

INTRODUCTION

Although the main issue with which we have to cope humanly and spiritually in this time is primarily the worldwide pandemic of the Covid-19 disease, we as theologians cannot ignore other significant transformations in global affairs. Among other things, we have to constantly return to the question of cultural and religious pluralism from a theological perspective; we have to repeatedly raise questions about the role of Christianity in a changing world. The variety of cultural and religious answers to the fundamental questions about the purpose and meaning of human existence and about the ways of dealing with suffering and death in these times calls on the Christian theology to be able to articulate well the affinity and empathy of Christians with this cultural and religious plurality, while at the same time offering the uniqueness of its own identity and presenting it in a credible and intelligible way.

The suggestions we find in Pope Francis' magisterium are a great challenge in this sense. In this issue, we will closely focus on his most recent documents, which touch on the theme of the fraternal coexistence between the members of different religious traditions (namely, Christianity and Islam) and, more generally, on the capacity to live in fraternal relationships as expressed in the 'Document On Human Fraternity' and, subsequently, in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

The text by Luboš Kropáček with the title 'Making Fraternity an Essential Link in Christian-Muslim Relations' introduces the ideas and initiatives advanced by Christian and Muslim religious leaders and believers towards a mutual religious rapprochement. In addition to the theological reflection of the experts on Islam, which was subsequently

reflected in the magisterial documents of the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar texts, it also shows Muslim efforts to seek dialogue. His article discusses the culminating point reached so far in the positive efforts of Pope Francis in his meetings with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, including their agreement on the fraternity as a desirable bond for all believers in God.

The text by Vojtěch Novotný ‘God’s Providence and the Plurality of Religions’ focuses on the hermeneutics of a particular formulation found in the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’, saying that ‘the pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.’ Novotný’s intention is to present the way how this statement should be read with regard to its general intention and context. Then the author explores if it is compatible with the Quran and analyses the various ways it has been interpreted within Christian theology. Finally, he shows that the sentence does not have to be read as contradictory with the Christian faith if we pay attention to its purpose, origin, and corresponding theological interpretation.

The last thematic text is the study by Petr Vizina and Denisa Červenková called ‘Faith Embodied in Attitudes: Ethics of Dialogue and Brotherhood of All People in the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in Abu Dhabi and the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*’. It approaches the topic of the ethical principles of inter-faith dialogue in both documents. It is based on the assumption that the Abu Dhabi document is the result of a debate between Christian and Sunni religious scholars, so it is grounded on the ethics of interfaith dialogue. The encyclical *Fratelli tutti* moves the theme of dialogue further to the ethics of interpersonal relations on a general social level. According to the authors of the article, Pope Francis’ approach in the documents is that the theological truth and values of religious traditions are embodied in the attitudes of social friendship. Francis challenges us to build a specific environment that he calls a ‘new culture of dialogue’, having frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter. This type of relations transcend political and social barriers and encourages creating a specific culture of social and ‘political love’. The authors of the article support the idea that Francis’ ethical approach refers to God the Creator of all and the call to the brotherhood of all human beings as well as to faith as a response to Revelation.

Of course, the presented articles do not cover the topic of religious and cultural pluralism in the context of Pope Francis' message in all its details and nuances, but we hope that they may serve as an inspiration for further theological dialogue in this field.

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