



## **FRATELLI TUTTI - Politics as an act of Love and Courage**

Josianne Gauthier, Secretary General, CIDSE, December 2020

*“Recognising that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end.” (FT.180)*

One doesn't usually consider politics as an act of charity or of love. Politics has often been reduced to its most menial form, and associated with greed, domination, exploitation, and corruption. And yet, here, in his latest Encyclical Letter, Pope Francis challenges us all to reclaim the nobility of the political act: to take responsibility as members of one human family for the well-being of all.

This reflection about our responsibilities towards one another and Creation were shared with us in the midst of the second wave of the global pandemic. This is also the period when Christians begin Advent, a time of preparation, waiting, and vigilance. In the northern hemisphere's darkest days of the year, the light of Christmas helps us keep our focus and not stagnate. In a global pandemic, amidst great uncertainty and fear, when movement and contact is restricted, it is tempting to shut our eyes and wait till the storm passes. This, however, is not how we will emerge from this crisis into a better world. *Fratelli Tutti* calls us to find active energy in our love. Through the storms, through the suffering, from our compassion, must come solidarity and the courage to stand for the Common Good.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Pope Francis continued to elaborate on interdependence and the relationship between our excesses, our individualism, our nationalism, and the suffering we are seeing around us. *Fratelli Tutti* is a stark mid-Covid reminder that none of us will be safe if we are not all safe. Only together will we heal this wounded world, only by converting to a culture of care, responsibility, of listening, will we emerge from this crisis stronger.

Pope Francis' previous Encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, also spoke of interconnectedness and responsibility. It demonstrated how Western lifestyles were threatening all forms of life on this planet as we continue to push past planetary boundaries. One year ago, the Pope convened a Synod on the Amazon to reflect on how neo-colonial consumption of the Amazon's resources is demolishing cultures, species, and human lives in this part of the world. On this common home, power and resources are unevenly distributed, and there are voices who have not yet been heard. At the Amazon Synod, the Pope invited the Catholic community to open ourselves to the perspectives and knowledge that the Indigenous peoples could share with us, in order to preserve our planet, our home, and therefore ourselves.

For a network of Catholic social justice organisations such as [CIDSE](#), *Fratelli Tutti* calls us to be bold, to name the clouds that hang over us all, to recognise responsibility, even when it is uncomfortable. Even when we are tired and discouraged. That is the exact moment when we must stand together and draw on our faith. Building on *Laudato Si'*, and *Evangelii Gaudium*, and the vast body of catholic social teaching, we name the symptoms of our hurt world and how we must address them. We have an extractive and colonialist economic model of growth,

producing a culture of unequal consumption and discrimination and resulting in extreme ecological and human degradation. We are reminded that we treat the earth and how we treat each other. *Fratelli Tutti* urges us all to make decisions for the “universal common good” by bringing us ever closer to our own responsibility in how we treat our “neighbour”. A healthy politics would transform our economy into one that “is an integral part of a political, social, cultural and popular programme”.

This passing decade has seen a rise in distrust of democratic or multilateral institutions. Pope Francis challenges us to step out of our dangerous trends of building walls, of self-protectionism, nationalism, and isolationism. In speaking about the importance of upholding collective, multilateral commitments and working in cooperation among nations, he reminds us: “Courage and generosity are needed in order to freely establish shared goals and to ensure worldwide observance of certain essential norms.” (FT.174). He calls on multilateral institutions, on politicians, on governments, but also on individuals to form a new kind of human community.

All the clouds can only be cleared if we blow them away, if we find it within our hearts to speak out against them and demand a political change. We can and must act on the transgressions we witness. We must take our own responsibilities but also demand our political leaders act for the Common Good and in the pursuit of peace.

Pope Francis invites us to hope, because as he says “Hope is bold”, and to allow ourselves to be open to the world around us, because it is in the richness of our diversity and the multitude of voices and ideas that we will build peace. We should act on our political responsibilities to create space for marginalized voices to take up their place, and allow ourselves to be transformed by their messages.

As we meditate through the second wave, and through advent, we come back full circle to the idea of love, care, fraternity, solidarity, and hope. “Politics too must make room for a tender love of others” (FT.194). We understand this not just to be addressed to political leaders, but to all of us, to challenge us to become political actors and lead from the heart.