

# Archbishop Smith: A New Encyclical Letter from Pope Francis

The timing is providential. On Oct 3rd, Pope Francis was in Assisi formally to sign his latest encyclical, entitled *Fratelli tutti*. Inspired by the thought of Saint Francis, this latest teaching of the Holy Father lays out a global plan of action for human solidarity. Its release coincided with the proclamation the following day, in churches throughout the world, of God's judgment on the tenants of his "vineyard", who, through individualistic self-pursuit, have brought forth a harvest of injustice and bloodshed (cf. Isaiah 5: 1-7; Matthew 21:33-43). The Holy Father, in clear and stark terms, lays bare the many facets of that "harvest of injustice" in our day. His point in doing so is to move the world toward a change of mind and heart that henceforth will see all people as brothers in sisters in one family under God, and to a consequent change in behaviour away from fracture to unity, from harm to healing.

Central to the teaching contained in *Fratelli tutti* is the parable of the Good Samaritan (cf. Luke 10:25-37). The command of Jesus at the end of the parable to "Go and do likewise" is familiar to all of us, and Pope Francis spells out in great detail within a variety of contexts exactly how we need to "go" and engage concretely the command to show mercy to one another. I hope we can all take time to read the document prayerfully and attentively so as to consider how it challenges each of us to that change of mind and action the Bible calls "conversion."

As we do, I suggest we consider a deeper meaning of the parable that is at times lost to view. A superficial reading of it might lead us to think that we can obey the injunction to "go and do likewise" on our own initiative, in the hope of fashioning the longed-for human solidarity solely by our own efforts and creativity. Appreciating the parable fully, however, removes from us such an illusion and reminds us that, before we can become agents of mercy, we must first be its recipients.

In the early centuries of the Christian community, many Church Fathers understood the parable's reference to the man beaten and robbed and left by the side of the road as representing humanity as a whole, grievously wounded by its sinful separation from God. In this reading, the Good Samaritan is Jesus himself, sent from the Father to heal broken humanity by the balm of his mercy. The lesson for us today is clear: if we, as tenants of the Lord's vineyard, want to yield for the Lord a harvest of solidarity, justice and peace; if we, as citizens of this planet, want to move away from division to unity, we cannot do so on our own, apart from the grace of Christ. Only he, the Son of God Incarnate, the Crucified and Risen Lord, can lead us in the direction we must go. With his new encyclical letter, Pope Francis helps us to understand that following this lead of the Lord begins with repenting of our selfishness, so

that, by the working of divine grace, we may begin to see all people as Jesus does: the beloved children of God, and thus fratelli tutti, all brothers and sisters to one another.

By the intercession of the Blessed Mother and St. Francis, may this vision become reality.



**"Homeless Jesus" by Timothy Schmalz in front of Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver. Pope Francis' Fratelli tutti calls us to identify with those "abandoned on the wayside." Lincoln Ho, Grandin Media**