

VERDAD Y VIDA

REVISTA FRANCISCANA DE PENSAMIENTO

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Revistas Franciscanas

I. Estudios

FRATERNITY IN *FRATELLI TUTTI* AND IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY. CONVERGING POINTS

MARTÍN CARBAJO NÚÑEZ

RECIBIDO: 18/06/2022

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ABSTRACT:

This article presents some points of convergence between the Franciscan perspective and the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* on fraternity. The Pope teaches that “it was the evangelical witness of St. Francis, with his school of thought, that gave the term fraternity the meaning it then preserved over the centuries.” The first part of the article focuses on how Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Tradition have developed the concept of fraternity. The second part studies it on the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. It is emphasized that both the Franciscan Tradition and *Fratelli tutti* offer a Trinitarian and Christological perspective that goes beyond the usual way of understanding it in our society.

KEYWORDS: Fraternity, Dialogue, Franciscan Tradition, Francis of Assisi, *Fratelli tutti*

SOMMARIO:

Il presente articolo mostra alcuni punti di convergenza tra la prospettiva francescana e quella dell'enciclica *Fratelli tutti* sul tema della fraternità. Il Papa insegna che “è stata la testimonianza evangelica di San Francesco, con la sua scuola di pensiero, a dare al termine fraternità il significato che esso ha poi conservato nel corso dei secoli.” L'articolo studia il modo in cui Francesco d'Assisi e la Tradizione francescana hanno sviluppato questo concetto (1ª parte) e come l'enciclica *FT* lo presenta oggi (2ª Parte). Si sottolinea che sia la Tradizione francescana che l'enciclica *FT* offrono una prospettiva trinitaria e cristologica che va oltre il modo abituale di intenderlo nella nostra società.

PAROLE CHIAVE: Fraternità, Dialogo, Tradizione francescana, Francesco d'Assisi, *Fratelli tutti*

SUMARIO:

Este artículo muestra algunos puntos de encuentro entre la perspectiva franciscana y la encíclica *Fratelli tutti* sobre el tema de la fraternidad. El Papa enseña que “fue el testimonio evangélico de san Francisco, con su escuela de pensamiento, quien dio al término fraternidad

el significado que ha conservado a lo largo de los siglos.” La primera parte se focaliza en cómo Francisco de Asís y la tradición franciscana lo han desarrollado. La segunda parte estudia cómo lo presenta la encíclica *FT*. Se subraya que tanto la Tradición franciscana como la encíclica *FT* ofrecen una perspectiva trinitaria y cristológica que supera la forma habitual de entenderlo en nuestra sociedad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Fraternidad, Diálogo, Tradición franciscana, Francisco de Asís, *Fratelli tutti*

* * *

This article shows some points of encounter between the Franciscan perspective and the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*¹ on the theme of fraternity. In this way, we complete the study that we began with two previous articles.² Some authors have stated that “fraternity is a typically Christian concept, widely developed by the Franciscan school of thought.”³ This school would have assigned to the fraternity “the meaning which it then retained in the course of time.”⁴ We will try to highlight these Franciscan roots.

The concept of fraternity is complex and has been used with different meanings. The French Revolution, for example, coined the expression: “Liberty, equality, fraternity” (“*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*”), which remains the national motto of France. Fraternity is here a secular concept, based on the verifiable fact that all human beings share a common nature and must therefore have equal rights.

¹ POPE FRANCIS, «*Fratelli tutti*. Encyclical letter on fraternity and social friendship,» [*FT*], (Oct. 3, 2020), *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* [LEV], Vatican City 2020. In the body of the text, the quotations of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* will be indicated with just the numbers in parentheses.

² CARBAJO-NÚÑEZ M., «Fraternity in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. Franciscan roots,» in *Revista eclesiástica brasileira* (REB) 81/319 (2021) 295-319; ID., «The Lord gave me brothers and sisters. Francis of Assisi, inspirer of the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*,» (printing). This article will also be published in Spanish by Aedos.

³ “La *fraternità* è un concetto tipicamente cristiano, ampiamente sviluppato dalla Scuola di pensiero francescana [...]. La parola *fratellanza* invece viene introdotta nel lessico popolare dopo la Rivoluzione Francese. Quindi sono due concetti diversi. Mentre la *fraternità* presuppone una comune origine, la *fratellanza* si basa piuttosto su un comune sentire.” Stefano Zamagni, quoted in: MAUSSIER B. (ed.), *Il mondo in divenire. Un dibattito aggiornato sulle previsioni di Jacques Attali*, Armando editore, Rome 2020, 301.

⁴ ZAMAGNI S., *L'economia del bene comune*, Città Nuova, Rome 2007, 6. “È stata la scuola di pensiero francescana a dare alla parola *fraternità* il significato che essa ha poi conservato nel corso del tempo.” *Ibid.*

The French revolutionaries soon realized that fraternity was an uncomfortable concept, which contrasted sharply with the centralizing tendency of the State and with the dynamic of confrontation that their revolution itself had generated. In 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville explained why this concept was difficult to maintain:

“Despotism, by its very nature suspicious, sees the isolation of men as the best guarantee of its own permanence. So, it usually does all it can to isolate them. Of all the vices of the human heart egoism is that which suits it best. A despot will lightly forgive his subjects for not loving him, provided they do not love one another. He does not ask them to assist him in governing the state; it is enough that they do not aspire to govern it themselves.”⁵

In fact, the post-revolutionary order soon abandoned it, “up to the point of its deletion from the political-economic lexicon.”⁶ Fraternity also has no place in the Marxist ideology that justifies the class struggle to reach an egalitarian society in the future. “People of the present are sacrificed to the moloch of the future.”⁷

The first part of this article is focused on how Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Tradition have developed the concept of fraternity. Then, in the second part, we will study how the encyclical *FT* presents it. It is emphasized that both the Franciscan Tradition and the encyclical *FT* offer a Trinitarian and Christological perspective that goes beyond the usual way of understanding it in our society. We need to overcome the current liberal ideology, which relegates family relations to the private sphere and abuses nature.⁸

⁵ TOCQUEVILLE A. DE, *Democracy in America*, Perennial Classics, New York 2000, 509.

⁶ POPE FRANCIS, «Fraternity as the governing principle of the economic order. Message to the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences,» (April 24, 2017), n. 1, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, [OR], 99 (April 29, 2017) 7; “Quando il padre-re viene ucciso, i rivoluzionari giacobini dovranno rinunciare [...] all'idea stessa di fraternità.” BAGGIO A.M. (ed.), *Il principio dimenticato. La fraternità nella riflessione politologica contemporanea*, Città Nuova, Rome 2007, 35.

⁷ BENEDICT XVI, «*Deus caritas est*. Encyclical letter» (Dec. 25, 2005), [DC], 31b, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS], 98 (2006) 217-252.

⁸ POPE FRANCIS, «*Laudato si'*. Encyclical letter,» (May 24, 2015), [LS], n. 215, in AAS 107 (2015) 847-945.