

On Fratelli tutti. Objectives and means

Retitled by the editor as:

A UNIVERSAL ETHIC BASED ON LOVE The objectives and means of the Fratelli tutti

1. APPROACH

The aim of this article is to try to see and highlight the most important thing that the Pope wants to say in his encyclical, the objectives he wants to achieve, and what should be attempted to be done accordingly.

I write this from my circumstance as a practicing Catholic, but since it affects believers and non-believers, I try to see these questions neutrally, as if God did not exist. With purely scientific criteria within my amateurism. The Pope also says (point 6) that he wrote it in such a way that the reflection opens itself to dialogue with all people of good will, believers and non-believers.

2. THE ENCYCLICAL

The most noteworthy:

The Intention

The Pope says it at the very beginning: it is a dream. A dream made up of partial objectives. It is a vision, sketched through fragments, of what an ideal world could be, and of how we might begin to build it, whether today or a hundred years from now. It is not a closed system of ideas. Rather, it is, in his own words, *“a humble contribution to reflection... open to dialogue with all people of good will.”*

The Subject

It is addressed to all men, not only to Catholics. It seems that it takes more into account the believers of the Book, but the message is addressed to all men, to all human beings.

And the subject to whom it is addressed, and whom it asks to act, is the whole of humanity, and the world. The addressee of the encyclical is humanity, and at the same time each one of men and their different populations and groups. Not seeing at the same time this single global subject and the multiplicity of coexisting subjects that compose it is one of the serious problems of understanding, of this encyclical and of any matter that refers to men as members of the same species. A species that is composed of individuals and of biological and cultural groups and populations: vertical ones (families, tribes, nations...) and horizontal ones (beliefs, religions, cultures, races...).

The objectives

Some of the defects and problems that the Pope points out to correct them are permanent and inherent to human beings. Others are contingent: ancient or characteristic of our own time. The recent contingent ones (financial methods, sexual fashions, economic and social policies, etc.) may be changed in the short or medium term. But changing those that affect human consciousness as such, inherited group morality, or deeply rooted cultural beliefs is a medium or long-term task. It is possible, though not easy, to change the habit of excessive accumulation, excessive selfishness, consumerism, the misuse of the rest of living beings, and all sins, crimes and offences against nature: against human nature itself and against our environment or circumstances. Although the techniques of social engineering are becoming increasingly effective, and enormous changes can be brought about in group moralities within one or two generations.

When considering the actions to be proposed, the nature and type of the problems to be solved should be taken into account: those common to mankind as a species, as well as those affecting groups and individuals; and whether they are permanent, inherited at group level, or recent and less deeply rooted.

In any case, if the encyclical is addressed to all human beings, believers and non-believers, rich and poor, present and future, the greatest problem is the lack of an explicit and accepted common priority objective for humanity as a whole and for each individual. This issue does not affect only this encyclical. It is an unresolved problem that has been seen and raised by philosophers and thinkers throughout history, from the Greeks to the present day. It is also something that the Church itself increasingly perceives as lacking.

The elementary question is: What is all this about as living beings? What is our vital objective? What is the Good that we should seek to achieve during our earthly life as members of our species, our family, humanity?

The answers given by the wise have been varied: Aristotelian happiness, Kantian eudaimonism, the welfare proposed by recent utilitarianism... According to those answers, different ethical systems have been developed concerning what ought to be done and how: ethics of values and virtues, ethics of duty and moral sense, ethics of welfare... Religions and other doctrines have had, and continue to have, their own objectives, generally transcendent, which are translated into human norms and precepts. These precepts usually coincide with the theories of the philosophers and thinkers prevailing in each age and culture.

The behavioral rules of any group, whether vertical or horizontal, usually accord with the natural laws that favor both group and individual survival. If they differ greatly, the most likely outcome is that such groups will disappear. Historically, these rules have been operative for individuals and for partial populations and groups, without considering humanity as an active subject and beneficiary.

The Authority

The other major problem is authority. Traditionally, the authority of the Church was based on Scripture and on the doctrine of the Church Fathers and the Popes. In our cultures, that authority remained very strong until the Enlightenment. Today, the authority of the

Church is accepted, to a greater or lesser extent, by the more committed Catholics, and by many other people insofar as it refers to matters supported by science or by customs and practices accepted within different cultures.

In general, the doctrines and teachings of the Church are humanly sound and, for that reason, what the Pope says is usually considered in matters of moral judgment, especially when it supports the ethical principles prevailing within each society or culture.

On this occasion, however, the Pope has not appealed to his authority as such. Instead, he relies on the love and fraternity of Saint Francis and on the brotherhood of all human beings as children of the same Earth. He seems to be right in doing so, since today scientists, believers and atheists alike fully accept that the species *Homo sapiens*, with a common genome distinct from that of any other species, constitutes a single family or Mendelian population, and that all living human beings descend from the same common trunk. We are therefore genetically brothers and sisters.

Yet that fraternity is not sufficient to move human beings to solidarity and to love one another. We need only remember Cain and Abel, and all subsequent history down to our own day. Brotherhood does not always function as a source of cooperation and affection.

For people to do things, three conditions are required: they must want to do them, know how to do them, and be able to do them.

Human beings know how to do, and can do, most of the things the Pope proposes, or at least of trying to do them. But they must first want to do them.

People can be led to want something in only two ways: willingly or by force. I believe the Pope neither wishes nor can compel anyone by force to do what he proposes. Rather, he seeks to persuade as many people as possible to do willingly what he says or suggests in his letters and encyclicals. Yet he succeeds only partially, and very slowly.

3. POSSIBLE ACTIONS AND GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

As I have already said, and according to my own experience, for a complex collective subject to act effectively it must have a common objective. For operational purposes, that objective may be broken down into partial objectives for its individuals or groups. This is true in football, the army, banks, universities, the Church, and so on.

It is both possible and common for the basic purpose of the principal collective subject not to be known by all its members. Nevertheless, it must be clear and operational for the leader or leaders of the group and for those responsible for assigning the partial objectives.

In the case of the encyclical, the subject to whom it is addressed is humanity. And rightly so, because it is humanity that is affected by these problems, and humanity that must solve them.

The problem is that, until now, humanity has not been regarded as the acting subject or the beneficiary in this sense. Human beings have worked, and continue to work, according to the partial objectives of their own partial groups.

I would like to think that, through ignorance, they have not explicitly recognized or accepted that the true subject is humanity itself. Nor, as I have already said, have they recognized its common priority objective, even though that objective has always been implicit and partially operative at the very foundation of the evolution of our species, our family, humanity.

The Catholic Church has indeed regarded humanity as the subject ever since Christ. Until relatively recently, however, humanity was understood as a subject to be saved in its transcendent dimension. The goal was the salvation of souls.

In more recent times, the Church's social doctrine has become concerned with the whole human person. More recently still, it has begun to speak of humanity as a unity of bodies and souls. Pope Francis addresses *Laudato si'* "to every person living on this planet" (3), and *Fratelli tutti* is a constant appeal to everyone, as he emphasizes from the very beginning in paragraph 8: "Let us dream, then, as a single human family."

Scholium: In 2011, Ediciones Cristiandad published, under the title The Unity of Nations, the text of a series of lectures delivered in 1962 by a young Joseph Ratzinger. Two passages deserve to be quoted:

Page 27: "The idea of the unity of the world and of humanity had its privileged place in biblical faith through the confession of one God and through the rooting of all history in one Adam, and once again in one common ancestor."

Page 43: "What happens at one point in human nature affects, in some way, the whole of that nature and cannot remain indifferent to the other possessors of that same nature. If the human being is, so to speak, a single living organism, touching it at any point affects humanity as a whole". End of scholium.

It seems clear that the Pope's partial objectives do indeed take humanity itself as their subject. Likewise, the primary vital objective is that human life should continue to exist, especially now that the possibility of self-destruction appears to be real. It also seems desirable that the human beings living at any given time should enjoy the greatest possible well-being, both materially, food, clothing, housing, peace, and spiritually and morally, education, freedom and dignity. Our habitat, land, seas, atmosphere and biosphere, must also be cared for, both for those alive today and for future generations, for as long as God wills.

These "natural" objectives proposed and recommended by the Pope have always been explicit and operative within the partial ethical systems and norms of groups, according to their circumstances and cultures. The novelty lies in the fact that they are now proposed for humanity, both as the acting subject and as the beneficiary: for every human being, present and future.

The previous ideas are obvious and have always been latent, but they have never been sufficiently made explicit. I believe they constitute the foundation of what the Pope proposes in his two most recent encyclicals. Unless these elementary ideas are clearly stated and accepted, the Pope's dream will be impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to bring about. The issue is broad and complex. I shall try to summarize it.

3.1 Motivation. As I have already said, what always works is self-interest. Human beings, like every living creature, tend to do what they believe is best for themselves and what makes them happier. Aristotle was right. Living beings are happy when they do what they are meant to do, when they follow their own nature, when they obey natural law. In other words, when they act according to their genetic and cultural programming, according to their internal principles and rules. Ideally, these internal principles should coincide with the explicit social norms of the groups to which they belong. That is precisely the point: to make explicit the foundations of our behavior and to ensure that the partial objectives of individuals and groups are consistent with the common objective of human life.

The two previous Popes recognized this problem. In 2004 they entrusted the International Theological Commission with the task of strengthening natural law as the basis of a universal ethics for believers and non-believers alike. The attempt did not produce the expected results. The Commission proposed natural law as a basis for dialogue. However, although following Saint Thomas they referred to the principal commandment of natural law, they neither highlighted nor explicitly proposed it. Perhaps because it seemed self-evident, or perhaps because it appeared too "*natural*". Like Pope Francis today, they offered to engage in dialogue with everyone to reach agreement on the values of a universal ethic.

That attempt at dialogue failed. Among other reasons, a universal ethic—which must necessarily be based on natural law—is not something that human beings can negotiate or agree upon. They may discover its commands and decide how best to fulfil them, but they cannot alter them. If they could, it would no longer be natural law but merely human law. That, in fact, was what the Enlightenment thinkers attempted. The fundamental natural laws, whether physical or biological, may be discovered. We may obey them or fail to obey them where possible. But we cannot change them.

Scholium. It is worth consulting the document of the International Theological Commission, approved in 2008, entitled In Search of a Universal Ethic: A New Look at the Natural Law. It was commissioned by John Paul II and Cardinal Ratzinger, with the participation of the then Secretary—and now Prefect—of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Monsignor Luis F. Ladaria, S.J.

3.2 Objectives. At present, it is already clear what natural law commands. It is the same as what the Pope assumes and proposes in his last two encyclicals. This is also affirmed by an atheist, Jacques Monod, and by a believer, Natalia López-Moratalla: all living beings have as their ultimate purpose the survival of their species. This is the first implicit and self-evident part of the commandment: that there should continue to be human beings, that humanity should continue to exist. Genesis also commands this in 1:28: "*Be fruitful and multiply...*"

The second part, which occupies the whole of *Fratelli tutti*, is that we should strive to ensure that present and future human beings live with the greatest possible well-being. This is also what both believing and non-believing thinkers have maintained. Darwin himself stated that happy tribes survive better. Likewise, the utilitarians argue that we should seek the greatest possible well-being for the greatest possible number of people.

And if we observe the behavior of all known social species, it seems evident that their members must practice cooperation and some form of altruism for their own survival, for that of the group, and ultimately for that of the species itself.

What I wish to emphasize is that the Pope's dream, and his recommendations for achieving it, coincide with the command of natural law, with what philosophers and biologists have stated—or have taken as self-evident—and with the findings of modern neuroethics, which is discovering ethics and altruism imprinted in the human brain.

Hans Jonas, whom Benedict XVI quotes, appealed to responsibility to encourage human beings to assume their duty to ensure the survival of our species and, for that reason, to care for the environment. There is no need to appeal to responsibility alone. Nor does the present Pope need to appeal merely to the undeniable biological fraternity of humankind. The vital imperative to prevent our species from becoming extinct is already written into the deepest level of every human being's programming, both genetic and cultural. It has been there since humanity first appeared, and it is present in every human being from the moment of conception.

Like every other living creature, human beings are born with the built-in vital imperative to ensure, as far as possible, the survival of their species. And, as members of the social species *Homo sapiens*, we are also endowed with the tendency to fulfil that imperative by living together in groups. To do so requires the practice of some form of enlightened altruism. It is enlightened because coexistence—whether voluntary or imposed—is indispensable for our own survival, for fulfilling the command implicit in our biological programming, and ultimately for our own happiness.

The Pope does not appeal to the commandment of Genesis—"Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and care for it"—nor to Christ's commandment to "love one another". He could have done so, because these commandments, which summarize the entire encyclical, can also be inferred simply by observing the behavior of living species. I assume he avoids doing so to prevent accusations of religious bias. Indeed, he has no need to appeal to the Bible, which, incidentally, is the first book to formulate the biological law of the survival of species; a law that scientists have still not explicitly formulated.

The Pope raises many problems, shortcomings, objectives and aspirations. In summary, however, he dreams of a sustainable humanity, one capable of enduring through time, and one that, besides being united by common origin, is also united by the love shared among those who live together as brothers and sisters. Such love should lead to the greatest possible well-being for everyone, both materially and spiritually. It is an attempt to build, through survival and love, the path towards Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point.

As I have already said, both the objective and the means for achieving it are already inscribed within every human being. Without realizing it, our species, our family, humanity, has been putting them into practice since the beginning of its existence, whatever that beginning may have been. That is why today more than 7.5 billion human beings are alive, enjoying an overall and steadily increasing level of well-being. Our survival has been made possible by our growing ability to live together in ever larger and stronger communities, with altruism, love, as the principal means of ensuring both individual survival and the survival of the group. The Pope's encyclical makes explicit and confirms these twin objectives: to survive by loving. It also reinforces, through his

moral authority, the natural imperative that believers and non-believers alike should strive to fulfil them.

4. THINGS TO BE DONE

The Pope sets out a considerable number of things that should be done and others that should be avoided. Additional actions may also be inferred from his explicit or implicit objectives. As I have already anticipated, I believe the encyclical contains three major proposals that provide the framework for its many partial objectives and the specific actions that may follow from them:

- a. That there should be a common direction, a universal ethic serving as the basis for action.
- b. Love as the principal element of human relationships.
- c. The concept of humanity as a single fraternal community.

I shall first develop these three guiding ideas before referring to their possible practical applications.

4.1 Guiding Ideas. General Approach

The existence of a universal ethical principle, love as the principal basis of human coexistence, and humanity as the acting subject are fundamental concepts that must be clearly understood and accepted before it becomes possible to think seriously about practical action. Until now these concepts have remained vague or distorted, and this defective understanding has prevented valid solutions from being applied to many of the grave problems facing humanity, several of which are identified by the Pope.

It is therefore important to examine these concepts carefully, refine them where necessary, accept them where they are found to be true and valid, and disseminate them so that they may become operational. This initial work of examination, and, where appropriate, dissemination, would naturally belong to thinkers and institutions possessing both the interest and the capacity to undertake it: scholars, researchers, philosophers, biologists, theologians, academies, universities, foundations, and similar institutions. This work should be carried out with an open, multidisciplinary and altruistic spirit, since the new meaning of these traditional concepts differs significantly from their historical interpretation, challenges deeply rooted beliefs, and requires new responsibilities from those who come to understand them.

a. A Universal Ethic. A Common Direction (paragraph 29)

Throughout the encyclical there is an implicit recognition of the need for an explicit universal ethical foundation upon which both universal norms and the values governing groups and individuals may be based. Without such an explicit foundation, there can be no valid criterion for developing the many partial objectives proposed throughout the encyclical.

A universal ethical principle, one that explicitly defines the common and primary objective of humanity, together with that of its individuals and groups, is indispensable for judging when, how, for what purpose, and for whose benefit the matters addressed in

the encyclical are good or bad, better or worse: war and peace, the use of the Earth's resources, the treatment of the marginalized, genetic, environmental and social engineering, and so forth. It must also serve as the basis for concepts such as development, justice, unity, solidarity and human rights.

If no common objective exists for humanity as a whole—one that is explicit and sufficiently accepted—each group, whether vertical or horizontal, will continue, as it always has, to seek primarily the survival and well-being of its own members. This attitude has been beneficial until now, because the sum, or the integral, of the well-being of individual groups has favored the development and welfare of humanity. However, as the most recent encyclicals make clear, the subject that must now be considered is no longer nations, religions, cultures or other partial communities. The true subject is humanity itself. And for humanity to act with a common direction, it must first adopt a common objective, a common harbor towards which all ships, or at least the great majority of them, may steer.

That common objective is the one that thinkers have sought throughout history. They have not found it, although they already possessed it implicitly and had been applying it without realizing it. The supreme objective, or Good, of natural law is life itself: the life possessed by living beings, together with the duty to preserve it and to transmit it continuously through their species. As we have already seen, this duty is implicit in every living being. For believers in the Scriptures, it is doubly binding, since it is explicitly stated in the fifth and sixth days of the Creation narrative in Genesis, and again in the covenant with Noah (Genesis 9:1). Thus, the universal ethical principle implicit in every human being can be made explicit in the following way: *That which is good, or better, for the survival of our species, of humanity, is good or better.*

This explicit principle should constitute the foundation of a universal ethic and of the moral norms governing every individual and every human group. As I have said, this principle has always been implicit in humanity. It has been active throughout our entire history. It is because of this principle that we have reached the present point. Once it has been recognized and made explicit, neither its application nor its dissemination should prove difficult.

It is evident that the vital objective on which this universal ethical principle is founded constitutes the purpose of every human being as a living creature, without prejudice to the existence of other transcendent purposes and principles. Such transcendent purposes would, in any event, include humanity's vital objective as a creature—a living being subject to the laws established by its Creator.

Moreover, this explicit universal ethical principle provides the common ground that both enables and obliges dialogue among all religions, ideologies, political parties, states and nations, since it remains neutral with respect to the natural and human ethical principles of each of them.

b. Love as the Fundamental Element of Human Relationships

As stated earlier, our species, humanity, has survived and prospered thanks to the increasing practice of various forms of broad altruism. This has favored the formation,

voluntarily or by force, of ever larger communities united by the common objective of surviving while securing the greatest possible well-being for their members.

I am proposing here a broad concept of altruism that includes everything that benefits another person or other persons. Such altruism may be rewarded, gratuitous, or costly to the one who gives. It therefore includes work, commerce, thinking and teaching, every form of collaboration and cooperation, every virtue and value, and even self-care, since the healthier, wiser, holier and more prosperous we are, the more—and the better—we can give to others and to love them.

At this point, it is important to make two things clear.

First. The concept of altruism, or love, must be understood and accepted as I define it. It is broader, both in content and in motivation, than the meanings usually attached to the word *altruism*. My concept includes the instinctive altruism of the hymenoptera, the reciprocal altruism found in many species, and human love both for oneself and for one's neighbor. It is both individual and collective, extending to members of the same group as well as to other individuals and groups, including those belonging to different species. Failure to understand altruism in this broader sense has been, and continues to be, the source of many discussions and misunderstandings. Furthermore, altruism in this sense is always self-interested and always rewarded, whether materially, through the appreciation of the group, or inwardly, through self-esteem. The wise and the saints—who are the most altruistic and, at the same time, the most enlightened in their own self-interest—know this well. They are also those who have the greatest interest in acting altruistically, because they are the happiest in this life and, if there is another, in the next as well.

Second. Altruism, in any of its forms, is the principal means by which living beings have sought—and continue to seek—to fulfil the vital imperative implicit within them: the survival of their species. Viruses are non-altruistic organisms and, although they too possess the imperative of survival, they are generally not regarded as living beings. Ever since Darwin formulated his theory, competition and struggle have been considered the principal mechanisms of evolution and species survival. This idea has had, and still has, many supporters. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that some form of altruism must prevail over competition and conflict if individuals, groups and species are to prosper and survive.

Scholium. Darwin himself felt compelled to respond to some of his earliest followers by publishing *The Descent of Man* twelve years after *On the Origin of Species*. In that work he gives priority to **sympathy**, arguing that happy tribes survive better, and writes: *Man owes his immense superiority... to his social habits, which lead him to aid and defend his fellow-men.*

Another point that should be clearly understood is that altruism, in all its forms, is inseparable from the imperative of survival, without which it would have no purpose.

In my own work I initially applied this idea only to social species, while admitting the possibility that bacterial reproduction might itself constitute an altruistic act, insofar as bacteria give half of themselves to create another organism. Since then, I have found this idea to be increasingly widespread, and that evolution itself is increasingly understood as the product of altruistic acts. Neuroethicists are attempting to identify the biological basis

of altruistic tendencies in the human brain. Ethologists likewise find altruism to be widespread among social species.

The human case is paradigmatic. Human beings have developed their extraordinary capacities by living in progressively larger communities through instinctive and reciprocal altruism, already present in other living beings. At the same time, humanity has created, embraced and naturalized a form of "pure" altruism that confirms that the human species differs fundamentally from every other form of life. As an observation aside, the growth of this altruism/love may well constitute our principal objective, leading ultimately towards Teilhard de Chardin's Omega Point.

c. The Concept of Humanity

As I have repeatedly stated, the two preceding ideas apply simultaneously to our species—our family, humanity—and to every individual and group composing it at any given moment. However, throughout the years in which I have been developing these ideas, the greatest difficulty I have encountered has been persuading my interlocutors to recognize these different realities simultaneously as subjects. The problems vary according to the discipline involved: philosophy, biology, theology, and so forth. I believe the principal ones deserve consideration.

Philosophers

The traditional subject of philosophy has been the individual human being. Philosophers have concentrated primarily on the spiritual dimension of human nature, taking for granted the preservation of the species itself. Consequently, the Good to be pursued through ethics and moral norms has generally been understood as individual happiness and personal well-being.

This individualistic perspective is certainly correct insofar as the moral and acting subject is the individual person, whose motivation is his or her own happiness. Yet it is also incomplete and reductionist, because it fails to recognize that the vital objective of individuals is not their own survival but the survival of their species. Nor does it acknowledge that whenever individuals act, they act as members of humanity. It is precisely this belonging to humanity that gives rise to their dignity and to Kant's idea that the human person should never be treated merely as a means but always as an end.

Philosophers should recognize that human beings are human precisely because they belong to humanity and that, consequently, all their actions are, at the same time, actions of humanity. Just as the actions of a police officer, when acting in that capacity, are actions of the police force, or the actions of a priest are actions of the Church, human beings always act as members of the human species. Accordingly, the ethical subjects are each individual human being. At the same time, however, they are also humanity itself: a real collective subject existing at every moment, composed of individual persons who share the same species-specific genetic, epigenetic and cultural laws and instructions.

Biologists

Despite the title of his most famous work, Darwin regarded individual organisms as the subjects of evolution. With the development of the Modern Synthesis, several

biologists—Dobzhansky, Mayr and Gould among them—came to regard biological species as "Mendelian populations" and therefore as evolutionary subjects. This does not alter the fact that individual organisms, as members of each species, remain the active subjects of evolution, the ones that originate and embody evolutionary change. As in the case of philosophers, this apparent duality of active subjects and beneficiaries continues to create difficulties among biologists. One objection that has been raised is that species do not really exist because they are merely conceptual constructs invented by human beings. The answer is simple and obvious. Species are indeed constructs, but they are real constructs, created by living organisms themselves as a means of survival long before human beings existed.

Theologians

I include in this category philosophers who are committed believers. The greatest obstacle I have encountered in persuading them to recognize humanity as a genuine subject has been the analogy with animals implied by considering human beings as a biological species. For theologians, as for many philosophers, what truly matters in the human being is the spiritual dimension. For believers, the immortal soul is the essential reality, individually created by God. From this perspective, the concept of species appears secondary or even irrelevant. Some prefer instead to speak of the human family.

Scholium. Some, because of their vows of celibacy, are reluctant to acknowledge the duty of reproduction for the survival of the species. I cannot resist quoting point 28 of The Way, where my fellow countryman Saint Josemaría writes: "While eating is a necessity for every individual, begetting children is a necessity only for the species; individual persons may dispense with it." With remarkable wisdom and sound spiritual and biological judgment, he confirms both the existence of the human species and the fact that it is the species—not necessarily every individual—that bears the duty of reproduction. Those who cannot or do not wish to reproduce have another duty: to contribute in other ways to the survival of the species. Indeed, they are often as useful, or even more useful, than those who reproduce. The example of the hymenoptera is sufficient to illustrate this.

Furthermore, it is evident that the principal individual objective of believers is eternal life. For these and other reasons, most of the believing philosophers to whom I have presented these ideas have not even examined them. Some have looked at them without really seeing them. The few who have understood them have raised objections concerning formal or methodological aspects, objections that I have answered. Up to the present, however, no one has refuted the substance of my argument. Nor has anyone explicitly accepted it. It consoles me to remember that this is not the first time in history that new, true and important ideas have taken many years before being accepted. I only regret the harm that might have been avoided had they been recognized and applied sooner.

4.2 Practical Applications

What matters is that these ideas should be recognized and accepted by those who possess the authority and the capacity to act upon them. Normally, these are the political, social and religious leaders who direct human communities, whether vertical or horizontal.

The specific tasks and actions to be undertaken are essentially technical problems. Fortunately or unfortunately human beings have developed enormous technical

capabilities that make it possible, provided there is sufficient authority and time, to attempt to solve the concrete problems identified in the encyclical. These problems are largely the same as, or very similar to, those addressed in the United Nations 2030 Agenda. The fundamental difference lies in the fact that they should all be approached based on the same universal ethical principle. That principle takes humanity as its subject, its survival and well-being as its objective, and broad altruism/love, both individual and collective, as its principal means.

In my small book *Surviving Through Love: A Universal Ethical Principle*, I propose seventeen possible applications that encompass the partial objectives and concrete actions advocated by the Pope in *Laudato si'* and *Fratelli tutti*.

Among them are adaptability; strengthening the idea of humanity; a world global authority; population size and quality of life; sexuality and the family; human ecology; genetic and social engineering; educational policies; economic and social policies; the treatment of marginalized people; religions and other sources of ethical systems; nationalisms; crimes and offences against humanity; universal virtues and values and individual ethics.

The book may be consulted on the website www.supervivenciayaltruismo.org.

The same website also contains *Survival: Ideas for a Universal Ethic*, together with many other writings that further develop these ideas.

5. CONCLUSION

Fratelli tutti is the account of a dream, built from fragments, of a world that must urgently come to recognize and embrace a timeless truth. A truth that has always been implicit in every human being: as living human beings, we are members of the same family, the same human species. As such, we share one universal ethical principle: *that what is good, or better, for the survival of humanity is good, or better*.

I believe it is urgent that the world's scholars and leaders come to know and embrace these ideas as the foundation for rethinking their policies, adapting them to the universal objective that our human family should survive while attaining the greatest possible well-being for all present and future human beings, with altruism/love as the most effective and efficient means.

Christianity is the tradition that has come closest to these natural and scientific truths. The social doctrine of the Church has likewise, especially in recent decades, proposed the values and virtues most consistent with them, even without explicitly identifying either the fundamental objective of survival or broad altruism/love as the principal means. It would therefore be desirable for all people of good will, and especially Catholic scholars, both clergy and laity, to strive to recognize and apply these truths. If they are true, as I believe they are, their acceptance and application would greatly strengthen the teachings of the Church and facilitate their practical implementation. Such implementation would require only minimal changes in certain contingent matters. I also believe that this would be of great benefit both to humanity as a whole and to the Church itself.

J.C. Madrid, 9 December 2021, the day after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception