

**Chapter Five - A BETTER KIND OF POLITICS - *FRATELLI TUTTI***

What are the first images or ideas that come to mind when I hear the word “politics”? Are they connected in any way to love and charity?

At the same time proponents of some forms of liberalism, such as economic “neoliberalism,” see society as a mere collection of self-interested individuals and think of the “the people” as an abstract idea separate from lived reality. Populism thus creates a false sense of human fraternity through shared hatreds, while liberalism threatens to dismantle the idea of fraternity altogether.

We become part of a people by working and living together and by developing a shared identity, but “the people” should be open to diversity and change, not closed. One of the pillars of developing a healthy sense of “the people” is ensuring all have dignified work.

Popular leaders who cultivate a healthy sense of “the people” can and do exist. There are political parties and movements that engage in acts of political love, though such examples are all too rare. Too often we take the cynical view: political love is unrealistic, and politics is about pursuing self-interest through sheer force or tactical maneuvering.

However, Francis is adamant: “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.” (180)

Viewed in this way, politics is something more noble than posturing, marketing and media spin. These sow nothing but division, conflict and a bleak cynicism incapable of mobilizing people to pursue a common goal. At times, in thinking of the future, we do well to ask ourselves, “Why I am doing this?”, “What is my real aim?”

For as time goes on, reflecting on the past, the questions will not be: “How many people endorsed me?”, “How many voted for me?”, “How many had a positive image of me?” The real, and potentially painful, questions will be, “How much love did I put into my work?” “What did I do for the progress of our people?” “What mark did I leave on the life of society?” “What real bonds did I create?” “What positive forces did I unleash?” “How much social peace did I sow?” “What good did I achieve in the position that was entrusted to me?” (197)

**Reflection Questions – looking to healing the racial divide:**

1. What do you think are the first steps to building a “better kind of politics?”
2. How can you contribute?
3. How has the pandemic impacted you? Have you experienced a revived sense of community?
4. Will political love heal the racial divide? How?
5. Am I ever cynical about politics? Has reading this chapter (summary of the chapter is given above) changed my mind in any way?
6. As we look to May 2022, what do we see as the presentation on healing the racial divide? Who wants to work with me to work on details for gathering?