

# An Architecture of Peace

## Pope Francis on Universal Fraternity

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*This essay is the revised version of a talk I gave at the Forum on Fratelli Tutti on 28 February 2021. This Forum was organised by the Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore to mark its bi-centennial.*

On October 4, 2020, Pope Francis issued *Fratelli Tutti* in the wake of the unrelenting march of the coronavirus pandemic and to a world fragmented by social, economic and political conflicts.<sup>1</sup> In *Fratelli Tutti* we find a clear, courageous and hopeful prophetic voice in the spiritual and moral wilderness that is our world, calling people of good will and of every tongue and tribe to come together in solidarity and fraternal love. This is Pope Francis' third encyclical and his second social encyclical.<sup>2</sup> Although it is in many ways different from Francis' first social encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, issued on 24 May 2015, *Fratelli Tutti* reiterates many of the major themes that he has focused on throughout his pontificate. More significantly, this encyclical is in concert with the social encyclicals issued by previous popes – especially Francis' immediate predecessors Saint John Paul II and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI – stretching all the way to *Rerum Novarum*, the first social encyclical issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891.

If *Laudato Si'* was in some ways inspired by the efforts of Bartholomew I of Constantinople (affectionately called the 'Green Patriarch' because of his profound concerns for ecological issues), *Fratelli Tutti* builds on the themes articulated in the 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together'<sup>3</sup> which the pontiff signed with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, in Abu Dhabi in 2019. But it was the saint whose name he has chosen as his papal name – St Francis of Assisi – who was the real inspiration behind the two social encyclicals. This is evident in the way the pope began both letters. *Laudato Si'* starts with a quotation from the beautiful canticle by St Francis called the Canticle of the Sun (also known as *Laudes Creaturarum*, 'Praise of the Creatures'). And 'Fratelli Tutti' is the way St

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html).

<sup>2</sup> *Lumen fidei* (19 June 2013), *Laudato si'* (24 May 2015), *Fratelli Tutti* (3 October 2020).

<sup>3</sup> 'A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together', [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco\\_20190204\\_documento-fratellanza-umana.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html).

Francis customarily ‘addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel’ (1).

In this brief presentation, I would like to reflect on some of the themes found in this powerful encyclical. I begin with Pope Francis’ diagnosis of our world and the temper of our times. Then, I discuss his call to solidarity and social friendship and examine a perhaps neglected theme which Francis has appropriately highlighted, namely, the universal destination of goods. Before concluding my presentation, I explore two important topics in the encyclical: populism and the death penalty.

## **DARK CLOUDS**

Francis begins his encyclical with a penetrating critique of the world in which we inhabit and the troubles that plague it. In a chapter ominously entitled ‘Dark Clouds Over a Closed World’, the pope exposes and attacks the destructive and toxic elements in modern culture and society that fracture human relationships and ‘hinder the development of universal fraternity’ (9). The encyclical launches a ferocious critique of the habits of mind and ideologies – the ‘isms’ – that have fuelled strife and alienation in our world. These dehumanising forces have been around in human society for quite a long time. But they have in many ways been exacerbated by that ‘Great Revealer’: the Covid-19 pandemic. In this letter, the pope discusses individualism (13, 105), racism (20), consumerism, neoliberalism (168), nationalism (11), sexism (23), ableism (98) and many more besides.

Francis speaks perceptively of a kind of ‘deconstructionism’ that is at work in our culture, that pervasive ‘loss of the sense of history’ that leads to the disintegration of the social fabric. This lack of rootedness in the past, Francis asserts, ‘leaves in its wake ... the drive to limitless consumption and expressions of empty individualism’ (13). Not only is this individualism impotent in addressing the fault-lines in our society, it is in fact detrimental to social wellbeing. As the pope puts it, it is unable to ‘save us from the many ills that are now increasingly globalised’. ‘Individualism does not make us more free, more equal, more fraternal’ (105), the pope starkly asserts.

Francis also addresses the serious problem of tribalism, which he describes in the encyclical as ‘local narcissism’ (146). This attitude, the pope explains, ‘is born of a certain insecurity and fear of the other that leads to rejection and the desire to erect walls of self-defence’. But this ethnic, communal, or national self-absorption – which must be distinguished from ‘a healthy love of one’s own people and culture’ – is ultimately self-destructive, for it is impossible to be ‘local in a healthy way’, that is, without being challenged and enriched by other cultures, and ‘without solidarity and concern for the tragedies affecting other people’.

In offering this robust critique of the contemporary *zeitgeist*, Pope Francis is not doing anything novel but merely following in the footsteps of his predecessors. For example, in his 1995 encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, Pope John Paul II speaks about a pervasive new cultural climate that is emerging that is antithetical to the Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Describing it as the ‘culture of death’, the pope explains that this pervasive sensibility, fostered by ‘powerful cultural, economic and political currents’, is war against the weak and ‘conspiracy against life’ itself (EV 12). He argues that the culture of death must be resisted at every turn, and that it can only be defeated by the grateful embrace of life as a gift from God. In similar vein, Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), offers his critique of certain forms of economic activity which are not directed at the welfare of society.<sup>5</sup> He warns that ‘grave imbalances’ would result when economic action is conceived merely as ‘an engine for wealth creation’ (CV 35). The Pope reminds his readers that economic action ‘must always be directed towards the pursuit of the common good, for which the political community in particular must also take responsibility’. In his encyclical, Benedict also reprises the topic of the ‘dictatorship of relativism’ which he explores in his addresses to various audiences.

In his analysis of these trends, Pope Francis paints with a broad brush. This has prompted some commentators to remark that some of the pope’s analyses – especially those having to do with the economy – are somewhat shallow.<sup>6</sup> While there may be some truth in this observation, it is perhaps more important to see this encyclical for what it is – an attempt to take the moral and spiritual pulse of our world and to offer exhortation towards radical change. In this regard, the pope’s own qualifications about this document must be taken seriously. This letter, he writes, is not an attempt to ‘study every aspect of our present day experience, [but] simply to consider certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity’ (9). It seeks to bring the different threads of the pope’s teaching throughout his pontificate together in ‘a broader context of reflection’ (5). So, while there may be quibbles about – for example – the pope’s remarks on migration (which some find too sweeping), it is important to acknowledge that, in the main, the pope has penetrated the heart of the human condition, and rightly discerned the troubles of our times.

It must be remembered, that in this encyclical, Francis writes not so much as a scholar but as a pastor and a prophet!

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<sup>4</sup> John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html).

<sup>5</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (2009), [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html).

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Burke, ‘Fratelli Tutti: In Search of a New Vision of Fraternal Love’, *Faith*, 1 Jan 2021. <https://www.faith.org.uk/article/fratelli-tutti-in-search-of-a-new-vision-of-fraternal-love>.

## WE ARE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

After diagnosing the global spiritual malaise and the toxins that cause it, the pope offers the antidote: universal fraternity and social friendship. Francis presents a masterful interpretation of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (56-85). The first Jesuit pope employs the classic Ignatian method of scriptural contemplation, which invites readers to be immersed in the scene and imagine themselves as its *dramatis personae*, to achieve this. Unlike his predecessor, Benedict XVI, Francis does not provide a Christological reading of the parable, but skilfully teases out its profound moral and social implications. This famous parable is therefore at the heart of the encyclical. The reading of it that the pope provides frames everything he says in the succeeding chapters of his letter. The pope uses this parable to break the barriers that we have erected through our various ‘isms’ – individualism, nationalism, racism, protectionism, local narcissism, etc. – and stresses that the human race is not made up of contesting groups, but ‘a single human family’ (30). He writes:

Jesus asks us to be present to those in need of help, regardless of whether or not they belong to our social group ... In other words, he challenges us to put aside all differences and, in the face of suffering, to draw near to others with no questions asked. I should no longer say that I have neighbours to help, but that I must be a neighbour to others (81).

The pope uses the parable to speak of ‘universal openness’ (97), the need for human beings to reach out welcomingly to their neighbours. He clarifies that such openness is existential rather than geographical and speaks poignantly and movingly about how we have created the ‘existential foreigner’ in our own communities by our territorialism. ‘Every brother or sister in need, when abandoned or ignored by the society in which I live, becomes an existential foreigner’ (97), he writes. These ‘hidden exiles’, as the pope calls them, – the weak, the disabled, the poor and the disenfranchised – must be embraced and valued (98). The pope asks us to see the ‘invisible’ people whom society has victimised and forgotten. He urges us not follow the examples of the priest and the Levite – to simply walk away, to pass by the other side. Rather he exhorts us to reach out to those who have been robbed of their dignity, and to turn the ‘existential foreigner’ into a neighbour and a brother (or a sister).

In short, the pope uses the Parable to exhort all of us to stop the social distancing!<sup>7</sup>

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis rehearses some familiar concepts – fraternity, solidarity, unity, common good – that have been treated at great lengths in other papal encyclicals and are the foundational pillars of Catholic social teaching. The pope reminds his readers that fraternity cannot be established by superficial ideological commitments or procedural arrangements (103). Fraternity, the pope insists,

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<sup>7</sup> See Roland Chia, ‘Stop the Social Distancing!’, <https://ethosinstitute.sg/stop-the-social-distancing/>.

‘necessarily calls for something greater, which in turn enhances freedom and equality’ (103). For Francis, fraternity is an ‘acknowledgement of *the worth of every human person*, always and everywhere’ (106, emphasis in the original), and is thus inextricably tied to human dignity.

Most significantly, the pontiff reminds us that we are brothers and sisters because we are – all of us – children of God. *Fratelli Tutti* stands in continuity with past papal encyclicals which treat the issue of civic friendship and the unity of the human family. For example, *Rerum Novarum* states that according to the Christian perspective, ‘the respective classes [of people] will not only be united in the bonds of friendship, but also in those of brotherly love’ (RN 25).<sup>8</sup> *Ut Unum Sint* (42) stresses that brotherhood should not be grounded in some vague family spirit but in the fact that the unity of divided humanity is the will of God (UUS 6).<sup>9</sup>

In the same way, Francis’ treatment of solidarity, which he regards as both a moral virtue and a social attitude, echoes those of his predecessors. For the pontiff, solidarity means prioritising the lives of all people over the appropriation of goods by a few. ‘Solidarity is much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity’, he writes. ‘It means thinking and acting in terms of the community’. But in order to achieve solidarity, society must expose and demolish the structural evils that promote discrimination and oppression. In a passage which echoes the writings of the liberation theologians of his native Argentina, Francis asserts: Solidarity ‘also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land and housing, the denial of social and labour rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money ...’ (116). Solidarity, in Christian teaching, underscores the importance of all people. It invites the Church to share in the joys and griefs of all of humanity, and to contribute creatively to human flourishing.

It is this challenge of extending neighbourly love, that comes from the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the great doctrines of fraternity and solidarity, that serves as the basis for Francis’ arguably controversial statements about migrants and migration. The pope recognises the complexities of the issue (129) and stresses that unnecessary migration should be avoided as far as possible. But until a more stable situation is achieved, ‘we are obliged to respect the right of all individuals to find a place that meets their basic needs and those of their families, and where they can find personal fulfilment’ (129). Thus, the proper response to the arrival of migrants should be: welcome, protect, promote and integrate (129). The pope urges his readers to open their hearts to the ‘other’ (134), to be wary of ‘local narcissism’ (146), a kind of ‘cultural sclerosis’ (134) that prevents us from being truly human and truly humane. Space does not allow a careful discussion of the pope’s proposals. But this general

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<sup>8</sup> Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, 1891, [http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_l-xiii\\_enc\\_15051891\\_rerum-novarum.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_15051891_rerum-novarum.html).

<sup>9</sup> John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25051995\\_ut-unum-sint.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html).

attitude is totally consistent not only to the message of the encyclical as a whole, but also with the Christian ethic of love for the neighbour.

## UNIVERSAL DESTINATION OF GOODS

In the chapter entitled ‘Envisaging and Engendering an Open World’, Pope Francis recalls an important principle in Catholic Social Teaching that requires clarification and unpacking: the universal destination of created goods. Applying this principle specifically to the question of the right to private property, Francis writes: ‘The right to private property can only be considered a secondary right, derived from the principle of universal destination of created goods’ (120). He repeats this assertion several paragraphs later, expanding on its ramifications: ‘The right to private property is always accompanied by the primary and prior principle of the subordination of all private property to the universal destination of the earth’s goods, and thus the right of all to their use’ (123). He sums up his position by taking a statement from his previous encyclical *Laudato Si*: ‘For my part, I would observe that “the Christian tradition has never recognised the right to private property as absolute or inviolable, and has stressed the social purpose of all forms of private property”’ (120).

These remarks by the pontiff have provoked some reaction from the clergies and theologians within his own Church. Some commentators have accused the pope of attempting to reconcile socialism with the Catholic faith, while others speak worryingly about the ‘communism’ of *Fratelli Tutti*.<sup>10</sup> Some have accused the pope of directly contradicting the teachings of previous popes with his view on private property, especially *Rerum Novarum*. In the statement I quoted above taken from No. 120 of his encyclical, Francis says that ‘the Christian tradition has never recognised the right to private property as absolute or inviolable’. Yet in *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII explicitly asserts that ‘The first and most fundamental principle, therefore, if one would undertake to alleviate the condition of the masses, must be the inviolability of private property’ (RN 15). Commentators see this as a blatant contradiction between Francis and Leo.

In my view, part of the reason why Francis’ remarks have caused confusion and dissent is because the ideas they convey are not adequately explained in the encyclical. But the confusion could also possibly be due to the lack of clarity – even among Roman Catholic clerics – on the principle of the universal destination of created goods. This teaching is not an invention by Francis. Nor is it a departure from the tradition. As Cardinal Miguel Ayuso has rightly stressed in his statement to Argentina’s *La Nación* newspaper, the pope ‘does not change so much as a comma’ of

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<sup>10</sup> Cameron Doody, ‘Vatican “Fratelli Tutti” talking Points for Spanish Bishops Refute Claim Pope a “socialist” or “communist”’, Novena, October 6, 2020. <https://novenanews.com/vatican-fratelli-tutti-bishops-pope-socialist/>.

the Catholic social doctrine.<sup>11</sup> The universal destination of created goods has always been a central idea in Catholic social thought and is consistent with the Church's emphasis on solidarity and the common good.

The doctrine of the universal destination of created goods – which pope John Paul II has called the first principle of Catholic social teaching – acknowledges the fact that God is the source of all good things. He has given the fruits of the earth to all humankind. 'Creation', as John Paul II has arrestingly put it, 'belongs to everyone'.<sup>12</sup> When applied to property, this doctrine underscores the fact that the property we own is ultimately not ours, but is destined for the good of all. This approach, encapsulated in the concept of 'social mortgage', stresses that everything that we own should be used for the common good, and not just for our private good. This principle can be applied at various levels. Thus, rich countries should be willing to share their wealth with poorer countries, and open their borders to displaced people. The theological inspiration behind this great social doctrine finds its clearest and most eloquent expression in *Gaudium et Spes*:

God intended the earth with everything contained in it for the use of all human beings and peoples. Thus, under the leadership of justice and in the company of charity, created goods should be in abundance for all in like manner. Whatever the forms of property may be, as adapted to the legitimate institutions of peoples, according to diverse and changeable circumstances, attention must always be paid to this universal destination of earthly goods. In using them, therefore, man should regard the external things that he legitimately possesses not only as his own but also as common in the sense that they should be able to benefit not only him but also others (GS 69).<sup>13</sup>

The doctrine neither prohibits the private ownership of property, nor maintains that all property should belong to the government, making the charge that Francis was trying to smuggle communism into the Catholic Church ludicrous. With regard to the alleged conflict between Francis and Leo, it must be remembered that Leo XIII wrote at a time when socialism and the abolition of private property was on the ascent. But most importantly, it must also be pointed out that although Leo did insist that right to private property is inviolable, he also stressed, following the teachings of Thomas Aquinas – the Angelic Doctor – that we must always be willing to share our possessions with the needy. He writes:

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, 'Called to Share the Table of Creation', Message of His Holiness John Paul II for Lent 1992. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/lent/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_29021992\\_lent-1992.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/lent/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_29021992_lent-1992.html).

<sup>13</sup> Pope Paul VI, '*Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World', December 7, 1965. [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).

But if the question be asked: How must one's possessions be used? – the Church replies without hesitation in the words of the same holy Doctor: 'Man should not consider his material possessions as his own, but common to all, so as to share them without hesitation when others are in need (RN 22).

The universal destination of created goods is a beautiful and powerful social teaching of the church. When put into practice – in whatever form – it is an expression of the universal fraternity that Francis talks about and that we should all aspire towards.

## **POPULISM AND THE DEATH PENALTY**

Before concluding this presentation, I would like to reflect – again very briefly – on two topics that the encyclical addresses, namely, populism and the death penalty. These issues cannot be more different from each other, and I have chosen to highlight them for vastly different reasons. We are witnessing in our world the disturbing rise of what authors like the Princeton political scientist Jan-Werner Müller have described as authoritarian populism.<sup>14</sup> More and more countries are now run by governments that may be described as populist. These include Poland, Hungary, Mexico and Turkey. Greece and Italy are run by multiparty populist coalitions. What the pope has to say about populism is both poignant and instructive. The second issue brings us closer to home. As many of us would I'm sure be aware of, there is a continuing debate in Singapore on whether the death penalty should be abolished.<sup>15</sup> The pope's comments on this subject can contribute to this debate.

In the chapter entitled 'A Better Kind of Politics', Francis criticises what he calls an 'unhealthy populism'. According to the pope, this kind of populism is present whenever 'individuals are able to exploit politically a people's culture, under whatever ideological banner, for their own advantage or continuing grip on power'. Such populist politicians or groups seek to attain power and influence by 'appealing to the basest and most selfish inclinations of certain sectors of the population' (159), using civic institutions and the legal system to achieve those ends. Francis has exposed the fundamental moral problem of populism, its political dishonesty and hypocrisy. Populists of every stripe claim that they and they alone represent the people. But 'the people' as defined by the populists does not include *all* people, but only those who support their cause. Those who are perceived as not part of 'us', who express dissent – the press, minorities, foreigners, etc – are often branded as 'the enemies of the people'.

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<sup>14</sup> Jan-Werner Müller, *What is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Saw Su Hui, 'Death Penalty in Singapore: Is It Time to Abolish It?' Singapore Legal Advice, January 21, 2019. <https://singaporelegaladvice.com/death-penalty-singapore/>.

But Francis' treatment of populism is profoundly nuanced. While condemning certain forms of populism, the pope speaks positively about the idea of the people. He warns against overreacting to certain expressions of populism that would inadvertently threaten democracy itself. For there is a legitimate meaning – Francis reminds us – of the word 'people'. There is a genuine and legitimate need to hear their voices, and to take seriously the pulse of society. 'Any effort to remove this concept [of the people] from common parlance', the pope stresses, 'could lead to the elimination of the very notion of democracy as "government by the people"' (157). What is needed, then, is to recover the meaning of the word 'people', to remove the distortions introduced to it by closed populist groups. 'The concept of "people" is in fact open-ended', writes Francis. 'A living and dynamic people, a people with a future is one constantly open to new synthesis through its ability to welcome differences' (160).

Turning now to the issue of the death penalty, some commentators have argued that Francis has changed the Church's teaching on this issue with his new encyclical. According to Catholic teaching, the State always has the right to impose the death penalty on criminals who have been convicted of very serious crimes, like murder. However, the traditional view also stresses that the State should not exercise this right if in the expected outcome the evil effects outweigh the good effects. Thus, while the traditional teaching maintains that the death penalty is a justifiable mode of punishment for very serious crimes, it leaves open the question whether the State should implement it. But until only very recently, the Church has never explicitly called for the abolition of the death penalty. Thus, in April 2001, Avery Dulles could write: 'The Catholic magisterium does not, and never has, advocated unqualified abolition of the death penalty. I know of no official statement from popes or bishops, whether in the past or in the present, that denies the right of the State to execute offenders at least in certain extreme cases'.<sup>16</sup>

However, it has been observed that the Catholic magisterium has, in recent years, become increasingly vocal on this issue. Both Saint John Paul II<sup>17</sup> and Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI<sup>18</sup> have pushed for its abolition. However, it was only with the revision of number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018, which was approved by Francis, that the new stance of the Church on the death penalty was made official. Quoting Francis' address in 2017, number 2267 states that 'the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person"', and she works with

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<sup>16</sup> Avery Dulles, 'Catholicism and Capital Punishment', *First Things*, April 2001, <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2001/04/catholicism-capital-punishment>.

<sup>17</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Urbe et Orbi*, Christmas 1998, para 5. [http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_mes\\_25121998\\_urbi.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/urbi/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_25121998_urbi.html).

<sup>18</sup> Benedict XVI, 'General Audience', 30 November 2011, [http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2011/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20111130.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20111130.html).

determination for its abolition worldwide'.<sup>19</sup> In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis merely repeats the words of the Catechism (263). However, in describing the death penalty as 'inadmissible' and with a call for its worldwide 'abolition', the Church has clearly changed its position on this practice. While the State may still have the right to impose the death penalty, it should never do so because it is a gross violation of human dignity. The shift in the Church's position, which began with John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is cemented in the Catechism during Francis' pontificate.

## CONCLUSION

It should be quite clear from what I have said in this brief presentation that I have much admiration for *Fratelli Tutti*.

However, as a theologian, I was hoping to see more theology in Francis' encyclical, drawing more liberally and creatively from the rich theological, spiritual, liturgical and pastoral traditions of the Roman Catholic Church. As a *Protestant* theologian, I was hoping that the pope would ground his statements and proposals more robustly in Holy Scripture, from which many passages that directly or indirectly address the themes of the encyclical can be gleaned. While the Pope has taken great pains to describe the ills of our world, very little is done to explain theologically why our world has come to be the way that it is. Put differently, there is very little emphasis on original sin and on human sinfulness. As some commentators such as Russell Hittinger of the Lumen Christi Institute have pointed out, the encyclical could do with more Augustine.<sup>20</sup> For what the pope has sketched in this encyclical are the habits of sinful human beings, which the fifth century bishop has aptly described as *homo incurvatus in se*, human beings who are self-destructively fixated with and turned in on themselves. As a consequence of this, very little is said about the need for conversion – for that radical spiritual transformation that theologians have described as regeneration and sanctification. These fundamental doctrines are important because without them we will not be able to fully understand the human condition and the reasons for our current crisis. We would fail to consider the basic truth that the fracture that we see everywhere in human relationality is because of our sinful alienation from God. And when we fail to see this – or take this with utter seriousness – then our vision of the human future and how that future can be actualised will be inspired by a secular optimism, not a theological realism.

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<sup>19</sup> Vatican, Summary of Bulletin. 'New revision of number 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty – Rescriptum "ex Audentia SS.mi", 02,08.2018. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2018/08/02/180802a.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Russell Hittinger made this comment at an online discussion co-sponsored by the Institute for Human Ecology at Catholic University of America and America Media entitled, 'Fratelli Tutti: Engaging Pope Francis's New Encyclical on Social Friendship', <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXQUKyYZisU>.

Be that as it may, Francis' exhortation to demolish the walls that divide us must be taken seriously. And perhaps the first steps should be taken by members of the household of God, to heal the brokenness that exists in the *ecclesia*. We should bring ourselves to see that there are more that unite us than divide us. I am not suggesting that we paper over the profound theological and doctrinal disagreements that exist among Christians. For a superficial irenics is ultimately irresponsible and disrespectful. But we should remind ourselves that these are disagreements among members of the same *oikos*, the same household, the same family. We must bring ourselves to see that although these disagreements are important and should never be trivialised, there is a deeper reality that binds us together – our union in Jesus Christ. So, let us take heed of Francis' exhortation, and welcome each other with the expression 'Fratelli Tutti', 'brothers all'.

For it is only when Christians are willing to demolish the walls that divide them will they be able to bring the message of fraternal love and social friendship to our broken world.

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