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Fraternity in the Teaching of Pope Francis¹

Abstract: The time of the coronavirus pandemic and the COVID-19 disease was an opportunity to ask anew many questions concerning interpersonal relations. In this context, Pope Francis tries to take up the therapy of fraternity in order to effectively and consistently contrast the “globalization of indifference” with the “globalization of fraternity and solidarity.” The aim of this article is to show the essence of fraternity in the teaching of Pope Francis (before the publication of papal encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti* about fraternity) in the context of the teaching of the Catholic Church. The article presents the biblical roots of fraternity as well as its inclinations in the Magisterium of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent popes. The reinterpretation of the term “fraternity” in Francis’ thought includes: the “mysticism of the fraternity,” its inter-religious and social character, its global fraternity on the level of bioethics and ecology, and its connection to the “theory of contradictions” (Germ.: *Gegensatz*), which the Pope took from R. Guardini.

Keywords: ethics, Pope Francis, fraternity, *Gegensatz*, mysticism of fraternity, universal fraternity

Introduction

In recent years, Pope Francis has repeated many times that we are dealing not so much with an epoch of change as with a change of epoch and “we find ourselves living at a time when change is no

¹ This article is a revised and updated version of my previous study published in Polish: Wojciech Kućko, “Braterstwo w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka,” *Collectanea Theologica* 90 (2020) no. 3, 123–162. Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

longer linear, but epochal.”² An important challenge of today, especially in the period after the COVID-19 pandemic, is to build proper relationships between people. One of the main themes developed in the teaching of Pope Francis is the proposal of fraternity, known from the beginning of Christianity, in which he sees one of the essential elements for building a new humanism and relations in the world. This gives the opportunity to see in the other person, regardless of his religion and beliefs, not a rival, a threat or an obstacle, but an opportunity and an ally.

The aim of the article is to outline the essence and the message of the concept of fraternity in the thought of Pope Francis, and to show its broad context in the teaching of the Catholic Church. Although the term “fraternity” itself is not a new concept, and its roots are in the biblical teaching, which in the form of an imperative was also given by Jesus, a critical analysis of the texts and statements of Pope Bergoglio gives an opportunity to discover new aspects of this reality that have so far not been sufficiently noticed.

The theme of fraternity between people was taken up by various Catholic circles – especially after Francis’s visit to the United Arab Emirates in February 2019, when some began to judge him for proclaiming this idea allegedly at the expense of purity of faith and Catholic morality. Yet, the historical view of the teachings of the last popes gives a completely different picture of the efforts to achieve the unity of the human community, which should be united by brotherhood. The term “fraternity” is presented in some foreign, especially biblical, studies,³ but it is not found in many Polish encyclopaedias and theological dictionaries (e.g., the *Catholic*

² Francis, “Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia.”

³ Cf. H. Lesêtre, “Frère,” col. 2402–2405; K.H. Schelkle, “Bruder,” col. 631–640; J. Ratzinger, “Fraternité,” 1141–1167; B. Langemeyer, “Kirche und Brüderlichkeit,” 190–210; R. Stupperich, “Bruderschaften/Schwesternschaften/Kommunitäten. Alte Kirche,” 195–206; L. de Candido, “Fraternité,” 448–457. The Pontifical Biblical Commission also spoke about fraternal love as a constitutive element of authentic life in society in a document: “*Che cosa è l’uomo?*”, 236–265. After Francis’ visit to Abu Dhabi, the editors of the oldest Italian magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* in 2020 prepared a collection of texts on fraternity *Fratellanza. Gli scritti della Civiltà Cattolica* in a series *Accenti*, No. 11. Politically, the theme of fraternity is discussed in the collective work *Il principio dimenticato* edited by A.M. Baggio.

Encyclopaedia TN KUL, whose authors discuss only various fraternities⁴). Selected theological–historical aspects of fraternity are discussed in monographs of Polish authors.⁵ It is also worth mentioning several, although not very numerous, proposals to develop the theme of fraternity in the heritage of Francis’s thought.⁶

After outlining the biblical roots of fraternity, we will describe its interpretations in the history of theology after the Second Vatican Council by the popes: St. Paul VI, St. John Paul II and Benedict XVI. The starting point will be a reflection on fraternity, which was comprehensively developed by the young theologian Joseph Ratzinger. The following section will describe the reinterpretation of fraternity in the teaching of Pope Francis: from the “mysticism of fraternity,” through the threats to this reality, to the different dimensions of its social, interreligious, and bioethical and ecological development. This will allow us to ask the question of the relationship of fraternity understood in this way with the “theory of opposites” (Germ.: *Gegensatz*), to which the young Bergoglio paid much attention.

1. Biblical Roots of the Concept of Fraternity

The idea of fraternity is no foreign to Christian thought and has its long history, because Christian relationships should be marked by fraternity. The interpretation of Jesus’ indication that all His followers are to be brothers (cf. Matt 23:8) has varied in the history of the Church. In His teaching, Jesus clearly warns that His disciples should not follow the path indicated by the scribes and Pharisees. He himself gives the principle of coexistence within and outside the community, trying to show the essence of Christian action *ad intra* and *ad extra*: “As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but

⁴ Cf. K. Kuźmak, “Bractwo kościelne,” col. 1013–1020.

⁵ Among the newest studies the following should be listed: P. Burgoński, “Braterstwo – mit,” 159–186; P. Pietrusiak, “Kościół jako *fraternitas*,” 67–76; C. Kościelniak, “Chrześcijańskie i laickie konteksty,” 7–20; W. Łużyński, “Chrześcijańskie braterstwo,” 69–86.

⁶ Cf. J.L. Fredericks, “Suffering, Liberation,” 33–42; idem, “The Dialogue of Fraternity,” 10–11; D. Fares, “La fratellanza umana,” 114–126; D. Marafioti, “Documento sulla Fratellanza,” 235–238.

one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Messiah” (Matt 23:8–10). These words form an analogy with the Sermon at the top. The Greek term ἀδελφοί shows that in the community of Jesus, all members are equal, in their lives should be guided by solidarity and follow the path of service.⁷

The biblical meaning of the term “fraternity” can be focused around two poles: from Adam (cf. Gen 1–2), “He made from one the whole human race” (Acts 17:26), united in the community by the bonds of blood, up to Christ, “the firstborn among many brothers” (Rom 8:29). The fraternity of all people in the Lord comes from the relationship of the Son with the Father, indicating a way of building human relationships with God and with each other.⁸ The natural fraternity, based on kinship, is completed by the spiritual fraternity of all those who believe in Christ.

The Roman Christians were to follow the advice of St. Paul and build kindness in fraternal love (cf. Rom 12:9–10). The theological virtue of love indicates that a Christian loves God in another man and another man for God’s sake. According to John’s theology, love for God is manifested in fraternity, and hatred for a brother is an expression of the lack of true love for God (cf. Jn 4; 1 Jn 3:14–15).⁹

2. Fraternity in Theological Tradition

Biblical and early Christian understanding of fraternity began to be put into practice, which occurred in particular in emerging religious congregations. Mendicant orders in the Middle Ages promoted various “brothers” in their ranks, often including lay people, and after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, various types of confraternities began to be formed, bringing together those who were into charity or practicing similar devotions.¹⁰ The term “fraternity” has taken on a certain political

⁷ More on the exegesis of this fragment: A. Paciorek, *Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza*, 386–399.

⁸ Cf. S. Corradino, “La fratellanza,” 529.

⁹ Cf. A. Tanquerey, *Compendio di Teologia*, 607–608.

¹⁰ Cf. R. Stupperich, “Bruderschaften/Schwesternschaften/Kommunitäten,” 195–212.

tone since the French Revolution, when it became a continuation of the realization of the ideas of freedom and equality. In a special way, after the Springtime of the Peoples, from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, fraternity began to be associated with belonging to the same nation or even only to the same social class, as was particularly emphasized by the advocates of Marxism.

Catholics have always been convinced of the bonds that connect all people, regardless of their religion or beliefs. The statements on this subject in papal documents on the Vatican website date back to the end of the 19th century. It is worth tracing the essence of the message of these texts from the last decades.

2.1. Joseph Ratzinger's interpretation

An interesting and comprehensive study on the various dimensions of fraternity can be found in the writings of Joseph Ratzinger, who dealt with this topic from the beginning of his theological research until the time of his pontificate.¹¹ In almost all theological studies, Ratzinger attempts to show the broad context of the reflection on brotherhood as well as its specific Christian message.¹²

According to Ratzinger, the original meaning of fraternity was kinship resulting from the bonds of blood, although already in ancient Greece, its metaphorical meaning is beginning to appear, although very rarely. For Plato, a compatriot is a brother, and for Xenophon, a friend will also be a brother. In this perspective, the boundaries of fraternity are drawn, where, among “our own,” it will be based on a common nationality, while a foreigner (gr. βάρβαρος)

¹¹ The first study of the fraternity theme by J. Ratzinger was included in the following: *Die christliche Brüderlichkeit*, 387–429; an extended version of the article is his book: *Die christliche Brüderlichkeit*, München 1960. Ratzinger presented a new look at fraternity, especially in an ecumenical and universal context, as an entry in a valued dictionary of spirituality: “Fraternité,” col. 1141–1167. Ultimately, the issue of fraternity will be addressed by Pope Ratzinger in the 2009 encyclical *Caritas in veritate* of 2009. (see *Caritas in veritate*, 34–42).

¹²The ecumenical aspect of brotherhood in Ratzinger's thoughts is discussed in: T. Maaßen, *Das Ökumeneverständnis*, 82–88.

no longer will be treated as a brother. The Old Testament commands to call a brother a person who shares the faith in the same God (cf. e.g., Ex 2:11; Lev 10:4; Jer 22:18–19). As in the Greek πόλις, political unity was identified with religious unification. In the Old Covenant, fraternity is associated with belonging to the same people and the common Divine election. The source of this unity, claims the German theologian, is twofold: first, it is based on a creative act in which God made man in His image and likeness, which was confirmed by His covenant with Noah; second, in the Abraham Covenant mankind became a special family, separated from the family of Adam and Noah.¹³

A detailed analysis of New Testament texts enabled Ratzinger to notice a threefold meaning of the term “fraternity” in Jesus’ teaching.¹⁴ First, it means a person who professes the same religion, belonging to the same nation, as was the case with the Jews (cf. Matt 5:22; 24:27; 7:3–5; Lk 17:3). The second meaning concerns those fragments where Jesus calls his disciples brothers or addresses them as brothers (cf. Matt 28:10; Jn 20:17). The new meaning which the community of Jesus’ disciples gave to what the rabbis called “fraternity” is related to the text of Matt 23:8, since “objectively it is precisely this sentence which means the abolition of Rabbinism and the Christian revolution – downplaying all internal worldly differences in the face of the encounter with the only One who is truly Great, the only one who is truly Other – Christ.”¹⁵ The fact that Jesus addresses the Twelve using the term “brothers” is a break with the rabbinical expression and a reference to building a new People of God, in which a great fraternity is being realized. The third, typically Christian, interpretation of fraternity can be found in Mk 3:31–35, where on hearing the news of his Mother and brothers coming, Jesus asks the question: “Who are my mother and (my) brothers?” and points out that more important than the bond of blood is the spiritual bond, as it expresses itself in submission to the will of God.

¹³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Braterstwo chrześcijańskie,” 32–39; W. Łużyński, “Chrześcijańskie braterstwo,” 73–74.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Fraternité,” col. 1144–1146.

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, “Braterstwo chrześcijańskie,” 46.

Ratzinger points out that the first Christian communities continue to call their followers brothers and sisters (Greek ἀδελφοί, cf. e.g., Acts 2:29.37; 7:2; Rom 9:3), but most of the development of this concept was brought about by St. Paul, for whom every Christian is a brother, a co-religious believer. The Apostle of the Nations, Ratzinger notes, even creates the neologism “false brother” on the basis of his missionary journeys (Greek: ψευδάδελφος, cf. 2Cor 11:16; Gal 2:4) to draw the boundaries of the Christian fraternity. Furthermore, as in the Old Testament, brotherhood was founded on the fatherhood of God, so St. Paul emphasizes its Trinitarian dimension, which Ratzinger describes as follows: “the fatherhood of God first refers to the Son, Christ, and through Him became ours because His Spirit is in us and speaks in us: Father,”¹⁶ and therefore fatherhood and fraternity contain richer content. They do not only have an existential character, but are oriented towards an ontological meaning. In Paul’s thought, fraternity understood in this way does not have a universal character, for everyone can enter the Christian community, but he will be a brother only when he becomes one, living as the Lord commanded. Christians are called to show love towards everyone (Greek: ἀγάπη), but fraternal love is to be shown only towards a brother (Greek: φιλαδελφία).¹⁷

This experience of the original Church finds its reflection in the emerging Christian ecclesiology. Entering the community of the Church through baptism makes it possible to call the Church itself the Mother and to call God the Father. Under the influence of persecution, the community of brothers and sisters closed itself to external relations, while at the same time strengthening internal bonds through participation in the most important unifying act, which is the Eucharist.¹⁸ From the third century onwards, the term “brother” was used less and less frequently to denote a Christian, while the technical Latin Christian term *fraternitas* began to be used to refer to the ecclesial community.¹⁹ The second aspect of the use of the terms “brother” and “sister,” according to Ratzinger, gained

¹⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁷ Ibid., 50–55; J. Ratzinger, “Fraternité,” col. 1146–1149.

¹⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Braterstwo chrześcijańskie,” 55–57.

¹⁹ Cf. P. Pietrusiak, “Kościół jako *fraternitas*,” 86–87.

ascetic character and began to be widespread in monastic communities, disappearing in the Church, which grew in numbers, reaching masses, which brought harmful consequences in understanding the meaning of the term until our time.²⁰

Cardinal Ratzinger goes on to confront biblical and Christian understanding of fraternity with modern ideas. The Enlightenment slogan of the French revolution—*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*—led its luminaries to place fraternity on the political and revolutionary agenda. In this view universal fraternity is not based on any kind of bond with God, but only on the earthly foundations of human nature, which is why all borders and barriers between people should be abolished, and a new ethos that applies to all people is introduced. This approach to fraternity paradoxically turns against man both in the ideas of liberalism and in freemasonry circles. A similar danger, according to Ratzinger, stems from the distortion of the idea of fraternity in Marxism, dividing humanity into two opposing, antagonistic groups: land and capital holders and the proletariat, between whom there will never be a fraternal relationship. The idea of unifying these two groups in a united classless society in some indefinite future was to convince many to trust in the assumptions of Marxist philosophy.²¹

2.2. The contribution of the 2nd Vatican Council

In the documents of the 2nd Vatican Council important aspects of fraternity were indicated.²² As Paweł Pietrusiak observes, the word *fraternitas* occurs 26 times in the conciliar texts, principally to denote fraternal feeling or fraternal bond. Only three times – and always as a quotation from the Fathers of the Church – does it appear to describe the ecclesial community.²³ It is worth noting here that the ecclesiology of the 2nd Vatican Council brings various images of the Church, which is understood as the People of God, the Body of

²⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, “Braterstwo chrześcijańskie,” 57.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 40–43.

²² Cf. T. Bielski, *Synopsa tekstów*, 106–110.

²³ Cf. P. Pietrusiak, “Kościół jako *fraternitas*,” 69. On the idea of fraternity in the thought of the Second Vatican Council, see Chapter IV in: J. Nyenyembe, *Fraternity in Christ*, 53–65.

Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. After the Synod of Bishops of 1985, the view of the Church as *communio* was broadened, including the related term *fraternitas*, although it did not generate greater interest then.²⁴

First of all, the Council fathers reminded us that the community of believers itself should be characterised by a tightening of fraternal ties. The Church is a sign of fraternity, so that she can have a sincere dialogue with others.²⁵ Believers in Christ unite around a single Eucharistic table,²⁶ and outwardly show fraternal love for one another.²⁷

The second dimension of fraternity in the light of the Second Vatican Council teaching concerns the bonds connecting the ministers of the sacraments. The bishops “gather together God’s family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father,”²⁸ while “in virtue of their common sacred ordination and mission, all priests are bound together in intimate brotherhood, which naturally and freely manifests itself in mutual aid, spiritual as well as material, pastoral as well as personal, in their meetings and in communion of life, of labour and charity.”²⁹

The third dimension of fraternity in the conciliar texts makes us aware of its universalistic character. The coming of Christ into the world has shown that He is the brother of the people³⁰ who has entered into human history to bring everyone to unity and harmony, which are the deepest desires of the whole human race.³¹ The Council fathers pointed out that the sign of the present time is to develop a sense of solidarity between peoples, while the main

²⁴ Cf. P. Pietrusiak, “Kościół jako *fraternitas*,” 67–69. Important and interesting analyses of the Church as *fraternitas* are presented in: G. Ruggieri, *Chiesa sinodale*, in chapter VIII: *Per una chiesa della fraternità e della sororità*. Similar questions are asked by: S. Dianich, C. Torcivia, *Forme del popolo di Dio tra comunità e fraternità*, 10–45.

²⁵ *Gaudium et spes*, 92.

²⁶ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 28.

²⁷ Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 23.

²⁸ *Lumen gentium*, 28.

²⁹ *Lumen gentium*, 28; cf. *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 8.

³⁰ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 32.

³¹ Cf. *Ad gentes divinitus*, 3, 8, 12

apostolic task of the laity is to spread true brotherhood.³² In the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* there is a statement: “We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God.”³³

Fourthly, the Second Vatican Council points out the need for all Christians to work together for the sake of universal fraternity; its spirit should reign between Christians and non-Christians, and it should result in the reduction of material inequalities between the inhabitants of the world through the recognition of and respect for Divine and natural law.³⁴ However, fraternal dialogue is not only the result of technical progress, but also of taking into account the spiritual dimension of life and human dignity.³⁵ This dialogue should not be marked by false irenicism: “Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded.”³⁶

2.3. Paul VI

Still during the Council sessions, St. Paul VI took up the issue of fraternity several times. During his 1963 general audience, he noted that the community of the Church has its source in the awareness of being brothers in Christ and sons of the same Father.³⁷ In a radio message of 22 December 1964 on the occasion of the Nativity of the Lord, Pope Montini decided to address the theme of fraternity “more true, more operative, more universal than that which already unites people.”³⁸ Influenced by his pilgrimage to India (2–5 December 1964), he stated that fraternity is something that spontaneously comes to mind, because instead of seeing another person as

³² Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 14.

³³ *Nostra aetate*, 5.

³⁴ Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 84, 88–90.

³⁵ Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 23, 24, 35

³⁶ *Unitatis redintegratio*, 11. More on building fraternity and on irenicism in the thought of his Polish precursor cf. R. Goczół, “Ogólne założenia ireniczne,” 107–130.

³⁷ Cf. Paul VI, “Udienza generale,” 479.

³⁸ Paul VI, “Nuntii radiophonici,” 177.

a stranger, rival or enemy, one should see someone similar to us, worthy of respect and love. Among the obstacles ruining human brotherhood, Paul VI listed the following: nationalism, racism, armaments, class divisions and hatred.³⁹

In the encyclical *Populorum progressio* (1967), Montini stressed that true solidarity is one of the duties of the richer people in particular, and that it results from human and supernatural brotherhood. It is rooted in an obligation of solidarity, social justice and universal love.⁴⁰

On the occasion of the Fourth World Peace Day in 1971, St. Paul VI issued a message entitled: *Every man is my brother*. He argued that building a universal fraternity is done by educating the young generations to believe that every human being is our brother. He also referred to the “golden rule” from Christ’s Sermon on the Mount: “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets” (Matt 7:12). In antiquity it was known, but in a negative version: do not do to others what is unpleasant for you. Jesus formulates it in a positive and therefore more demanding way.⁴¹

The historical meetings of Paul VI with Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury (1966) and the Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras (1964 in Jerusalem, 1967 in Istanbul and Rome) were signs of special fraternity.⁴²

2.4. John Paul II

In slightly different dimensions, the essence of human fraternity was further defined by St. John Paul II. In his *Letter to Cardinal Agostino Casaroli about the work entrusted to the Holy See* of 1982, he pointed out that one of the tasks of the Holy See is to create an atmosphere of mutual respect, based on human and Christian brotherhood. Justice should be combined with fraternity, which is

³⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 179–181; R. Marangoni, *La Chiesa mistero*, 196–199.

⁴⁰ *Populorum progressio*, 43–44, 66–67, 71–75, 78–79, 85–87.

⁴¹ Cf. Paul VI, “Ogni uomo,” 3–5.

⁴² Cf. W. Miziołek, “Biuletyn ekumeniczny,” 117–125.

the love of man in truth.⁴³ The task of promoting such fraternity is at the heart of the activities of the Church and all its institutions, especially the Roman Curia.⁴⁴

Prayer meetings in Assisi were important steps towards strengthening fraternity between followers of different religions. The first such meeting, the need for which was already mentioned during the Second Vatican Council by Bishop Hélder Câmara, was organised by the Polish Pope “in the spirit of Assisi” on 27 October 1986. The second such meeting, on the initiative of John Paul II, took place on 24 January 2002, in response to the attacks in the United States of America in 2001. The decision of the Polish Pope to organise an extraordinary synod for Lebanon in Beirut, announced on 6 June 1991, was also surprising for some Catholic circles. The synod took place on 26 November–14 December 1991, after the end of the great conflict from the years 1975–1990 in that country. This work made it possible to discover that in situations of conflict, one must first look for what unites different people, including in the spirit of brotherhood.⁴⁵ This was also reflected in the papal post-synodal exhortation *New Hope for Lebanon* of 1997.⁴⁶

2.5. Benedict XVI

Joseph Ratzinger returned to the academic quest concerning a wider fraternity from university times, when he became a Pope, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* of 2009, sometimes called the “encyclical of universal brotherhood.”⁴⁷ Benedict XVI devoted the entire third chapter of this document to the issue of brotherhood and civil society. Although it is appropriate to seek a new humanism, according to Ratzinger, the regress of development today is due precisely to the lack of fraternity between people and nations.

⁴³ Cf. John Paul II, “Epistula al Venerato Fratello,” 124–125.

⁴⁴ Cf. John Paul II, “Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus*,” art. 145.

⁴⁵ Cf. R. Cristiano, “Giovanni Paolo II.”

⁴⁶ Cf. John Paul II, “Exhortation apostolique *Une espérance*,” 17, 32, 47, 51, 61.

⁴⁷ Cf. *Caritas in veritate*, 34–42; P. Burgoński, “Braterstwo – mit,” 159; R. Gibellini, “L’enciclica della fraternità,” 1; C.L. Rossetti, “*Fraternitatis munus*,” 103–116.

Following the thought of John Paul II's encyclical *Centesimus Annus* (1991), Benedict XVI pointed out the need to build a system consisting of three agents: the market, the state and civil society. The latter should be a special environment for building an "economy of gratuitousness" and fraternity.⁴⁸ The global village that the world has become seems to bring people together, but this does not mean that it makes them brothers. It needs a reference to the fatherhood of God. "Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is."⁴⁹

Benedict XVI dedicated his speech to the new diplomats on 16 December 2010 to the theme of human fraternity. He noted that although this term is included in the motto of many countries, it has lost its importance because of individualism or collectivism, giving the first place to liberty, equality or progress of unity. In such an approach, the Church "for this reason refrains from acting as a lobby, concerned solely with her own interests, but works under the gaze of the One who is Creator of all human beings, wishing to honour the dignity of each and every one."⁵⁰ In everyday life, however, this fraternity is expressed in gratuitousness and respect for everyone.

Benedict XVI showed a strictly Christian sense of fraternity by contrasting the histories of men related to the history of Rome and Christianity. Saints Peter and Paul, whose bond of brotherhood in faith took on particular significance in the Eternal City, were in contrast to the two mythical brothers Romulus and Remus and, in a broader sense, to the bad relationship between the brothers Cain and Abel. True fraternity, Benedict XVI states, finds its proper foundation in following in the footsteps of Jesus.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Cf. *Caritas in veritate*, 38.

⁴⁹ *Caritas in veritate*, 19.

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, "Address of His Holiness."

⁵¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, "Holy Mass for the Imposition."

3. Francis and Universal Fraternity

All the aspects of fraternity indicated so far are reflected in the teaching of Pope Francis, in whom new and as yet unnoticed dimensions of this reality can also be indicated. It seems that this Pope, more than any of his predecessors, is trying to build a universal fraternity that is the most primary reflection of the essence of Christianity. This reasoning is also at the heart of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, where Article 1 states: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”⁵² It will therefore make sense to show the various aspects of Francis’s thought on fraternity. It is, in fact, the first and one of the main themes to which Francis referred on the day of his election to St Peter’s See, when he talked about the “fraternal journey” of the Bishop of Rome and his people: “Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity.”⁵³ This theme returns both in pontifical messages for World Peace Day, encyclicals and exhortations and in numerous speeches to ambassadors, international organisations, associations and members of academic gatherings. Francis has already drawn attention to “fraternity” in the 2013 encyclical *Lumen Fidei*: “Modernity sought to build a universal brotherhood based on equality, yet we gradually came to realize that this brotherhood, lacking a reference to a common Father as its ultimate foundation, cannot endure. We need to return to the true basis of brotherhood.”⁵⁴

The Pope even formulates a kind of definition of fraternity. In his opinion, “fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother”⁵⁵ including the one who is poor and migrant. In this way the “mosaic

⁵² More on the text of the document: H. Andrzejczak, “Filozoficznoprawne podstawy,” 81–98.

⁵³ “First Greeting of the Holy Father Pope Francis.”

⁵⁴ *Lumen fidei*, 54.

⁵⁵ Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation,” 1.

of fraternity”⁵⁶ can be formed in a world of diversity. It must be clearly stated that in Francis’s reasoning philosophical and theological arguments are interwoven, and that he finds it important to spread human fraternity as a certain programme of world renewal. For Pope Bergoglio, the plane of reference is certainly natural law and human nature itself, in which a desire to build bonds with others is inscribed, sometimes disturbed by attitudes of selfishness and mistrust. This will be the subject of further analysis.

3.1. Mysticism of fraternity

The Jesuit theologian Christoph Theobald notes that when Francis uses the term “mystical fraternity”⁵⁷ in his exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, he does so in a programmatic way to indicate what lifestyle should characterise the followers of Christ.⁵⁸ In this exhortation, fundamental for the entire pontificate, the Pope speaks three times about a mystique, which in his logic is of particular importance in healing and building human relationships.

The main dimension of this mystique concerns everyday interpersonal contacts: “Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a «mystique» of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage. Greater possibilities for communication thus turn into greater possibilities for encounter and solidarity for everyone.”⁵⁹ This unexpected context for mysticism is understandable if it is placed in the light of the “theology of the people” and its Argentinean roots in the thought of Francis, referring to the former “folk religiousness”, called “folk piety” by Paul VI and

⁵⁶ Francis, “General audience” (3 August 2016).

⁵⁷ *Evangelii gaudium*, 92.

⁵⁸ Cf. C. Theobald, *Fraternità*, 60.

⁵⁹ *Evangelii gaudium*, 87.

defined in Aparecida as “folk spirituality.”⁶⁰ Although it is linked to the theology of liberation, it shows in a positive way the essence of a community of believers who are not only the object of evangelisation, but also their subjectivity in self-evangelisation is mentioned.

According to Theobald, the theological foundation of the mystique of fraternity is the faith in Christ’s Incarnation, which shows an inherent connection with such realities as self-giving, community, service and reconciliation.⁶¹ In Francis’s language they lead to the realization of a “revolution of tenderness,”⁶² to discovering Christ’s face in another person, His voice and requests to “learn to suffer in the embrace of the crucified Jesus whenever we are unjustly attacked or meet with ingratitude, never tiring of our decision to live in fraternity.”⁶³ This is a reference to the greatest works of Christian mysticism, by Thomas à Kempis or St Therese of Lisieux, because true fraternity is in itself an experience of God, according to the statement of St. Bonaventure, quoted by the Pope in the Encyclical *Laudato si’*, that one should recognise the Creator in other creatures.⁶⁴ This is why, when asked whether people on their own will ever be able to satisfy the desire for fraternity, to overcome hatred, selfishness and differences, Francis answers that it will be possible, but only in the sphere of acceptance of the fatherhood of God. “It is a fatherhood, then, which effectively generates fraternity, because the love of God, once welcomed, becomes the most formidable means of transforming our lives and relationships with others, opening us to solidarity and to genuine sharing.”⁶⁵ This can be done through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because Francis perceives the *locus* of brotherhood in the cross, showing how far one can go in recognizing a brother in another person. In this regard, his vision is identical to what Benedict XVI presented.

⁶⁰ More on the “theology of the people” cf. M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario*, 61–77; J.C. Scannone, *La teologia del popolo*, 11–30. Among its main representatives was the theologian Lucio Gera.

⁶¹ C. Theobald, „Mistica della fraternità,” 581–582.

⁶² *Evangelii gaudium*, 88.

⁶³ *Evangelii gaudium*, 91.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Laudato si’*, 233; C. Theobald, “Mistica della fraternità,” 582.

⁶⁵ Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation,” 3.

Priests are a particular group called to discover their identity: “Priests are united in a sacramental brotherhood, therefore, the first form of evangelization is the witness of brotherhood and of communion among themselves and with their bishop.”⁶⁶ A missionary impulse and going out to proclaim the Word of God to the peripheries can be the fruit of this reflection and experience, which moves the accent from thinking about one’s own welfare to taking notice of another man.

In Francis’s opinion, the most important attribute of fraternity is its universal character. On the one hand, the natural discovery of reason is to recognize a brother in the other person, a companion of the shared world journey. Therefore “fraternal love can only be gratuitous; it can never be a means of repaying others for what they have done or will do for us.”⁶⁷ This nature of love therefore also makes it possible to speak of the love of the enemies. On the other hand, from this perspective, the circle of fraternity is being extended to include the world of nature, which escapes complete human control. In this sense, Francis notes, we can speak of a “universal brotherhood.”

In a special letter *Humana Communitas* published on January 6, 2019 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Pontifical Academy of Life (*Pro Vita*), founded in 1994 by St John Paul II, Francis considers building universal fraternity sown by the Gospel to be the most important task of the Church. The Pope states: “We must once again bring this fraternity to the fore. For it is one thing to feel forced to live together, but something entirely different to value the richness and beauty of the seeds of common life needing to be sought out and cultivated. It is one thing to resign oneself to seeing life as a battle against constant foes, but something entirely different to see our human family as a sign of the abundant life of God the Father and the promise of a common destiny redeemed by the infinite love that even now sustains it in being.”⁶⁸ Since all the Church’s paths lead to man, as St John Paul II wrote in his programmatic encyclical *Redemptor hominis* in 1979, it is

⁶⁶ Francis, “Address to the Plenary of the Congregation.”

⁶⁷ *Laudato si’*, 228.

⁶⁸ *Humana communitas*, 6.

necessary to seek “a new vision aimed at promoting a humanism of fraternity and solidarity between individuals and peoples.”⁶⁹ In this perspective, the strength of fraternity born of adoration of God in spirit and truth becomes “the new frontier of Christianity.”⁷⁰

3.2. Fraternity under threat

The diagnosis of the causes of the degradation of humanity was given by Francis in his encyclical *Laudato si'* of 2015, in which he described what the breaking of human ties with the natural world leads to.⁷¹ The resulting pretentious attitude of the consumer and the exploiter has always been alien to the Christian attitude.⁷² From the first pages, the Bible reveals the brutal consequences of a lack of interest in one's neighbour, which is particularly evident in the story of Cain and Abel. If everything in the world is interconnected, any expression of a lack of solidarity and concern is a blow to human dignity and freedom.⁷³ A lack of harmony with the created world, cruelty to other creatures and disordered relationships with others are contrary to the dignity of a person.⁷⁴ That is why Francis sees fear as one of the main threats to fraternity. Andrea Monda, who considered fraternity to be the most important word of 2019 in the Pope's language, comments on this thread as follows: “It is the fear that the other will take our place in our Father's heart, that the other is the enemy that can destroy my happiness consisting in feeling loved; at the root of this fear is suspicion, a lack of confidence in the greatness of the love of God, in whom one no longer believes.”⁷⁵

Other threats to fraternity result from the selfish attitude of individuals and social groups. Mistrust, self-interest, fierce rivalry

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁷¹ Cf. *Laudato si'*, 66–70.

⁷² “If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs.” Ibid., 11.

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, 70.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 92.

⁷⁵ A. Monda, “Le sfide del Papa,” 1 [self-translated].

and violence reveal ever-increasing divisions, also in relations between man and the environment in the history of the earth and between the different peoples of the world. This creates a certain anti-culture, characterised by indifference to the community, hostile to men and women, and building alliances based solely on the violence of money. Francis also sees a certain paradox of this distorted progress: although the world's economic and technological resources would allow today for greater concern for the human family, they are causing many divisions and degradation. The attitude of nihilism, the greedy search for pleasure and consumerism shrink people's chances of living together.⁷⁶

3.3. The social dimension of fraternity

Francis tries very boldly to address the issue of building a proper vision of fraternity in which the community of the Church is not opposed to society. In this context, Theobald notes: "The question of truth is therefore not in the first place (although it is never excluded). However, instead of apologetic self-defence, the Church offers *specific spiritual resources* through which our societies, right here in Europe, could resist the crises that shake them. The Church is understood here as, if we may say so, a missionary "wand" (Italian: *rabdomante*) which finds with spiritual sensitivity what is said in the Gospel as already present in the *Other*."⁷⁷

An important place to learn fraternity, shared life in diversity and dependence on others is family, in which different kinds of relationships—marital, paternal, maternal, filial and fraternal—lead a person to what he or she experiences in a large human family.⁷⁸ In the passage quoted in *Amoris Laetitia*, taken from one of his catechesis, Francis states: "In the family, among siblings, human coexistence is learned, how one must live in society. Perhaps we are not always aware of it, but the family itself introduces fraternity into the world! Beginning with this first experience of fraternity,

⁷⁶ Cf. *Humana communitas*, 2–3.

⁷⁷ C. Theobald, „Mistica della fraternità,” 587 [self-translated, the italics by the author].

⁷⁸ Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 66.

nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society and on its relations among peoples.”⁷⁹

The story of the first human beings and their family, that is, “the story of Cain and Abel teaches that we have an inherent calling to fraternity, but also the tragic capacity to betray that calling. This is witnessed by our daily acts of selfishness, which are at the root of so many wars and so much injustice.”⁸⁰ Francis states, following Benedict XVI,⁸¹ that the lack of fraternity leads to various forms of social poverty – in the dimension of inter-human relationships, in the area of material goods and political relations. A return to the cardinal virtues is the recipe for overcoming the economical crisis that the world grapples with. These virtues can help “to recover the fraternal bonds which join us one to another, with deep confidence that human beings need and are capable of something greater than maximizing their individual interest. Above all, these virtues are necessary for building and preserving a society in accord with human dignity.”⁸²

In the most visible way, relations of fraternity are shaken between people and nations by the experience of war, which is based on indifference and hostility, spread by the proliferation of weapons, including nuclear and chemical weapons. International pacts cannot be the sole remedy for this, but there is also a need for building a civil society, inside which there is a conversion of hearts: “a conversion of hearts is needed which would allow everyone to recognize in the other a brother or sister to care for, and to work together with, in building a fulfilling life for all.”⁸³

⁷⁹ Francis, “General Audience” (18 February 2015). Cf. *Amoris laetitia*, 194. Pope Bergoglio wrote in other words on the fraternal role of the family in the first of his messages for the 47th World Peace Day (1 January 2014), which could be called a “little encyclical” on fraternity: “The family is the wellspring of all fraternity, and as such it is the foundation and the first pathway to peace, since, by its vocation, it is meant to spread its love to the world around it.” Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation,” 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸¹ Cf. *Caritas in veritate*, 19.

⁸² Francis, “Fraternity, the Foundation,” 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 7.

Other forms of disarming fraternity in the social dimension include – according to Francis – corruption, organized crime and various forms of social sins, calling for vengeance from heaven, such as: the drama of drugs, devastation of natural environment, financial speculation, prostitution, human trafficking and slavery.⁸⁴ Therefore the task of building universal brotherhood, in which not only the followers of Christ will be involved, is particularly essential. These papal thoughts are a significant and important extension of the horizons of looking at fraternity: “The globalization of indifference, which today burdens the lives of so many of our brothers and sisters, requires all of us to forge a new worldwide solidarity and fraternity capable of giving them new hope and helping them to advance with courage amid the problems of our time and the new horizons which they disclose and which God places in our hands”⁸⁵. Global fraternity is therefore the opposite of the “globalization of indifference,” which is located in the zone of the “structures of sin” of which John Paul II wrote.⁸⁶ Against these it is necessary “to weave the fabric of a new fraternity” characteristic for the existence of the first Christians.⁸⁷ Fraternity based on the grace of Jesus can help build authentic communities both inside the Church and among citizens.⁸⁸

Francis calls for the traditional concept of justice, which refers only to the distribution of goods, to be extended to include the question of the ethical aspects of work and the production of those

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁵ Francis, “No Longer Slaves, but Brothers and Sisters,” 6. The papal thought of the “globalization of indifference” appeared already in 2013 in the Exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* (cf. 54). In 2015, the Pope explained: “The great challenge of our world is the globalization of solidarity and fraternity in place of the globalization of discrimination and indifference and, until an equitable distribution of wealth can be achieved, no solution will be found for the ills of our society.” Francis, “Message to the President.”

⁸⁶ Cf. W. Piwowarski, “Grzechy społeczne,” 461–469.

⁸⁷ Francis notes the huge discrepancies in the lives of people in the world: “The 50 wealthiest people in the world have a patrimony equivalent to US\$2.2 billion. Those 50 people could finance the medical care and education of every poor child in the world, be it through taxes, philanthropic initiatives or both. Those 50 people could save millions of lives every year.” Francis, “New Forms of Solidarity.”

⁸⁸ Cf. Francis, “Regina Coeli” (2 April 2018).

goods. “That is why the Social Doctrine of the Church (SDC) insistently invites us to find ways to apply, in practice, fraternity as the governing principle of the economic order. Where other lines of thought speak only of solidarity, the SDC speaks instead of fraternity, since a fraternal society is also typified by solidarity, while the opposite is not always the case, as so many experiences confirm.”⁸⁹ The dichotomy of the code of efficiency and the code of solidarity has, according to Francis, created a serious error in contemporary culture. This can be rectified by returning to the true roots of evangelical brotherhood. Adopted in a distorted way by the order of the French Revolution, it was consequently removed from the socio-economic space. The testimony of St. Francis of Assisi makes it possible to grasp the link between fraternity and solidarity. Pope Bergoglio points out that solidarity guarantees equality for those who are not equal in society, while “fraternity is what allows the equal to be different people. Fraternity allows people who are equal in their essence, dignity, freedom, and their fundamental rights to participate differently in the common good according to their abilities, their life plan, their vocation, their work, or their charism of service”⁹⁰. This balance can be achieved by a participatory society, which is the right way to go in the face of the extremes of neoliberalism and neo-étatisme. Solidarity and protectiveness in itself do not bring happiness in the social area; they must be enriched by fraternity, which sees the entire human being in his or her full range of needs and dignity.

Jesus’ coming to earth has made it possible to discover the essence of human existence. “Without the fraternity that Jesus Christ has bestowed on us, our efforts for a more just world fall short, and even our best plans and projects risk being soulless and empty.”⁹¹ According to Diego Fares, Francis, referring to an evangelical sentence: “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Matt 25:40) – places fraternity between incarnation

⁸⁹ Francis, “Message to Prof. Margaret Archer,” 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Francis, “*Urbi et Orbi* Message.”

and the last judgment.⁹² Fraternity places us in the present, prolonging Christ's incarnation and His mission in the world, but it also anticipates the judgment that will come in the future. All human relationships, from family and marriage to maternal, paternal and filial relationships, are complemented by the relation of fraternity, because it seals them with the mark of love. If the only Father is the One in Heaven and Christ is the only Bridegroom, then all called to this vocation can be brothers (cf. Gal 3:25–28).⁹³

The approach to the migration crisis is, in Francis's opinion, a very important element of building fraternity between people in the social dimension. The Pope sees the importance of tenderness and the need to involve all people who need help, accompany them and change their fate. The attitude of fraternal help towards immigrants and refugees can, in his view, be expressed in four verbs: "to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate."⁹⁴ In practice this will mean showing respect for the dignity of each person so that they can experience personal security. In the Pope's opinion, "collective and arbitrary expulsions of migrants and refugees are not suitable solutions, particularly where people are returned to countries which cannot guarantee respect for human dignity and fundamental rights,"⁹⁵ so it is necessary, in many cases, to provide special humanitarian corridors for the most vulnerable and to provide diverse assistance to those in need. The experience of migration in the world is a call for establishing contact with others, for opening up to them and developing a culture of knowing, meeting and understanding each other.

3.4. Religious dialogue and fraternity for peace

True fraternity between people from different religious traditions reveals that establishing authentic relationships and building a society that would be a true family cannot be achieved by rejecting

⁹² In *Evangelii gaudium* the Pope states: "God's word teaches that our brothers and sisters are the prolongation of the incarnation for each of us." *Evangelii gaudium*, 179.

⁹³ Cf. D. Fares, „La fratellanza umana,” 120–122.

⁹⁴ Francis, "Message for the 104th World Day."

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4–5.

one's own religious identity.⁹⁶ The Pope notes: "It is impossible to think of fraternity being 'born in a laboratory.' Of course, it is necessary that all things be done while respecting the convictions of others, and of unbelievers, but we must have the courage and patience to come together as we are. The future lies in the respectful coexistence of diversity, not in homologation to a single theoretically neutral way of thought."⁹⁷

Pope Francis showed his understanding of the idea of fraternity in a special way in the context of his journey to the United Arab Emirates in 2019, exactly eight centuries after the famous pilgrimage of peace of St. Francis of Assisi to the Holy Land and his visit to Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil.⁹⁸ It was the fruit of four earlier meetings between Pope Bergoglio and the Grand Imam of the University of Cairo al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyeb (in 2016, in private; in April 2017, on the occasion of the International Conference for Peace in Cairo, when the Pope called the Grand Imam "brother"; another in November 2017 and October 2018, as Domenico Marafioti claims, probably in order to prepare the text of their joint *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*⁹⁹).

Through meeting representatives of the diversified Islamic world, the Pope has taken up the call to build the "the ark of fraternity" in which one human family could sail on the stormy sea of the world.¹⁰⁰ Recognizing God as the beginning of human community allows other fundamental principles to be derived, such as respect for dignity, opposition to individualism, hatred and violence, including those motivated by religion. Francis reminded that fraternity expresses the diversity between brothers united by the fact of their being born and having inviolable dignity. Religious

⁹⁶ Cf. A. Piola, "La sfida della fraternità," 63–76.

⁹⁷ Francis, "Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly."

⁹⁸ The essence of the papal initiative was presented by Antonio Spadaro, who noted that it went beyond the mere logic of dialogue, as it was not only a discussion on important issues, but also a sharing of "the joys, sorrows and problems of the modern world." Cf. A. Spadaro, "«Sentinelle di fraternità»," 467–468.

⁹⁹ Cf. D. Marafioti, "Documento sulla Fratellanza," 235–238. Other commentaries on the document: F. Körner, „Fratellanza umana," 313–327.

¹⁰⁰ Francis, "Interreligious Meeting."

pluralism is the expression of this diversity. Using the conciliatory words of *Nostra Aetate*, Francis justifies why it is so important not to force uniformity or accept “a conciliatory syncretism,” but rather to strive for equal treatment for all, adding that “the reconciliation of conflicts and fraternity in diversity must be sought.”¹⁰¹ This will lead to real peace, which can be built through education and therefore through discovering the resources of one’s own soul as well as that of the other man. The phrase “know yourself” remains a valid maxim, and what must be added to it, the Pope says, is another one: “know your brother or sister.”¹⁰² Religions play an extremely important role in this and their task is to “demilitarize the human heart” and not to accept the word “war.”¹⁰³

The *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed on 4th February 2019, was the fruit of the meeting of Pope Francis and Great Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. This document was to be an appeal, with the intention that “it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters.”¹⁰⁴ The special value of the document is the inter-religious diagnosis of the current spiritual crisis of mankind, which results from sidestepping religious values in favour of the affirmation of various materialistic philosophies. A moral deterioration (Italian: *deterioramento dell’etica*) can be observed, as well as cultural decline, associated with a desensitized human conscience (It: *una coscienza umana anestetizzata*), a weakening of responsibility, many armed conflicts and environmental degradation.¹⁰⁵

These challenges show how great the task is that believers of different religions face, to try to spread a culture of tolerance, coexistence and peace in the face of the “Third World War in

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Cf. *Nostra aetate*, 5.

¹⁰² Francis, “Interreligious Meeting.”

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Francis, The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, “A Document on Human Fraternity.” The official text of the document on the Holy See website does not contain any paragraph numbers, but only a division into two parts, entitled *Introduction* and *Document*.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. D. Marafioti, “Documento sulla Fratellanza,” 241–243.

pieces,” which has been mentioned many times by Francis.¹⁰⁶ Faith “in the name of God,” which makes us see a brother or sister in another person, leads towards this purpose. Human brotherhood will be expressed “by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.”¹⁰⁷

Some Catholic commentators have tried to undermine the importance of the Abu Dhabi document, focusing the discussion on the interpretation of the statement on religious diversity in the world. They began to reflect on the validity of the formulation: “The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings,”¹⁰⁸ and making unfounded allegations against Francis, accusing him of heresy and distortion of the traditional Magisterium.¹⁰⁹ It should be remembered that this text principally aims to improve social relations between Catholics and Muslims, outlining a path that leads from competition to mutual understanding for peace. It is also another step forward in Pope Bergoglio’s consistent construction of a new humanism. In this spirit, referring to the theological concept of the admmissive will of God, Pope Francis explained the meaning of the contested sentence from the *Document*: “But some might ask themselves: but why is the Pope going to the Muslims and not just to Catholics? Because there are many religions, and why are there many religions? Along with the Muslims, we are the descendants of the same Father, Abraham: why does God allow many religions? God wanted to allow this: Scholastic theologians used to refer to God’s *voluntas permissiva*. He wanted to allow this reality: there are many religions. Some are

¹⁰⁶ Francis used this term for the first time on 18 August 2014 during a conversation with journalists on a plane from Seoul to Rome. Cf. V. Ilari, “La «terza guerra»,” 69–74.

¹⁰⁷ Francis, The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, “A Document on Human Fraternity.”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Critical voices on the *Document*, presented by Bp Athanasius Schneider (*The Gift of Filial Adoption, the Christian Faith: the only valid and the only God-willed religion*) and – in a less direct way – by Card. Gerhard Müller (*Manifesto of Faith*), are discussed in: G.S. Reynolds, “After Abu Dhabi,” 11–12. The various accusations of the ambiguities presented in the *Document on Human Brotherhood* are resolved in: D. Marafioti, “Documento sulla Fratellanza,” 257–262.

born from culture, but they always look to heaven; they look to God. But what God wants is fraternity among us and in a special way, this was the reason for the trip, with our brothers, Abraham's children like us, the Muslims. We must not fear differences. God allowed this. We should be afraid were we to fail to work fraternally to walk together in life"¹¹⁰.

Card. G. Müller presented a positive assessment of the Abu Dhabi *Document*, describing its theological character, as well as the philosophical roots of fraternity in the thought of the stoics and the sources of Revelation on this subject. According to the cardinal, although for Catholics the document is not an act of the Magisterium which concerns faith and morals it should also not be regarded as a private opinion of the Pope, as it points to Francis as the highest authority in the interpretation of natural law.¹¹¹ Therefore, evangelisation should be distinguished from proselytism, and the practice of evangelical love should become the touchstone of this activity.¹¹²

It is worth noting that the *Document on Human Fraternity* resulted in the establishment of the High Committee for Human Fraternity on 20 August 2019, composed of representatives of various religions.¹¹³ The group is currently headed by Cardinal Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, a Comboni Missionary and, since 2019, President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.

¹¹⁰ Francis, "General Audience" (3 April 2019).

¹¹¹ Cf. G. Müller, "Das Abu Dhabi," 293–297.

¹¹² Cf. Francis, "Meeting on the Theme."

¹¹³ The Committee's website presents the current activities of the group, cf. www.forhumanfraternity.org (accessed: 31.05.2020), and in particular the establishment of the *Abrahamic Family House*, a place for education and promotion of mutual understanding and interreligious dialogue between the three great religions referring to Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is characteristic that the first meeting of the Grand Committee took place on 11 September 2019, on the 18th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in the USA. An important initiative was the call for fasting and prayer on 14 May 2020, which was addressed to followers of all religions in reference to similar actions of John Paul II in 1993, 1994 and 2001.

3.5. Fraternity in the time of global bioethics and ecology

After analyzing the recent documents and statements of Francis, one can come to the conclusion that the spread of the idea of fraternity is linked to the fundamental value that is human life. That is why he entrusts this particular task to the Pontifical Academy of Life, headed by Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia since 2016. It should therefore not be surprising that the Pontifical Academy, in a special document of 30 March 2020, took up the subject of fraternity in the context of the current health crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic and COVID-19 disease. It is an attempt to address very important questions which have emerged at the level of bioethics in the context of the treatment of coronavirus-infected patients and those suffering from COVID-19. The authors of the document noted that, paradoxically, while experiencing the disease and isolation, we realized “how essential for our lives is life with others.”¹¹⁴ In the context of building *humana communitas*, that is a human community, pandemic time has shown not only the fragility and weakness of human life, but also how much impact individual and collective acts have on social life. Sickness and death should not, however, be treated as a failure of science and technology, as they can be seen as an opportunity to show the immortality of love, which is concealed in life.

Building fraternity appears to be a turning point for the time after the pandemic. It is not just a relationship of interconnection, it should be a conscious choice of a certain way in which humanity functions. It is important to consider a new way of thinking about liberty and rights. Two dangers have been highlighted in this regard. The first is the ambiguous absolutisation of freedom according to the principle: “My freedom ends where the other’s begins.” Yet, it is not only the boundary of the freedom of an individual person, but his or her freedom as such, that cannot be recognised if we disregard the freedom of others, working together with others, in a spirit of friendship and not hostility. A second false statement: “My life depends solely on me” should lead to the discovery that “we are part

¹¹⁴ Pontifical Academy for Life, “Global Pandemic.” Cf. V. Paglia, “L’*Humana communitas*,” 8.

of humanity and humanity is part of us.” The reflection on freedom should give rise to technical and equally important ethical questions.¹¹⁵

Noticing the difference between dependencies and solidarity does not happen automatically, but it requires a great deal of work by individuals, whole groups and society. The months of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 have shown this in particular in the dedication of health workers, thanks to whom many have admitted that work is not just a service or a commodity, but can be a reality that gives meaning to human life. The Pontifical Academy of Life also recognizes in this context the activities of scientists who, instead of competing, have begun to share information between research centres in order to find new treatments. In the everyday life of many societies, women and men, mothers, fathers, seniors and young people, who conscientiously do their work for the benefit of others, have undertaken work for the sake of fraternity. The same applies to volunteers and various religious leaders. It has also shown the need to overcome “national interests” in favour of new international cooperation, without which the pandemic could not be overcome. The context of the pandemic has shown that fraternity, that is to say, entrusting oneself to one another, can be realised today primarily on the level of concern in the medical world. The Pontifical Academy of Life has shown very clearly the need for an alliance between science and humanism. The present crisis can be overcome primarily by “the antibodies of solidarity.” We see almost every day how many medical doctors are forced to make decisions which they have not yet had to confront. The rationing of life-saving medical supplies cannot be justified, that is it “cannot be based on differences in the value of a human life and the dignity of every person, which are always equal and priceless.”¹¹⁶

The ethical criteria used so far, for example, in the field of persistent therapy, ordinary and emergency measures, prove to be insufficient in the situation of a pandemic. The Pontifical Academy of Life gives several specific indications and reminds that the age of a patient suffering from COVID-19 cannot be the only criterion for

¹¹⁵ Cf. Pontifical Academy for Life, “Global Pandemic.”

¹¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*

choice – this would mean passing death sentence on older and weaker people. The decision about the choice of therapies and treatments should take into account the condition of the individual patient – not only the stage of the disease, the need for treatment, but also the prospects, i.e. the clinical benefits that the therapy may bring. These often dramatic decisions concerning the rationing of medical measures (e.g. ventilators) have revealed how necessary it is to rethink the criteria on which there would be the broadest possible consensus among various medical circles, which present human life and health in different ways. A chance to do this would be provided by the adoption of a “global bioethics” perspective, that is, a multi-faceted, global approach to bioethical problems, which Pope Francis has already called for many times.¹¹⁷

In the name of justice—as the Pontifical Academy of Life observes—during the pandemic one should look for new ways of caring, moving patients, sharing resources and also creatively undertake non-standard solutions, such one ventilator being shared by several patients. This can also never mean abandoning palliative care, pain treatment and care for the basic needs of terminal patients.¹¹⁸

Moreover, the Pontifical Academy of Life has noted how much damage can be done by a false interpretation of God’s activity in the history of the world. Seeing in mankind’s suffering a simple pattern of punishment for insulting God’s majesty or God’s anger at mankind hurts the fraternal approach to man. In such a perspective, the suffering and the poorest would once again be the most wronged, and yet it was always Jesus who intervened for them. After the pandemic, a planetary revolution in fraternity is needed, that is, a solidarity-based concern for one another in the name of the future. In the opinion of V. Paglia, global bioethics would mean making real once more the intention God had at the beginning of the work

¹¹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ An attempt to address the problem on Polish ground can be found in *Stanowisko Zespołu Ekspertów Konferencji Episkopatu Polski ds. Bioetycznych w kwestii dystrybucji środków ratunkowych w sytuacji pandemii wywołanej przez koronawirusa SARS-CoV-2* of 2 April 2020, precisising various criteria of action during the pandemic in the light of personalist medical ethics. Published in: J. Wróbel, “Trzeba ratować,” 16.

of creation, so that for man and other creatures the world would be a home, and not a place of extermination.¹¹⁹

In a practical way, the idea of brotherhood also translates into the protection and care of nature. Man is a user of the works of creation, but he should not become an exploiter or selfish explorer. In this context, Francis recalls the principle of the universal destination of goods, one of the fundamental principles of the Catholic social teaching of the Church, which safeguards fair and real access to the goods that man needs.¹²⁰

4. Human Fraternity in the Perspective of the Theory of the Opposites (Germ.: *Gegensatz*)

The vision of fraternity in Pope Francis's teaching may at first sight raise some doubts and provoke questions about an unclear and even Hegelian view of reality. However, the accusations against the papal concept should be considered in the light of his entire thought on the world, consistently proclaimed since the years of theological studies and first steps in the footsteps of St. Ignatius in the Society of Jesus. In his programmatic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*¹²¹ among the main principles of building goodness and social peace, Francis points out that the whole exceeds the part, and therefore the view of the world should be broad, recognizing the greater good. This does not mean any relativisation of truth or affirmation of partiality. The model of such a vision is therefore not a sphere in which every point is equally distant from the centre and all are similar. The model should be a polyhedron in which different points, at different distances from each other, retain their originality. In this perspective, both those who have their own plans and culture and those who, in their thinking, are distancing themselves from commonly accepted opinions are noticed.

In view of the many contradictions that have affected the Argentinean Church and society, in 1974 Jorge Bergoglio, as a young provincial of the Argentinean Jesuits, formulated the

¹¹⁹ Cf. V. Paglia, *Pandemia e fraternità*.

¹²⁰ Cf. Francis, "Fraternity, the Foundation," 9–10.

¹²¹ Cf. *Evangelii gaudium*, 234–237.

principle that unity is more important than conflict. This did not mean finding a middle ground between the two opposites; rather, it was an attempt to find a third way,¹²² rooted very much in Ignatian spirituality and dialectical thinking, but different from Hegel's dialectics. The initiator of such "metamorphosis" was Johann Adam Möller, the author of the works: *Die Einheit in der Kirche* (1825) and *Symbolik* (1832), which presented the Church as a *coincidentia oppositorum* with a characteristic distinction between contradictions (*Gegensatz* and *Widerspruch*).¹²³ Bergoglio took the essence of this issue from the concept of Romano Guardini, who in his work *Der Gegensatz*¹²⁴ described reality as a heterogeneous construction made up of different levels and points of view.¹²⁵ It is therefore possible, while preserving Aristotle's logic and avoiding Hegelian dialectics, to look at the world and man in such a way as to see various tensions that govern them and provide an opportunity to survive. This is also the way to interpret the community of the Church, which is not a monolith, but appears more as a symphony of various sounds harmonised by the Holy Spirit. Diversity in the perception of the world is not necessarily a threat, but can be a starting point for looking at one truth from different perspectives. In this diversity, the other person cannot be seen as an enemy, but as a brother who calls for abandoning common schemes of thought in order to look for what unites in the multiplicity of the world. In the "theory of oppositions," an attitude of solidarity leads to fraternity which, on the one hand, shows that everyone has his or her own way of life, originality, and, on the other hand, also sees how difficult it is to exist without the other person.¹²⁶ This is probably why Francis reminded in his speech in Abu Dhabi: "True religious piety consists

¹²² Cf. J.M. Bergoglio–Francis, "Una istituzione," 234–237.

¹²³ This thought has found its continuation in: Erich Przywara, Henri de Lubac, Gaston Fessard. Cf. M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario*, 79–103.

¹²⁴ Cf. R. Guardini, *Der Gegensatz*, 25–35. The description of the concept is presented by: A. Kobyliński, *Modernità e postmodernità*, 100–106.

¹²⁵ Jorge Bergoglio began preparing his doctoral thesis on this Guardini theory in 1986, and in one of his statements he cites its title: *L'opposizione polare come struttura del pensiero quotidiano e dell'annuncio cristiano [Teoria przeciwieństw jako struktura codziennego myślenia i orędzia chrześcijańskiego]*. Cf. M. Borghesi, *Jorge Mario*, 119–120.

¹²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 137–144.

in loving God with all one's heart and one's neighbour as oneself. Religious behaviour, therefore, needs continually to be purified from the recurrent temptation to judge others as enemies and adversaries."¹²⁷

Conclusion

During the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, the need to plan the world anew was highlighted. A "new normality," a "great depression," a "new era" are concepts that try to reflect the predictions about the condition of the world and man after months of slowing down human activity across the globe. Undoubtedly, an important voice of Francis is the proposal to undertake fraternity, which can unite people with different views, sensitivities and ways of looking at reality. In a sense, Pope Francis is trying to initiate the therapy of fraternity in order to effectively and consistently counter the "globalisation of indifference" through a "globalisation of fraternity and solidarity."

If faith allows one to see one's brother in another man, then the same faith also makes one see in God the Creator of the universe and every creature. Man who refers to God can, through an attitude of brotherhood, seek to preserve creation and the world and at the same time notice in it anyone who needs help and support. The various aspects of fraternity presented in the article, developed in Francis's teaching, allow us to conclude that this is one of the main themes of his pontificate. The Pope's particular merit is elaborating the issue of fraternity at the level of social life, the references to followers of other religions, and also referring to the area of bioethics and ecology. Following C. Theobald, it should be stated that the papal proposal can be called "the mystique of fraternity," that is, a certain style of life, also spiritual, which should characterize every believer in Christ. Moreover, Francis does not shy away from pointing out the human fraternity as a recipe for proper human relations, even among non-Christians and non-believers.

It seems that the Pope's understanding of brotherhood should find fertile ground, especially in our country, where the Polish

¹²⁷ Francis, "Interreligious Meeting."

experience of solidarity, including the proper, capitalized name, can be an opportunity to discover the bonds of blood and spirit that unite a single nation. However, the question of how such fraternity can be implemented in practice in social, church and political life remains open. The document of the Pontifical Academy of Life, quoted before, ends with words: “Even someone who does not share the profession of this faith can in any case draw from the witness of this universal brotherhood insights that point toward the best part of the human condition.”¹²⁸ Undoubtedly, therefore, the issue of brotherhood should become one of the most important subjects for further research in the field of theology and related disciplines, especially in the practical aspect, so that we can rediscover the depth of this concept, very strongly rooted in Christian anthropology.

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¹²⁸ Pontifical Academy for Life, “Global Pandemic.”

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