

FRATELLI TUTTI AND IMPLICATIONS ON DEMOCRACY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

The paradoxical reality of the disparities between economic growth in Africa and increased poverty in the continent is a clear reflection of the dysfunctionality of the inherited democratic and economic systems. The new encyclical of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Brothers All) that came out in October 2020, draws attention to social consciousness on the common responsibility toward building solidarity, social friendship, global citizenship and fraternal economy that respects human dignity and advances integral human development. Like in many parts of the world, democracy in Africa is in a crisis, and politics has largely been sectarian. There are a number of African countries that have subjected democracy to mockery through constitutional coups that create life presidencies or political manipulation of electoral results to remain in power. The persistent disappointment with democratic systems that economically marginalize the majority of the population, making the rich richer and pressing down the poor to poverty, has raised questions on the extent of efficiency levels of democracy. There have been mass demonstrations expressing this discontentment with

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democracy whether against bad governance, corruption, disenfranchisement of citizen rights, police brutality or economic marginalization of the majority of the population. Pope Francis' *Fratelli Tutti* makes a strong appeal on the need to form "social friendship" advanced by fraternal economy that goes beyond individualistic attitudes sustained by parenthesized solidarity. The advancement of democracy in Africa, and the rest of the world, will have to be based on the principles of common good and respect for human dignity, through actualization of democratic systems that respect fair distribution of national resources, care of the poor and marginalization, and creation of employment opportunities, especially for the youth.

Keywords: Democracy; Economic Marginalization; *Fratelli Tutti*; Marginalization; Politics

The big disappointment with democracy, not only in Africa but in the rest of the world, has driven many people to question the extent of the efficacy of the acclaimed 'perfect' society that this system of governance purports to achieve.¹ The frustration expressed, particularly by the young people in search for self-actualization, but who often end up on the streets with no jobs or any fulfilling means of survival has, to a great extent, created a very unequal society in the world. Overemphasis on civil and political rights without any structural and institutional strategies for social-economic rights has turned democracy into a capitalistic instrument meant to enrich a few and dupe the majority with their right to participate in 'democratic election.'

The new encyclical of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (Brothers All) that came out in October 2020, draws attention to social consciousness on the common responsibility toward building solidarity, social friendship, global citizenship and fraternal economy that respects human dignity and advances integral human development. Francis calls humanity to reflect on "a way of life marked by the flavor of the Gospel,"² integrating both human and Gospel values aimed at safeguarding human dignity and common good. In a world that is fast moving towards isolationist cultures of individualism, bigotry, sectarianism, ethnicism, racism, religious extremism and marginalization of the minorities, the *Fratelli Tutti* advocates for a more communitarian attitude to social cohesion, which is closely

¹Harold J. Laski, *Democracy in crisis*. London: Routledge, 2016; Grayling, A. C. *Democracy and Its Crisis*. London: Oneworld Publications, 20.

² Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 3 Oct 2020, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

related to the African values of communitarian solidarity, founded on mutual concern for one another.

The growing middle class in most African capital cities is fast moving into a capitalistic lifestyle that threatens Africa's communitarian heritage, and embraces wholesale what Francis has persistently termed "globalized indifference,"³ a false security in self-independence. In fact, in most of these cities, the wealthy suburbs have developed a "culture of walls"—*physical walls* that keep off perceived 'dangerous' poor, robbers and thieves, and at the same time, *social walls* that make clear distinctions between the poor and the rich, politicians and citizens, the ruling class and the ruled class, the dominant and minority or marginalized ethnic groups, and the employed and the unemployed. This dichotomized society runs parallel to the 'economic progress' mentioned above, clearly indicating that there is need to review the current structures of social organization in Africa. These economic structures deceptively create false comfort under a fragile foundation that can only be termed as a 'time-bomb.' Francis deplors that many people feel "more alone than ever,"⁴ with the world economic system confining the majority of the population to tools of work, under the disguised criteria "of market freedom and efficiency"⁵ that privatizes common good to specific economic class.

Global inequality continues to rise while the number of billionaires has double in the last decade. The disturbing world trend demonstrates that "world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than the 4.6 billion people who make up 60 percent of the planet's population,"⁶ according to 2020 Oxfam's world Inequality Report. In addition, 22 richest men in the world have more wealth than all the women in Africa. In United States top 1% of Americans own almost the same amount of wealth as the middle class. Richest 1% Americans own about \$35 trillion, according to 2019 figures, whereas the entire middle class had accumulative wealth of roughly \$36.9 trillion.⁷

³Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 30.

⁴Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 27.

⁵Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 109.

⁶OXFAM, 2020. World's billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people." <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/worlds-billionaires-have-more-wealth-46-billion-people>

⁷John Kelly, "The 1% Owns Almost As Much Wealth As The Middle Class: Will The Rich Keep Getting Richer?" *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jackkelly/2019/11/12/the-1-owns-almost-as-much-wealth-as-the-middle-class-will-the-rich-keep-getting-richer/?sh=2564a0794323>

A good number of African countries are among the fastest growing economies. In fact, Africa is “the world’s largest free trade area and with 1.2 billion-person market,”⁸ it has become an attractive investment zone for most western nations. The projected GDP for 2020 was at an average of between 2-5%, with some countries projecting even higher growth of up to 7%. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Africa’s economic growth, with the continent losing “between \$37 and 79 billion in estimated output losses.”⁹ Despite the economic growth, there are still 416 million Africans living in poverty, 640 million without access to electricity and 210 million trapped in fragile and conflict-affected countries, further diminishing that capabilities for economic advancement.¹⁰

The paradoxical reality of the disparities between economic growth in Africa and increased poverty in the continent is a clear reflection of the dysfunctionality of the inherited democratic and economic systems, that Francis strongly condemns. He states that, “Some economic rules have proved effective for growth, but not for integral human development.”¹¹ He adds that while perceptively wealth has increased, inequality has concurrently increased, and new forms of poverty have emerged, perpetuated by persistent corruption that divert public funds to private individuals. It is important that any economic system takes into account the needs of the poor and marginalized, while considering the fact that a large unemployed population is vulnerable to human trafficking, child abuse, recruitment into violent extremist groups, popular insurrection and disguised slavery in form of paid labour. Pope Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, strongly condemns these forms of modern day slavery that treat vulnerable persons as objects “...whether by coercion, or deception, or by physical or psychological duress.”¹²

Discontentment with Democracy

The discontentment with the dysfunctionality of democratic system have led to mass demonstrations and calls for resignation of presidents in different parts of the world. This has been enhanced by the persistent disappointment with democratic systems that economically marginalize the majority of the population, making the rich richer and pressing down the poor to poverty. Mass

⁸ World Bank, “The World Bank In Africa,” <https://www.worldbank.org/en/region/afr/overview>

⁹World Bank, “The World Bank In Africa.”

¹⁰World Bank, “The World Bank In Africa.”

¹¹Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 21.

¹²Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 24.

demonstrations have been witnessed in Ecuador, Bolivia and Chile against rising cost of living and economic inequality between the rich and poor; Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq against corruption of top government officials while majority of the citizens continue to suffer in poverty; in Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo and Guinea against dinosaur presidents who have been in power for many years, often rigging elections, and never caring much about the social-economic welfare of the population. The demonstrations led to forced resignation of the presidents of Burkina Faso in 2014 and Mali in 2020.

Even in old democracies like the United States, there has been a “sense of displacement, dislocation, and despair among large numbers of Americans who feel that the democratic system has grown increasingly unresponsive to their needs and that government is less willing to advocate for their interests.”¹³ In Hong Kong demonstrations were against a bill that would have had criminal suspects to be extradited to mainland China. While the law was withdrawn, protests continued with further demands for investigation over police brutality and release of imprisoned political activists; in Thailand demonstrations in 2020, by largely the youth, against the government and monarchy, called for dissolution of parliament, ending of persistent government intimidation of the population, and the drafting of a new constitution that will increase people’s liberties; in United States the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement regained momentum following repeated police brutality incidences in 2020. The main trigger was the inhumane public choking of George Floyd, an African-American man, by a white policeman. The images of this scene spread throughout the social media leading to protests across the country. There were more police brutality incidences caught on camera that led to further demonstrations and riots in an already highly polarized country. The November 2020 elections were the most divisive and politically charged elections between the incumbent Donald Trump of the Republican Party and Joe Biden of the Democratic Party.

Democracy has been captured by the capitalist pursuit that is merciless on the majority of the population. The modelling of democracy has always been linked to liberal economic progress, which in other words translates to liberal capitalism. In 1991, Samuel Huntington, a renowned political scientist wrote that “successive waves of democratization have washed over the shore of dictatorship. Buoyed by a rising tide of economic progress, each

¹³Charles Edel, “Democracy Is Fighting for Its Life,” *Foreign Policy*, September 2019.[https:// foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/10/democracy-is-fighting-for-its-life/](https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/10/democracy-is-fighting-for-its-life/).

wave advanced further—and receded less—than its predecessor.”¹⁴ The economic ‘progress’ is often limited to capital and foreign income earnings, production and market performance, and hardly improvement of people’s life condition. Hence, such economic systems tend to favour just a few individuals or specific groups of individuals in the society.

In his book, *The Future of Capitalism*, Paul Collier states that “Modern capitalism has the potential to lift us all to unprecedented prosperity, but it is morally bankrupt and on track for tragedy.”¹⁵ Collier’s primary concern is that poverty has increased in the world and economic divide widened, while the world pretends to be making progress.¹⁶ Larry Diamond’s new book, *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency* laments that democracy is on the decline and that illiberal populist regimes that are more dictatorial are taking over in the Philippines, Benin, Poland, Bolivia, Guatemala, Senegal, Turkey, among others.¹⁷ While Diamond, a well-known political scientist and authority in democracy research, already predicted the decline of democracy a decade ago, studies by Freedom House, which is a nongovernmental organization that produces regular updates on democracy and political freedom around the world, noted in 2018, that since 2006, 113 countries experienced a net decline in democratic freedoms, while in 2017 alone “(s)eventy-one countries suffered net declines in political rights and civil liberties, with only 35 registering gains.”¹⁸ Similarly, according to the 2019 Economic Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index that measures democracy score in 165 countries, 2019 marked the worst decline in democracy score, with global score falling from 5.48 in 2018 to 5.44 in 2019.¹⁹

Crisis of Democracy in Africa

Like in many parts of the world, democracy in Africa is in a crisis, and politics has largely been sectarian. There are a number of African

¹⁴Samuel P. Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave,” *Journal of Democracy*, 2, 2 (2005) 34.

¹⁵Paul Collier, *The Future of Capitalism: Facing the New Anxieties*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2018, 53.

¹⁶Collier, *The Future of Capitalism*.

¹⁷Larry Diamond, *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency*, New York: PENGUIN Books, 2020, 40.

¹⁸Freedom House, “Freedom in the World 2018: Democracy in Crisis,” <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2018/democracy-crisis>

¹⁹“The Democracy Index 2019,” *The Economist*, <https://www.eiu.com/topic/democracy-index>

countries that have subjected democracy to mockery through constitutional coups that create life presidencies or political manipulation of electoral results to remain in power. Pope Francis laments that, "For many people today, politics is a distasteful word"²⁰ and the world is "suffering from grave structural deficiencies" that need to be addressed comprehensively through inclusive approaches that take into account the needs of all sectors of the society. Politicians have tended to use the masses as stooges, under a "free rein to ideologies"²¹ aimed to advance political power, to the extent of inciting them to violence. In Africa there have been demonstrations and protests, largely by the youth, calling for political accountability, economic justice and respect for the rule of law. These demonstrations have been witnessed in Mali, Togo, Uganda, Nigeria, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia, among others.

In Mali, young protestors, in 2020, took to Bamako's Independence Square, blowing vuvuzela horns and calling for the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. The demonstrations were sparked by dissatisfaction over Mali's financial troubles, corruption and worsening security situation in the country, especially persistent terrorist attacks. Youth leaders within the so-called June 5 Opposition Movement, known also as M5-RFP, asked their supporters to demonstrate peacefully and demand the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. Keita resigned hours after soldiers seized him from his home as part of a coup following months of mass protests against alleged corruption and worsening security in the West African country. The news of Keita's departure was met with jubilation by anti-government demonstrators, while leaders of the military coup said they would enact a political transition and stage elections within a "reasonable time."²² The resignation of the president was a clear victory to the youth, and they hoped that the new government would listen to their plea for jobs and better standards of living.

In Nigeria, thousands of youth began a protest in October 2020 against the hated police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) which had become a brutal force acting with impunity and killing civilians without any accountability. The SARS operated under State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID). Demonstrations

²⁰Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 176.

²¹Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 41

²²"Mali's Keita Resigns as President after Military Coup," *Aljazeera*, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/19/malis-keita-resigns-as-president-after-military-coup>

against police brutality, organized on social media and powered by artists and musicians, drove thousands of youth on to the streets across the country.²³ The SARS which was originally designed to fight criminal networks in the country had ended up being an extortion machine, harassing and killing innocent civilians instead of protecting them. The SARS officials targeted young people using expensive phones and driving flashy cars, often harassing them and robbing them of their property. The unit also profiled young people with dreadlocks and tattoos. Through the social media and the use of twitter hashtag #EndSARS which attracted 28 million tweets all over the world, the young felt energized to express themselves on the streets and on 11 October 2020 the government announced the immediate disbandment of SARS. Although the protests started peacefully, they turned ugly when the Nigerian Army shot at unarmed protesters on 20 October 2020 at close range and many young protesters were killed, while at the same time thugs allegedly sponsored by politicians infiltrated and disrupted the protests.²⁴ Protests also turned into a looting spree, leading to damage of properties and loss of lives. The above situation demonstrates the systematic marginalization of the youth, with unemployment rate standing at 27.1% which translates to 27.7 million people who remain unemployed.²⁵

In Uganda, demonstrators, mostly youth held rallies in Kampala to protest against arrest of opposition politician, Bobi Wine, officially known as Robert Kyagulanyi. There were clashes between the police and youth, generating into violent acts of aggression by the police. Following the arrest of Bobi Wine, Amnesty International called for his immediate release, with the regional director Seif Magango stating that: "The Ugandan authorities must immediately free Bobi Wine and stop misusing the law in a shameless attempt to silence him for criticising the government."²⁶ Intermittent protests have rocked Uganda since 2019, when the government amended the constitution to abolish presidential age limits, allowing President

²³ Ating Nelly, 2020, "Nigeria's Next-Generation Protest Movement," <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/10/28/nigerias-youth-protest-movement-end-sars/>

²⁴ Nelly, "Nigeria's Next-Generation Protest Movement."

²⁵ Samuel Oyekanmi, "Nigeria's Unemployment Rate Jumps to 27.1% as at 2020 Q2," <https://nairametrics.com/2020/08/14/breaking-nigeria-unemployment-rate-jumps-to-27-1/>

²⁶ "Uganda Police Clash with Pop Star Bobi Wine's Supporters," *Aljazeera* (2019), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/4/30/uganda-police-clash-with-pop-star-bobi-wines-supporters>

Yoweri Museveni to stay in power indefinitely.²⁷ The main supporters of Bobi Wine are frustrated youth in search for jobs, education and employable skills. Most of these youth feel left out by the existing governance system that has focused on entrenching political interests of the ruling class while ignoring the economic perils of the majority of the population.

In Guinea, clashes between police and protesters erupted on in the capital city, Conakry, after Guinean President Alpha Conde filed a case before the Constitutional Court to run for a third term in October's elections. Tens of thousands of mostly young people, took to the streets to protest the third term decision which went against the constitution.²⁸ The demonstration were mostly coordinated by the Guinean Organisation for the Defense of Human Rights, that was protesting against the president's bid to adopt a reformed constitution that could extend his time in office beyond the end of his mandate in 2020. The police responded by launching teargas on the crowds and opening fire on them as well, leading to dozens of deaths and destruction of property in the outskirts of the capital, Conakry. In a flawed referendum in March 2020, the 82 year old president changed the constitution to run for the third term. Following the elections in October 2020 in which the incumbent won with 59.5 per cent, there were mass protests by opposition supporters claiming that elections were rigged. Further protests followed, and again the police responded with brutality against civilians leading to deaths of more dozens of people, mostly youth.²⁹

In Ivory Coast, the mass demonstrations emerged following the decision by president Alassane Ouattara to seek a third term. At least five people were killed and over 100 injured in the three days of the street protests.³⁰ The protesters argued that the constitution only allowed two terms of presidency and the incumbent president

²⁷ Salem Solomon, "Young Ugandans Protest Entrenched Power," (2018) <https://www.voanews.com/africa/young-ugandans-protest-entrenched-power>

²⁸ Fisayo-Bambi Jerry, 2020, "Guinea: Protests as Conde Files in 3rd Term Candidacy," (2020), <https://www.africanews.com/2020/09/04/guinea-protests-as-conde-files-in-3rd-term-candidacy-/>

²⁹ "Guinea Electoral Body Says Alpha Conde Won Third Term in Office," *Aljazeera*, (2020), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/24/guinea-election-president-conde-wins-third-term-in-office>

³⁰ "Thousands Rally in Ivory Coast to Protest President Ouattara's Bid for Third Term," *France24*, <https://www.france24.com/en/20201011-thousands-rally-in-ivory-coast-to-protest-president-ouattara-s-bid-for-third-term>; Nobantu Shabangu, "Deadly Clashes Between Protesters and Police Erupt in Ivory Coast Following President Ouattara's Decision to Run For Third Term," <https://www.okayafrica.com/alassane-ouattara-third-term-protests-ivory-coast/>

seeking for a third term mandate was violating the constitution.³¹ The youth, largely under 19 years, have increasingly voiced their frustration with their governments, particularly in relation to high rates of unemployment. They have expressed fears that 78-year-old Ouattara's decision to run for the third time was a dangerous turn that would destabilise country. Following the elections in October 2020, the opposition leaders called for a "civil transition"³² claiming that Ouattara had illegally run for presidency.

In Togo, tens of thousands of people, mostly youth, protested between 2017-2020 demanding presidential term limits and the resignation of President Faure Gnassingbé since his family has ruled Togo for five decades.³³ Police responded by firing teargas and shooting at protestors. Dozens were killed. Presidential elections took place, and President Faure Gnassingbe, who has been in power since 2005, won his fourth term in office. He originally succeeded his father Gnassingbe Eyadema, who previously ruled the country for 38 years. Hence, the family has ruled the country for about 50 years. Despite the protests, President Faure Gnassinbé still remains in power.

Ethiopia has had a difficult time holding the country together, with diverse regions of the country challenging the government and demonstrating on the streets to claim recognition, respect and end to state brutality.³⁴ Historically, the country has been ruled by heavily authoritarian regimes that did not allow for freedom of speech and political associations. President Ahmed Abiy, who took over the country in 2018, emerged as a liberal leader, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for ending more than 20 years of conflict with Eritrea and signing a peace deal, and he also freed political prisoners, opened up the media and allowed for freedom of speech. However, his legacy was disrupted with massive protests against the government, especially by the Oromia, Tigrayan and Amhara people

³¹ Shabangu, "Deadly Clashes Between Protesters and Police Erupt in Ivory Coast."

³² "Ivory Coast election: Opposition Demands 'Civil Transition,'" BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54768743>

³³ Besliu Raluca, "Togo Rallies for Change After 50 Years of Rule by One Family," <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/04/world/africa/togo-protests-faure-gnassingbe.html>

³⁴ J.W. Hussein, "Examining the Nature of Defensively Situated Politics of Difference, Identity and Essentialism in Ethiopia: A Critical Engagement," *International Area Studies Review* 19, 4 (2016) 340-354; J.W. Hussein, F.B. Keney, R. Wentzell, "Politics of Protective Territoriality and Governance Challenges in the Geography of Networked Human Connectivity: The Jarso-Girhi Case in Eastern Ethiopia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 52, 2 (2017) 232-250.

who felt marginalized and targeted. In July and October 2020, respectively, the protests led to inter-ethnic and religious clashes coupled with confrontation with police, incidences that resulted into deaths of dozens of people.³⁵ There were random attacks on civilians by armed groups, largely associated with Tigrayians and Oromos.³⁶ These attacks that took place in October-November 2020, have further weakened the social cohesion in the country. Ethiopia will continue to face the challenge of national integration for a very long time.

A Call to Solidarity in Governance

Pope Francis regrets that politics has led to so much polarization that any political “victory consists in eliminating one’s opponents,”³⁷ dominating the other and paying no attention to the common good that binds the society together. The examples above on the struggle of Africa demonstrate that competitive politics has been manipulated by the rich and powerful, reducing democratic practices to political tools for advancement of power, control and accumulation of wealth. Pope Francis appeals for good politics that is “built upon respect for law and frank dialogue between individuals,”³⁸ initiating bridges across the different social-political divides of the society within a communitarian framework.

In his Post-Synodal Exhortation to the Second African Synod, Pope Benedict XVI spoke strongly against disguised economic systems that pretend to operate for the benefit of the poor. These systems instead, tend to aggravate the situation of the poor while maximizing the former’s profits.³⁹ Hence, Pope Benedict made a strong appeal to the church in Africa, that it “must speak out against the unjust order that prevents the peoples of Africa from consolidating their economies.”⁴⁰ There is therefore a call to shift from the manner in which Africa continues to manage its own economy.

Communitarianism is strongly emphasized in *Fratelli Tutti*, with a warning that the world is fast losing the sense that we are a global community, echoed in Francis’ call in the *Laudato Si*, in which he reiterated that the world is our common home. The Pope states that

³⁵Human Rights Watch, 2020, “Ethiopia: Justice Needed for Deadly October Violence” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/ethiopia-justice-needed-deadly-october-violence>

³⁶Dawit Endashaw, “Gunmen Kill 32, Burn Houses in Attack in Ethiopia: Administrator,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSKBN27I20D>

³⁷Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*.

³⁸Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 196.

³⁹Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 79.

⁴⁰Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 79.

the COVID-19 experience has shown the world that “we are a global community, all in the same boat”⁴¹ mutually experiencing each other’s problems. Africa has often been characterized as a communitarian society where shared socio-cultural values enhance social cohesion and bind the people together. While the communitarian attitude and social solidarity are still strongly appreciated in Africa, there have been a lot of social pressures that have threatened the sense of shared communal values. These have largely been due to growing urbanization, increased capitalism and reduced communitarian economic resources that hitherto sustained economic support to those most in need.

The diminished communitarianism has created a sense of “loneliness, fear and insecurity,”⁴² trapping, especially the youth, into a “a false communitarian mystique”⁴³ that generates “bonds of dependency and fealty”⁴⁴ under the control of the propagators of violence. A good number of youth in Africa have been used by politicians to fan violence against political opponents or rival ethnic groups, leading to loss of lives and destruction of property. Electoral violence has become common in different election periods, in a number of countries in Africa.⁴⁵ Currently, there are four active conflicts in Africa: Central African Republic, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia. Ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnic identities have rendered the continent vulnerable to conflicts. The conflicts have propagated violent conflicts that have led to social, ethnic, political and religious divisions.⁴⁶ These situations have threatened the African ‘ubuntu’ theological wisdom that underlines the interlocking and intertwined nature of human life – my humanity is defined by your humanity, and vice versa. In other words, a human person is only human through another human person. This calls attention to respect of human dignity and appreciation of a broader sense of fraternity defined in a magnanimous sense of love of the neighbour.

⁴¹Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 32.

⁴²Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 28.

⁴³Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 28.

⁴⁴Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 28.

⁴⁵Nnanta N. Elekwa, and Okechukwu I. Eme. “Post-Election Violence in Africa: A Comparative Case of Kenya and Zimbabwe,” *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 72, 3 (2011) 833–844.

⁴⁶Elias Omondi Opongo, “Insecurity & Violence and Impact on Human Security,” in Michelle Becka, Felix Wilfred, and Mile Babic, ed., *Human Security*, London: SCM, Concilium Series, 2018.

To address conflicts and divisions, such as those in Africa, Pope Francis proposes a call to courageous review of the past crimes and injustices with a long term view of reconciling divided communities. In fact, in this particular section of the encyclical, Francis uses a very blunt language and does not mince his words on what reconciliation process should entail. The pope calls for a bold encounter with the reality of hate and revenge, while emphasizing that mediation and dialogue ought to be linked to sincere acknowledgement of the past wrongs; forgiveness, without necessarily forgetting the wrongs; reconciliation aimed at building a new future together. He calls on previously fierce enemies “to speak from the stark and clear truth”⁴⁷ while learning to cultivate “a penitential memory”⁴⁸ open to exploring a new future together. This echoes Pope Benedict’s Post-Synodal Exhortation after the Second African Synod, where he reiterates that reconciliation can only be achieved from encounter with “a truth capable of transcending human standards of measure.”⁴⁹

In a classical theological reflection of the good Samaritan, Pope Francis makes an elaborate reflection on who indeed is the neighbour, and draws attention to the busy fast moving life that often creates no time for social friendships. As a result, there tends to be a predetermined distinction of who deserves to be the neighbour, and who ought to be automatically disqualified and termed as ‘minority’ group, immigrant or migrant, refugee or trafficked person. The deficit of communitarian concern witnessed in the African urban societies today, is founded on “local narcissism,”⁵⁰ which reflects the global virus of parenthesized solidarity, that is not only selective, but to a large extent discriminatory. The concept of neighbour is reduced to persons in close circles of relationships. Francis calls for a broader conceptualization of neighbour to include persons most in need. Hence, the story of the good Samaritan calls back humanity to a kind of love that “shatters the chains that keep us isolated and separate.”⁵¹

There have been several attempts in Africa to address the past wrongs through transitional justice processes.⁵² These have either taken a justice approach that seeks to prosecute the crimes or

⁴⁷Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 226.

⁴⁸Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 226.

⁴⁹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus*, 135.

⁵⁰ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 146.

⁵¹ Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 62.

⁵² Y. Selim, T. Murithi, “Transitional Justice and Development: Partners for Sustainable Peace in Africa?” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 6, 2 (2011) 58-72.

reconciliation approach that aims at reconciling individuals and communities in conflict. Truth commissions in South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, among others, have focused on bringing the victims and perpetrators of violence together in search for truth.⁵³ These commissions, to some extent, have attempted to address historical injustices, despite diverse contextual limitations. One of the major limitations has been the lack of political will to pursue the reconciliation agenda, reducing transitional justice processes to political theatrics meant to calm emotional expectations.

African needs to re-invent a governance system that is broadly inclusive and geared towards economic emancipation, creating more jobs and skills, especially for the majority youth population, holding those in power accountable, respecting human dignity and safeguarding the common good. *Fratelli Tutti* therefore, makes a strong appeal on the need to form “social friendship” advanced by fraternal economy that goes beyond individualistic attitudes sustained by parenthesized solidarity. Social friendship is founded on “social love” as the encyclical insists, making it possible to move towards achieving “a civilization of love” beyond the walls of separation and discrimination.⁵⁴ The advancement of democracy in Africa, and the rest of the world, will have to be based on the principles of common good and respect for human dignity, through actualization of democratic systems that respect fair distribution of national resources, care of the poor and marginalization, and creation of employment opportunities, especially for the youth.

⁵³Elias O. Opongo, *Transitional Justice in Post-Conflict Societies in Africa*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2016.

⁵⁴Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 183.