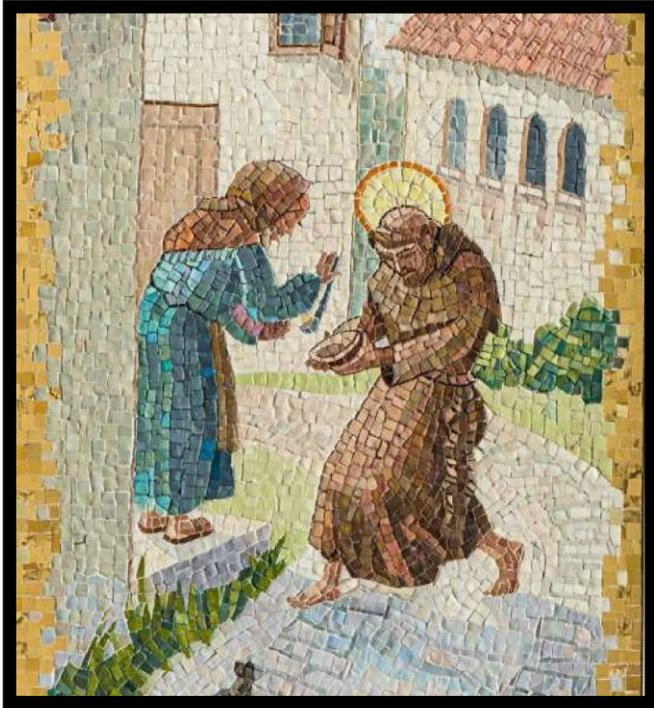


Chapter 7

Paths of Renewed Encounter



Credit: Fr. Paul Rezek, OFM

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 7

Pope Francis asks us to cultivate a penitential memory, one that can accept the past in order not to cloud the future with our own regrets, problems and plans. Only by basing themselves on the historical truth of events will they be able to make a broad and persevering effort to understand one another and to strive for a new synthesis for the good of all."

Artists and Architects of Peace

Working to create a path and a way of living in peace is a life-long process requiring each person's gifts, talents, and creativity. Every human being has a place in this world. Every person must be recognized for the innate and indelible imprint of God's creative purpose. Embracing this truth, we are called to bring our unique perspectives and gifts to the process of peacemaking. However, each person in bringing a gift is called to see and offer it in service to others and for the common good of all.

Individually and together we must commit and work to eradicate the oppression and selfish greed that dehumanizes others for personal or national gain. "There is no end to the building of a country's social peace, rather, it requires us to place at the centre of all political, social and economic activity the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good" (232).

Currently, we are facing the divisive words, attitudes, and violence of racism, many social injustices and economic disparities. Will this convergence wake us up from myths of peace and equality that we have created?

In Catholic Social teaching, the preferential option for the poor and the vulnerable encourages us to imitate and embody Christ's love for the poor by working to create a culture where the needs of the poor are always considered first. Fratelli Tutti affirms that the poor and the vulnerable are our sisters and brothers. They are not a nameless multitude.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are central teachings of Jesus. "True reconciliation must preserve the dignity of all, especially those who have been oppressed. True love for an oppressor means seeking ways to make him cease his oppression; it means stripping him of a power that he does not know how to use, and diminishes his own humanity and that of others" (241).

War and the Death Penalty

Wars have been justified by world leaders to stabilize a region or support humanitarian causes. War and its devastation offend human life and the environment. "Every war leaves our world worse than it was before."

"Today, we state clearly that the 'death penalty is inadmissible' and the Church is firmly committed to calling for its abolition worldwide." No one, no government and no judicial power has the right to take a life or "eliminate others." If we truly are pro-life, if each human being holds that innate and indelible imprint of God, all life, even the lives of the most hardened and unrepentant criminals must be respected. We must work to reform our justice systems.

Margaret Magee, OSF

Quotes from Chapter 7

- *Working to overcome our divisions without losing our identity as individuals presumes that a basic sense of belonging is present in everyone (230).*
- *Those who work for tranquil social coexistence should never forget that inequality and lack of integral human development make peace impossible (235).*
- *If I do not deny that dignity to the worst of criminals, I will not deny it to anyone (269).*

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

1. Francis of Assisi respected all people while speaking truth to everyone. How do you do that?
2. Perhaps the greatest challenge for some people in reading Fratelli Tutti will be Pope Francis' call for the end to the death penalty. Do you agree with Pope Francis' stance on the death penalty?
3. What would you say to someone who continues to support it?

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