

ENCYCLICAL LETTER
FRATELLI
TUTTI *of the*
HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
on FRATERNITY *and*
SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP



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1. “Fratelli tutti”.¹ With these words, Saint Francis of Assisi addressed his brothers and sisters and proposed to them a way of life marked by the flavour of the Gospel. Of the counsels Francis offered, I would like to select the one in which he calls for a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother “as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him”.² In his simple and direct way, Saint Francis expressed the essence of a fraternal openness that allows us to acknowledge, appreciate and love each person, regardless of physical proximity, regardless of where he or she was born or lives.

2. This saint of fraternal love, simplicity and joy, who inspired me to write the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, prompts me once more to devote this new Encyclical to fraternity and social friendship. Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters.

WITHOUT BORDERS

3. There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship,

1. *Admonitions*, 6,1. English translation in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, vol 1., New York, London, Manila (1999), 131.

2. *Ibid.*, 25: op. cit., 136.

given Francis' poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be traveled and their differences of language, culture and religion. That journey, undertaken at the time of the Crusades, further demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone. Francis' fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters. Unconcerned for the hardships and dangers involved, Francis went to meet the Sultan with the same attitude that he instilled in his disciples: if they found themselves "among the Saracens and other nonbelievers", without renouncing their own identity they were not to "engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God's sake".³ In the context of the times, this was an extraordinary recommendation. We are impressed that some eight hundred years ago Saint Francis urged that all forms of hostility or conflict be avoided and that a humble and fraternal "subjection" be shown to those who did not share his faith.

4. Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that "God is love and those who abide in love abide in God" (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. Indeed, "only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a father".⁴ In the world of that time, bristling with watchtowers and defensive walls, cities were a theatre of brutal wars between powerful families, even as poverty was spreading through the countryside. Yet there Francis was able to welcome true peace into his heart and free himself of the desire to wield power over others. He became one of the poor and sought to live in harmony with all. Francis has inspired these pages.

3. Saint Francis of Assisi, *Earlier Rule of the Friars Minor (Regula non bullata)*, 16: 3.6: op. cit. 74.

4. Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *Exil et tendresse*, Éd. Franciscaines, Paris, 1962, 205.

5. Issues of human fraternity and social friendship have always been a concern of mine. In recent years, I have spoken of them repeatedly and in different settings. In this Encyclical, I have sought to bring together many of those statements and to situate them in a broader context of reflection. In the preparation of *Laudato Si'*, I had a source of inspiration in my brother Bartholomew, the Orthodox Patriarch, who has spoken forcefully of our need to care for creation. In this case, I have felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom I met in Abu Dhabi, where we declared that “God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters”.⁵ This was no mere diplomatic gesture, but a reflection born of dialogue and common commitment. The present Encyclical takes up and develops some of the great themes raised in the Document that we both signed. I have also incorporated, along with my own thoughts, a number of letters, documents and considerations that I have received from many individuals and groups throughout the world.

6. The following pages do not claim to offer a complete teaching on fraternal love, but rather to consider its universal scope, its openness to every man and woman. I offer this social Encyclical as a modest contribution to continued reflection, in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words. Although I have written it from the Christian convictions that inspire and sustain me, I have sought to make this reflection an invitation to dialogue among all people of good will.

5. *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi (4 February 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 4-5 February 2019, p.6.

7. As I was writing this letter, the Covid-19 pandemic unexpectedly erupted, exposing our false securities. Aside from the different ways that various countries responded to the crisis, their inability to work together became quite evident. For all our hyper-connectivity, we witnessed a fragmentation that made it more difficult to resolve problems that affect us all. Anyone who thinks that the only lesson to be learned was the need to improve what we were already doing, or to refine existing systems and regulations, is denying reality.

8. It is my desire that, in this our time, by acknowledging the dignity of each human person, we can contribute to the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity. Brotherhood between all men and women. “Here we have a splendid secret that shows us how to dream and to turn our life into a wonderful adventure. No one can face life in isolation...We need a community that supports and helps us, in which we can help one another to keep looking ahead. How important it is to dream together... By ourselves, we risk seeing mirages, things that are not there. Dreams, on the other hand, are built together”.⁶ Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.

6. *Address at the Ecumenical and Interreligious Meeting with Young People*, Skopje, North Macedonia (7 May 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9 May 2019, p. 9.



Dark clouds over a closed world

9. Without claiming to carry out an exhaustive analysis or to study every aspect of our present-day experience, I intend simply to consider certain trends in our world that hinder the development of universal fraternity.

SHATTERED DREAMS

10. For decades, it seemed that the world had learned a lesson from its many wars and disasters, and was slowly moving towards various forms of integration. For example, there was the dream of a united Europe, capable of acknowledging its shared roots and rejoicing in its rich diversity. We think of “the firm conviction of the founders of the European Union, who envisioned a future based on the capacity to work together in bridging divisions and in fostering peace and fellowship between all the peoples of this continent”.⁷ There was also a growing desire for integration in Latin America, and several steps were taken in this direction. In some countries and regions, attempts at reconciliation and rapprochement proved fruitful, while others showed great promise.

11. Our own days, however, seem to be showing signs of a certain regression. Ancient conflicts thought long buried are breaking out

7. *Address to the European Parliament, Strasbourg* (25 November 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 996.

anew, while instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise. In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests. Once more we are being reminded that “each new generation must take up the struggles and attainments of past generations, while setting its sights even higher. This is the path. Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day. It is not possible to settle for what was achieved in the past and complacently enjoy it, as if we could somehow disregard the fact that many of our brothers and sisters still endure situations that cry out for our attention”.⁸

12. “Opening up to the world” is an expression that has been co-opted by the economic and financial sector and is now used exclusively of openness to foreign interests or to the freedom of economic powers to invest without obstacles or complications in all countries. Local conflicts and disregard for the common good are exploited by the global economy in order to impose a single cultural model. This culture unifies the world, but divides persons and nations, for “as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers”.⁹ We are more alone than ever in an increasingly massified world that promotes individual interests and weakens the communitarian dimension of life. Indeed, there are markets where individuals become mere consumers or bystanders. As a rule, the advance of this kind of globalism strengthens the identity of the more powerful, who can protect themselves, but it tends to diminish the identity of the weaker and poorer regions, making them more vulnerable and dependent. In this way, political life becomes increasingly

8. *Meeting with Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps*, Santiago, Chile (16 January 2018): AAS 110 (2018), 256.

9. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 19: AAS 101 (2009), 655.

fragile in the face of transnational economic powers that operate with the principle of “divide and conquer”.

The end of historical consciousness

13. As a result, there is a growing loss of the sense of history, which leads to even further breakup. A kind of “deconstructionism”, whereby human freedom claims to create everything starting from zero, is making headway in today’s culture. The one thing it leaves in its wake is the drive to limitless consumption and expressions of empty individualism. Concern about this led me to offer the young some advice. “If someone tells young people to ignore their history, to reject the experiences of their elders, to look down on the past and to look forward to a future that he himself holds out, doesn’t it then become easy to draw them along so that they only do what he tells them? He needs the young to be shallow, uprooted and distrustful, so that they can trust only in his promises and act according to his plans. That is how various ideologies operate: they destroy (or deconstruct) all differences so that they can reign unopposed. To do so, however, they need young people who have no use for history, who spurn the spiritual and human riches inherited from past generations, and are ignorant of everything that came before them”.¹⁰

14. These are the new forms of cultural colonization. Let us not forget that “peoples that abandon their tradition and, either from a craze to mimic others or to foment violence, or from unpardonable negligence or apathy, allow others to rob their very soul, end up losing not only their spiritual identity but also their moral consistency and, in the end, their intellectual, economic and political independence”.¹¹ One effective way to weaken historical consciousness, critical thinking, the struggle for justice and the processes of integration is to empty

10. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), 181.

11. Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, *Homily at the Te Deum*, Santiago de Chile (18 September 1974).

great words of their meaning or to manipulate them. Nowadays, what do certain words like democracy, freedom, justice or unity really mean? They have been bent and shaped to serve as tools for domination, as meaningless tags that can be used to justify any action.

LACKING A PLAN FOR EVERYONE

15. The best way to dominate and gain control over people is to spread despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending certain values. Today, in many countries, hyperbole, extremism and polarization have become political tools. Employing a strategy of ridicule, suspicion and relentless criticism, in a variety of ways one denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion. Their share of the truth and their values are rejected and, as a result, the life of society is impoverished and subjected to the hubris of the powerful. Political life no longer has to do with healthy debates about long-term plans to improve people's lives and to advance the common good, but only with slick marketing techniques primarily aimed at discrediting others. In this craven exchange of charges and counter-charges, debate degenerates into a permanent state of disagreement and confrontation.

16. Amid the fray of conflicting interests, where victory consists in eliminating one's opponents, how is it possible to raise our sights to recognize our neighbours or to help those who have fallen along the way? A plan that would set great goals for the development of our entire human family nowadays sounds like madness. We are growing ever more distant from one another, while the slow and demanding march towards an increasingly united and just world is suffering a new and dramatic set-back.

17. To care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves. Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home. Such care does not interest those economic powers that demand quick profits. Often the voices

raised in defence of the environment are silenced or ridiculed, using apparently reasonable arguments that are merely a screen for special interests. In this shallow, short-sighted culture that we have created, bereft of a shared vision, “it is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims”.¹²

A “throwaway” world

18. Some parts of our human family, it appears, can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence. Ultimately, “persons are no longer seen as a paramount value to be cared for and respected, especially when they are poor and disabled, ‘not yet useful’—like the unborn, or ‘no longer needed’—like the elderly. We have grown indifferent to all kinds of wastefulness, starting with the waste of food, which is deplorable in the extreme”.¹³

19. A decline in the birthrate, which leads to the aging of the population, together with the relegation of the elderly to a sad and lonely existence, is a subtle way of stating that it is all about us, that our individual concerns are the only thing that matters. In this way, “what is thrown away are not only food and dispensable objects, but often human beings themselves”.¹⁴ We have seen what happened with the elderly in certain places in our world as a result of the coronavirus. They did not have to die that way. Yet something similar had long been occurring during heat waves and in other situations: older people found themselves cruelly abandoned. We fail to realize that, by isolating the elderly and leaving them in the care of others without the closeness and concern of family members, we disfigure and

12. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 57: AAS 107 (2015), 869.

13. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See* (11 January 2016): AAS 108 (2016), 120.

14. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See* (13 January 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 83-84.

impoverish the family itself. We also end up depriving young people of a necessary connection to their roots and a wisdom that the young cannot achieve on their own.

20. This way of discarding others can take a variety of forms, such as an obsession with reducing labour costs with no concern for its grave consequences, since the unemployment that it directly generates leads to the expansion of poverty.¹⁵ In addition, a readiness to discard others finds expression in vicious attitudes that we thought long past, such as racism, which retreats underground only to keep reemerging. Instances of racism continue to shame us, for they show that our supposed social progress is not as real or definitive as we think.

21. Some economic rules have proved effective for growth, but not for integral human development.¹⁶ Wealth has increased, but together with inequality, with the result that “new forms of poverty are emerging”.¹⁷ The claim that the modern world has reduced poverty is made by measuring poverty with criteria from the past that do not correspond to present-day realities. In other times, for example, lack of access to electric energy was not considered a sign of poverty, nor was it a source of hardship. Poverty must always be understood and gauged in the context of the actual opportunities available in each concrete historical period.

Insufficiently universal human rights

22. It frequently becomes clear that, in practice, human rights are not equal for all. Respect for those rights “is the preliminary condition for a country’s social and economic development. When the dignity of

15. Cf. *Address to the “Centesimus Annus pro Pontifice” Foundation* (25 May 2013): *Insegnamenti I*, 1 (2013), 238.

16. Cf. Saint Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967): AAS 59 (1967), 264.

17. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 22: AAS 101 (2009), 657.

the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good”.¹⁸ Yet, “by closely observing our contemporary societies, we see numerous contradictions that lead us to wonder whether the equal dignity of all human beings, solemnly proclaimed seventy years ago, is truly recognized, respected, protected and promoted in every situation. In today’s world, many forms of injustice persist, fed by reductive anthropological visions and by a profit-based economic model that does not hesitate to exploit, discard and even kill human beings. While one part of humanity lives in opulence, another part sees its own dignity denied, scorned or trampled upon, and its fundamental rights discarded or violated”.¹⁹ What does this tell us about the equality of rights grounded in innate human dignity?

23. Similarly, the organization of societies worldwide is still far from reflecting clearly that women possess the same dignity and identical rights as men. We say one thing with words, but our decisions and reality tell another story. Indeed, “doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights”.²⁰

24. We should also recognize that “even though the international community has adopted numerous agreements aimed at ending slavery in all its forms, and has launched various strategies to combat this phenomenon, millions of people today—children, women and men of all ages—are deprived of freedom and forced to live in conditions

18. *Address to the Civil Authorities*, Tirana, Albania (21 September 2014): AAS 106 (2014), 773.

19. *Message to Participants in the International Conference “Human Rights in the Contemporary World: Achievements, Omissions, Negations”* (10 December 2018): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 10–11 December 2018, p.8.

20. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), 212: AAS 105 (2013), 1108.

akin to slavery...Today, as in the past, slavery is rooted in a notion of the human person that allows him or her to be treated as an object... Whether by coercion, or deception, or by physical or psychological duress, human persons created in the image and likeness of God are deprived of their freedom, sold and reduced to being the property of others. They are treated as means to an end... [Criminal networks] are skilled in using modern means of communication as a way of luring young men and women in various parts of the world”.²¹ A perversion that exceeds all limits when it subjugates women and then forces them to abort. An abomination that goes to the length of kidnapping persons for the sake of selling their organs. Trafficking in persons and other contemporary forms of enslavement are a worldwide problem that needs to be taken seriously by humanity as a whole: “since criminal organizations employ global networks to achieve their goals, efforts to eliminate this phenomenon also demand a common and, indeed, a global effort on the part of various sectors of society”.²²

Conflict and fear

25. War, terrorist attacks, racial or religious persecution, and many other affronts to human dignity are judged differently, depending on how convenient it proves for certain, primarily economic, interests. What is true as long as it is convenient for someone in power stops being true once it becomes inconvenient. These situations of violence, sad to say, “have become so common as to constitute a real ‘third world war’ fought piecemeal”.²³

26. This should not be surprising, if we realize that we no longer have common horizons that unite us; indeed, the first victim of every war is

21. *Message for the 2015 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2014), 3-4: AAS 107 (2015), 69-71.

22. *Ibid.*, 5: AAS 107 (2015), 72.

23. *Message for the 2016 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2015), 2: AAS 108 (2016), 49.

“the human family’s innate vocation to brotherhood”. As a result, “every threatening situation breeds mistrust and leads people to withdraw into their own safety zone”.²⁴ Our world is trapped in a strange contradiction: we believe that we can “ensure stability and peace through a false sense of security sustained by a mentality of fear and mistrust”.²⁵

27. Paradoxically, we have certain ancestral fears that technological development has not succeeded in eliminating; indeed, those fears have been able to hide and spread behind new technologies. Today too, outside the ancient town walls lies the abyss, the territory of the unknown, the wilderness. Whatever comes from there cannot be trusted, for it is unknown, unfamiliar, not part of the village. It is the territory of the “barbarian”, from whom we must defend ourselves at all costs. As a result, new walls are erected for self-preservation, the outside world ceases to exist and leaves only “my” world, to the point that others, no longer considered human beings possessed of an inalienable dignity, become only “them”. Once more, we encounter “the temptation to build a culture of walls, to raise walls, walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people. And those who raise walls will end up as slaves within the very walls they have built. They are left without horizons, for they lack this interchange with others”.²⁶

28. The loneliness, fear and insecurity experienced by those who feel abandoned by the system creates a fertile terrain for various “mafias”. These flourish because they claim to be defenders of the forgotten, often by providing various forms of assistance even as they pursue their criminal interests. There also exists a typically “mafioso” pedagogy

24. *Message for the 2020 World Day of Peace* (8 December 2019), 1: *L’Osservatore Romano*, 13 December 2019, p. 8.

25. *Address on Nuclear Weapons*, Nagasaki, Japan (24 November 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 25-26 November 2019, p. 6.

26. *Dialogue with Students and Teachers of the San Carlo College in Milan* (6 April 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 8-9 April 2019, p.6.

that, by appealing to a false communitarian mystique, creates bonds of dependency and fealty from which it is very difficult to break free.

GLOBALIZATION AND PROGRESS

WITHOUT A SHARED ROADMAP

29. With the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, we do not ignore the positive advances made in the areas of science, technology, medicine, industry and welfare, above all in developed countries. Nonetheless, “we wish to emphasize that, together with these historical advances, great and valued as they are, there exists a moral deterioration that influences international action and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility. This contributes to a general feeling of frustration, isolation and desperation”. We see “outbreaks of tension and a buildup of arms and ammunition in a global context dominated by uncertainty, disillusionment, fear of the future, and controlled by narrow economic interests”. We can also point to “major political crises, situations of injustice and the lack of an equitable distribution of natural resources... In the face of such crises that result in the deaths of millions of children—emaciated from poverty and hunger—there is an unacceptable silence on the international level”.²⁷ This panorama, for all its undeniable advances, does not appear to lead to a more humane future.

30. In today’s world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all-powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat. This illusion, unmindful of the great fraternal values, leads to “a sort of cynicism. For that is the temptation we face if we go down the road of disenchantment and

27. *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, Abu Dhabi (4 February 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano*, 4-5 February 2019, p.6.

disappointment... Isolation and withdrawal into one's own interests are never the way to restore hope and bring about renewal. Rather, it is closeness; it is the culture of encounter. Isolation, no; closeness, yes. Culture clash, no; culture of encounter, yes".²⁸

31. In this world that races ahead, yet lacks a shared roadmap, we increasingly sense that "the gap between concern for one's personal well-being and the prosperity of the larger human family seems to be stretching to the point of complete division between individuals and human community... It is one thing to feel forced to live together, but something entirely different to value the richness and beauty of those seeds of common life that need to be sought out and cultivated".²⁹ Technology is constantly advancing, yet "how wonderful it would be if the growth of scientific and technological innovation could come with more equality and social inclusion. How wonderful would it be, even as we discover faraway planets, to rediscover the needs of the brothers and sisters who orbit around us".³⁰

PANDEMICS AND OTHER CALAMITIES IN HISTORY

32. True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid-19 pandemic 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. Once more we realized that no one is saved alone; we can only be saved together. As I said in those days, "the storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, our projects, our habits and priorities... Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which

28. *Address to the World of Culture*, Cagliari, Italy (22 September 2013): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23-24 September 2013.

29. *Humana Communitas*. Letter to the President of the Pontifical Academy for Life on the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of its Founding (6 January 2019), 2.6: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 January 2019, pp.6-7.

30. *Video Message to the TED Conference in Vancouver* (26 April 2017): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 April 2017, p. 7.

we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another”.³¹

33. The world was relentlessly moving towards an economy that, thanks to technological progress, sought to reduce “human costs”; there were those who would have had us believe that freedom of the market was sufficient to keep everything secure. Yet the brutal and unforeseen blow of this uncontrolled pandemic forced us to recover our concern for human beings, for everyone, rather than for the benefit of a few. Today we can recognize that “we fed ourselves on dreams of splendour and grandeur, and ended up consuming distraction, insularity and solitude. We gorged ourselves on networking, and lost the taste of fraternity. We looked for quick and safe results, only to find ourselves overwhelmed by impatience and anxiety. Prisoners of a virtual reality, we lost the taste and flavour of the truly real”.³² The pain, uncertainty and fear, and the realization of our own limitations, brought on by the pandemic have only made it all the more urgent that we rethink our styles of life, our relationships, the organization of our societies and, above all, the meaning of our existence.

34. If everything is connected, it is hard to imagine that this global disaster is unrelated to our way of approaching reality, our claim to be absolute masters of our own lives and of all that exists. I do not want to speak of divine retribution, nor would it be sufficient to say that the harm we do to nature is itself the punishment for our offences. The world is itself crying out in rebellion. We are reminded of the

31. *Extraordinary Moment of Prayer in Time of Epidemic* (27 March 2020): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29 March 2020, p. 10.

32. *Homily in Skopje, North Macedonia* (7 May 2019): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 8 May 2019, p. 12.

well-known verse of the poet Virgil that evokes the “tears of things”, the misfortunes of life and history.³³

35. All too quickly, however, we forget the lessons of history, “the teacher of life”.³⁴ Once this health crisis passes, our worst response would be to plunge even more deeply into feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistic self-preservation. God willing, after all this, we will think no longer in terms of “them” and “those”, but only “us”. If only this may prove not to be just another tragedy of history from which we learned nothing. If only we might keep in mind all those elderly persons who died for lack of respirators, partly as a result of the dismantling, year after year, of healthcare systems. If only this immense sorrow may not prove useless, but enable us to take a step forward towards a new style of life. If only we might rediscover once for all that we need one another, and that in this way our human family can experience a rebirth, with all its faces, all its hands and all its voices, beyond the walls that we have erected.

36. Unless we recover the shared passion to create a community of belonging and solidarity worthy of our time, our energy and our resources, the global illusion that misled us will collapse and leave many in the grip of anguish and emptiness. Nor should we naively refuse to recognize that “obsession with a consumerist lifestyle, above all when few people are capable of maintaining it, can only lead to violence and mutual destruction”.³⁵ The notion of “every man for himself” will rapidly degenerate into a free-for-all that would prove worse than any pandemic.

33. Cf. *Aeneid* 1, 462: “Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt”.

34. “*Historia... magistra vitae*” (CICERO, *De Oratore*, 2, 6).

35. Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* (24 May 2015), 204: AAS 107 (2015), 928.