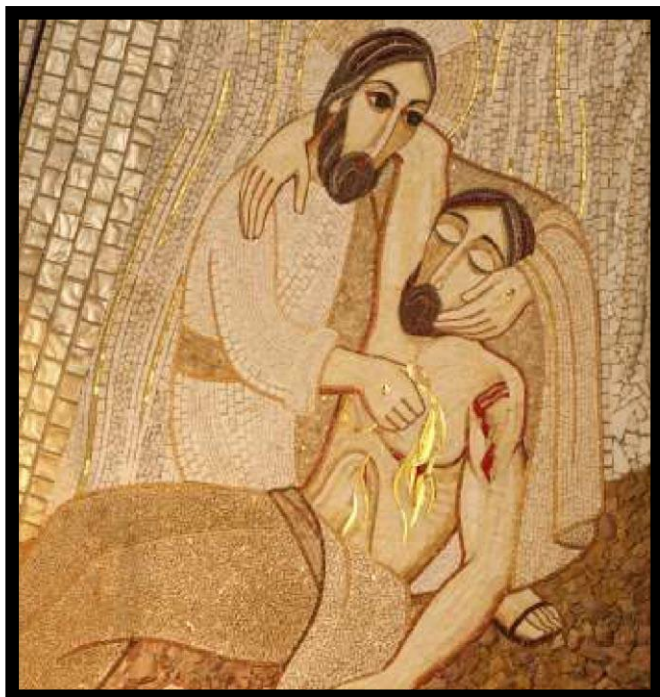


Chapter 2

A Stranger on the Road



Credit: Pater Rupnik

Modern mosaic of Good Samaritan

A Word about Inclusive Language

The announcement that the Holy Father was going to Assisi to sign a new encyclical on social relationships caused some people to applaud. When we learned that the encyclical would be known as *Fratelli Tutti*, much of that applause died out. Didn't using the masculine noun show that the Catholic Church is still out of touch with today's realities? In fact, Church language is not known for keeping up with the times. As we go forward, we Franciscans share a deep concern about inclusive language and the role of women in the Church while also sharing the urgent plea of this letter from Pope Francis.

This document would once have been called "an encyclical of the Holy Father Francis on fraternity and social friendship." Somewhere down the line people started referring to papal documents, such as encyclicals, bulls, etc., by their incipit, the first two or three words of the document itself, making it easier to remember and discuss them.

Every word has a denotation, a precise definition, which we can find in dictionaries; however, it also has a connotation, a commonly accepted meaning, even some emotional impact.

For this reason, the same word can evoke feelings of joy and security in one person while causing someone else to feel threatened or repulsed. In any conversation or dialogue, both parties need not only to listen to the words, but also to delve into what the other is saying. I personally find it encouraging that the English translators of this encyclical show some sensitivity to the issue by leaving the incipit in Italian.

Basically, the Holy Father is encouraging all of us to discover what Francis did after that fateful day when he stripped himself and said, "Now I can truly say, 'Our Father.'" If we are all children of one father, we are then all brothers and sisters.

Sr. Nancy Celaschi, OSF

How to Use This Guide

1. This guide can be used with small or large groups and for personal reflection.
2. Feel free to share with others the URL where you found the guide. You are free to print it for others who prefer a printed text. This guide is **free**.
3. This guide serves as an overview to the chapter featured but cannot in the space available do justice to the richness of each chapter.

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Margaret Carney, OSF and Pat McCloskey, OFM coordinated this study guide series.

Summary of Chapter 2

After painting the dark landscape of our global situation in chapter one, Pope Francis leads us to light through the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). This parable teaches that the grief and anguish of one of us is that of all of us. The story echoes in our hearts because aspects of each of its characters are part of our own lives.

It answers classic scriptural questions: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Cain in Gen 4:9) and “Who is my neighbor?” (the lawyer in Lk 10:29). Indifference to injustice or the suffering of others has no justification.

Why? Because we all come from the same creator who loves all creatures. Because we too were once in dire straits (cf. the Jewish people once having been slaves in Egypt).

We are used to thinking of our neighbors as those who are most like and closest to us. However, the Scriptures increasingly expand our understanding of “neighbor.” Love does not care where someone is from. Instead, it builds bridges. We are citizens of the world, not only our nation. God sees no boundaries; only we do. Pope Francis often speaks of those on the “peripheries.” Here he also calls them those “abandoned on the wayside.” There are only two kinds of people: those who care for the hurting and those who pass by. These difficult choices are the real test of being a follower of Jesus.

Suffering people are not the cause of division in the world; they are its symptom. It is easy to blame the victims or remain detached from what is going on around us. Yet, each day offers a new opportunity to take on the attitude of Christ. The question is not who our neighbor is but whether we will become a neighbor to all.

Father William Hugo, OFM Cap.

Quotes from Chapter 2

- *[Human] compassion is for [one’s] neighbour, but the compassion of the Lord is for all living beings (59 and Sir 18:13).*
- *Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen (61 and 1 Jn 4:20).*
- *The sight of a person who is suffering disturbs us. It makes us uneasy, since we have no time to waste on other people’s problems. These are symptoms of an unhealthy society (65).*

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

1. Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Imagine yourself to be each of its characters: victim, robber, lawyer, priest, Levite, Samaritan, and innkeeper. Explore each character’s goals, values, and spiritual imagination. How are you like each character?
2. Who are your neighbors as manifested by your actions? Is your circle of neighbors expanding or contracting? Why?
3. How might an expanding notion of being neighbor affect you on some of the hot-button issues of our day: homelessness, immigration, interracial relations, health insurance, unemployment, global warming, etc. How would you want to be treated if you were someone affected by this list?
4. Who are the modern thieves who victimize those abandoned on the wayside? How do we confront the robbers and console the victims?

Author



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