

**“Fratelli tutti”**

**A reading of the Encyclical of Pope Francis**

**On Fraternity and Social Friendship**

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Aula della Conciliazione, Lateran Palace

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***INTRODUCTORY REMARKS***

Dear friends,

Good afternoon and welcome to this meeting on Pope Francis’s Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship. I am delighted to welcome you to the Aula della Conciliazione at the Lateran Palace, a magnificent artistic masterpiece, a witness to history that has radiated the beauty of faith throughout the world for many centuries while it served as the residence of the Bishop of Rome. A warm welcome to all those who are following us on Telepace and the Facebook page of the Diocese of Rome.

I am pleased to introduce this event organised to explore and study the message of the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* on the occasion of the World Day of the Poor.

My first thought, full of filial gratitude, goes out to our Bishop, Francis, for the extraordinary gift of this Encyclical on fraternity and social friendship at such a challenging and crucial time in our history.

I welcome and thank His Eminence, Cardinal Gianfranco RAVASI, President of the Pontifical Council for Culture, for so kindly accepting our invitation. His Eminence will highlight the main core themes of the Encyclical.

A warm welcome to Father Fabio BAGGIO, Undersecretary of the Migrants and Refugees Section of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. I express my gratitude to him for accepting our invitation to describe the challenges that the ecclesial community faces today in light of the *Fratelli tutti*.

I welcome and sincerely thank Dr. Stefania FALASCA, Vice President of the Vatican John Paul I Foundation, journalist and columnist for *Avvenire*, who will introduce the reflection and situate the Encyclical in the framework of Pope Francis’s magisterium.

At the end of the *Angelus* of Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis expressed his joy in presenting and offering the Encyclical Letter to the faithful of the whole world, and said:

“Yesterday I was in Assisi to sign the new Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* on fraternity and social friendship. I offered it to God on the tomb of Saint Francis, who inspired me to write it, as in the previous *Laudato si*” (FRANCIS, *Angelus* 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020).

Our Bishop revealed that he drew “the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives” (FT 1) especially from “the Saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy” (FT 2).

Pope Francis situates the new Encyclical within the sequence of magisterial teachings of his predecessors: “The signs of the times clearly show that human fraternity and care of creation form the sole way towards integral development and peace, already indicated by the Popes Saints John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II” (FRANCIS, *Angelus* 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020).

By reasserting the dignity of each human person, “we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity” (FT 8).

By acknowledging that we are all brothers, “we advance along the paths of hope”, as our Bishop encourages us to do at this time of trial, in the awareness that “hope is bold” and enables us to see beyond fear and dismay. Only thus shall we engage on a path of fraternity within the Church, with the faithful of all religions, and with all people.

Thank you!

## *CONCLUDING REMARKS*

I am deeply grateful to the speakers; your thought-provoking speeches have helped us reflect and delve into the message of this new magisterial document.

I express my feelings of gratitude to Dr. Stefania FALASCA for describing the context and the place that the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti* occupies in Pope Francis's magisterium.

My sincerest gratitude goes out to His Eminence, Cardinal Gianfranco RAVASI, for offering us an invaluable interpretive key to explore the text and understand the teaching of the Encyclical in all its richness.

I am grateful to Fr. Fabio BAGGIO for helping us understand the main concrete challenges that the ecclesial community must address in the present context.

I wish to thank Aleandro Fusco and Ilaria Fantozzi who read the texts of the encyclical, and the choir of the Cappella Musicale Santa Maria in Montesanto, directed by Director Fabrizio Vestri.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to all those who contributed to the organization of this important event.

I affectionately greet all of you, dear friends, who have followed us live. I thank you for your attention and urge you to read Pope Francis's Encyclical with a sense of responsibility, because it will reveal viable pathways to build a more just and fraternal world, starting with our day-to-day relationships.

In conclusion, I urge you to value the words of wisdom that Pope Francis shares in paragraph 8 of the Encyclical: "Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation. We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together!" (FT 8).

It is true that "by ourselves, we risk seeing mirages", so we may be misled and see things that do not exist; "dreams, on the other hand, are built together". (FT 8). Never be afraid to dream together!

Thank you and good evening!