

Summary of the Forum on Social Friendship as a Path to Peace

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The Significance of the Encyclical “*Fratelli Tutti*” in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era

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The sudden arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic had brought an unprecedented stop to normal activities and replaced with fear and loss. The realism of the pandemic broke the failing patterns of the society, unmasked human vulnerability, showing the world the compelling need for a lifestyle change. It also represents the challenge for the Church’s mission in the seriously ill plant that prevails with planetary injustices and national selfishness.

In response, Pope Francis calls on people for a new imagination of the *possible*, when people are often accustomed to the *probable*. He stresses the need for a renewing outlook, which called into question the existing economic, health and social systems and demands people to look to the inequalities and divisions in the world. More importantly, he arouses the awareness that the world is one human family. It is through working together as a whole human family that the crisis can be overcome.

When talking about the pandemic, the Pope has borrowed various images. The pandemic is the storm. The human family who “are on the same boat” needs to row together in turmoil. The boat becomes the figure of a radical and human fraternity because no one reaches salvation by oneself. The virus is also like a universal flood. It attacks people regardless of their religion, gender or nationality. Pope Francis prompted us to reset the course of life, and saying prayers to the Lord is a form of reality to help us.

Meanwhile, in his new encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis reflects and affirms the ideals of human fraternity and social friendship. Extreme individualism and the globalization of indifference is no longer an acceptable response for the world.

In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis uses the image of the boat again, warning that we are all on the same boat in contrast to some people thinking that they are “all-powerful” and that working together for justice and peace was regarded as outdated. Thus, he reminds us that we need closeness and the culture of encounter.

Another image the Pope uses is “caravan” in No. 30 of *Fratelli Tutti*. It is an expression of the “mystique of the living together, of mingling and encounter...while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of the fraternity.” Through these simple daily images, he put together the big vision of the world and the whole of humanity.

The storm, referring to the pandemic, is the ideal place to discover fraternity because it is the moment for people to find the courage to open to others and allow “new forms of hospitality, fraternity and solidarity.” But this fraternity is not simply human work. There is also the arousing of the Holy Spirit.

Fraternity is a theme of Pope Francis since after his election and a keyword that he uses in facing the Covid challenge. At the same time, the central message of *Fratelli Tutti* addresses both fraternity and social friendship. It implies an action to answer the question: Whose brother can I be? An example is the historical document that the Pope signed with the Grand Imam in Abu Dhabi in 2019, where they recognized each other as brothers.

Fraternity is sometimes being replaced with a weaker word, “solidarity.” Pope Francis distinguishes their difference: “While solidarity is the principle of social planning that allows the unequal to become equal, fraternity is what allows the equal to embrace different people.”

Recognizing the meaning of fraternity will see its strong message of political value as in Pope Francis’ trip to Iraq in 2021 that gets together people of different religions. The message to build the society is for all, not just the Church. Another example of social friendship is a group of young people he met in Buenos Aires before becoming pope. These people who were putting up buildings came from different faiths and political ideas but working for the common good.

Social friendship is not just on a personal level but also in international relations, in terms of “common destination of the earth goods.” For this, Francis uses the image of the boat again in *Fratelli Tutti* 32: “True, a worldwide tragedy like the Covid 19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all.”

The pandemic has no boundaries. In this sense, “each country also belongs to the foreigner,” and the issue has to be dealt with by all humanity, with the more powerful countries have to take care of the fragile ones.

The last image for the conclusion is the Good Samaritan, the parable that Pope Francis dedicates a chapter in *Fratelli Tutti*. The Good Samaritan is a social and civil model. The inclusion or exclusion of the wounded is not just a choice of an individual but also states’ policies. As for the Church, the Pope indicates it is a “field hospital” to tend the wounds of humanity. The pandemic is time to recognize the global vulnerability of humanity and to imagine the Gospel values of fraternity with action.

Aristotle's Justice in Friendship: Cliché or Antidote?

Dr. TENG Wen Ching

Friendship is a social bond that knits a community together. The Latin root of the word “social” means group. But for Aristotle, the highest and the best friendship achievable comes between only two persons, and he knows that it is rare. He calls it friendship based on goodness. Two good men desire goodness from each other. That is the highest human possibility. It is an intellectual possibility, not a moral or religious possibility. For the ancient Greeks, the highest life is the contemplative life.

Aristotle classified friendships into three kinds: 1. friendship based on utility; 2. friendship based on pleasure; and 3. friendship based on goodness.

A friendship based on utility means friendship based on usefulness. But once you find the guy not useful anymore, that friendship will evaporate. For the second type, you call someone a friend when you feel pleased with that person. However, once that pleasant feeling is gone, you do not find that person enjoyable anymore. Both types of friendship are not promising.

Both friendship and justice are relationships between men. Justice is a relationship between fellow citizens, and friendship is a relationship between fellow human beings.

Aristotle has spent a whole Book Five in his *Nicomachean Ethics* to deal with the topic of justice. First, Aristotle gives a general outline telling us justice is a choice. Then he shows there is justice in accordance with geometrical proportion and with arithmetical progression. Then he goes into political justice, legal justice, wrongdoing, harm and so on.

Between the two parts, there is a section on justice in exchange. All reciprocity in accordance with proportion is commonly referred to as justice, as proportional exchange. He says that justice is the kind of mean in which the just man is set to be a doer by choice and distribute what is equal in accordance with proportion to share benefit and burden.

If two persons exchange goods by barter all the time, it is very inefficient, even if both agree on the right proportion. So some medium, like money, would serve the purpose. The fulfillment of our natural desires and the realization of just exchange come into one. Another benefit is that it doesn't require politics since the two parties agree on the terms beforehand.

Since our desires and the values for the exchange are not the same, we have to figure out a fair term. But if humans do not have desires, they will not exchange. If humans do not desire companionship, what are friends for?

By nature, we are not self-sufficient; we have desire and need to trade with others. To trade properly, we have to be fair and honest. So proportional exchange is like a locomotive for civilization. Without exchange, we have no division of Labor.

According to Aristotle, proportional justice is not all justice but is most beneficial to humans, and with money as a medium, it does not require any government in the exchange process. While exchange could also have its ugly side, such as an eye for an eye, Aristotle only demonstrates good for good, like what we call today a win-win situation. It also has to be moderate in order not to go into extremes or excessive consumerism.

Friendship and exchange are both give and take. What holds two friends together is fair, proportional exchange. Even in friendship based on utility and pleasure, there is proportional exchange to make two persons happy. Then it can be a friendship that can last long.

However, when two close friends become different in social circles without a common language, Aristotle says their friendship may not maintain. It is because the two cannot keep some proportional fair exchange.

Concerning Pope Francis' vision of fraternal love, what the Pope calls for is very hard to maintain because friendship is not something for eternal from the Aristotelian standpoint.

Aristotle's idea of brothers is very different. He looks at justice like a concentric circle. The core is oneself and then family and friends on different layers of needs. In other words, there are distances between people. As an ordinary human being, not a devoted Christian, with all these layers, you would only treat well someone closer to you. That would not fit into the Church teaching, which says we have to treat everybody the same as the Good Samaritan, who offered a helping hand without discrimination for fraternity's sake.

In the classical understanding of human nature and human possibility and how the Church looks at different human possibilities, we need to build bridges and make compromises. Of course, it is easier said than done. There is the possibility to achieve but it is very rare for common humanity. We like pleasure, we like usefulness, so we maintain some kind of friendship so long as we do not simply use the others.

Social Friendship in Vaccine Diplomacy: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Victor CHAN Chi Ming

Social friendship is an ideal for all working for the common good, embracing social justice and human dignity. In Chapter Five of the papal encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* about politics, Pope Francis has identified major contemporary political problems. The most important and rising problem is populism, which could lead to extreme nationalism, and that is important to vaccine politics and diplomacy. The second one is the limit of liberalism. From international relations and international political economy perspectives, it stresses economic interdependence and cooperation, but it does not address the fair distribution of economic gain. The last problem is the uneven distribution of global power, which currently rests in a few nations and in the transnational economic and financial sectors.

In response, Pope Francis calls for reforms of international organizations. He stresses that politics should emphasize the long-term common good and combat the threat of human rights violations. His encyclical also addresses the exposure of the false securities of the world in the pandemic. Thus, immediate actions are advocated for vaccine development and distribution accessible to all for the common good of humanity.

The presentation here will discuss 1. how the existing mechanism of the vaccine distribution can illustrate the problems that Pope Francis mentioned and whether we can apply the teaching of social friendship; 2. what are the challenges and opportunities ahead and, 3. whether social friendship as an ethical ideal would shift the international mechanism of Covid 19 vaccination.

There are considerations to vaccine-related issues, including development and production, affordability, funding sources and allocation, the distribution mechanism and deployment, how the nations' capacity to manage the vaccination. These considerations can also be discussed from international relations perspectives, including the concept of power, interest, identity, and the teaching of social friendship.

Three concepts of international relations can apply to vaccination and social friendship. First, the realm of realism highlights the importance of self-help and national survival in terms of vaccination. These nations, like the US, only care about the supply of vaccines for their population. Virus eradication may lead to vaccine nationalism as security is the concern of state sovereignty. Social friendship hardly exists. That's why the Director-General of WHO criticizes vaccine nationalism and calls for essential collective efforts.

For liberalism, it emphasizes interest calculation and the important role of state and non-state actors, such as international institutions or NGOs. This implies the possibility of mutual help in vaccine

allocation through diplomatic practices. Humanitarian intervention has a long history with many successful stories. We can see the lead actors—the state actors, vaccine manufacturers, international organizations and NGOs—working very hard on vaccine diplomacy. Friendship exists in this approach but not equal among all parties, which may lead to unfair distribution as it rests a lot on an individual state's effort in a bilateral approach. For example, India and China have been playing significant roles in vaccine diplomacy. There is competition between these two delivering countries, which are questing for greater global influences.

Thirdly, constructivism believes that idea or ideology is the driving force behind international relations, shaping the behaviors and dynamics of the state and non-state actors. Friendship here as the quality of bonds and shared aims is the basis for mutual and fair cooperation to promoting global justice. In this category, social friendship is possible in pursuing common goods, which shapes the global vaccine production and allocation. That is the case with the COVAX. It is a global initiative lead by the WHO and other international organizations to coordinate resources to enable the low to middle-income countries equitable access to Covid 19 tests, therapists, and vaccines. The principle of priority allocation focuses first on the frontline workers, then the elderly and high-risk groups. No country will receive vaccines for more than 20% of their population before others in the COVAX financing group.

Despite the effort, there are challenges to the COVAX, particularly financial concerns with high-income countries can purchase more than enough and lead to a shortage of vaccines for the low-income countries. The poor countries also face problems with logistics and administrative capability to handle the vaccines they received. In addition, vaccine hesitancy is a trust issue of the people.

Overall, there are some cases where social friendship can be applied in terms of vaccine diplomacy. However, the national governments have their agendas and interests to consider and have missed an opportunity to maximize the common good by reducing the global death tolls, supporting economic recovery and mitigating supply chain disruption. It is not enough to think only of developing more vaccines. We have to get back to the four aspects of the vaccination: affordable, accessible, trust among people, maximizing its impact and being efficiently used. It is very challenging to turn social friendship into a social norm. But we should try to maximize the existing mechanism to expand its coverage to all people to receive fair and cheap but reliable vaccines to combat the Covid 19 pandemic.

God as *Shouzu*: A Hongkonger's Perspective on Social Friendship

Professor Kung Lap-yan

The idea of social friendship makes sense to the Western people due to the legacy of Aristotelian ethics, but it becomes problematic in China, which carries a highly political connotation. For China, friendship has the meaning of a strategic relationship that does not need intimate personal relations. Instead, it is a term confined to foreigners and international relations. For instance, the government's "non-official" diplomacy is conducted by organizations, such as the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries or through building Friendship Bridges for its poorer neighbors. This presentation focuses on how people under the Chinese government's ideology can appreciate and practice the virtue of friendship, with reference to *Fratelli Tutti*, the third encyclical of Pope Francis. Protestors in Hong Kong's anti-extradition bill movement in 2019 widely use the term *shouzu* (literally means arms and legs, 手足). I find it provides Christians a language to be engaged in a theology of social friendship. Besides, God as *shouzu* makes sense to Hongkongers and people in China striving for justice.