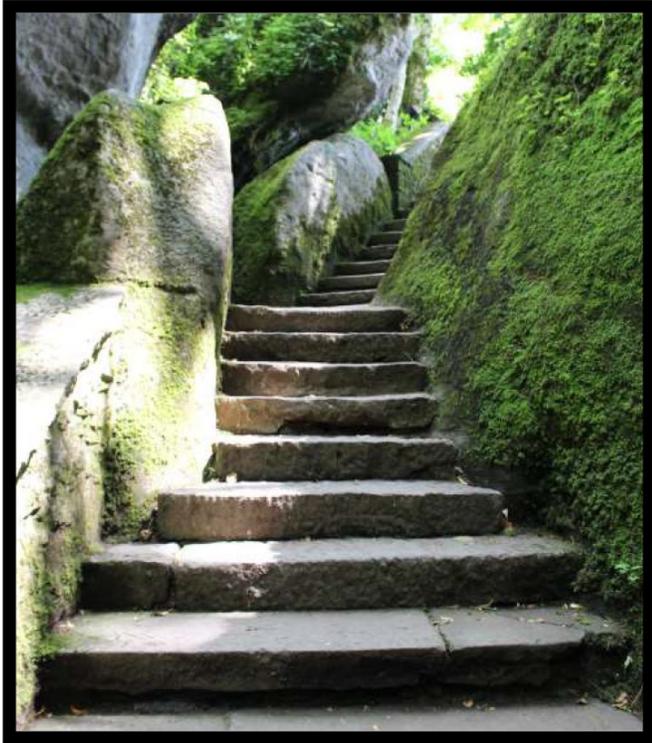


Introduction



Photographer: Andy Iretow

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 Introduction

This section has eight paragraphs that note the inspiration for this encyclical, its connection to *Laudato Si'*, and its connection to Francis' visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil. After acknowledging his debt to Ecumenical Patriarch, Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, and the 2019 Abu Dhabi document "Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together," Pope Francis describes this encyclical as a help toward forming a new vision of fraternity and social friendship.

He concludes by noting that the COVID-19 epidemic has made promoting human fraternity more difficult, invites readers to dream together, "brothers and sisters all."

Pat McCloskey, OFM

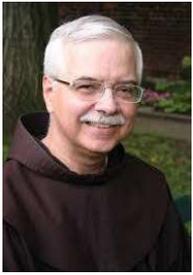
Quotes from the Introduction

- *Francis of Assisi sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters (2).*
- *Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines. He became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society (4).*
- *The best way to dominate and gain control over people is to spread despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending certain values (15).*

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

1. Have you experienced people who consider Francis of Assisi heroic and yet simultaneously dismiss him as someone who was unrealistic? If so, how can you show Francis as ultimately more practical than his critics?
2. What practical steps can be taken as a group to promote a more fraternal society? What steps can we take as individuals?
3. Certain language can disguise a person's real objective (e.g., opposing all immigration). How can we speak the truth in love, challenging what justifies seemingly acceptable language for a particular action or inaction on a morally significant issue? How did Francis handle this challenge?

Author



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