

Message to Associates of the Blessed Sacrament on Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti*

Dear Members of the Eymardian Family,

Earlier this week Pope Francis promulgated his new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (3, October, 2020). Following upon the release of this historic document the international leadership of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (Fr. Eugenio Barbosa Martins, SSS), The Congregation of the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament (Sr. Fe Manalo, SSS), and *Servitium Christi* (Mrs. Mary Keane), sent a joint document to the members of the Eymardian family asking us to read, integrate, and promote the message of this new Papal encyclical. We would like to share Pope Francis' message with you along with the letter from the international leadership of the Eymardian family.

We recognize that there are many demands upon your time in these challenging times and that reading a large Papal encyclical may be difficult to accomplish. With that in mind we would like to highlight some important points from Pope Francis' new document that speak particularly to our eucharistic spirituality and mission. Likewise, we offer two prayers that Pope Francis has included in his new encyclical. We encourage you to offer these prayers with your local communities. May we build true and lasting communion in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our nation, and in our world, following the witness of Pope Francis.

Some "Eucharistic Highlights" from Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship* (3, October, 2020)

The leadership of the Eymardian family has highlighted Pope Francis' new encyclical as being "eucharistic." At first glance we might notice that Pope Francis doesn't speak explicitly about the Eucharist or the Mass in this new document. So, what are the leaders of our religious community referring to when they call this document "eucharistic?" In essence, the "eucharistic dimension" that they identify is the deeper sense of communion and belonging that the Eucharist calls us to.

In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis desires to call all people to build a more harmonious society where the dignity of every human being is recognized, and we truly live as brothers and sisters. Sadly, Pope Francis observes that conflict, division, polarization and their negative consequences are on the rise. He shares this letter in the hope of turning away from that trend for the good of all.

In *Fratelli Tutti* Pope Francis draws inspiration from Saint Francis of Assisi who journeyed to visit Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt during the time of the crusades, in order to build peace, greater understanding, and fraternal relationship. Follow his lead, Pope Francis has been working with Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb to help accomplish the same in our contemporary context. They together state that, "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters (*FT*, 5)."

Building upon his groundbreaking encyclical *Laudato Si'* (On the Care of Our Common Home), Pope Francis speaks at length of our “interdependence” upon each other as human beings and with the world in which we live. This interdependence, far from being a detriment, allows us to grow and flourish. It’s noteworthy here that Pope Francis uses a phrase so important to Saint Peter Julian Eymard, “the gift of self,” in order to illustrate his point. Pope Francis writes:

Human beings are so made that they cannot live, develop and find fulfilment except “in the sincere gift of self to others.” Nor can they fully know themselves apart from an encounter with other persons: “I communicate effectively with myself only insofar as I communicate with others.” No one can experience the true beauty of life without relating to others, without having real faces to love. This is part of the mystery of authentic human existence. “Life exists where there is bonding, communion, fraternity; and life is stronger than death when it is built on true relationships and bonds of fidelity. On the contrary, there is no life when we claim to be self-sufficient and live as islands: in these attitudes, death prevails (*FT*, 87).

Fratelli Tutti is a social encyclical of the Church. This means, it follows in the path of the great document from the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et spes* (which it also quotes). These encyclicals speak to the complexities and challenges of our current times. Thus, *Fratelli Tutti* speaks of the current coronavirus pandemic, the challenges of an increasingly technological world, healthy and unhealthy political perspectives, the dignity of all people (especially the young, the elderly, and those on the margins of society). These are all themes those familiar with Pope Francis’ homilies and writing will recognize. Immersed in this conversation, however, is not simply how we relate to each other as individuals, but how we relate to each other as communities and nations. This is a major emphasis of the document for a eucharistically minded international community like ours. Again, Pope Francis speaks of the way forward in terms of good relationships as he writes:

For a healthy relationship between love of one’s native land and a sound sense of belonging to our larger human family, it is helpful to keep in mind that global society is not the sum total of different countries, but rather the communion that exists among them. The mutual sense of belonging is prior to the emergence of individual groups. Each particular group becomes part of the fabric of universal communion and there discovers its own beauty. All individuals, whatever their origin, know that they are part of the greater human family, without which they will not be able to understand themselves fully (*FT*, 149).

The document concludes with the following two prayers. The values of the document are woven into these prayers. Please offer these prayers with your families and communities that we may together work towards building greater communion and “social friendship.”

A Prayer to the Creator

Lord, Father of our human family,
you created all human beings equal in dignity:
pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit
and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter,
dialogue, justice and peace.
Move us to create healthier societies
and a more dignified world,
a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war.

May our hearts be open
to all the peoples and nations of the earth.
May we recognize the goodness and beauty
that you have sown in each of us,
and thus forge bonds of unity, common projects,
and shared dreams. Amen.

An Ecumenical Christian Prayer

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.

Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognizing him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.

Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves. Amen.