

ENCYCLICAL LETTER  
**FRATELLI TUTTI**  
ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP  
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AN ABSENCE OF HUMAN DIGNITY ON THE BORDERS

37. Certain populist political regimes, as well as certain liberal economic approaches, maintain that an influx of migrants is to be prevented at all costs. Arguments are also made for the propriety of limiting aid to poor countries, so that they can hit rock bottom and find themselves forced to take austerity measures. One fails to realize that behind such statements, abstract and hard to support, great numbers of lives are at stake. Many migrants have fled from war, persecution and natural catastrophes. Others, rightly, “are seeking opportunities for themselves and their families. They dream of a better future and they want to create the conditions for achieving it” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 25 March 2019, 91).

38. Sadly, some “are attracted by Western culture, sometimes with unrealistic expectations that expose them to grave disappointments. Unscrupulous traffickers, frequently linked to drug cartels or arms cartels, exploit the weakness of migrants, who too often experience violence, trafficking, psychological and physical abuse and untold sufferings on their journey” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 25 March 2019, 92). Those who emigrate “experience separation from their place of origin, and often a cultural and religious uprooting as well. Fragmentation is also felt by the communities they leave behind, which lose their most vigorous and enterprising elements, and by families, especially when one or both of the parents migrates, leaving the children in the country of origin” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 25 March 2019, 93). For this reason, “there is also a need to reaffirm the right not to emigrate, that is, to remain in one’s homeland” (BENEDICT XVI, *Message for the 2013 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 12 October 2012).

39. Then too, “in some host countries, migration causes fear and alarm, often fomented and exploited for political purposes. This can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and it needs to be addressed decisively” (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 25 March 2019, 92). Migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person. Hence they ought to be “agents in their own redemption” (*Message for the 2020 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 13 May 2020). No one will ever

openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human. For Christians, this way of thinking and acting is unacceptable, since it sets certain political preferences above deep convictions of our faith: the inalienable dignity of each human person regardless of origin, race or religion, and the supreme law of fraternal love.

40. "Migrations, more than ever before, will play a pivotal role in the future of our world" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 11 January 2016). At present, however, migration is affected by the "loss of that sense of responsibility for our brothers and sisters on which every civil society is based" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 11 January 2016). Europe, for example, seriously risks taking this path. Nonetheless, "aided by its great cultural and religious heritage, it has the means to defend the centrality of the human person and to find the right balance between its twofold moral responsibility to protect the rights of its citizens and to assure assistance and acceptance to migrants" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 11 January 2016).

41. I realize that some people are hesitant and fearful with regard to migrants. I consider this part of our natural instinct of self-defence. Yet it is also true that an individual and a people are only fruitful and productive if they are able to develop a creative openness to others. I ask everyone to move beyond those primal reactions because "there is a problem when doubts and fears condition our way of thinking and acting to the point of making us intolerant, closed and perhaps even – without realizing it – racist. In this way, fear deprives us of the desire and the ability to encounter the other". (*Message for the 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, 27 May 2019)