populism appeals to the desire for stability, rootedness, and rewarding work, but lets hostility distort these

desires. Liberalism imagines freedom in terms of the self-interested individual and discounts our deeply inter-connected lives. We forget what enables societies to endure and renew. These are our false materialisms.

This letter has its roots in a specific interfaith encounter. It is unashamed about its religious character and call. A transcendent truth is not a burden, but a gift securing the roots of our action. It can reduce the anxiety we feel about taking risks together for the transformation of our world. Faith is our wellspring. It is part of how we can name and move beyond the grieving indifference of our age.

For this reason, the encyclical is clear about the weight of responsibility borne by religious communities. Religious groups are caught up in the digital and market cultures that harm us. Inexcusably, religious leaders have been slow to condemn unjust practices, past and present. Religion too stands in need of repentance and renewal. *Fratelli tutti* exhorts religions to be models of dialogue, brokers of peace, and bearers of the message of transcendent love to a hungry, cynical and uprooted world.

Echoing the Abu Dhabi statement, the encyclical restates the absolute dignity of the human person, over which no political preference, no 'law' of the market can take precedence. Here Pope Francis highlights the treatment of migrants. He notes the biblical commands to welcome the stranger, the benefits that come with encounters between cultures, and the invitation to sheer gratuitous love. But he also extends earlier social teaching on the universal destination of goods, making clear that nations are entitled to their land, wealth and property insofar as this enables all humankind to access the means for survival and fulfilment. A nation bears obligations to the whole human family and not merely towards its own citizens. Dignity, solidarity, and the universal destination of material goods are the hallmarks of this teaching.

Pope Francis warns against closed forms of populism, but he upholds the importance of seeing ourselves as 'a people'. Following St Augustine, he reminds us that to become 'a people' is based on encountering each other in dialogue, face to face and side by side. Together we negotiate the enduring common loves we wish to live by. This is a dynamic unfinished process of social peace building, one that is the fruit of a genuine search for, and exchange of, truths. A culture is only healthy to the extent that it remains open to others. This renewal of political cultures happens only *with*, not *for* the most marginalised. The role of grassroots movements is key to this participation.

The naming of God as our kin, and ourselves as kin and kind in this image, is love-language. There are other ways of naming God. But the message Pope Francis wishes us to hear for this moment is that we are made fully human by what draws us beyond ourselves. What makes this possible is a divine love, open to all, that births, bonds, bridges and endlessly renews. This love cannot be erased or disposed of, and it is the basis of Pope Francis's call to us with St Francis's words of loving attention: 'Fratelli tutti'...

Intervention by Professor Andrea Riccardi

As Amin Maalouf, a writer of fine sensibility, observed: "If in the past we were ephemeral in an unchanging world, today we are disoriented beings ...". It is the disorientation suffered by many sons and daughters of globalization. *Fratelli tutti* lays out a simple and essential path for all those who lost their bearings: fraternity. I shall focus on one aspect: it is war, the most serious of wounds and tasting of death. Across the pages of the encyclical, fraternity competes with war. However, is fraternity not too fragile to confront war, a ruthless machine of death and destruction?

A sense of resignation to war has taken hold in the history of humankind as a natural fact, and it arises surely from a sense of irrelevance. Many believe that the responsibility always lies with the leading countries, or with politicians, not with the common people. What can we do? There is a growing fatalism, camouflaged as realism. We have surrendered to the war option, believing humanitarian justifications of a defensive or preventive slant, or trusting manipulated information. For too long, we – governments, institutions, individuals – have accepted war as a constant companion of our time. It has become a cultural and political fact. Suffice it to think of how the

peace movement has faded away over the past few years.

“War is not a ghost from the past – said the Pope alarmingly - but a constant threat.” It is the present, and it risks becoming the future. The burning presence of war is evident everywhere, from the Mediterranean to Africa and elsewhere. For many, it’s “their wars”: they do not concern us. They only concern us if refugees reach our shores and borders. However, pieces of wars combine to form an explosive climate, overflowing and involving everyone: the fire can spread. In today’s global world, it is an illusion to think about isolating a conflict; however, we live as if this were possible.

The Encyclical embraces the world with its gaze, in the light of fraternity. What is far away concerns us. Fraternity is never short-sighted. It is evangelical and human, but also more realistic than many so-called realistic ideologies and policies.

The Pope emphatically expresses the Church’s analysis of humanity’s experience: “Every war leaves our world worse than it was before”. It disfigures the face of humanity. Two world wars are testament to that. The current conflicts scream it. War has never made the world a better place. This is the truth of history! However, the Encyclical states, “There is a growing loss of the sense of history.” Its memory is lost in the selfishness and excesses of the present day and in exacerbated confrontations. Nationalism and populism exalt the value of a specific group against others. Meanwhile, those great words, the beacons that illuminate humankind, have lost all meaning: fraternity, peace, democracy, unity...

We believed that the world had learned the lesson after many wars and failures. We believed in the enthusiasm of a world at peace after 1989. However, we have regressed from the conquest of peace and some degree of integration among States. We tend to discredit the structures of dialogue that prevent conflicts. Thus, the world shall become unable to prevent war. It will let conflicts continue, becoming entrenched for years if not decades, and revealing the powerlessness of the international community.

In light of the “fraternal” vision of a global, realistic and far-sighted world as proposed by the Encyclical, it is possible to understand the tragedy of war, both near and far, with its burden of suffering: destruction of the human and natural environment, death, refugees, legacies of suffering and hatred, terrorism, weapons of all kinds, cruelty... The words of the Pope awaken us from the collective numbness generated by the logics of conflict; he writes: “War is a failure of politics and of humanity, a shameful capitulation, a stinging defeat before the forces of evil.”

War cannot be contained; it gives rise to all forms of poverty. It is a harmful school for the young and pollutes the future. It can look like a solution to the desperate on the peripheries of humanity.

War that is fought piecemeal shows the arrogant fragmentation of the global world, which considers projects with great goals for the development of our entire human family to be madness. The world rejects growth projects due to the egotism of underlying interests: thus, it rejects the great dream of peace.

The Encyclical shows us that we are all guardians of peace. Institutions have the task to reawaken the “architecture of peace”. However, we, normal people, cannot remain on the sidelines. The art of peace is everybody’s task: we must engage every day in daring and creative rebellion against war. If many can make war, all can be artisans of peace.

Hence the role of religions. The Pope refers to the dialogue among religions and the encounter with Imam Al-Tayyeb, when they stated: “Religions must never incite war ...”. If they do, they abuse and abandon their true role.

As I read *Fratelli tutti*, I see not only a condemnation of war, but also the hope that peace is possible. I remembered the invitation of John Paul II when he said together with other religious leaders in Assisi, on a glorious day back in 1986: “Peace awaits its prophets... its builders... peace is a workshop, open to all and not

just to specialists, savants and strategists... it comes about in a thousand little acts in daily life.” The artisans of peace are men and women of fraternity.

Pope Francis proposes true dreams to the global world that has switched off the beacons of the great values and ideals. I recall just one, not the least one of them but the one everything else depends upon: peace. Let me conclude by quoting a great Italian, don Luigi Sturzo, who in 1929 said: “we must believe that ... war, as a juridical means to protect law, shall be abolished, as were legally abolished polygamy, slavery, serfdom, and family revenge.”

After the dark clouds of the pandemic, this Encyclical opens up a horizon of hope: to become brothers and sisters. This is a dream to live and fight for, even with our bare hands.
