

Fratelli Tutti Study Guide (Chapter 8)

Chapter 8: Religions at the Service of Fraternity in Our World



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A Word about Inclusive Language

The announcement that the Holy Father was going to Assisi to sign a new encyclical on social relationships caused some people to applaud. When we learned that the encyclical would be known as *Fratelli Tutti*, much of that applause died out. Didn't using the masculine noun show that the Catholic Church is still out of touch with today's realities? In fact, Church language is not known for keeping up with the times

As we go forward, we Franciscans share a deep concern about inclusive language and the role of women in the Church while also sharing the urgent plea of this letter from Pope Francis.

This document would once have been called "an encyclical of the Holy Father Francis on fraternity and social friendship." Somewhere down the line people started referring to papal documents, such as encyclicals, bulls, etc., by their incipit, the first two or three words of the document itself, making it easier to remember and discuss them.

Every word has a denotation, a precise definition, which we can find in dictionaries; however, it also has a connotation, a commonly accepted meaning, even some emotional impact.

For this reason, the same word can evoke feelings of joy and security in one person while causing someone else to feel threatened or repulsed. In any conversation or dialogue, both parties need not only to listen to the words, but also to delve into what the other is saying. I personally find it encouraging that the English translators of this encyclical show some sensitivity to the issue by leaving the incipit in Italian.

Basically, the Holy Father is encouraging all of us to discover what Francis did after that fateful day when he stripped himself and said, "Now I can truly say, 'Our Father.'" If we are all children of one father, we are then all brothers and sisters.

— Sr. Nancy Celaschi, OSF

How to Use This Guide

1. This guide can be used with small or large groups and for personal reflection.
2. Feel free to share with others the URL where you found the guide. You are free to print it for others who prefer a printed text. This guide is **free**.
3. This guide serves as an overview to the chapter featured but cannot in the space available do justice to the richness of each chapter.

Summary of Chapter 8

In the final chapter (271-287), Pope Francis talks about true religion and emphasizes that only erroneous interpretations of religious texts lead to terrorism. True religion is actually at the service of fraternity because it is rooted in transcendent truth that enables men and women to achieve full identity.

All religions are invited to enter into a journey of peace, thereby guaranteeing religious freedom for all. Walking together is a familiar theme in Pope Francis' thinking as well as working together and praying together. There is a particular role for the Catholic Church to play: that of going out of herself, "not restricting her mission to the private sphere" (276)—not engaging in politics but at the same time remaining engaged in the public dimension of life according to evangelical principles.

At the end of his letter, he returns to the agreement signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in 2019 at Abu Dhabi that makes a pressing appeal for peace,

justice, and fraternity.

Pope Francis concludes by returning to the principal intuition that has characterized his pontificate: “Remember the poor.” He does so by evoking the person of Blessed Charles de Foucauld, who sought to surrender himself to God by identifying himself with the poor—namely, to become “truly a brother of all!” (287).

— Jim Puglisi, SA

Quotes from Chapter 8

- We are convinced that “when, in the name of ideology, there is an attempt to remove God from a society, that society ends up adoring idols, and very soon men and women lose their way” (274).
- We Christians are very much aware that “if the music of the Gospel ceases to resonate in our very being, we will lose the joy born of compassion, the tender love born of trust, the capacity for reconciliation that has its source in our knowledge that we have been forgiven and sent forth” (277).
- The commandment of peace is inscribed in the depths of the religious traditions that we represent. As religious leaders, we are called to be true “people of dialogue,” to cooperate in building peace, not as intermediaries but as authentic mediators (284).

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

1. If we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves,” what do I know about my neighbor’s religion (and my own!)? Knowing is not just noetic but is a deep personal knowledge of the person. It means overcoming fear. What do I fear most about getting to know my neighbor (and myself!)?
2. If the goal of dialogue is to establish friendship, peace, and harmony, how have I established these values within myself and thus become a person of authentic dialogue?
3. How consistent am I in my stance on sustaining life? Do I act equally in resisting certain positions (on arms, death penalty, ecology,

abortion, poverty, hunger, welcoming the stranger and so forth)—or am I selective and not coherent in my actions and thoughts?

Author



Jim Puglisi, SA, is Director of the Centro Pro Unione in Rome. He is an international leader in Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

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