

Laudato Si in Action

Dark Clouds Over a Closed World

Last week I introduced Pope Francis' new encyclical, Fratelli Tutti, which in English means "we are all brothers and sisters." In the next few weeks, I would like to share with you more of this important and timely document. Today, we will take a look at Chapter 1: *Dark Clouds Over a Closed World*.

The chapter begins by asking the reader "to consider certain trends" which are counterproductive to "universal fraternity":

For decades, it seemed that the world had learned a lesson from its many wars and disasters, and was slowly moving towards various forms of integration...Our own days, however, seem to be showing signs of a certain regression. Ancient conflicts thought long buried are breaking out anew, while instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise. In some countries, a concept of popular and national unity influenced by various ideologies is creating new forms of selfishness and a loss of the social sense under the guise of defending national interests.

Pope Francis warns about a kind of "destructionism," whereby some claim ideas come from them alone, without any sense of history or spiritualism. This leads to a:

...drive to limitless consumption and expressions of empty individualism...That is how various ideologies operate: they destroy (or deconstruct) all differences so that they can reign unopposed.

The Holy Father also raises the alarm of toxic politics:

The best way to dominate and gain control over people is to spread despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending certain values. Today, in many countries, hyperbole, extremism and polarization have become political tools. Employing a strategy of ridicule, suspicion and relentless criticism, in a variety of ways one denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion...

Amid the fray of conflicting interests, where victory consists in eliminating one's opponents, how is it possible to raise our sights to recognize our neighbours or to help those who have fallen along the way? A plan that would set great goals for the development of our entire human family nowadays sounds like madness. We are growing ever more distant from one another, while the slow and demanding march towards an increasingly united and just world is suffering a new and dramatic setback.

Next week, we will dig a little further into Fratelli Tutti. Meanwhile, I encourage you to read the encyclical yourself at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

Working together, we can help take care of our common home.

Paul Litwin