

# Council Sunday

## Staying Connected

October 25, 2020

In his latest encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*—ON FRATERNITY AND SOCIAL FRIENDSHIP—Pope Francis says this pandemic has enabled us to “realize that our lives are interwoven with and sustained by ordinary people...No one is saved alone.”<sup>1</sup>

The Holy Father goes on to talk about the power of faith, hope, and love in keeping our community strong. He says: “Faith has untold power to inspire and sustain our respect for others, for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love and ‘thereby confers infinite dignity’ upon all humanity. We likewise believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love.”<sup>2</sup>

Pope Francis also invites everyone to renewed hope, for he says hope “speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart,...of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love...Hope is bold;...It can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile”.<sup>3</sup>

What’s more, “love shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate; in their place, it builds bridges. Love enables us to create one great family, where all of us can feel at home... Love exudes compassion and dignity”.<sup>4</sup> Each day we have to decide whether to be Good Samaritans or indifferent bystanders.

Consider the Gospel reading [Matthew 22: 37], we are called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind and to love our neighbor as our self. And in James, chapter two, we are asked: what good is it to say we have faith, but don’t have works? The pope’s encyclical teaches us that belief in God and the worship of God are not enough to ensure that we are actually living in a way pleasing to God.

According to *Fratelli Tutti*, a believer may be untrue to everything that his faith demands of him, and yet think he is close to God and better than others. The pope also says “the guarantee of an authentic openness to God, on the other hand, is a way of practicing the faith that helps open our hearts to our brothers and sisters.”<sup>5</sup>

But we face a lot of constraints these days. What do we need to prevent these constraints from weakening our faith, our hope, and our charity? **Prayers, perseverance, and patience.**

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<sup>1</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 54

<sup>2</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 85

<sup>3</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 55

<sup>4</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 62

<sup>5</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 74

We know that prayer is a vital necessity. It's our lifeline to Heaven. Each one of us has a prayerful purpose—to maintain a heavenly bond for ourselves and for each other. Prayer works to keep our faith strong and we can always come together in prayer even when we are apart.

As we pray for one another and send our pleas to Heaven, we come together with the Holy Trinity, Mary our Blessed Mother, plus all of Heaven's angels and saints as well as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Together we have strength we can share. Through prayer we become more aware of the internal promptings of the Holy Spirit which enable us to follow Jesus more closely in order to share God's love with others who are also struggling. While human resources run short, God's graces and blessings provide an infinite supply of necessities such as perseverance and patience.

Jesus and Mary are our perfect role models. Through His prayerful perseverance and patience, Christ had the strength to endure His passion and crucifixion for the sake of our salvation. From his cross, Christ gives us mercy when He said: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." [Luke 23:34] He gives us hope when He said to the repentant criminal "today you will be with me in paradise." [Luke 23:43] He gives us love when He gave us Mary to be our mother and He gives us faith when He said "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." [Luke 23:46]

Witnessing all that Christ poured out to save humanity, Mary became Mother of all People. From Heaven to earth, Mary patiently prays and perseveres to share the fullness of her God-given graces and blessings with everyone who reaches out to her. In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis says Mary cares not only for Jesus but also for all of her children. In the power of the risen Lord, Mary wants to give birth to a new world, where we are all brothers and sisters, according to the Holy Father.<sup>6</sup>

Jesus and Mary show us that as God's children we are called to unite our daily living with faith, hope, and love. This union is reinforced by our prayers, perseverance, and patience, and manifested in our acts of kindness as we cope with our challenges and adversity.

Pope Francis tells us in *Fratelli Tutti*: "Kindness frees us from the cruelty that at times infects human relationships, from the anxiety that prevents us from thinking of others, from the frantic flurry of activity that forgets that others also have a right to be happy." The Holy Father says "Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say 'excuse me', 'pardon me', 'thank you'. Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference." According to Pope Francis, "if we make a daily effort to do exactly this, we can create a healthy social atmosphere in which misunderstandings can be overcome and conflict forestalled."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 278

<sup>7</sup> Encyclical Letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, 224