

## **Better Politics - Truly at the Service of the Common Good**

The pleading call for all societies to engage in “A Better Kind of Politics” is the focus of chapter 5 in Pope Francis’ encyclical letter *Fratelli Tutti*. In the midst of a world pandemic, political decisions that are “truly at the service of the common good” (par. 154) are not only needed, but essential!

Pope Francis’s message is clear; we must engage in politics that takes into account more than just economics. Though economic growth is a necessary consideration, stable economies are not built solely on profit; stability also relies on putting social structures in place that support human dignity. “Populist” leaders (*leaders that claim to represent the well-being of others, while in fact, pursuing their own agenda*) who show a lack of compassion for all people, undermine the principles of human dignity. A “better kind of politics” (par. 154) would see leaders do the ‘right thing’ in the interest and benefit of all people, not just what is popular for short term benefit or gain. A better type of leadership considers “the need for a greater spirit of fraternity, but also a more efficient world-wide organization to help resolve the problems plaguing the abandoned and suffering in poor countries” (par. 165). As a society, our goal must be to engage in “healthy politics” (par. 177) — this is where we will see true reform and peace.

Dialogue and the essential role it plays in creating a culture of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” (par. 219) is at the heart of chapter 6 “Dialogue and Friendship in Society”. Each of us has something to contribute; “each of us can learn something from others.” (par. 215) Currently, we live in a culture where social media exploits people’s weaknesses and makes them feel less worthy. Pope Francis says that when we engage in meaningful dialogue, we learn that “no one is useless, and no one is expendable.” (par 215) A country will flourish, when economics are not the sole focus and “when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture, technological culture, economic culture, family culture and media culture.” (par. 199) When we take time to use social media for good — connecting with others, uniting in solidarity with others, and creating a sense of unity with others we “offer immense possibilities for encounter and solidarity.” (par. 205)

It is in “respecting the truth of our human dignity and submitting to that truth” (par. 207) that we can build a great future for our children. This means recognizing other people’s right to be themselves and accepting diversity and positive change or progress in our world. This means finding the time and energy, in a world that spins so quickly around us, to show care, generosity, and compassion for others. The simple “gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference” (par. 224) is integral to building new pathways for a world of hope; a world with compassion and understanding.

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