

From Ubuntu to *Fratelli Tutti*: “I Am Because We Are” and Relational Solidarity

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Abstract: Connectedness, belonging, and relationality are necessary ingredients for a flourishing society. They point to the theological and anthropological truth that humans are not alone. Ethical and moral principles require that we have a duty and obligation towards one another, thus emphasizing that we are relational and interdependent. We are meant for relationships and have a shared responsibility to live for one another. We are for others. These truths are at the heart of creation and the Gospel accounts of Christ’s salvific mission. We are all endowed with human dignity as an immutable quality regardless of race, nationality, and background. Thus, we are called to respect, reverence, and protect everyone’s dignity and work together to promote each other’s lives and well-being. This reflects the practical concept of solidarity, which Desmond Tutu articulates as Ubuntu and J. S. Mbiti as “I am because we are.” Inspired by this, Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* encourages the building of a human community that cuts across races and nationalities. Against this backdrop, this article argues that in recognition of one another as brothers and sisters, we can contribute to building a social friendship and global network devoid of discrimination, racism, wars, and conflicts. The connections between *Fratelli Tutti*, Ubuntu, and “I am because we are” establish that we are endowed with the capacity to inspire and engender a global network that can significantly impact international politics through solidarity and social friendship.

THERE ARE, ACROSS THE GLOBE, MANY INSTANCES OF WAR, conflict, violence, discrimination, racism, tribalism, poverty, disparities, and stringent refugee and immigration laws. This is a problematic situation, demonstrating insufficient understanding of our common descent. Even more disturbing, these thrive in a socio-religious landscape believed to be the locus for promoting and preserving humanity, exposing the failure of a society that claims to value and dignify the human person, place people at the center of development, and promote the sanctity of human life but instead has become the agent of discrimination and enabler of wars and conflict violence. What emerges from this situation is that we have devoted

much energy to thinking about what at face value (superficially) differentiates us, over against what substantially unites and binds us.

Practical evidence can be drawn from a scenario that played out shortly after the Rwandan genocide. Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, who visited Rwanda as Pope John Paul II's representative, was surprised to hear from those who claimed to be Christians that the blood of ethnicity or tribe is more consistent than the waters of Baptism. On meeting with the assembled church leaders, he asked, "Are you saying that the blood of tribalism is deeper than the waters of baptism?" One leader answered, "Yes, it is."¹ This is what the influence of colonialists has inculcated in the life of the people, as they prioritized and favored one tribe against the other in line with sociopolitical realities. Supersessionism, tribal superiority, bigotry, derogation, division, nepotism, and tribalism were ingrained in the hearts of the Rwandan people, even as they professed Christianity and belief in one true God. As a result, people never felt sufficiently connected, related, or interdependent to appreciate one another despite sharing a common ancestry. Consequently, they lost their feelings for one another, and genocide even occurred during the Easter period when Rwanda was considered to have a population that was ninety-nine percent Christian, encompassing Catholic, Protestant, and Seventh-day Adventist adherents.² Unfortunately, the horrendous acts that played out in Rwanda in 1994, because of division along tribal and racial lines, have been witnessed in different parts of the world, within different religions, cultures, and politics. The reality of division has been manifested to the point that different reeds or yardsticks are applied in measuring people from various backgrounds and nationalities. Thus, people's nationality either redefines them as subhuman, inferior, or superhuman.

This remains the case in the era of globalization. As Pope Benedict XVI noted: "Globalization has brought us together but has not succeeded in making us brothers." This reveals the lacuna of globalization, as it falls short of building an ethic of authentic recognition, relationality, and equality (*Caritas in Veritate*, no. 42).³ The structure of the United Nations Security Council, whereby some

¹ This scenario is described in Emmanuel Katongole's *Mirror to the Church: Resurrection Faith after Genocide in Rwanda* (Zondervan, 2008), 22.

² Timothy Longman, *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 11.

³ Benedict XVI, "Justice and Charity Build a True 'Human Ecology,'" *L'Osservatore Romano* 1993 (May 9, 2007), 4. Pope Benedict XVI does cite positive aspects of globalization, particularly that it has increased the interdependence of peoples with their different traditions, religions, and education systems so that the world's peoples, for all their differences, are constantly learning about one another and coming into much greater contact.

countries occupy permanent seats while others occupy temporary ones, is another example of inequality that raises questions about what globalization truly entails. Placing many developing and small countries in a constant state of needing aid, thus being at the mercy of so-called superpower countries in the name of philanthropy, is another practical instance of the hypocrisy of globalization. Another example is alleged findings that USAID has been used at various times in many developing countries to achieve America's undue dominance and control. This would reflect or imply superiority and inferiority, or a suzerain-vassal kind of relationship. Zoe Daniels corroborates this view, noting: "The philanthropic sector does not like to share power; it is still primarily led by people who are white, who believe themselves to be saviours, having been passed down the legacy from their missionary forebears, who work with fossil fuel industries and weapons manufacturers (look no further than Stonewall) whilst preaching anti-oppressive values."⁴

These differences leading to division and discrimination are artificial and borne out of some countries, individuals, and groups' craving for superiority and domination. Augustine describes this as the *libido dominandi* (lust for domination).⁵ The appearance of our skin and the particularities of our way of life or worldview have orchestrated this discrimination and division. Our uniqueness, differences, and diversity of backgrounds have become obstacles to authentic relationships and friendship. We detest and demonize what we should celebrate as a gift and treasure. We see and feel our diversity and uniqueness as a wall rather than a bridge, a source of sadness rather than joy, a source of negative energies, frustration, and failure. However, Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice interrupt this misunderstanding and misrepresentation of diversity and multiculturalism as they demonstrate that "differences are not a threat but a gift to our life together The unique particularities of colors, histories, geographies, and cultures make life interesting."⁶

Within our broken context, Ubuntu and "I am because we are," two philosophical and theological ethical suppositions emerging from Africa, offer a new understanding of anthropology—that is, the core of humanity—pitched with equality, altruism, recognition, and respect irrespective of one's background. It sets a new paradigm for

⁴ Zoe Daniels, "The Two Faces of Philanthropy: Violence, Hypocrisy, and the Illusion of Justice," *JMB Consulting* (March 27, 2025), www.jmb-consulting.co.uk/uncharitablepapers/the-two-faces-of-philanthropy.

⁵ Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Modern Library, 1993), Preface, 1.4., 3.14.

⁶ Emmanuel and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace, and Healing* (InterVarsity, 2008) 29.

sociopolitical relationships that provides a new basis for genuine understanding of globalization and a global relationship network. The intersection between Ubuntu and “I am because we are” is visible now. In *African Traditional Philosophy*, John S. Mbiti revolutionized it, nuancing “‘Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang’ (Sotho) or ‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’ (Nguni), to ‘I am because we are.’”⁷ In light of this, Desmond Tutu describes “I am because we are” as an ethical principle that reminds us that we are made for togetherness and to live as a family. We are made for complementarity and created for being part of a delicate network of relationships, dependence on ourselves, and the entire creation.⁸ These ethical notions suggest that no one lives in isolation. We are created to be connected and cannot live without others. We cannot realize our full humanity without recognizing others. We are all beings with and for others. This stands against the situation of prioritizing appearance as the guiding principle for measuring the true essence of humanity.

This article underscores the emerging ethical notion, “I am because we are,” and its inextricable connections to Ubuntu. It further demonstrates how this nexus of African principles resonates with Pope Francis’s call to foster a culture of encounter among people, especially in his encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. In the latter, Pope Francis argues that we are created for shared responsibility towards one another, to promote and encourage each other to live meaningfully as brothers (and sisters). To this end, this article envisions how these African ethical principles can help establish moral principles capable of interrupting the dynamics of discrimination, inequality, and injustice that arise from centuries of theologically grounded misunderstanding and ignorance about our common descent and contribute to cultivating social friendships and global networks characterized by solidarity, interdependence, and relationality. I begin with a brief overview of what Ubuntu and “I am because we are” represent as ethically and socially driven African principles.

⁷ Dalene Swanson, “Ubuntu, African Epistemology, and Development: Contributions, Contradictions, Tensions, and Possibilities,” in *The Dialectics of African Education and Western Discourses: Counterhegemonic Perspectives*, ed. Handel K. Wright and Ali A. Abdi (Peter Lang, 2007), 27–52.

⁸ Desmond Tutu, *God Is Not a Christian: And Other Provocations* (HarperOne, 2011), 23, Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Pilgrim, 1997), 73.

UBUNTU AND “I AM BECAUSE WE ARE”: AN AFRICAN SOCIAL AND ETHICAL SYSTEM

We live in a world where globalization is celebrated as a means of connecting all people. At least in principle, it has established bilateral relationships among nations. However, connectivity or relationality through globalization as a tool for a global network has not fostered genuine cohesion based on principles of equality, recognition, and respect for one another in a way that promotes fraternity. Amid the claimed connectivity, relationality, and interdependence, a noticeable categorization among countries remains, reflecting their poverty, prosperity, progress, and regress. Thus, they are placed or grouped according to their capabilities, with some depending on others to survive economically and socio-politically. Thomas Weisskopf corroborates this by highlighting that “quantitatively speaking, this phase—like the others—has involved rapidly expanding economic links between national and regional economies, and it has now created a global economic system far more interconnected than ever before. Qualitatively, however, it has had a somewhat different impact on the (previously colonized) periphery than on the (previously colonizing) center.”⁹ This shows that globalization falls short of what it ordinarily portends in many minds, even without underestimating its positive contribution.

The glaring inequality and discrimination associated with globalization have made it a two-faced mechanism in the sense that it has both good and bad sides. However, the bad sides could be said to have negated globalization, which at this point needed ethical and moral guidance to achieve its full responsibility for bringing people together and advancing the principles of equity and fairness. Thus, globalization can be described as a growth mechanism in trade, technology, and investments among countries bereft of genuine recognition of humanity. Although “globalization tends to increase economic growth for many countries, the growth is only sometimes equal. Globalization has created a situation where increased trade and investment benefits have not been evenly distributed. Some people and countries have become much wealthier, while others have been left behind. This has led to growing income and wealth disparities, with the gap between the rich and poor widening. This can result in economic and social instability in developing countries.”¹⁰

⁹ Thomas Weisskopf, “Reflections on Globalization, Discrimination, and Affirmative Action,” in *Discrimination in an Unequal World*, ed. Miguel Angel Centeno and Katherine S. Newman (Oxford University Press, 2010), 30.

¹⁰ Joyce S. Osland, “Broadening the Debate: The Pros and Cons of Globalization,” *Journal of Management Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (2003): 137–154.

In light of this, Ubuntu is an ethical principle that can redirect or provide guidance on how globalization can change our world's sociopolitical and economic space to advance genuine shared responsibility, interdependence, and relational solidarity. Historically originating from Africa, Ubuntu expresses key commitments that define Africa's social and ethical life, characterized by community, interdependence, relationality, and shared responsibility. Thus, Ubuntu is an emerging alternative ethical framework to Western individualism. Ubuntu practically demonstrates African humanism expressing itself in non-dominance, respect for one another, compassion, solidarity, and dependence on one another. Corroborating this, Moeketsi Letseka describes Ubuntu as a human dedication to non-dominance, recognition, and respect for humanity.¹¹ It implies that humanity carries concern for others. Lovemore Mbigi describes Ubuntu as a sign of people's interconnection.

Furthermore, Daniel Louw refers to Ubuntu as a social ethic and code of behavior.¹² Nkonko Kamwangamalu states, "Ubuntu is about togetherness and sharing the burden of our actions and their impacts. Despite how it may feel at times, we are not alone in this world. Our existence is shared and our actions, whether they are positive or negative, impact us all."¹³ This is to say that Ubuntu promotes inclusivity, giving everyone a genuine stake in their society, not in a manner that places them above the value system, but in such a way that they respect society and other aspects of development above self-interest.¹⁴ Taking cognizance of this, Vuyisile Misila argues that Ubuntu's inclusive, social, and communal character includes attempting to support others in the spirit of benefit, showing respect for others regardless of who they are and how they look, and not forgetting to be sincere and reliable. It honors humanity as an essential part of the universe, leading to shared responsibility to preserve life.

Centered on the value guidelines and between generations, Ubuntu emphasizes the sharing and protecting of communal assets.¹⁵ Within this framework, Lovemore Mbigi identifies five core values of

¹¹ Moeketsi Letseka, "In Defence of Ubuntu," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 31, no. 1 (2012): 47–60.

¹² Dirk J. Louw, "Ubuntu: An African Assessment of the Religious Other," *Philosophy in Africa, Paideia Archive* (August 1998), www.bu.edu/wcp/Papers/Afri/AfriLouw.htm.

¹³ Kristina Hunter, *Action for Change, Flourishing things, Mental and Spiritual Wellbeing, Social Justice*, www.kristinahunterflourishing.com/blog/ubuntu.

¹⁴ William E. Flipping, Jr., "Ubuntu: Applying African Philosophy in Building Community," April 6, 2012, www.huffingtonpost.com/reverend-william-e-flipping-jr/ubuntu-applyingafricanp_b_1243904.html.

¹⁵ Vuyisile Msila, "Ubuntu and school leadership," *Journal of Education* 44, no. 1 (2008): 67–84.

Ubuntu: survival, the spirit of solidarity, compassion, respect, and dignity, which he describes and explains thus:

Survival enabled African communities, during harsh environmental conditions, to rely on each other for existence despite differences they might have had amongst themselves. Solidarity entails working together and cooperatively to achieve a common goal. The third value, compassion, refers to the human's ability to understand other people's challenges and problems. Compassion is fundamental to the feeling of belonging and interconnectedness among African communities. The last values of the theory, respect and dignity, are essential for high regard for rights, values, and beliefs for others, irrespective of diversity.¹⁶

Ubuntu's articulation as a distinctive African framework originates from South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu. An African humanist, he believed philosophy has its whole meaning in advancing the culture of humanity, which has characteristics such as sharing, openness, mutual dependence, dialogue, and interpersonal encounters.¹⁷ Thus, Ubuntu reflects the culture and way of life of Africa.¹⁸ Some scholars argue that Ubuntu has become a signature of African communal social life, underpinning the interconnectedness of shared humanity and individual responsibility toward one another.¹⁹ For example, Monicca Thulisile Bhuda and Phemelo Marumo state, "Ubuntu philosophy brings to light that African society is, in essence, humanist, community-based, and communist in general. Subsequently, the Ubuntu principle underpins every meeting within an African community."²⁰

For Tutu, it also has deep theological resonances. Nothing causes disarray, discrimination, segregation, inequality, racism, tribalism, ethnicity, nepotism, and favoritism more than the practical belief that I am better than others. Such beliefs are a practical betrayal of the creation narrative, which states that we are all created good, in the image and likeness of our creator God (Gen 1:27; *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16). At its core, Ubuntu aligns more deeply with the Christian creation narrative, holding that humans, irrespective of their background, race,

¹⁶ Lovemore Mbigi, *Ubuntu: The African Dream in Management* (Knowledge Resources, 1997).

¹⁷ Desmond and Mpho Tutu, *Made for Goodness and Why This Makes All the Difference* (HarperCollins, 1989), 5.

¹⁸ Mbigi, *Ubuntu: The African Dream in Management*.

¹⁹ Jan D. Koster, "Managing the Transformation," in *Citizen Participation in Local Government*, ed. Koos Bekker (Van Schaik, 1996), 99–118; Louw, "Ubuntu: An African Assessment of the Religious Other."

²⁰ Monicca Thulisile Bhuda and Phemelo Marumo, "Ubuntu Philosophy, and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Insights from Decolonization and Indigenization of Research," *Gender & Behaviour* 20, no. 1 (2022): 19135.

tribe, and nationality, have a spark of goodness and divinity. In *Made for Goodness*, Desmond and Mpho Tutu corroborate this by highlighting that “we are made for goodness by God who is goodness itself. We are made for and like God, the essence of goodness.”²¹ That we are created good by God, who is goodness itself, has become a veritable stance on “I am because we are” and Ubuntu. Thus, both Ubuntu and the Christian tradition establish a backdrop for thinking about people’s equality.

Similar commitments ground a second principle. “Umuntu ngumantu ngabantu,” a phrase prevalent in various South African Bantu languages, means “A person is a person through other persons.” That is, “I am because we are.” As explained above, Tutu describes Ubuntu in the context of African humanistic philosophy, which has meaning in the culture of sharing, openness, mutual dependence, dialogue, and interpersonal encounter. Inspired by this thought, Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator states that “human existence reaches fulfillment as part of the whole, society thrives on common humanity, and forgiveness and reconciliation are prerequisites for preserving social harmony.”²²

This theological and anthropological claim becomes a force that interrupts whatever might privilege one over the other, undermine one to uplift the other, or see one as substantial and the other as superficial. Tutu describes it thus:

I . . . am what I am because of who we all are. It is the essence of being human—you can’t exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can’t be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality—Ubuntu—you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected, and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out for the whole of humanity.²³

Thus, both principles express interdependence, that one becomes human only when one recognizes the other as human. It is the basis and meaning of African philosophy, the backdrop of African ethics.

“I am because we are” and Ubuntu could be said to be a corrective ethical principle prevailing over domination in today’s world. Hence,

²¹ Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness and Why This Makes All the Difference*, 8.

²² Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “Fratelli Tutti and the African Philosophical and Political Tradition of Ubuntu,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, January 9, 2021, www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/2021-01/ing-002/fratelli-tutti-and-the-african-philosophical-and-political-trad.html.

²³ Quoted in Michael Tellingier, *Ubuntu Contributionism: A Blueprint for Human Prosperity* (Zulu Planet, 2013), vi.

they provide a critique of doctrines, forces, and structures that have looked at some people with a demeaning and derogatory approach because of their race, tribe, and nationality. Originating out of African culture and wisdom, they carry an interrupting principle against global politics that undermine certain people because of their background and nationality. They especially critique the colonialist exclusive approach in dealing with African nations which continues today. Michael Onyebuchi Eze, for example, has stated:

In terms of contemporary Africanist discourse, though, Ubuntu/Botho is best understood as a critique of the logic of colonialism—the process of attempting to “humanize” or “civilize” non-Western cultures through colonization. Colonialism was a powerful and condescending narrative that thrived through a pretext of “humanizing” or “civilizing” non-Western peoples. The consequences of this false doctrine of humanism were to become the bedrock of colonial practices in Africa as an institutionalized form of social Darwinism nurtured by racist capitalism.²⁴

For Eze, racist capitalism suggests the situation whereby one’s choices, potentialities, the kind of job one does, the school one attends, the person one marries, and the people one associates with are determined by one’s race. In such a society, different laws are made for different people based on their backgrounds and races. The best practical example is the security structure and architecture of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) noted earlier, where five permanent seats are for five countries: China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, and the other ten seats are elected during the UN General Assembly.²⁵

The constant xenophobia being ignited by unfair immigration, migration, and refugee laws demonstrates that the belief that some people are unworthy of being part of particular societies continues today. It has become a curse to come from certain places. One becomes an outcast among people who consider themselves perfectly created and an abomination to live in certain areas. Thus, we are trapped in a situation where, according to Michael Teller, “we are all born free on our planet, and yet we cannot move around freely; we cannot live where we choose to; we have to follow the rules and laws

²⁴ Michael Onyebuchi Eze, “I Am Because You Are,” *The UNESCO Courier* (April 20, 2023), <https://courier.unesco.org/en/articles/i-am-because-you-are>. The terms Botho in the Sesotho languages, Sepedi, Setswana, and (Southern) Sesotho, captures the same meaning as Ubuntu. The Nguni languages, which include isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, and siSwati, are spoken in South Africa.

²⁵ The United Nations Security Council was formed to prevent conflict and violence and build sustainable peace worldwide.

that we did not agree to.”²⁶ Lending credence to this is Manal Elsehrawi’s observation that, “We were all human until race disconnected against us, religion separated us, politics divided us, and wealth classified us.”²⁷ This is a reminder that the problem of discrimination and domination is not limited to race or nationality but is found in every human sector and institution at the national, international, continental, intercontinental, regional, and sub-regional levels. It is practical evidence that we have lost the sense of who and what we are for one another in all ramifications.

“I am because you are” and “Ubuntu” have become relevant and necessary ethical doctrines that make us realize that we are all humans, right from creation, despite our backgrounds, races, and differences. Thus, it provides a template for living a sociopolitical life that ensures equality, solidarity, and interdependence for the good of all people. By so doing, it becomes a dynamic that interrupts discrimination, racism, and domination. Lending credence and a voice to this, Tellinger summarily articulates Ubuntu in this way:

Ubuntu is a blueprint for a new social structure in which everyone is free and equal. A society that functions without the concept of money, any form of barter or trade, or the attachment of value to material things. A culture where each individual is encouraged to follow their passion and contribute their natural talents or acquired skills to the more significant benefit of all the people in their community. Everyone can choose to live anywhere, and nobody is forced to do anything against their will. A society with a new set of laws based on the needs of the people where everything is provided to everyone because they contribute their Labor of Love. A world where there are no jobs, careers, corporations, unemployment, homelessness, or hunger. A society that promotes the highest levels of scientific and technological exploration because there are no financial restrictions. A society where arts and culture flourish, allowing people to experience life to the fullest. A society in which the spiritual growth of its people, through the explosion of arts and culture, will allow the rapid rise of consciousness to embrace the concepts of unity fully. A system that provides an unimaginable abundance of all things on all levels, almost impossible to imagine by those trapped in the capitalist consumer-driven environment of today.²⁸

²⁶ Tellinger, *Ubuntu Contributionism*, 8.

²⁷ Manal Elsehrawi, “We Were All Human Until Racism Disconnected Against Us, Religion Separated Us, Politics Divided Us, and Wealth Classified Us,” *LinkedIn*, August 24, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/we-were-all-human-until-race-disconnected-us-religion-manal-elsehrawi/.

²⁸ Tellinger, *Ubuntu Contributionism*, 6.

In light of this, he describes Ubuntu as a system or approach that presents us with a new reality that enables us to forge a path of prosperity for all persons and “concern for one another” in perfect harmony with all of nature and earth.²⁹

THE MESSAGE OF *FRATELLI TUTTI*

On October 3, 2020, Pope Francis released *Fratelli Tutti*, explicitly promoting fraternity and social friendship as society’s only trajectory toward human flourishing and sociopolitical and economic development. Drawing inspiration from St. Francis and reflecting on his previous teachings and those of his predecessors, he reminds us that we are inextricably connected and should live as people without walls. Thus, he urges us to build bridges that foster solidarity and ensure our everyday survival. In light of this, he emphasizes a culture of encounter over a throwaway culture, using the biblical story of the Good Samaritan to encourage us to engage in theological discernment that breaks down barriers of isolationism and individualism. Pope Francis discourages any attempt to engage in war and promotes prioritizing dialogue to create a war and conflict-free society.

In this way, he distinguishes himself as a pope who openly dissociates from the just war tradition. Following the instruction of St. Francis of Assisi, who encouraged his disciples to prioritize dialogue as the best approach to resolving conflicts, Pope Francis maintains that fraternity and social friendship in today’s world mean a renewal of society where everyone is repugnant to one another. That is, Francis believes that we can improve our lot in a world that resolves to see everyone as equal in dignity, related as brothers and sisters in principle and praxis, thus restoring the proper place of politics while criticizing nationalism and populism, characterized by exclusionism and inequality. *Fratelli Tutti* thus forms a corpus of ethical teaching rooted in relational solidarity, social friendship, and genuine fraternity that seeks to demolish the walls of division, discrimination, and enmity (no. 86) to engender renewed humanity and sociopolitical landscape through peacebuilding, dialogue, political charity, or love.

Pope Francis acknowledges that his thoughts in *Fratelli Tutti* were inspired by the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, and Desmond Tutu. These figures remind us that we are intricately connected as humans, not to promote inequality, dehumanization, division, or discrimination in our society, and encourage us to adopt a nonviolent approach to address inequality and discrimination to prevent humanity’s destruction. Most importantly, the theme of the

²⁹ Tellinger, *Ubuntu Contributionism*, 5.

brotherhood of humanity was drawn from the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, in February 2019. Leaning on this, Pope Francis delved into the longstanding Christian teaching of love in the context of universality, presenting it as basis for thinking about human brotherhood without borders, without partitions in the sense of geographical boundaries, groups, or other forms of separation.³⁰ Emerging from this are such keywords as fraternity, culture of encounter, universal love, and transcending borders and limits.

Reminding us of the need to return to genuine universal love, Pope Francis pointed out that we are experiencing dark days, following efforts made decades ago to unite people by establishing regional bodies like the European Union. At the same time, many others around the globe have begun to regress. Consequently, the significant efforts made in reconciliation and reintegration have started to vanish into thin air due to the rise of nationalism and populism, driven by self-interest and not granting space to foreigners within a structure built under the guise of protecting the interests of citizens, resulting in divorce from goodness, love, justice, and solidarity that should be reflected among the people (no. 11). Pope Francis reminds us that our common brotherhood demands that we extend hands of fellowship and connect with everyone irrespective of their backgrounds and nationalities to restore or recover lost justice and solidarity, so as to be able to identify with those agonizing because of frustrating situations. Hence, the principle of universal love highlights that we are incomplete until we meet with others in good and bad times. Leonardus Samosir corroborates this by stating that “humans cannot live, develop, and reach perfection without sincere self-giving for others. Nor can humans recognize themselves without encountering others.”³¹ Similarly, he says, “Humans cannot live in themselves or in small groups but move outward. The movement of openness to the world transcends these barriers and requires a driving force, universal love.”³²

This understanding provides a backdrop for enhancing the concepts of globalization and politics. Pope Francis believes that fraternity and social friendship would transform globalization into a mechanism for deepening relationality that signifies genuine common brotherhood. Until now, globalization has faced criticism for its

³⁰ Leonardus Samosir, “*Fratelli Tutti: Brotherhood Without Boundaries*,” *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* (June 2022), 267–270.

³¹ Leonardus Samosir, *Fratelli Tutti: Persaudaraan Tanpa Sekat (Fratelli Tutti: Brotherhood Without Borders)* (Universitas Katolik Parahyangan, 2021).

³² Samosir, *Fratelli Tutti: Persaudaraan Tanpa Sekat*, 268.

association with colonialism, domination, undue market forces, hegemony, empire, modernization, Eurocentrism, and Americanization.³³ False interventions under the pretext of aid and assistance were used to deepen domination, neocolonialism, and total control of the market for the developing world.³⁴

This aspect of globalization makes *Fratelli Tutti* a corrective to globalization, turning the latter into a mechanism for worldwide connectivity, a connectivity that should come with recognition and respect for everyone's dignity and potential to contribute to each other's growth. Francis articulates it this way: "When the dignity of the human person is respected, and his or her rights recognized and guaranteed, creativity and interdependence thrive, and the creativity of the human personality is released through actions that further the common good" (no. 22). Alongside Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Pope Francis acknowledges the development in sciences and technology, medicine, industry, and welfare, especially in the developed countries. They have contributed to the societal moral fiber that engenders responsible existence. Thus, he pointed out that "we wish to emphasize that, together with these historical advances, great and valued as they are, there exists a moral deterioration that influences international action and a weakening of spiritual values and responsibility. This contributes to a general feeling of frustration, isolation, and desperation" (no. 29).

Stretching further, he points out that efforts to form one human family have yet to be shown to be realizable. Attempting to dream of a shared vision that translates into building a structure of justice and peace is utopian. Despite the trumpeting of the effects of globalization in global politics, Pope Francis still observes what he calls "aggressive nationalism" (no. 11) to be prevalent across national governments, as migrants are rejected or mistreated in many countries. He calls on the church to dissociate itself from such actions that undermine its mission and the expectations of Jesus. Thus, he stated: "Ours must be a personal and collective commitment that cares for all our brothers and sisters who continue to suffer. . . . A commitment that makes no distinction between natives and foreigners, residents and guests, since it is a matter of a treasure we hold in common."³⁵ The universal "we" was crumbling due to "aggressive forms of nationalism and radical

³³ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, "Globalization—Everything, Everywhere, All the Time," *Dialogues in Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2025): 37–41, doi.org/10.1177/29768667241306377.

³⁴ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Connectivity and Global Studies* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 29.

³⁵ Pope Francis, "Towards an Ever Wider We," *Message for the 107th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, September 26, 2021, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20210503_world-migrants-day-2021.html.

individualism.”³⁶ This situation confirms why he was passionate about transforming global and local politics to advance genuine charity and compassion in our relationships. As he says:

In today’s world, the sense of belonging to a single human family is fading, and the dream of working together for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia. What reigns instead is a cool, comfortable, and globalized indifference, born of deep disillusionment concealed behind a deceptive illusion: thinking that we are all powerful, while failing to realize that we are all in the same boat. This illusion, unmindful of the great fraternal values, leads to a sort of cynicism. (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 30)

In this context, I have previously written:

Given how people have been treated, maligned, and marginalized in the countries that take them as strangers, it is evident that international politics has not gotten the true renewal needed to do the needful. That is, global politics has not allowed itself to be guided by charity and truth as Pope Benedict XVI would suggest, or what Pope Francis would refer to as “political love.” With these, politics, whether local or international, would live up to the expectation of making life meaningful for one and all despite one’s background and nationality. Being guided by truth and charity, politics would come to understand that we are for one another, given the common descent of all as drawn from the creation narrative.³⁷

Offering a solution to the sociopolitical challenges that cloud our sense of fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis once more says:

Recognizing that all people are our brothers and sisters, and seeking forms of social friendship that include everyone, is not merely utopian. It demands a decisive commitment to devising effective means to this end. Any effort along these lines becomes a noble exercise of charity. For whereas individuals can help others in need, when they join in initiating social processes of fraternity and justice for all, they enter the field of charity at its most vast, namely political charity. (no. 180)

Following this, globalization, fraternity, and social friendship can be determined and advanced to build a society or world that means

³⁶ Associated Press, “Pope Francis: God Does Not Distinguish Between Natives and Foreigners,” *America*, May 6, 2021, www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/05/06/pope-francis-migrants-refugees-welcome-240603.

³⁷ Colman Okechukwu Nwokoro, “Migrants and Refugees: A Great Resource for Social and Economic Growth in Light of Pope Francis’s Teaching,” *Asian Horizons* 17, no. 4 (2023): 463–474.

well for everyone by transformed or reformed politics—politics guided by truth and love.

To this end, I have argued that “this political love, when appropriately interpolated into politics, has the possibility to transform politics to advance such ethical and political principles that enforce fraternal and universal friendship of all people.”³⁸ It provides the basis for a healthy politics recognizing that “global society is suffering from grave structural deficiencies,” needing to evolve into an economy integrating political, social, cultural, and popular programs directed to the common good that preclude stifling human creativity and ideals of progress, and direct such energy through a new channel (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 179).

FRATELLI TUTTI, UBUNTU, AND “I AM BECAUSE WE ARE”

Within this context, “I am because we are,” Ubuntu, and every other concept and principle with relationality and connectivity underpinnings suggest solidarity, equity, and fairness. This is where the ethical import and considerations of “I am because we are” in light of Ubuntu align with many documents and teachings of the church. The closest of all is Pope Francis’s *Fratelli Tutti*, which teaches, among other things, common brotherhood, shared responsibility, and a global network of persons of various backgrounds. In the following section, I outline how these three ethical principles interact.

Common Brotherhood

Relationality and interconnectivity make sense and engender deeper cohesion when humans see each other as part of one another. That is, when what affects one affects the other, one’s challenges and sufferings belong to others, from locality to the global community—a nation’s political and economic quagmire and downturn cause others to struggle to rescue it. Everyone is invited to be part of everyone else’s joy and suffering, a call to remind everyone that we are for everyone in and out of season, good and bad, as couples profess during the sacrament of matrimony. In his Letter to the Romans, St. Paul corroborates this: “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. You are doing a great job at weeping with those who weep. You know what it means to enter the sorrows of your fellow members and help carry their burdens” (12:15). Igbo philosophy captures it well in “Onye aghala nwanne ya” (which literally means “Let no one

³⁸ Nwokoro, “Migrants and Refugees.”

abandon their kinsmen”)³⁹ which characterizes Igbo traditional communal life. In this case, people are called to leverage one another’s strength to improve their lives and to identify with one another in their problems and challenges. This also brings us to another collaborative concept in Igbo traditional communal life called “Ibu anyi danda” (“no weight overpowers the strength of ants”).⁴⁰ According to Emmanuel Metu, these two concepts reflect the collaborative effort for which the Igbo community was and is known. The survival of one depends on the other and vice versa. They believe these concepts suggest that collaborative efforts or community self-help must surmount every individual’s felt need.⁴¹ It means not to leave your kinsmen behind, to be part of your brother’s or sister’s problems in many ramifications: political issues, economic challenges, religious violence, wars, conflicts, hunger, diseases, and other issues.

Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” and *Fratelli Tutti* share this vision of interdependence, solidarity, and social friendship. Together, they all seek to interrupt the dynamics of selfishness, setting the right approach to globalization and a new political template to drive solidarity and friendship from the grassroots to the global space. Taken together, they encourage synergy, collaboration, and interdependence, pointing to the fact that we share a common descent and destiny drawn from the creation narrative and the salvific grace of Jesus Christ. Orobator sees them as equivalent: “*Fratelli Tutti* is Ubuntu.” Highlighting the solidarity that they portray, he states:

“*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*.” This saying exists in variant forms in Southern Africa’s Bantu languages and translates as, “A person is a person through other persons” or, “I am because we are.” Strikingly, Pope Francis’s encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* contains an equivalent: “Each of us is fully a person when we are part of a people; at the same time, there are no peoples without respect for the individuality of each person” (no. 182). In other words, we are “brothers and sisters all.” (no. 8)⁴²

Ubuntu provides a principle that drives politics characterized by solidarity, where people come together as a community to support

³⁹ See Emmanuel Metu Egbule, “Igbo Traditional Communal Life, and Mission Crisis: Lessons for Contemporary Missions,” *International Journal of Science and Research* 8, no. 4 (2019): 1761, doi.org/10.21275/ART20197183. Igbo is one of the most significant tribes in Africa, located in the Eastern part of Nigeria, where it is one of three major tribes.

⁴⁰ Egbule, “Igbo Traditional Communal Life, and Mission Crisis,” 1761.

⁴¹ Egbule, “Igbo Traditional Communal Life, and Mission Crisis,” 1760.

⁴² Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, “*Fratelli Tutti* is Ubuntu by Any Other Name,” *National Catholic Reporter* 57, no 2 (Oct. 30–Nov. 12, 2020), 17.

each other's growth as part of a collective whole. This suggests a genuine encounter with others to foster authentic humanity. The Swahili proverb "Mountains do not meet, but people do" clarifies this. According to Orobator, Ubuntu is a premium socio-ethical principle that centers on engagement with others. It is an inclusive concept that challenges any culture of exclusion and inequality, transcending narrow barriers, interests, and prejudices. As a result, Ubuntu has become synonymous with authentic fraternity, which creates a family of nations marked by hospitality and generosity, recognizing the rights of all peoples, communities, groups, and social spheres. Following this established paradigm, Ubuntu and "I am because we are" have emerged as a socio-ethical principle suggesting a politics of respect and recognition of all for the benefit of all.

Shared Responsibility

Following Francis's key ideas in *Fratelli Tutti*, solidarity and social friendship, Orobator underscores the "urgency of Ubuntu in our present-day context, where the fabric of humanity is riven by atavistic conflicts, ideological division, isolationist paranoia, and political polarization that take a catastrophic toll on the weak and vulnerable."⁴³ Emphasizing Ubuntu as backdrop for *Fratelli Tutti*, he believes that the radical mutuality of Ubuntu can be achieved via a love that transforms humanity into a community of neighbors without borders. In light of this, Francis argues for a social premium on rights and duties because of humanity's relationality, whose most profound manifestation is the ability to transcend the self and create solidarity of service to others (*Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 87–88, 111).

However, Pope Francis says that social love should go beyond the immediacy of neighborliness; it is expansive and enriches the lives and existence of others. This kind of love manifests as hospitality because it welcomes and values others for who they are (nos. 90–93) and recognizes every human person as an "existential foreigner" with an incontrovertible moral claim on our care (no. 97). Following this, Orobator pragmatically speaks about Ubuntu in light of "I am because we are," which expresses a true fraternity that leaves no one behind. Pope Francis emphasizes collaboration and synergy between all peoples to work together for the salvation and protection of all in a way that reflects that no person has all it takes to save themselves alone; we need one another to live, grow, and develop (no. 137). Thus, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a case study that exposed everyone's vulnerability, incompleteness, and weakness, he stated:

⁴³ Orobator, "Fratelli Tutti is Ubuntu," 17.

True, a worldwide tragedy like the COVID-19 pandemic momentarily revived the sense that we are a global community, all in the same boat, where one person's problems are the problems of all. As I said in those days, "The storm has exposed our vulnerability and uncovered those false and superfluous certainties around which we constructed our daily schedules, projects, habits, and priorities. . . . Amid this storm, the façade of those stereotypes with which we camouflaged our egos, always worrying about appearances, has fallen away, revealing once more the ineluctable and blessed awareness that we are part of one another, that we are brothers and sisters of one another. (no. 32)

This implies a call for authentic cohesion that will build on recognizing everyone's endowed natural capacity, making them unique. By this, Francis calls on us to combine all these endowments to serve all. Everyone counts on building one another, and everyone could be said to be indispensable, sharing equal opportunity and love. At this point, this saying attributed to Pope John Paul II comes to mind: "Nobody is so poor he has nothing to give, and nobody is so rich he has nothing to receive."⁴⁴ This resonates with the Igbo philosophy of "Igwe/oha bu ike" ("people are strength"), as it highlights the indispensability of the community or its precedence over individualism. Hence, it emphasizes that everyone's unique potential matters greatly in building the community. In light of this, Emmanuel Egbule states that "Igwe/oha" "connects 'people,' which is the genuine concept of democracy. People are valued and cherished for who they are. People have a voice. People can carry out mass action. People decide what they want and what they want to live for. People are themselves. People are not molested, oppressed, dehumanized, or disregarded. People make people, and the people make the community."⁴⁵

By "people" here, everyone counts, both the rich and the poor. No one is discriminated against. Everyone is human and recognized as capable of helping others live well. This captures Tutu's view about Ubuntu and the political paradigm it implies: "Ubuntu recognizes the interconnectedness of life. My humanity, we say, is bound up with your humanity. One consequence of Ubuntu is that we realize that we all need to live our lives in ways that ensure others may live well. Our flourishing should enhance the lives of others, not detract from them. . . . God's invitation to wholeness always includes more than ourselves. God's invitation to wholeness is Ubuntu."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ John Paul II, in quote fancy.com/john-paul-ii-quotes.

⁴⁵ Egbule, "Igbo Traditional Communal Life and Mission Crisis," 1759.

⁴⁶ Tutu and Tutu, *Made for Goodness and Why This Makes All the Difference*, 47.

A GLOBAL NETWORK OF PERSONS

Unfortunately, the world has been structured so that one cannot recognize the connectivity and relationality that define humanity. It is so divided that people have lost touch with the reality that our humanity realizes its meaning in relationality and interdependence. Some have assumed control over the rest of the people, becoming the measure of all things for others, the makers of the law, while others are implementers. Michael Tellinger captures this thought thus:

Our countries are corporations, and the world is a business controlled by a small group of untouchable banking families. The laws that control our society have been meticulously structured over thousands of years to protect corporations while giving us the illusion that we are free. We, the people, are blissfully ignorant that we are the slaves and the assets of those who control the business. It is time to wake up and free ourselves. Nobody will do this for us. The universe awaits our action to respond through the law of attraction and welcome humanity into the universal community of beings of higher consciousness.⁴⁷

Globalization is generally good, at least for the singular reason of connecting people and countries together. According to one definition: “Globalization means the speedup of movements and exchanges (of human beings, goods, and services, capital, technologies or cultural practices) all over the planet. One of the effects of globalization is that it promotes and increases interactions between different regions and populations around the globe.”⁴⁸ In other words, globalization is often characterized as a network mechanism assumed to have brought everyone together, thus presenting the world as a simple global community or village where every person, nation, and society can easily connect. Its assumed capacity to develop this network mechanism has become entrenched in the daily lives of individuals and institutions.⁴⁹

Despite this marketing rhetoric, the data is clear that globalization has served more as a dynamic of exclusion than inclusion. David M. Smith lends credence to this latter claim: “The processes that have expanded the scale of global capitalism have occurred in varying degrees across the globe and increased the generation of wealth, while

⁴⁷ Tellinger, *Ubuntu Contributionism*, iv.

⁴⁸ Youmatter, “Globalization, Definition, Benefits, Effects: What is Globalization?,” January 21, 2019, youmatter.world/en/definition/definitions-globalization.

⁴⁹ Salima Valiani, Patience Salane, and Siphokazi Sigenu, “How Globalization Has Threatened Ubuntu,” *Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection*, October 23, 2017, mistra.org.za/mistra-media/how-globalisation-has-threatened-ubuntu/.

polarising its distribution both within and between countries.”⁵⁰ These realities reveal globalization’s shortcomings in connecting people and encouraging interdependence. It also neglects the traditional and religious values that prompt individuals to recognize one another as brothers and sisters. Globalization, though it connects countries, just as Smith observed, does not distribute gifts equally. However, Ubuntu and its core belief maintain equality of humanity by building for each other and sharing the proceeds. Thus, it emphasizes survival, solidarity, compassion, and dignity, challenging this aspect of globalization. Hence, the Ubuntu phenomenon, unlike globalization, fosters a community that nurtures genuine interdependence characterized by solidarity, compassion, and shared purpose in a manner that promotes the equality of all individuals. In this context, Ruel Khoza, Desmond Tutu, and Wendy Luhabe describe Ubuntu as a means of building and sustaining communities of justice and mutual care, portraying it as the capacity within an African community for essential compassion, connection, respect, humanity, and commonality. Ubuntu highlights globalization’s shortcomings.

One way African society has shown this is through palaver ethics, which bring people together on an equal platform to discuss issues that border their shared existence and common good. Benezet Bujo, the main proponent of this thought, describes palaver in the context of the forum or space for open and shared communication by which people are integrated into the life and expectations of their communities.⁵¹ Anna Floerke Scheid highlights that “this space can be physical, as when community members gather under the ancestral tree or at the grave of a deceased family member, but more importantly, it is [both a] psychological and social space for open communication.”⁵² This pattern of communication and shared thought resonates with Ubuntu’s approach as it serves as a mechanism that promotes justice, equality, recognition, and a focus on commonality. From this perspective, it can be regarded as establishing a new paradigm of ethical principles that inspires a new approach to politics in our world. In this context, Pope Francis believes that humanity would fare better when there is mutual exchange between individuals and countries. Thus, he suggests that this is only possible when global politics becomes a political charity that ensures the recognition, respect, fairness, justice, and well-being

⁵⁰ David M. Smith, *On the Margins of Inclusion: Changing Labour Markets and Social Exclusion in London* (Policy, 2005), 17.

⁵¹ Benezet Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (Herder & Herder, 2001), 54.

⁵² Anna Floerke Scheid, “Under the Palaver Tree: Community Ethics for Truth-Telling and Reconciliation,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 31, no. 1 (2011): 19. See also Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic*, 54.

of everyone (*Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 155, 157, 160). “Mutual assistance between countries proves enriching for each. A country that moves forward while remaining solidly grounded in its original cultural substratum is a treasure for the whole of humanity. We need to develop the awareness that nowadays, we are either all saved together or no one is saved. Poverty, decadence, and suffering in one part of the earth are a silent breeding ground for problems that will end up affecting the entire planet” (no. 137). This precedence implies that no one can do it alone. We are beings with and for others. This thought suggests an invitation to be responsible for one another and a call to build a global network beyond mere recognition to carry and share each other’s burdens. Conversely, it can be understood in light of complementarity, which emphasizes equality and the appreciation of differences as a gift.

However, history has recorded a lot of inequalities and discrimination. Some countries’ immigration, migration, and refugee laws have expressed a discriminatory undertone at different times. The most recent example is the forced relocation of some asylum seekers from the United Kingdom to Rwanda. The then-prime minister, Boris Johnson, and other UK government officials in 2022 responded that such people entered the UK illegally, as they were supposed to be granted asylum in France and other countries. According to *The Standard*, “The UK government says that the plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda will discourage people from crossing the English Channel. The policy is aimed at people who arrive in the UK through what the government calls ‘illegal, dangerous, or unnecessary methods,’ such as on small boats or hidden in lorries when they could have claimed asylum in another safe country, such as France.”⁵³ The action raises the question: Why send them to Rwanda instead of France, as initially planned? Of course, at this point, one would understand and feel the inequality of all nations. Otherwise, if people are considered equal in dignity as drawn from the creation narrative, there would not be any thought of taking them to Rwanda unless there were not enough space to accommodate them in France or elsewhere in Europe. However, where there is no substantial reason like this, one could conclude that Rwanda is seen like any other in the global south as designated for lawless refugees or migrants.

Such laws and policies designate some people, because of their backgrounds, as unfit, unqualified, and dissidents, hence motivating some citizens to be agents of racism, perpetrators of inequality, and champions of xenophobic attacks. In his reflection on the challenges

⁵³ Lowenna Waters, “Which Asylum Seekers Are Being Sent to Rwanda and How Many Could Go?,” *The Standard*, June 14, 2022, www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/who-being-sent-rwanda-uk-immigration-how-many-legal-action-b1005956.html.

confronting immigrants, migrants, and refugees, Pope Francis emphasized the need for host communities to treat them with respect rather than like nonentities. He believes that, given the opportunity and welcomed with open arms, immigrants, migrants, and refugees can contribute to building their host countries' future. In light of this, he stated: "*Building the future with migrants and refugees* also means recognizing and valuing how much each of them can contribute to the process of construction. I like to see this approach to migration reflected in a prophetic vision of Isaiah, which considers foreigners not invaders or destroyers, but willing labourers who rebuild the walls of the new Jerusalem, that Jerusalem whose gates are open to all peoples (Isa 60:10–11)."⁵⁴

He had earlier in *Fratelli Tutti* spoken in the voice of Jesus and scriptures as he echoes:

I would note that in another passage of the Gospel, Jesus says: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matt 25:35). Jesus could speak those words because he had an open heart, sensitive to the difficulties of others. Saint Paul urges us to "rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Rom 12:15). When our hearts do this, they are capable of identifying with others without worrying about where they were born or come from. In the process, we come to experience others as our "own flesh" (Isa 58:7). (no. 84)

Ray Taras points out the dangers of xenophobia and discourages every policy and law that could engender such. He thus argues:

Xenophobic attitudes in a society can make its state lurch towards illiberal, undemocratic practices. This is never truer than when such citizen attitudes are aggregated by political parties. Much of the xenophobia in Europe today represents an anti-immigrant backlash. But it is also a backlash against Euro-elite discourse that is perceived as privileging civic rights over civic obligations for immigrants; by contrast, for the populations making up the ethnic majority in EU states, this discourse from Brussels appears to emphasize their civic obligations while paying little attention to their rights (of identity, language, lifestyle, and values).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Pope Francis, "Building the Future with Migrants and Refugees," *Message for the 108th World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, September 25, 2022, www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/20220509-world-migrants-day-2022.html.

⁵⁵ Ray Taras, "Xenophobic Parties and the Making of Exclusionary Etatized Nationalism, Dichotomies, Complementarities, Oppositions," in *Nationalism and Democracy*, ed. André Lecours and Luis Moreno (Routledge, 2010), 129.

He goes further to point out some countries that have been notorious for xenophobic attitudes: “The negative reception given in receiving societies—Italy, Austria, France, Germany, and others—to calls for expanding immigrant rights has resulted in a turn to nationalist discourse.”⁵⁶ In response to this, he emphasizes the law of hospitality, stemming from the views of other thinkers like Derrida, should be aligned with immigration laws. Following Derrida, “Hospitality is contingent in nature because it is circumscribed by a country’s legal system, especially its immigration laws. The legal system limits the immediate, infinite, and unconditional welcoming of the other.”⁵⁷ Meyda Yegenoglu, a seasoned sociologist, lends credence to this as he describes such hospitality as conditional. He stated: “Conditional hospitality is offered at the owner’s place, home, nation, state, or city—that is, at a place where one is defined as the master and where unconditional hospitality, or unconditional trespassing of the door, is not possible.”⁵⁸ In such a situation, there will be discrimination between the supposed owner of the land and the strangers. The human rights and dignity of strangers and foreigners will always be trampled upon. As a result, Ray Taras highlights that “fear of foreigners affects the politics of hospitality offered by a host society to strangers.”⁵⁹

Pope Francis would respond to this by bringing to the fore St. Francis’s inspiring advice, which suggests an invitation for everyone and every country to have open hearts that should transcend differences of origin, boundaries, ethnicity, race, nationality, color, and religion.⁶⁰ For this reason, he raises concerns about human fraternity and social friendship.⁶¹ This reflects and suggests the matter of the ethical supposition: “I am because we are,” as reflected in and reflecting Ubuntu. All this emphasizes that we are all humans despite our differences of origin. We are meant to complement and work together to improve, enrich, and develop one another. This speaks of theological anthropology, which teaches that we are all created by the same God, who made us in His image and likeness (Gen 1:27). Therefore, we are all beneficiaries of God’s salvific gift through Jesus Christ. Awareness of this will help build sustainable relational solidarity and social friendship, which cut across borders, continents,

⁵⁶ Taras, “Xenophobic Parties,” 130.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford University Press, 1999), 87.

⁵⁸ Meyda Yegenoglu, “From Guest Worker to Hybrid Immigrant: Changing Themes of German Turkish Literature,” in *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*, ed. Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla (Lexington, 2005), 143–144.

⁵⁹ Taras, *Xenophobic Parties*, 131.

⁶⁰ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 3.

⁶¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 5.

regions, nationalities, colors, and religions, implying that what affects one should affect the other.

CONCLUSION

Following the above reflections, this article draws from the everyday philosophy of Ubuntu and “I am because we are” to provide an African grounding of Pope Francis’s vision in *Fratelli Tutti* of a global network that fosters sociopolitical transformation and economic viability for all people through shared responsibility. Such a framework would serve as an antidote to exclusion and inequality and principle for developing inclusion that would engender a bottom-up approach to governance. To this end, Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” and *Fratelli Tutti* have established a foundation for securing a more constructive, accurate, and theologically rich humanity.

Can such a vision be feasible, possible, and realizable in our world, which seems to be doubling down on its efforts to expand domination, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and exclusion across the globe, regions, and nationalities? I hereby close with a few recommendations that might contribute to translating this vision into practical outcomes.

- The church should challenge itself to be more concerned with advancing these ethical suppositions. The saying “charity begins at home” should be visible in the church’s life and activities, because *nemo dat quod non habet* (“no one gives what he does not have”). Therefore, if the church’s life and activities have not been exemplary, as we have witnessed and experienced visible discrimination, exclusion, and injustice among Christians and their leaders, its voice will not make a substantial difference in transforming secular politics and communities.
- The church should leverage global political power and authority to ensure that these ethical suppositions are mediated and manifested in international, regional, and national laws. It can achieve this by consistently drawing the attention of world, regional, and national leaders to visible exclusion, domination, and inequality that act as a ticking time bomb, potentially igniting crises, conflicts, and wars if not adequately addressed. The Rwandan genocide could have been averted if the church in Rwanda at that time, where 80 to 90 percent of the population were Christians, had acted differently. That Christians could get into the church to hack down their fellow Christians while the leaders watched and even encouraged them in the name of the tribe and ethnicity highlights the failure of the church and its teaching.
- If possible, the church should lead in discouraging teachings and activities that suggest superiority and unhealthy competition

between different groups of persons. A concrete example is the conflict over trade tariffs in the global market which, if not adequately addressed, could result in the worst global economic crash, negatively affecting a large portion of the population worldwide.

- The church should always make bold self-critical statements to transform its mindset from its leaders to its adherents, inspiring the global community to live out the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, common good, and interdependence to engender shared responsibility. The marks of the church, which include unity/oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity in line with Catholic social teaching, should be upheld everywhere, but not without guiding laws and sanctions that promote compassion and respect.

The relational solidarity and social friendship in Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” and *Fratelli Tutti* advance fascinating ethical principles that can change religious, sociopolitical, and economic landscapes to offer a sustainable and peaceful community. However, these principles may remain a mirage if they are not applied in the practical realities of life. Dialogue, peace process, and conflict resolution are a few areas where they can be made concretely and significantly visible to contribute to the growth and development of politics and a sustainable society. We live in a world that has partly distinguished itself in war, conflicts, and inequality because of incessant cravings for domination, selfishness, and self-interest. Unfortunately, every attempt to get the world out of conflict, wars, inequality, and discrimination has been unsuccessful. This is because there has not been dialogue, a peace process, or conflict resolution that has taken place in an equal balance and representation of the parties involved.

The United Nations and other relevant agencies that serve as mechanisms or agents of a global network and interdependence have been working to bridge divides, inequality, and discrimination among nations and genders that underpin conflict and wars. They believe we can have a developed and peaceful society where equality and respect for human dignity are prioritized in every activity and transaction aimed at human flourishing and sociopolitical and economic transformation. Taking a lead in this direction, the United Nations started with Resolution 1325 in 2000, which recommends including women in the peace process and dialogue to resolve conflict and achieve sustainable peace. In 2015, Resolution 2250 for youth and security was developed; in 2007 and 2019, there was Resolution 2275 for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the peace process, through the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). In 2007, the

United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCR) released a declaration for the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This is the bold step expected of both the African community and the church: to advocate for the principles of Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” and *Fratelli Tutti*, to mediate through global and local politics to foster the desired transformation. This means that Ubuntu, “I am because we are,” and *Fratelli Tutti*’s ethical principles embody fraternity and social friendship, encouraging interdependence and shared responsibility among everyone, regardless of background and nationality. **M**

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