

## Editor's word

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. (*Fratelli Tutti* 99)

Recognizing 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. (*Fratelli Tutti* 180)

During the Covid-19 pandemic, through his social encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*,<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, as in *Laudato Si'*, appealed to the world and not just the Catholic community. It reminds us of the popular Chinese cultural scene of the sounding of the "evening drums and morning bells" (暮鼓晨鐘) alerting the world of the need for prayer and search for purity in life. In October 2020, while humanity was shocked by the daily toll of loss of life in the pandemic, different places in the world were also absorbed with their

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1 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli Tutti*, On Fraternity and Social Friendship, 2020. [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20201003\\_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html)

local challenges, including the presidential election in the USA. Hong Kong was experiencing the passing of the “dark clouds” when the population was reflecting on the challenges of the earlier year. It is a wounded world. The Pope, as one of the leaders of the wounded healers providing pastoral care, came out with a clear message. A vision of fraternity and social friendship is set as the hope of the future.

Immediately after the publication of *Fratelli Tutti*, the author was invited to speak at a webinar jointly organized by Yuan Dao Study Society and Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology under Cambridge Theological Federation. Two other speakers included a local scholar in philosophy and one in social psychology. The encyclical turns out to be a highly relevant document helping the local community in Hong Kong to reflect on their recent experience from a global and spiritual perspective. The document forms an integral part of the trilogy of encyclical teaching of the Pope, building on *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Laudato Si'*. Following the spirit of Vatican Council II, Pope Francis is leading the church into the global community. As a global Pope, his teaching addresses different aspects of life in the present world. To properly appreciate the significance of his preaching, the realm of social teaching, the documents need to be studied from different perspectives, both globally and locally.

The author is honoured to be invited to serve as the guest editor for this special issue of *Tripod* to celebrate the second anniversary of the publication of *Fratelli*

*Tutti*. Contributors from the United Kingdom, the USA, mainland China and Hong Kong write from their respective background and perspectives. The author also contributes his own article in this special issue and shares his views in his contribution. He is very grateful for the warm response from all the contributors, especially considering their heavy commitment in their own professional services.

Massimo Faggioli, a well-renowned theologian of the study of Vatican Council II and the evolution of Pope Francis' pontificate, with a masterly stroke, provides a highly condensed review of the encyclical in the broader context of the challenges facing the emergent global church and the dynamics of the pontificate. The encyclical is a testimony and landmark of the "liminal papacy" (Faggioli's description of Pope Francis) to move toward Global Catholicity. It is well-known for its innovation and consequential controversy. In his closing statement, the effort of *Tripod* to produce this special issue is placed in a context of the vision of the encyclical:

Francis' critique of the Western model has become more arduous and, at the same time, timelier than at the time of the publication of the encyclical, given the situation the Catholic Church and especially Vatican diplomacy started to face, once again, in both Europe and Asia in 2022. It is now necessary to begin a second phase of reception of *Fratelli Tutti*, and this special issue of *Tripod* a very encouraging sign of this new process of

reflection on one of Pope Francis' major documents.

Peter Coughlan from the other side of the Atlantic with firsthand experience serving the Vatican provides an overall view of the encyclical pointing out its major themes which aim to show the paths to attain fraternity and develop social relationship. He reminds readers of the central mission of an aspiration to universal fraternity: “let us dream as a single human family, he says, as children of the same earth which is our common home”.

Having set the overall context of the reflection on the document, Lui Tai-lok, taking a sociological approach, discusses the institutional basis of the encyclical. He outlines the historical evolution of contemporary society identifying the burning issues challenging the world of today. He thinks that *Fratelli Tutti* offers a reaction to the contemporary scene and an intervention to the social environment. With this position, he continues to ask how fraternity can be built in the contemporary socio-economic setting. How can caring, love, and solidarity be shown in an institution already out of balance? The encyclical shows that we need a culture buttressed in humanity and its values in order to build a new social foundation of common life.

Moving from macro vision of review on *Fratelli Tutti*, Philip Chmielewski, a theologian and engineering ethics professor from Loyola Marymount University, brings a special perspective to the practical implications of the encyclical to the engineering professionals and organizations.

He systematically illustrates how the encyclical may help the engineering profession benefit from insights and guidance drawn from the Catholic social teaching of the document.

Sharing the practical theological approach to the study of the encyclical is the ethnographical testimony of Melanie-Préjean Sullivan in her service as an interspiritual chaplain promoting the spirit of interreligious dialogue and demonstrating the values embedded in the encyclical. Vatican Council II plants seeds in her campus work which reflects the efforts of interreligious practices in university campuses in the USA embodying the spirit of *Fratelli Tutti*.

After looking at the American scene of practical theology, the special issue brings the focus to Asia and China. Mary Yuen leads the discussion of the intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the context of the Asian Church in the light of the essential teaching of the encyclical. With the rich multicultural and multireligious experience, the Asian Church has developed a three-fold dialogue method, hoping to achieve a vision of harmony. This may hopefully enrich the notions of dialogue and human fraternity emphasized by *Fratelli Tutti*.

Shifting from Asia in general to China in particular and another illustration of the implications of intercultural and interreligious dimension of the encyclical, as a follower of the Focolare Movement founded by Chiara Lubich in 1943, Chiaretto Yan links up the vision of the charism of unity and the teaching of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*

with the Chinese cultural tradition and the contemporary efforts of the present Chinese government to promote a new global vision for a better future.

Further deepening the potential of intercultural and interreligious dialogue in light of *Fratelli Tutti*, Huang Jiaofeng, a leading advocate of the teaching of Mozi, an important intellectual tradition of China in the Axial Age, sidelined for quite a long time in history but revived in the last two decades in China, demonstrates solidly how some of the essential elements in Mozi teaching can shed an intercultural light on the promotion of common good, fraternity and universal love embraced by *Fratelli Tutti*.

Thierry Meynard, a leading scholar of philosophy and religious study teaching in China for years, provides a balanced reflection on the convergence and divergence of the efforts to building a society of universal fraternity advocated by *Fratelli Tutti* and the model being evolved in contemporary China which values the collective welfare of the people and a safety network for most people, as priority over the individual dimension of society which is needed for the flourishing of a richer brotherhood.

Serving as an epilogue, the present author reverts both to the macro approach of reflecting on the historical relevance of *Fratelli Tutti* especially how the document may be looked at together as whole with the two other major writings of Pope Francis and the inheritance of the spirit of Vatican Council II. This echoes the analysis of Faggioli

showing how Pope Francis is trying to realize the vision of Vatican Council II as a global church and the shaping of a new paradigm of intercultural and interreligious dialogues in the context of Chinese wisdom tradition.

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