

## Chapter 3

### Envisaging and Engendering an Open World



Beautiful sunset over Old City Jerusalem

#### 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 3

Our Holy Father calls us to recognize the dignity of each and every person and the inherent desire that each of us has for loving relationships in our lives (88,89). Love means a growing concern for everyone's personal, communal, national, and international good (93-96). We need to locate those who are in need, abandoned, ignored, disabled, elderly or of a different race: the "hidden exiles on the margins" (98), peacefully recognizing and celebrating the differences we find in them.

The Good Samaritan (Chapter 2) was himself living on the margin, not fitting into the larger society there (99-101). Too often we organize ourselves into social groups that exclude and limit our contacts to those who serve our purposes. To build a fraternal society open to all, we must exercise a universal love ready to dialogue about the values of mutual enrichment.

Individualism too often serves as a deception in that we cling to our own idea of the common good without being open to the view of the other (102-106). Unless dignity and integral development are built on love and respect for the rights of all peoples, humanity will not survive (107).

The pope stresses the need for a universal fraternity that focuses on the common good without neglecting individual rights and needs that must be ordered to the greater good of society. Otherwise, conflict and violence will follow.

Solidarity means building a common future through social systems that encourage thinking and acting, for the good of the whole, looking beyond the self or one's group (114-117). Pope Francis reminds us that the world belongs to all of us, not simply privileged people. Created goods are for the common use; all of us are responsible for their care. Business interests must be directed ultimately to reducing and eliminating poverty (118-123).

Because a country's goods cannot be denied to citizens of other countries, we need to build up international relationships based on shared human rights and dignity, reflecting a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation for the purpose of developing a shared responsibility for the whole human family (124-127).

*Mary Esther Stewart, OFS*

## Quotes from Chapter 3

- *To claim economic freedom while real conditions bar many people from actual access to it, and while possibilities for employment continue to shrink, is to practice doublespeak (83).*
- *Words like freedom, democracy or fraternity prove meaningless, for only when our economic and social system no longer produces even a single victim, a single person cast aside, will we be able to celebrate the feast of universal fraternity (110).*
- *Every society needs to ensure that values are passed on; otherwise, what is handed down are selfishness, violence, corruption in its various forms, indifference and, ultimately, a life closed to transcendence and entrenched in individual interests (113).*

## Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

1. What, in your opinion, are the greatest deterrents to envisaging and engendering an open world?
2. How does your thinking compare with that of Pope Francis?
3. How can political entities (e.g., states, countries) maintain their identity while attempting to establish attitudes and practices that would bring about an open world?

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