



Contents

Editorial: We Are All Brothers and Sisters	3
Christmas Carries Hope Amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic <i>Fabian Jose UMI</i>	6
Deepening the Emmanuel Experience <i>Leela Jose SCCG</i>	13
Evolution of Equality: The Narrative of Liberalisation <i>Riya Chhutani</i>	20
Amazing Evidence of God in Science: Tracing the Hidden Face of God Behind the Brilliance of Science <i>Soniya Joseph P UMI</i>	32
The Complexity of Human Consciousness: A Phenomenological Approach Inspired by Roger Penrose <i>Gargi Mukherjee</i>	42



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Editorial

We Are All Brothers and Sisters

Pope Francis in his new Encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti* (“*All Brothers*”) has focused on the theme of fraternity and social friendship, calling on all humanity to a renewed brotherly and sisterly unity where all men and women are brothers and sisters, writes Sr. Jecinter Antoinette Okoth, FSSA in AMECEA Blog.

The Pope’s Encyclical was signed on Saturday, October 3, 2020 before the tomb of St Francis of Assisi, on the anniversary of the Saints death. The Encyclical has the subtitle: “on fraternity and social friendship”

Pope Francis’ third encyclical has been inspired by St. Francis of Assisi whom he describes as the “saint of fraternal love,” as shown earlier in the ecumenical document he signed in February 2019 with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb, in Abu Dhabi, on “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together.”

“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,” the Pope reminisces.

He adds, “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.”

Pope Francis highlights the significance of living a fraternal life with no boundaries, making reference to Saint Francis of Assisi who engaged freely with people of other religions, a gesture that

“demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone.”

“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,” he writes.

He explains, “When St. Francis met with the Egyptian Sultan Al-Kamil in 1219, he 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.”

In this encyclical signed in his first official trip outside Rome since the Covid-19 pandemic struck Italy, the Pope suggests ways in which humanity can build a more just, peaceful world, recognizing each other as brothers and sisters of one human family.

“If every human being possesses an inalienable dignity, if all people are my brothers and sisters, and if the world truly belongs to everyone, then it matters little whether my neighbor was born in my country or elsewhere,” he writes in the document.

The encyclical addressed to the entire community of Catholic faithful and people of good will around the world is divided into eight chapters where the Pope has shared his thoughts on political, social and economic realities in the world including the interconnected of humanity and creation realised due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Four special quotes from this encyclical are particularly inspiring:

- “We should also recognize that destructive forms of fanaticism are at times found among religious believers, including Christians; they too “can be caught up in networks of verbal violence through the internet and the various forums of digital communication. Even in Catholic media, limits can be overstepped, defamation and slander can become commonplace, and all ethical standards and respect for the good name of others can be abandoned”. How can

this contribute to the fraternity that our common Father asks of us?” (No. 46)

- “Let us admit that, for all the progress we have made, we are still “illiterate” when it comes to accompanying, caring for and supporting the most frail and vulnerable members of our developed societies. We have become accustomed to looking the other way, passing by, ignoring situations until they affect us directly.” (No. 64)
- “A love capable of transcending borders is the basis of what in every city and country can be called ‘social friendship.’ Genuine social friendship within a society makes true universal openness possible.” (No. 99)
- “We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved. Poverty, decadence and suffering in one part of the earth are a silent breeding ground for problems that will end up affecting the entire planet.” (No. 137)

The last chapter of the Encyclical encourage dialogue between different faiths to promote peace among their followers.

May the Joy and Hope of Christmas mitigate our collective experience of Pandemic. As we pray for the health and safety of 83-year old Jesuit priest, Fr. Stan Lourdasamy, we pray with the nation that “Satyameva Jayate” (Truth alone Triumphs).

Fabian Jose, UMI

Guest Editor