

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 210415c

Thursday 15.04.2021

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin at the high level virtual event on: Fraternity, Multilateralism and Peace: a presentation of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti"

The following is His Eminence Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin's intervention this afternoon at the high level virtual event on: Fraternity, Multilateralism and Peace: a presentation of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter "Fratelli tutti" (Geneva, 15 April 2021):

Intervention by Cardinal Pietro Parolin

FRATELLI TUTTI, MULTINATIONALISM AND PEACE

Excellencies,

Distinguished authorities,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends.

I am particularly grateful for the invitation to speak at a meeting of reflection on the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti", with the participation of some eminent directors general present in Geneva International. Your commitment to multilateralism, like that of the most excellent ambassadors present here, is a special way of promoting the common good of the human family and of developing original ideas and innovative strategies, "so that, with greater boldness and creativity, new and sustainable solutions can be sought". [1]

To fully understand the concept of brotherhood and its application in the multilateral diplomatic action of the Holy See, it may be useful to return to the beginning of Pope Francis' papacy. You will recall that brotherhood is the

first theme to which the Pope referred on the day of his election, more than eight years ago, when he expressed this wish: "Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity".[2] All the subsequent actions and activities of his pontificate have been a natural and consistent consequence of a journey oriented towards this.

Reflecting a year on from the beginning of the pandemic, we see how this programmatic criterion is decisive if we are to overcome the current dichotomy between "the code of efficiency" and the "code of solidarity".[3] In fact, brotherhood leads us towards an even more demanding and inclusive "code": "Indeed, while solidarity is the principle of social planning that allows the unequal to become equal; fraternity is what allows the equal to be different people. Fraternity allows people who are equal in their essence, dignity, freedom, and their fundamental rights to participate differently in the common good according to their abilities, their life plan, their vocation, their work, or their charism of service".[4]

In multilateral action, fraternity translates into the courage and generosity freely to establish determined shared goals and to the worldwide observance of certain essential norms, in virtue of the Latin locution *pacta sunt servanda*, by which one seeks to keep faith with the legitimately manifested will, to resolve controversies through the means offered by diplomacy, negotiation, multilateral institutions and the broader desire to achieve "a truly universal common good and the protection of weaker states"[5]

On the basis of this brief premise on fraternity, I would like to take this opportunity to share some reflections on the main themes within the competence of the Organisations you represent and the Holy See's priorities in this area: access to health, refugees, labour, international humanitarian law and disarmament.

On the basis of this brief premise on fraternity, I would like to take this opportunity to share some reflections on the main themes within the competence of the Organisations you represent and the priorities of the Holy See in this area: access to healthcare, refugees, work, international humanitarian law and disarmament.

In the area of health, this past year the human family has experienced an indissoluble bond that "momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all".[6] This human feeling in the face of the unknown soon gave way to a race for vaccines and treatment at national level, which made manifest the gap in access to basic care between developed countries and the rest of the world.[7] Faced with a systemic problem such as barriers to access to care, exacerbated by the current emergency, the Holy See has offered a set of guidelines to address this issue, inspired by a belief in the importance of brotherhood. At all times, we must focus on the underlying principle of service to the common good. This approach is well exemplified by Saint John Paul II and his insistence on the "social mortgage", which asserts the principle of the universal destination of goods".[8] With this in mind, the international community has an obligation to ensure that any COVID-19 vaccine and treatment is safe, available, affordable and accessible to all who need it.

Attention to the most needy and those in vulnerable situations, especially refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, is not only testimony to brotherhood, but a recognition of the real need of our sisters and brothers. The Pope's incessant appeals to leaders and international bodies for a new globalisation of solidarity capable of supplanting that of indifference are a constant of his, and systematically repeated in the Encyclical. Refugees have always been part of history. Unfortunately, even today their numbers and their suffering continue to be a wound in the social fabric of the international community. In the year that marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), we painfully note that the number of people seeking protection continues to rise inexorably. This implies profound humanitarian and social issues.[9] In this sense, the Holy See welcomes the underlying vision of the Global Compact on Refugees, which aims to strengthen international cooperation through a more equitable and predictable sharing of responsibility, while recalling that the ideal and most comprehensive durable solution is to ensure the rights of all to live and prosper in dignity, peace and security in their countries of origin.

In recent months, global pandemic containment strategies have had a significant impact on workers, including informal workers, small businesses and traders, who have seen their savings eroded and have often faced

systematic barriers to accessing basic health care. In today's world, for the sake of peace-building processes, the traditional format of social dialogue must be expanded and become more inclusive. The involvement of workers' and employers' organisations is crucial, but should be complemented by actors representing the informal economy and environmental concerns. As *Fratelli tutti* reminds us, "What is needed is a model of social, political and economic participation "that can include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny".[10]

It is perhaps not widely known that Mr Henry Dunant (1828 - 1910), the founder of the Red Cross, who strongly impacted by the violence and the lack of organisation in the provision of aid to the wounded, also adopted the phrase "We are all brothers!" to convince the local population and volunteers to offer help regardless of the side to which the victims belonged.[11] It was as a result of these dramatic experiences that Mr Dunant conceived the Red Cross. Today, unfortunately, there is an urgent need to strengthen the dissemination and promotion of respect for humanitarian law. The aim of humanitarian law is to safeguard the essential principles of humanity in a context, that of war, which is in itself inhuman and dehumanising, by protecting the civilian population and banning weapons that inflict suffering that is as atrocious as it is pointless. It could also be said that the universality of the 1949 Geneva Conventions represents an implicit recognition of the bond of brotherhood that unites peoples, and at least of the need to set limits to conflicts. The Holy See, moreover, conscious of omissions and hesitations, hopes that states can achieve further developments in international humanitarian law, in order to take proper account of the characteristics of contemporary armed conflicts and the physical, moral and spiritual suffering that goes with them,[12] with the aim of eliminating conflicts altogether. Indeed, the desire for peace, security and stability is one of the deepest desires of the human heart, since it is rooted in the Creator, who makes all peoples members of the human family. This aspiration can never be satisfied by military means alone, and even less so by the possession of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.[13] Conflicts always cause suffering, in those who suffer them, certainly, but also in those who fight them. It is not rhetorical to say that war is the antithesis of brotherhood. It is with this in mind that the Holy See strongly encourages the commitment of States in the field of disarmament and arms control towards lasting agreements on the road to peace and, in particular, on the nuclear disarmament front. If the statement that we are all brothers and sisters is valid, how can nuclear deterrence be the basis of an ethic of fraternity and peaceful coexistence among peoples? There are some encouraging signs, such as the recent entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. However, the huge sums of money and human resources allocated to armaments give pause for thought. Linking national security to the accumulation of weapons is a counterproductive logic. The disproportion between the material resources and human talents dedicated to the service of death and the resources dedicated to the service of life is scandalous. There are many other quite different challenges facing the international community, and these should be the priorities for states.[14]

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

What I have just outlined are just a few indications of the method and challenges facing the human family. Indications and goals that the Holy See, in the wake of the perspectives renewed by Pope Francis with the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti", considers essential for an action that is intended to be adequate and to lead with respect to the processes taking place in the international community. We are aware that in order to face the scenario outlined above, it is not enough to proclaim commitment or limit oneself to encouraging efforts, recalling duties or contributing to action so as to respond concretely to the great challenges.[15]

Hence the need no longer to cope, but to prepare a plan able to respond to what comes next.[16] From this perspective, the legal system no longer needs only common rules, but also that these be efficient and effective with respect to current situations. The additional element is individual responsibility and the ability to feel that we are brothers, that is, to make the needs of others our own through a reciprocity of relationships that overcomes isolation and involves states, individuals and international bodies. Pope Francis increasingly demands a presence and conduct that responds to the current condition of relations between states and between peoples, especially when attitudes that abandon the vision of the common good seem to prevail.

I hope that this event will be a step forward for all of us in embarking on the rich and demanding path of brotherhood.

I thank you cordially.

[1] Francis, Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 11 January 2016.

[2] Francis, First greeting, 13 March 2013, at w2.vatican.va.

[3] Francis, *Message to Professor Margaret Archer, President of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, on the occasion of the Plenary*, 24 April 2017.

[4] Ivi.

[5] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 174.

[6] Ivi, 32.

[7] As Dr. Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organisation, recalled at the Executive Committee last January, and also since then, “the world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure - and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world’s poorest countries”. Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, *Address to the 148th Meeting of the WHO Executive Board*, 18 January 2021.

[8] “The goods of this world are originally meant for all. The right to private property is valid and necessary, but it does not nullify the value of this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a “social mortgage”, which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods”, Saint John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 42.

[9] The Holy See, Member State of the UNHCR Executive Committee, was among the first 26 countries to participate in the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in July 1951, which gave rise to one of the most important Conventions for the international community: the Convention regarding the status of refugees. This Convention, which will celebrate its seventieth anniversary this year, has contributed to protecting and giving hope to many people, victims of conflicts or persecutions. In a certain sense, the recognition and granting of international protection presupposes an implicit recognition that we are brothers and sisters, members of the same human family.

[10] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 169.

[11] See H. Dunant, *Un souvenir de Solferino* (1859).

[12] See Francis, *Address to participants in the Conference on International Humanitarian Law*, 28 October 2017.

[13] See Francis, *Message to the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons*, 7 December 2014.

[14] In this regard, as Pope Francis has affirmed, “The current state of our planet requires a serious reflection on how its resources can be employed in light of the complex and difficult implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in order to achieve the goal of an integrated human development”, *Address on nuclear arms*, Nagasaki, 24 November 2019.

[15] To this end, we have a sign from the Pope that may be of solid guidance: “We need, then, to reject the culture of waste and to care for individuals and peoples labouring under painful disparities through patient efforts to favour processes of solidarity over selfish and contingent interests”, *Address to participants in the International Symposium on Disarmament promoted by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development*, 10 November 2017.

[16] “The crisis of politics and of democratic values is reflected also on the international level, with repercussions on the entire multilateral system and the obvious consequence that Organisations designed to foster peace and development – on the basis of law and not on the “law of the strongest” – see their effectiveness compromised. To be sure, we cannot ignore that the multilateral system has also, in recent years, shown some limitations. The pandemic is a precious opportunity to devise and implement structural reforms so that international Organisations can rediscover their essential vocation to serve the human family by protecting individual lives and peace”. *Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, 8 February 2021.
