



A BETTER KIND OF POLITICS

When we hear the word charity, we think of care and help for the needy, the suffering and the poor. For Pope Francis, love that addresses the structural causes of suffering and poverty is also important. "Political love" means working for a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. The encyclical identifies the problems and proposes solutions. The task of politics is to better regulate the power of the economy and the financial markets where they cause poverty and inequality; to give the poor not only alms but work to enable them to lead a life of dignity; to strengthen or create efficient international structures to defend the global common good against the claims of powerful interest groups. The Pope emphasises the primacy of the common good over the individual right to property and warns against destructive ideologies, especially the seduction of nationalist populism and the excesses of rampant neoliberalism. Lent is an invitation to better understand the interconnections of global structures of injustice and to work for change.

Quotes

- For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join together in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the field of charity at its most vast, namely **political charity**. This entails working for a social and political order whose soul is social charity. Once more, I appeal for a renewed appreciation of politics as a lofty vocation and one of the highest forms of charity... *FT 180*
- Every commitment inspired by the Church's social doctrine is derived from charity, which according to the teaching of Jesus is the synthesis of the entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36-40). This means acknowledging that love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. *Fratelli tutti 181*
- It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering. If someone helps an elderly person cross a river, that is a fine act of charity. The politician, on the other hand, builds a bridge, and that too is an act of charity. While one person can help another by providing something to eat, the politician creates a job for that other person, and thus practices a lofty form of charity that ennobles his or her political activity. *Fratelli tutti 186*
- **The world exists for everyone because** all of us were born with the same dignity. Differences of colour, religion, talent, place of birth or residence, and so many others, cannot be used to justify the privileges of some over the rights of all... **The right to private property** can only be considered a secondary natural right, derived from the principle of the universal destination of created goods. *FT 118+ 119*
- Closed **populist groups** distort the word "people", since they are not talking about a true people. **Neoliberalism** simply reproduces itself by resorting to the magic theories of "spill-over" or "trickle-down" – without using the name – as the only solution to societal problems. There is little appreciation of the fact that the alleged "spill-over" does not resolve the inequality that gives rise to new forms of violence threatening the fabric of society. *Fratelli tutti 160 + 168*

Lord, Father of our human family,

you created all human beings equal in dignity: pour forth into our hearts a fraternal spirit and inspire in us a dream of renewed encounter, dialogue, justice and peace.

Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war. *Fratelli Tutti*