

REMARKS BY H.E. ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
REFLECTIONS ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PAPACY:
THE LEGACY OF FRATELLI TUTTI
ARGENTINE EMBASSY IN THE UNITED STATES
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Thank you, Ambassador Argüello, for your kind invitation to be present today and to participate in this dialogue on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the papacy of Pope Francis, focusing in particular on his encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*, which speaks of our call to fraternity and social friendship. It is a pleasure to be a part of this gathering, in which, as people of various religious and civic backgrounds, we are having an experience of the human fraternity that the Holy Father wants to encourage and inspire. Warm greetings to all of my fellow guests.

When Pope Francis issued his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* in 2020, he wanted to address the call to fraternal love, and “to consider its universal scope, its openness to every man and woman.” He offered this work “as a modest contribution to continued reflection, in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words.”¹

The inspiration for this letter was Francis of Assisi, whom the Pope called the “saint of fraternal love, simplicity, and joy”.² He recounts a story of St. Francis who, in the midst of the Crusades and the interreligious violence that characterized them, chose to cross the battle lines in Egypt in order to visit Sultan Malik-el-Kamil. Francis approached the Sultan, not to “engage in arguments or disputes, but to be subject to every human creature for God’s sake”.³ The Pope writes:

“Francis did not wage a war of words aimed at imposing doctrines; he simply spread the love of God. He understood that ‘God is love and those who abide in love abide in God’ (1 Jn 4:16). In this way, he became a father to all and inspired the vision of a fraternal society. Indeed, ‘only the man who approaches others, not to draw them into his own life, but to help them become ever more fully themselves, can truly be called a father’.”⁴

In other words, Francis of Assisi did – 800 years ago in a climate of war and polemics – what Pope Francis is calling us to do today, in the midst of terrible polarization. Instead of playing the “game” that so many are playing in our society – insisting on one’s own way at all costs, and seeking the power which will allow one side to impose its own agenda at the expense of the interests of the other – we must choose a *different* way: a way of true dialogue, in which each party is honest about its own beliefs and ideals, but in which *all* parties aim for a common good of which everyone can have a part. As religious leaders we should practice and model this way. For, as Pope Francis wrote in *Fratelli Tutti*:

“From our faith experience and from the wisdom accumulated over centuries, but also from lessons learned from our many weaknesses and failures, we, the believers of the

different religions, know that our witness to God benefits our societies. The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognize one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters.”⁵

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to be here; and thank you to everyone who has chosen to participate.

¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, October 3, 2020, 6.

² *Fratelli Tutti*, 2.

³ St. Francis of Assisi, *Earlier Rule of the Friars Minor (Regula non bullata)*, 16: 3.6; cited in *Fratelli Tutti*, 3.

⁴ *Fratelli Tutti*, 4; citing Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *Exil et tendresse*, Éd. Franciscaines, Paris, 1962, 205.

⁵ *Fratelli Tutti*, 274.