

# LIVING FRATERNITY

## Theme: A Heart Open to the Whole World ...

In the month of March 2022, we offer Chapter 4 of the *Fratelli Tutti* Study Guide prepared by Fr. Pat McCloskey, OFM. The author for this chapter is Sr. Margaret Carney, OSF, co-chair of the Commission of Charism Services for the Franciscan Federation and president emeritus of St. Bonaventure University.

**Recall:** Our monthly meeting should favour *an encounter with Christ*. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes communal experience.

## MARCH 2022 MONTHLY MEETING

### Opening of the meeting if it happens

The members can offer suggestions for a song. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

### Introduction

This guide serves as an overview to the chapter featured but cannot in the space available do justice to the richness of each chapter. The person animating the meeting should make sure that each member has a copy of Chapter 4 of the encyclical letter. If possible the copy should be distributed before the meeting so that the fraternity members can do a first reading of its contents, thus avoiding reading during the meeting.

### Summary of Chapter 4

This chapter has three sections: Borders and Their Limits; Reciprocal Gifts; and Local and Universal. It treats issues that come to the fore when we move from generalizations about “a global village” and must deal with the complexities of immigration: racial and ethnic diversity, the need for global systems, and the preservation of unique cultures.

Describing the problems created by current migrations that create critical situations in host nations, Pope Francis describes the process by which immigrants should be integrated into the receiving country in four words: “welcome, protect, promote and integrate” (110). Beneath each of these terms is a world of political choice regarding legal remedies and citizens’ response to immigrant populations as they become integrated in their new home. We do well to study the list of fifteen specific policy issues (130). This is thoughtful study of the legal policy standards that exist—or are negated—in nations where immigration requires governmental response.

The encyclical moves then to consider the difficulties that arise when cultures are in conflict or are a source of division within a community, whether it is a locality or an entire nation. Here there

is no tendency to brush over the real work that is entailed in creating a healthy climate of unity and diversity combined. Pope Francis points to the problems created when a group is a victim of “cultural sclerosis” (134)—the inability to welcome and to benefit from what the “other” brings to it. He also points to the evidence of “local narcissism” (146) that refuses to accept what enrichment may occur by a real exchange of cultural goods. The antidote would be found in “universal [mutuality] and social friendship” (142).

We realize as we ponder this chapter that these terms are laden with significance. They are “shorthand” for a sustained commitment to create the kind of intelligent governance that can overcome the crises created by forced migration. The closing proposal is that educators focus on real love of neighbour—the kind of political charity that knows that “common good” (153) must be realized in solidarity among nations and within nations.

### **Quotes from Chapter 4**

- We need to develop the awareness that nowadays we are either all saved together or no one is saved (137).
- Let us realize that as our minds and hearts narrow, the less capable we become of understanding the world around us (147).
- A living culture, enriched by elements from other places, does not import a mere carbon copy of those new elements, but integrates them in its own unique way (148).
- No one people, culture, or individual can achieve everything on its own: to attain fulfilment in life we need others (150).

### **Questions for Discussion or Reflection**

After the person animating the period of discussion or reflection reads the question, take the necessary time so that the members can express their thoughts.

1. Describe an experience in which you were enriched by real encounter with another culture. Were you required to “give up” some personal bias or beliefs?
2. Fifteen practices that will improve the lives of immigrants are listed as responses to people fleeing “grave humanitarian crises” (130). Are you engaged in the development or support of any one of these proposals? (This includes engagement through advocating to legislators or support of agencies that respond to these needs.)
3. Education that seeks to promote love of neighbour—as described by the pope—is clearly an education that goes beyond the catechism. What evidence do you see that our Catholic and Franciscan schools (at all levels) are striving for this?

## **Biblical Reflection:**

Read the texts of Sunday or of the day, or the preceding or following day of the meeting.

- Take a moment of reflection; then underline words or inspiring phrases ...
- Share your thoughts on the gospel: a) How can it be integrated in our life

## **Linking points from the Study Guide to the Rule and the General Constitutions**

While preparing this document, we found Article 11 of our Rule, Chapter II – the Way of Life and Apostolic Activity and the articles 15.1, 15.2 and 15.3 of the General Constitutions that have links to this study.

### **Rule**

#### **Article 11**

Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of "the Beatitudes", and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

### **General Constitutions**

#### **Article 15.1**

Secular Franciscans are committed to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.

#### **Article 15.2**

Secular Franciscans, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment and the encouragement of the Fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life, and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.

#### **Article 15.3**

Secular Franciscans should commit themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially

those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners. They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values, and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

**Reflection:** Can you see the link to the chapter in the Rule and the General Constitutions?

### **Life-Objective:**

In this month of March, let us take time to live this Paschal season with more fervour and gratefulness for what the Lord has done for us ...

### **Events and Information from the Church and the Order**

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

**End of the meeting:** (song or prayer chosen by the fraternity)

### **At Home**

For your reflection, read Articles 134, and 146 extracted from the encyclical letter.

**134.** Indeed, when we open our hearts to those who are different, this enables them, while continuing to be themselves, to develop in new ways. The different cultures that have flourished over the centuries need to be preserved, lest our world be impoverished. At the same time, those cultures should be encouraged to be open to new experiences through their encounter with other 33 realities, for the risk of succumbing to cultural sclerosis is always present. That is why “we need to communicate with each other, to discover the gifts of each person, to promote that which unites us, and to regard our differences as an opportunity to grow in mutual respect. Patience and trust are called for in such dialogue, permitting individuals, families and communities to hand on the values of their own culture and welcome the good that comes from others’ experiences”.

**146.** There is a kind of “local” narcissism unrelated to a healthy love of one’s own people and culture. It is born of a certain insecurity and fear of the other that leads to rejection and the desire to erect walls for self-defence. Yet it is impossible to be “local” in a healthy way without being sincerely open to the universal, without feeling challenged by what is happening in other places, without openness to enrichment by other cultures, and without solidarity and concern for the tragedies affecting other peoples. A “local narcissism” instead frets over a limited number of ideas, customs and forms of security; incapable of admiring the vast potential and beauty offered by the larger world, it lacks an authentic and generous spirit of solidarity. Life on the local level thus becomes less and less welcoming, people less open to complementarity. Its possibilities for development narrow; it grows weary and infirm. A healthy culture, on the other hand, is open and welcoming by its very nature; indeed, “a culture without universal values is not truly a culture”.