

**Ecumenical Social Week**  
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*Program Address:*  
*Human migration, inclusivity and fraternity:*  
*Ideas and ideals for Ukraine*

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### **Introduction**

To talk of development during the current pandemic may seem like fantasy, a flight from reality. Talk of development can also conceal negative attitudes, as when some people use the phrase “third-world development” to imply that other regions of the world are behind or inferior. So why do we link development and migration? Because development stimulates migration and because people, looking for a new place of stability and opportunity, migrate in large part to ensure their own full development and especially that of their children. Sadly, local populations, thinking they have nothing in common with migrants and perhaps feeling threatened, may be tempted to turn them away.

In spite of these sobering thoughts, I am delighted today to explore the topic of migration within Catholic Social Teaching. In order to respond to reality’s new challenges, the evolving social thought of our Church calls for recognising the signs of the times and culminates with eschatological hope. In his recent encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis proposes to carefully read the modern world and especially its current events. “Once this health crisis passes,” he warns, “our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation” or destructive individualism. And he elaborates: “God willing, after all this, we will no longer think in terms of ‘them’ and ‘those’, but only ‘us’”. Let this not prove “to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing” (FT 35).

This is a time when the logic of globalization coincides with a weakening of social standards of existence. Learning from the mistakes of the past, the magisterium of Pope Francis and his predecessors urges us to rediscover the central understanding of the common good which promotes communal and personal development that is

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well-rounded and sustainable – in the words of Pope Paul VI, the “development of each man and of the whole man.”<sup>2</sup>

This year’s Ecumenical Social Week is dedicated to ongoing development. As I reflect on the unique value of fraternity and the common good, my remarks will, in a special way, focus on the meaning of migration for holistic human development in the Ukrainian context. And for the current situation in Ukraine, I will offer a few suggestions from the point of view of the Holy Father’s teaching. At the same time, I very much hope to convince you to read, to meditate, to assimilate and to implement *Fratelli tutti* because, in the words of its subtitle, “fraternity and social friendship” are indeed the necessary key to the great problems which are crippling humanity and destroying our planet.

### **The Ukrainian Context**

To begin, here is a quick review of some challenges directly or indirectly related to migration, which, in turn, is a key factor in Ukrainian economics and demographics today.

Statistics clearly show that of the countries in Europe, Ukraine is one of those most involved in the phenomenon of emigration. The Ukrainian diaspora numbers around 20 million persons. Among these are 2.5 million migrant workers who send back around US\$11 billion every year, or 10% of the country’s gross domestic product. With such impressive figures, one can assume that far-sighted management of these revenue transfers would probably stimulate significant economic growth and, hopefully, development. Growth in 2019 was a good 3.2%, but the crisis caused by the COVID-19 epidemic sharply worsened the economic position of the country in 2020 and 2021. Agricultural production, including village farming, is a mainstay of the domestic economy; with proper planning and marketing, it can address both internal consumption and export trade. Agriculture has significant potential for the further economic development of the country.

The current migration picture in Ukraine is influenced by an array of important factors. These include:

- The past and continuing conflicts in Crimea and the Donbas region (Eastern Ukraine) and the resulting economic decline;
- Drastic reforms on the state level that risk displacing some groups of citizens and, if they are implemented inadequately, can cause even more mass emigration;
- In 2021, when the unemployment level in Ukraine grew to over 10.5%, one third of Ukrainian migrant workers abroad were under the age of 35. This can affect national security and growth in the medium term;

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<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 14.

- The Ukrainian population is one of the fastest aging in Europe. This reduces the total workforce and further aggravates employment problems;
- European and Euro-Atlantic integration, including the introduction of the visa-free regime by the European Union in 2017;
- Ukrainians have a positive experience of migration from their own participation in international working-migration over many years. Many networks formed that facilitate migration.
- Closely tied to migration are the tragic plagues of human trafficking and modern slavery. In recent years, Ukraine has been a major country of origin, transit, and destination of victims of human trafficking. Victims from Ukraine are exploited within the country and in Russia, Western Europe, China, Kazakhstan, and the Near East. Ukrainian children and some vulnerable adults are coerced into forced begging. Restrictions related to the pandemic have caused the exploitation of more Ukrainians in various trades, and an increase of sexual exploitation through the internet.<sup>3</sup> But much of this tragedy remains unobserved, invisible and without response.

Considering important points like these, Anh Nguyen, head of the International Organization for Migration mission in Ukraine, recently drew up a balance:<sup>4</sup> Migrants are a foundation of Ukrainian economics. Private money transfers sent to Ukraine allow Ukrainian families to provide for basic needs, including food, housing, education, and healthcare. However, if Ukraine receives more economic advantages from migration than disadvantages, we must not lose sight of the fact that the absence of parents – usually the mother – can cause great damage to the social and psychological development of their children. Abandoned children are especially vulnerable. They need separate treatment on the part of government policies. Another unfortunate outcome is that women returning to Ukraine after working abroad are often ignored by their families. They are abandoned, often without any means of living or help.

These multifaceted phenomena instrumentalize people’s vulnerabilities and enhance the political or economic interests of certain groups. Such challenges call for more than simple measures that leave the deep underlying problems untouched.

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<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department Report regarding human trafficking in 2021, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

<sup>4</sup> Anh Nguyen, “Migrants, the Backbone of Ukrainian Economy, Require Support in Times of COVID-19 – IOM Report,” 21.07.2021 <https://www.iom.int/news/migrants-backbone-ukrainian-economy-require-support-times-covid-19-iom-report>

## Holistic development and the social magisterium of Pope Francis<sup>5</sup>

Keeping in mind these challenges, let us turn to Catholic Social Teaching. What helpful guidance can we find?

Development can most significantly be assessed by its impact on the common good, in which all levels of society participate in just manner. From the point of view of Pope Francis, it is also measured by how it implements the all-embracing ideal of human brother- and sisterhood. In order for it to be holistic and sustainable, development must include the people who need help, not just as beneficiaries, but as active participants or protagonists. “When we speak of sustainability,” Pope Francis says very clearly, “we cannot overlook how important it is to include and to listen to all voices, especially those usually excluded from this type of discussion such as the voices of the poor, migrants, indigenous people, the young”<sup>6</sup>.

The paradigm of fraternity with its inclusivity, stability, and comprehensive human development of the whole person, is to be promoted at every level throughout the entire development process. Fraternity -- brother- and sister-hood -- is one of the fundamental themes running through all the teaching of Pope Francis.

This began with his words just after being elected: “Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity” (13.3.2013). And at the Eucharist beginning his Petrine ministry, he declared: “whenever we fail to care for creation and for our brothers and sisters, the way is opened to destruction and hearts are hardened” (19.3.2013). From the start, he has followed and applied the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. As *Gaudium et spes* tells us, general fraternity and social friendship are “signs of the times” for the modern world (GS 4). The fourth chapter of *Evangelii gaudium* clearly demonstrates the social effects of joyfully proclaiming the Gospel. And chapter five of *Laudato sì* contains guidelines for building a more just world, better mutual respect among people and due respect towards creation.

*Fratelli tutti* builds on this consistent teaching. Its main message and formal point of view establishes “we together” and “us together” in order to foster *human fraternity for life in common and peace in the world*. Herein lies the prophetic force of *Fratelli tutti*. The very title of the encyclical proclaims that we are *fratelli tutti* – siblings all. It reveals the calling to spread brother- and sisterhood and social friendship incumbent upon all, including the Church.

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<sup>5</sup> See Michael Czerny and Christian Barone, *Fraternità - segno dei tempi: Il magistero sociale di Papa Francesco* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2021, forthcoming in English translation from Orbis in 2022). It provides a synthesis of the magisterium of Pope Francis, in continuity with the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council, urging universal brother- and sister-hood as a “sign of the times” for our age—a rejuvenated vision for contemporary humanity, including all the religions, walking together and joining forces to build a more just and united world.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, Address to the Conference on “Religions and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS): Listening to the Cry of the Earth and of the Poor”, 8.03.2019.

In chapter 1, “Dark clouds over a closed world,” the Holy Father reads modern reality, highlighting deeply troubling trends which “hinder the development of universal fraternity” (FT 9). These tendencies constitute common challenges that are inevitably faced by church communities, the academic world, and civil society at large.

Consumerist, throwaway culture creates an illusion of omnipotence. It leads relentlessly to a levelling of individual interests and to self-isolation, and as a result, to the death of fraternity. In order to save humanity and its ideals and to carry out God’s creative plan, Pope Francis constantly invites each of us to share and propagate a culture of encounter. He asks us to consider: “Encountering and welcoming everyone, solidarity – a word that is being hidden by this culture, as if it were a bad word – solidarity and fraternity: these are what make our society truly human”<sup>7</sup>.

Chapter 2 reminds us of the well-known Good Samaritan as the “stranger on the road.” In order to recognize the one in difficulty as a brother or sister, we must first notice or perceive their actual presence. Those who are focused on themselves, who are not interested in others, who are indifferent – such people do not recognize their neighbour who has been cast to the side of the road (compare with FT 73). Recognition of one’s neighbours as brother and sister requires effort, especially when that neighbour does not “belong to our social group” (FT 81).

In addition to this inherent measure of fraternity, there also exists a transcendental measure which is based on the unequivocal revelation of Jesus Christ: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). Christians are called, therefore, “to recognize Christ himself in each of our abandoned or excluded brothers and sisters” (FT 85). From this point of view the culture of encounter is transformed into a “theology” of encounter, and thus, into a “theophany” of encounter.

### ***Fratelli tutti* looks at migrants**

The culture of exclusion is readily seen in the phenomenon of migration. Because migrants come from many origins, they introduce cultural, linguistic, religious diversity. It becomes easy to divide “us” from “them” and to justify excluding “them” from “our” circle. The masks we learned to use during the pandemic, should teach us about unhelpful masks. These are façades and stereotypes “with which we camouflage our egos, always worrying about appearances.” Let these fall away, “revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another” (FT 32) with whom we live together in, and care together for, our “common home.”

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, Homily ((XXVIII World Youth Day), Cathedral of Rio de Janeiro, 27.07.2013.

In order to begin to build together, we need to slow down, be patient and restrained in our comparisons. We need to invite those to the table who usually remain outside our circle. Decision-making calls for dialogue and contemplation and these are becoming increasingly awkward in the consumerist economy. The rhythms of its frantic cycles of production and its acceleration of marketing set a daily agenda designed to avoid any delays and slowdowns (FT 17).

To oppose this manifestation of throwaway culture, brother- and sisterhood must become our identity in all dimensions of common effort and human coexistence. During his meeting with youth in Vilnius in 2018, Pope Francis explained: “Identity is not the product of a laboratory; that does not exist [...]. An identity *does* exist in walking together, of struggling together, of loving together. Identity does exist in belonging to a family, to a people. An identity does exist that gives you love, tenderness, concern for others... An identity does exist that gives you the strength to struggle and at the same time the tenderness to caress”<sup>8</sup>.

And in his message for the 2021 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis invites everyone “to journey together towards an ever wider “we” including all men and women, for the sake of renewing the human family, building together a future of justice and peace, and ensuring that no one is left behind.” Is there any other effective way to promote holistic or integral development?<sup>9</sup>

### **The vocation of politics**

The whole of FT chapter 5 is dedicated to “A better kind of politics”. Politics is a vocation, and the role of politics is of fundamental importance for the realization of general fraternity and societal friendship. In other words, the holistic realization of our common vocation to fraternity requires honest politics, politicians who are faithful to their vocation and who are always at the service of the common good (FT 154). Building the common good starts with the establishment of peace and justice.

I think that in this regard, the words of Pope Francis during his 2016 visit to Armenia are especially relevant for the Ukrainian context: “[Today] too many conflicts in various parts of the world remain unresolved, causing grief, destruction, and forced migrations of entire peoples. It is essential that those responsible for the future of the nations undertake courageously and without delay initiatives aimed at ending these sufferings, making their primary goal the quest for peace, the defence and acceptance of victims of aggression and persecution, the promotion of justice and sustainable development”<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, Address to Youth, Cathedral Square, Vilnius, 22.09.2018.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 107<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 26.9.2021.

<sup>10</sup> Pope Francis, Address to civil authorities and the diplomatic corps, 24.06.2016.

The politics of responding to the call to serve and defend the common good, requires us to avoid tendencies toward corruption and abuse of power. These tendencies occur and proliferate when politicians give in to the temptations of “a populism that exploits [the vulnerable] demagogically for its own purposes, or a liberalism that serves the economic interests of the powerful” (FT 155). Politics must prove itself able to encompass a wide vision, one that is able to renew societal structures and organizations from the inside; a vision that promotes multilateralism (FT 144), and that calls us to rethink legal systems on the basis of international cooperation; and a vision to establish goals that go outside the boundaries of local interests (FT 177).

Just as person and nation are related concepts, so too are the concepts of “social love” and “political mercy”. At the interpersonal level, this becomes support for the other. In politics, this pairing manifests itself in the desire to build an inclusive society (FT 186).

Among today’s main challenges for Ukrainian politics, religious communities and civil society is the question of the defence of life. From the point of view of the holistic development of the person, the defence of life is not just a one-time action but means the defence of every aspect of human existence. “Taking care of life”, says the Holy Father, “requires that attention be paid to living conditions: health, education, and job opportunities. In short, it includes everything that allows a person to live in dignity”<sup>11</sup>.

### **Dialogue and friendship in society**

Chapter 6 is dedicated to “Dialogue and friendship in society”. In pluralistic societies, development of friendly relations and honest exchange acquires special social significance. Pope Francis proposes dialogue as an irreplaceable tool for uniting different spheres of society by penetrating beyond the boundaries of “any ephemeral consensus” (FT 211). The absence of true dialogue and of commitment to friendship always has harmful consequences, and can only increase conflict and the aggravation of internal tensions (FT 202). You can see how this applies to Ukraine.

Dialogue is often confused with a frantic “exchange” of thoughts, a dynamic that does not provide for true recognition of the other, but remains an unrelenting attempt at strengthening one’s own position. Not only does this approach dominate in networks where aggression and hatred find shelter in social media. It is also witnessed in angry political debates, where the ability to prevail over opponents has become much more important than the ideas being expressed. There is no true dialogue without respect towards the other, their identity, and the recognition of the legitimacy of other ways of thinking (FT 203).

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<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, Address to the *Pro-Life Movement*, 2.02.2019.

Social friendship and fraternity are born from a culture of encounter and dialogue, which means to search for truth together, to recognize it and its factual objectiveness, and to overcome any kind of “appropriation” which is limited to a single point of view (FT 206). Promoting a healthy “culture of encounter” is a prerequisite to achieving social coherence in which no one is denied rights or opportunities (FT 216-221).

Pope Francis recommends kindness as a form of respect and as a means of communication which has the goal of not doing harm to others (FR 223). To cooperate with one another, to not relativize one’s own thoughts or the thoughts of others, is the most direct way to transform societal relations and to lay the foundations of a common existence that is fruitful for all (FT 224).

The promotion of dialogue and encounters aimed at holistic development and at cooperation among the Church, civil society and academia is an absolute necessity. Pope Francis states that, “Our societies will have a ‘colourful’ future, enriched by diversity and by cultural exchanges. Consequently, we must even now learn to live together in harmony and peace. [...] To achieve this ideal, however, we must make every effort to break down the walls that separate us and, in acknowledging our profound interconnection, build bridges that foster a culture of encounter”<sup>12</sup>.

### **Some practical reflections on Ukraine**

Integral development requires encounter, dialogue, and cooperation. It requires not only special attention for the weakest such as the homeless, the displaced and refugees, but also their active participation. In the light of Catholic Social Teaching and especially the magisterium of Pope Francis, here are proposals for the Ukrainian context.

- Regarding the huge and growing Ukrainian diaspora, these emigrants are an evident resource for Ukrainian society and its economy -- rather than “out of sight and out of mind,” they must be taken into account in all political, religious, social and academic forums. Ukrainian grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and daughters who work abroad commonly sacrifice themselves to allow a better life and future for their relatives. These people are an organic part of Ukraine and of the Ukrainian community.
- Another issue is mass skilled emigration or the so-called “brain-drain”. In 2016, Pope Francis exhorted, “[S]ociety is called to offer valid employment opportunities to the new generations, avoiding the so-called ‘brain drain’. That one might freely choose to specialise and work abroad is good and fruitful; however, it is painful when educated young people feel they must abandon their homeland due to a lack

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<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 107<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 26.09.2021.

of suitable opportunities”<sup>13</sup>. The government, public figures and the religious community cannot remain on the sidelines, merely observing. Who is willing to contribute to an interconnected holistic approach?

- A high priority need is to develop workable proposals for effective policies for the reintegration of returning persons throughout the country. “For those who decide to return to their homeland”, says the Pope, “I want to emphasise the need to develop social and professional reintegration programmes”<sup>14</sup>.
- There are, believe it or not, more than a million internally displaced persons in your country, awaiting integration and participation. Without its national minorities, a fraternal and multicultural Ukrainian society would not be possible. For example, the Crimean Tatars experienced the horror of deportation in 1944. Still today, thousands of them are IDPs. Their presence provides an opportunity for practical hospitality and mutual growth throughout the whole country. For the encounter with newly-arrived migrants and internally displaced people “of other denominations and religions represents a fertile ground for the growth of open and enriching ecumenical and interreligious dialogue”<sup>15</sup>.

### **In conclusion**

Since “great changes are not produced behind desks or in offices” (FT 231) but are made with the help of concrete gestures and actions, Catholic Social Teaching has always looked at social reality from a practical point of view. It offers concrete guidelines for the resolution of these complex questions and for harmonious coexistence in society. The recent magisterium of Pope Francis emphasizes the major themes of holistic development of the person and proposes real, practical instruments: 1) for preserving, “mining” or “harvesting” the memory of the past, not discarding it as obsolete; 2) for promoting dialogue about today’s challenges as the privileged approach or “approach of choice” even when the parties have long been at loggerheads; 3) for joint planning for the future where “joint” means all stakeholders, not just the so-called “important” ones; 4) for initiating processes of reconciliation in the spirit of St Francis: “Make me a channel of your peace. Where there is hatred let me bring your love” etc.; and 5) for protecting national treasures and cultural diversity as well as natural beauty and resources in trust for future generations.

The main contribution to today’s theme, then, provided by the Holy Father’s leadership, teaching and action, is our learning to work together without jealousy, without disharmony or divisions, and to build a fraternal society where no one is

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<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, Address to the Fourth World Congress of Pastoral Care for International Students, 1.12.2016.

<sup>14</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 104<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 14.01.2018.

<sup>15</sup> Pope Francis, Address to National Directors of Pastoral Care for Migrants, 22.09.2017.

excluded.<sup>16</sup> Enriched by each person and the diversity of his/her gifts, we can unite our community with bridges, not further divide it with walls, where “we can transform borders into a privileged place of encounter and where the miracle of an ever wide ‘we’ can come about.”<sup>17</sup>

In the light of God’s Word, the prophetic voice of Pope Francis reveals in *Fratelli tutti* the anxiety that worries all of mankind today, but which also presents the opportunity for transformation, not only for religious people but for all of society. Pope Francis invites us to understand the reality of fraternity and its concrete effects for building a better world. This is an appeal to people to renew their courage and farsightedness, and to actively encourage the spread of the paradigm of fraternity inspired by the words of Christ: “I have not called you servants, but friends” (John 15:15).

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<sup>16</sup> Pope Francis, Message for the 106<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 27.09.2020.

<sup>17</sup> Compare with Pope Francis, Message for the 107<sup>th</sup> World Day of Migrants and Refugees, 26.09.2021.