

Migration and State Borders in the Encyclical of Pope Francis

Migracije i državne granice u enciklici pape Franje

Stanislav Šota¹

Abstract

In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* on fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis expresses his views on migrants and state borders. Because of his concern for migrants and the need for open state borders, it can be safely said that he is the Pope of migrants. Aware that strong migration always leaves a lasting mark and profoundly changes the culture of a place or region, he calls on Christians and all people of goodwill to welcome migrants with open hearts and open arms, providing them with opportunities for new growth and a better life. The common good and the dignity of every person must have a central role in social ethics and social and political love. Accepting, protecting, promoting, and integrating migrants means understanding that every person is valuable, at all times and in all circumstances. All structures, both ecclesiastical and political, should respond to the globalization of migration with a globalization of cooperation, acceptance, and open borders.

Keywords: *Fratelli tutti*, Pope Francis, immigrants, borders, social friendship and fraternity

Sažetak

U enciklici *Fratelli tutti* o bratstvu i socijalnom prijateljstvu papa Franjo iznosi stavove o migrantima i državnim granicama. Zbog njegove brige o migrantima i potrebi otvorenosti državnih granica slobodno se može reći da je papa Franjo papa migranata. Svjestan da snažna migracija uvijek ostavlja trag i dubinski mijenja kulturu nekog mjesta ili kraja, poziva kršćane i sve ljude dobre volje da prihvate migrante otvorena srca, raširenih ruku, pružajući mogućnost za nov razvoj i život. Opće dobro i dostojanstvo svakog čovjeka mora imati središnju ulogu u socijalnoj etici, socijalnoj i političkoj

¹ Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, University of Josip Juraj Strossmayer in Osijek

ljubavi. Prihvatiti, zaštititi, promicati i integrirati migrante znači shvatiti da svaki čovjek vrijedi u svakom trenutku i u svim okolnostima. Sve strukture i crkvene i političke trebaju na globalizaciju migracija odgovoriti globalizacijom suradnje, prihvata i otvorenih granica.

Ključne riječi: *Fratelli tutti*, papa Franjo, imigranti, granice, socijalno prijateljstvo i bratstvo

Introduction

Pope Francis, often referred to as the »Pope of the Poor,« has consistently emphasized the importance of fostering a culture of care for migrants and rejecting the culture of walls that close state borders to them. Immediately after the election, in the first published exhortation on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world, *Evangelii gaudium*, published in 2013, he emphasized the need to pay attention to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, and that migrants pose a special challenge for him. Moved by human tragedies and the suffering of migrants, for the first pastoral visit on July 8, 2013, he chose Lampedusa, an island on the border between Africa and the European Union, the place of suffering of many migrants, around which thousands of migrants died in their desire to enter the European Union. On that occasion, he called for reform of the European political structures' attitude towards open borders and more humane policies, allowing migrants to enter Europe. He does not differentiate between migrants seeking a better life and refugees seeking a safe life. He defends those who migrate for economic reasons, considering it a natural human desire to strive for a better future.

In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, on fraternity and social friendship, he systematically presented his views on migrants and state borders. He pointed out that migration is a fundamental element of the world's future, and that migrants, in the countries where they come to live and work, are faced with the loss of the sense of fraternal responsibility on which civil society is based. Discussing migration, whether directly or indirectly, inevitably involves addressing state borders. The dignity of the human person, social fraternity, and friendship are the fundamental arguments Pope Francis uses to advocate for the openness of state borders and the acceptance of migrants seeking better living conditions.

In the first part, the paper talks about human beings, who are migratory beings by nature, with special emphasis on the views and words of Pope Francis on migration and migrants in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. The second

part explores his understanding of state borders in the context of migration, highlighting the challenges faced by migrants seeking to enter the wealthy countries of the European Union and North America. The Pope expresses great dissatisfaction with the fact that countries in the European Union and North America, on the one hand, enjoy an abundance of democracy and human rights, and, on the other hand, tighten and close their borders.

1. Fundamental Attitudes of Pope Francis Towards Migration in the Encyclical

1.1. *A Human Being is a Migratory Being*

By its very nature, a human being, like numerous animals, fish, reptiles, and other living beings, is a migratory being, a being that has always migrated since the beginning of man. »Homo sapiens has been traveling the world since its emergence 200,000 years ago. The prehistory and history of humanity are characterized by migrations, and all human habitats and dwellings have emerged as a result« (Žunec 2024, 8). The Old Testament also testifies to numerous migrations and people who migrated during their lives. Thus, Abraham first moved from Egypt to the Negeb, from the Negeb to Bethel, from Bethel to the land of Canaan at the oaks of Mamre in Hebron, from Hebron to Beersheba (cf. Gen 13 – 22).

»My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. Then we cried out to the Lord, the God of our ancestors, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our misery, toil, and oppression. So, the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, Lord, have given me. Place the basket before the Lord your God and bow down before him. Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the Lord your God has given to you and your household« (Deuteronomy 26:5-10).

The Book of Leviticus calls for treating the stranger as a fellow citizen: »When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them

as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God« (Lev 19:33-34). The New Testament also testifies to the migrations of that time. It is mentioned that Joseph went from Galilee to Judea, from the city of Nazareth to Bethlehem, then from Bethlehem to Egypt, and finally from Egypt back to Nazareth (cf. Lk 1-2).

Migrations are a historical constant and human need, an inevitable phenomenon that has existed from the earliest times to the present day. They represent the foundations on which today's world is built. They are the cause of the emergence and the consequence of the disappearance of numerous societies, cultures, states, politics, and even civilizations. In today's modern world, migration has become an integral part of the Western *acquis* of human rights, according to which everyone has the right to leave the country (Vlada Republike Hrvatske 2009, art. 13). From a geopolitical perspective, in addition to war conflicts and persecution, the most common causes of migration are material and economic in nature. In recent times, some migrations can be called traditional, because they have been established for decades, for example, migrations from Mexico to the USA, or European internal migration trends, which mainly move from east to west, for example, migrations of Croats and Poles to Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, or migrations from Ukraine and Russia to the Baltic countries.

The migration policy of the Republic of Croatia notes that international migration primarily occurs in three forms. The first form is the legal or free migration of individuals who change their country of residence or stay at their own will and within the framework of existing laws; the second form is forced migration when people flee in fear of persecution, various conflicts, violation of human rights; and the third is illegal entry and stay in another country. On the other hand, the causes of migration can be categorized into four groups: economic, social, political, and humanitarian (Hrvatski sabor 2007).

Andrea Bilandžija categorizes the causes of migration in a similar manner. The first category of migrations is socio-political, encompassing persecutions due to ethnic, religious, racial, or cultural affiliation, as well as political instability, war conflicts, threats of conflict, and persecutions of the civilian population. The second category is demographic-economic factors: the country's poor economic situation, low living standards, high unemployment, and high poverty rates are the main reasons for the migration of the working-age and fertile population. The third category of causes comprises ecological factors that have become increasingly visible over the years through climate change, extreme natural disasters, floods, and droughts, resulting in shortages of food

and drinking water. The fourth category comprises historical-geopolitical reasons stemming from post-colonial ties or dependence on the mother countries or blocs of countries, e.g., Algeria-France, Morocco-Spain. Geographical proximity, knowledge of the language and culture are the most common reasons for migration from former colonial countries (Bilandžija 2021, 153). According to Mikac and Dragović, migrations are caused by »mixed push and pull factors - from a combination of war destruction, ethnic intolerance, lack of public security, climate change, and poverty to looking for everything that is the opposite of their existing condition and environment« (Mikac and Dragović 2017, 132).

It should be noted that the Republic of Croatia – particularly during the period from 2017 to 2022, when migration reached its peak – underwent substantial shifts in migratory dynamics (Komušanac 2023, 184–185). Acknowledging the limits of this vantage point, it remains instructive to analyze integration at the local level to discern both the challenges and the salient facets of integration efforts, namely: the legal-political dimension (encompassing a broad spectrum of rights, from legal status to access to health care), the socio-economic dimension (labor rights, economic status, education), and the cultural-religious dimension (Gregurović et al. 2024, 376–396).

In response to the broader initiatives of the universal Church, the Church in the Republic of Croatia has undertaken pastoral and social action on behalf of migrants. Notably, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) in Croatia, under the leadership of its director, Fr. Stanko Perica, has played a prominent role. Perica, together with Marčinko, cautions against the emergence of resistance within the host society, characterizing it as a »reflex of resistance« that is, in fact, at odds with Christian doctrine (Marčinko and Perica 2023, 434–435). The authors further contend that migration affords the Catholic Church an opportunity² to articulate and enact its mission with greater clarity and resolve, positioning itself as »an instrument of reconciliation and the establishment of just relations« (Marčinko and Perica 2023, 443).

1.2. *Hope, Joy, Dignity, and Signs of the Times*

Pope Francis was among the first to speak about human tragedies and the suffering of migrants. Right from the start, in his first published exhortation on

² This opportunity—and the interpretive frameworks for reading today's »signs of the times,« among which migration is a salient example—is likewise identified by the contributors who, from diverse perspectives, develop their analyses in the conference proceedings *Theology Confronting the Challenges: Identity – Migration – University* (Kovač and Barić 2021).

the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world, *Evangelii gaudium*, published in 2013 after his election, Pope Francis expressed his concern for migrants. »It is essential to draw near to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, in which we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this appears to bring us no tangible and immediate benefits. I think of the homeless, the addicted, refugees... Migrants present a particular challenge for me...« (Francis EG 2013, 210). During his first pastoral visit to Lampedusa on July 8, 2013, at the site of the suffering of many migrants, an island that borders Africa and the European Union, the Pope called for a reform of the attitude of political structures in Europe in order to open borders and doors to more humane policies and allow migrants to enter Europe, which on the one hand enjoys an abundance of democracy and human rights, and on the other hand tightens its borders (Kim 2015, 140-142). He does not differentiate between migrants seeking a better life and refugees seeking a safe life. He defends those who migrate for economic or any other reason, believing that it is human nature to strive for a better future (Francis 2017b).

Discussions about migration became even more topical in 2015, when the EU was considered an oasis of peace, security, and prosperity. Namely, a large number of people from the Middle East, due to war destruction, as well as from Africa, for economic reasons, migrated to countries within the European Union (EUR-Lex 2017). Since then, the topic of migration has been indispensable in all European countries.

On January 17, 2016, the Jubilee of Mercy and the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis led a Holy Mass in St. Peter's Square in Rome in front of 5,000 migrants. He welcomed their act of hope and emphasized that each of them brings a precious culture and experience of oppression to the West. »Dear migrants and refugees, each of you carries within you a story, a culture, precious values, and often, sadly, also experiences of misery, oppression, and fear. Your presence in this Square is a sign of hope in God. Do not let them rob you of the hope and joy of living, which springs from the experience of divine mercy« (Francis 2016a).

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, published the same year (2016), an entire issue on love in the family is devoted to contemporary migrations. They are a sign of the times that must be dealt with, especially to understand all the consequences they have on family life.

»This phenomenon, in different ways, affects the lives of whole populations in different parts of the world. The Church has exercised a major role in this area. Maintaining and expanding this witness to the Gospel (cf. Mt 25,35) is urgently needed today more than ever.... Human mobility, which

corresponds to the natural historical movement of peoples, can prove to be a genuine enrichment for both families that migrate and countries that welcome them. Furthermore, forced migration of families, resulting from situations of war, persecution, poverty and injustice, and marked by the vicissitudes of a journey that often puts lives at risk, traumatizes people and destabilizes families. In accompanying migrants, the Church needs a specific pastoral program addressed not only to families that migrate but also to those family members who remain behind. This pastoral activity must be implemented with due respect for their cultures, for the human and religious formation from which they come and for the spiritual richness of their rites and traditions...« (Francis AL 2016b, 46).

This is highly demanding because migrations often involve illegal circumstances supported by various international criminal circles, which causes migrants to stay in migrant camps without starting to integrate into society.

Pope Francis has often spoken about the dignity of migrants, the need to accept, integrate, and protect migrants, especially from the perspective of social friendship, fraternity, and love. Several quality works have been written in the Croatian-speaking area about his attitude towards migrants (Kovač and Barić 2021; Baloban and Petrović Štefanac 2022; Milikić and Perica 2024), which analyze his views and messages from a theological, ethical, social and societal aspects, in particular the contribution of the Holy See and the Department for Migrants and Refugees of the Dicastery for promoting integral human development in the drafting of the Marrakesh Agreement on Safe and Regular Migration in 2018, and the subsequently signed New York Agreement on Refugees (Dugalić and Jakobfi 2021, 124-131).

The best insight into Pope Francis's attitudes towards migrants is found in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, an encyclical on fraternity and social friendship (Francis FT 2020b). It emphasizes that migrations will constitute a key element in the future of the world, and that today they are faced with the loss of the sense of fraternal responsibility on which civil society is based (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 39).

1.3. *Accept, Protect, Promote, and Integrate*

Ideally, unnecessary migrations should be avoided, which can be achieved by creating conditions for dignified life and growth in the countries of origin, so that conditions for integral development can be found there. However, until serious progress is made in this direction, it is the duty of every person to respect

the right of every person to find a place where they can not only satisfy their basic needs and those of their family, but also fully realize themselves as a person. »Many migrants have fled from war, persecution and natural catastrophes. Others, rightly, are seeking opportunities for themselves and their families. They dream of a better future and they want to create the conditions for achieving it« (Francis FT 2020b, 38). The Pope then explains that migrants are »not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person. No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we can show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human« (Francis FT 2020b, 39). Therefore, he emphasizes that the efforts of the entire social and church community regarding migrants should be summarized in four verbs: *accept*, *protect*, *promote*, and *integrate*.³ For him, the four actions, approaches, or attitudes towards migrants and migrations are not a case of implementing welfare programs, but a way to build cities and countries that, »while preserving their respective cultural and religious identity, are open to differences in the spirit of human fraternity« (Francis FT 2020b, 129). He has before him migrants who have migrated mainly for demographic, economic, environmental, and socio-political reasons, although he does not exclude historical and geopolitical causes of migration either. The acceptance, protection, promotion, and integration of migrants includes specific steps and measures, especially in relation to those fleeing major humanitarian crises:

- increasing and simplifying the granting of visas,
- adopting programs of individual and community sponsorship,
- opening humanitarian corridors for the most vulnerable refugees,
- providing suitable and dignified housing,
- guaranteeing personal security and access to basic services,
- ensuring adequate consular assistance and the right to retain personal identity documents and equitable access to the justice system,

³ To accept means to ensure legal entry into the countries of destination. To protect means to undertake a series of actions aimed at protecting the dignity and human rights of migrants, regardless of their legal status. To promote would mean enabling migrants to realize themselves as persons in all the dimensions in which God desires them to be in the countries to which they have come. To integrate means to create coexistence between the indigenous community and migrants in the cultural, intellectual, social, economic, and every other dimension of human life. To integrate does not mean assimilating migrants, but rather to get to know and gradually discover the values and worth of the dominant population vis-à-vis migrants, and vice versa, enabling the granting of citizenship that is not conditioned by financial requirements or language knowledge (Francis 2017a).

- the possibility of opening bank accounts and the guarantee of the minimum needed to survive,
- freedom of movement and the possibility of employment,
- protecting minors and ensuring their regular access to education,
- providing for programs of temporary guardianship or shelter,
- guaranteeing religious freedom,
- promoting integration of migrants into society,
- supporting the reuniting of families and preparing local communities for the process of integration,
- for those who arrived, apply the concept of citizenship, which is based on the equality of rights and duties,
- creation of comprehensive legislation for migrants and migration,
- creation of medium and long-term plans for the inclusion of migrants,
- using political programs based on solidarity to promote development in the countries from which migrants come, without interfering with their culture and worldview,
- to encourage the local population and migrants to bring forth something new from themselves in the encounter with the other, different (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 130-134).

1.4. Social and Political Love

In accepting, protecting, promoting, and integrating migrants, it is also important to pay attention to religious, cultural, and historical differences that are a vital component in shaping the character, culture, and civilization of the East. It is equally important to strengthen universal common human rights in order to ensure a dignified life for all men and women in the East and the West, avoiding the politics of double standards (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 136). The path to follow is one of closeness and a culture of encounter. Fostering a culture of encounter must become a shared passion for each individual, community, and culture (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 30). Humanity needs to burn with the desire to embrace everyone, to become brothers without denying one's own identity. The most powerful tool to defend the central role of the person and find the right balance is the double moral duty: on the one hand, to protect the rights of one's own citizens, and on the other, to guarantee assistance and acceptance for migrants (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 40). In other words, fostering social fraternity and friendship is the most excellent tool for accepting migrants.

Fraternity and social friendship⁴ must not remain a beautiful, generally accepted idea, but a concrete reality that has many challenges. For it to come to life, not only are better politics that will serve the true common good needed, but also systematic care for nurturing social and political love. Social love⁵ makes a person love the common good and sincerely pursue the good of all people, observing human beings not only individually but also in the social dimension that unites them. It is based on the truth of relationships. It enables progress towards a civilization of love. Such love, with its universal dynamics, builds human beings, the world, and society; it is not a fruitless feeling, but the best way to develop every person. It is based on social dialogue, a common global ethic of solidarity, social ethics, and cooperation, shaped by a spirit of service that fosters awareness of co-responsibility, approaches others, expresses one's thoughts and feelings, listens to others, seeks to understand them, and finds a common language. Justice is an indispensable means in realizing the ideal of universal social fraternity and love. Social love gives priority to the last; it hides behind everything that is done for the last, the deprived, the abandoned, and the marginalized (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 182-183, 198-199).

Political love finds expression in the spirit of openness towards every person, a love that integrates, brings together, enables encounters, and seeks convergence around fundamental issues for a better future for everyone. It knows how to listen, it sacrifices for others, and it has patience in creating a polyhedron in which everyone has their place, tries to live and teach the values of respect for others, is ready to accept all differences, recognizes the priorities of the dignity of every human being, promotes dialogue, tolerance, coexistence, and peace. Political love is specific and close; it combines love with hope and trust (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 191-196).

Through social and political love, a kind of spirituality of fraternity and a more effective organization of the world is achieved, which cries out for

⁴ »Building social friendship does not only call for rapprochement between groups who took different sides at some troubled period of history, but also for a renewed encounter with the most impoverished and vulnerable sectors of society« (Francis FT 2020b, 223).

⁵ In elaborating and interpreting social love, Pope Francis refers to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (Papinsko vijeće »Iustitia et pax« 2005, 207) and John Paul II (John Paul II RH 1980, p. 288). »There is a kind of love that is 'elicited': its acts proceed directly from the virtue of charity and are directed to individuals and peoples. There is also a 'commanded' love, expressed in those acts of charity that spur people to create more sound institutions, more just regulations, more supportive structures... It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering« (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 186).

change in human hearts, habits, and ways of life (cf. Francis FT 2020b, 165). Real social dialogue,⁶ social peace, a social pact based on a cultural pact,⁷ as a result of social and political love, according to Pope Francis, would enable the dignified acceptance, protection, and integration of migrants, and migrants would become »a blessing, a source of enrichment and new gift that encourages a society to grow« (Francis FT 2020b, 135).

It is a significant fact that during the last Synod of Bishops on Synodality in 2024, the Pope invited everyone in the Church, especially the participants in the Synod, to a penitential service in which they prayed for the forgiveness of sins. Among the sins he named, he mentioned the sin against migrants (Francis and XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 2024).

Dignified acceptance, protection, and integration of migrants cannot be achieved without respecting their human dignity.⁸ The exhortation also addresses the causes of the denial of dignity to migrants. It is significant that the Pope uses the term »culture« for the denial of dignity: *culture of walls*,⁹ *culture of rejection*,¹⁰ *cultural sclerosis*,¹¹ *cultural colonization*,¹² *disintegration and deconstructionism in culture*.¹³ By using the word »culture,« he wants to strongly empha-

⁶ Real social dialogue is the realism of those who are convinced that they must be true to their principles, but at the same time recognize that others also have the right to try to be true to their own principles (Francis FT 2020b, 221).

⁷ »A cultural covenant eschews a monolithic understanding of the identity of a particular place, and it entails respect for diversity by offering opportunities for advancement and social integration to all«. Such a covenant also requires the acceptance of renouncing certain things for the sake of the common good. (Francis FT 2020b, 221).

⁸ »That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change« (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 213).

⁹ »Walls are raised, walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people« (Francis FT 2020b, 27).

¹⁰ »A readiness to discard others finds expression in vicious attitudes that we thought long past, such as racism, which retreats underground only to keep re-emerging« (Francis FT 2020b, 20).

¹¹ By cultural sclerosis, he means narrow-minded nationalisms (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 134, 141).

¹² By cultural colonization, the Pope means the negative phenomena of globalization and the globalized neoliberal unscrupulous economic progress of individuals and society, in which the rich impose value systems on the weak and poor, human progress in general without a common direction (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 29), unethical behavior in international relations (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 126), and consumerist relativism on the moral, social and cultural levels (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 209).

¹³ Disintegration and deconstructionism in culture occur because the neoliberal globalized society permeated with digital culture enables the rich to build everything anew in relation to the poor, while human rights are not equal for everyone (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 22); meaningless individualism is emphasized, and individual rights are misunderstood (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 111); individual interests are given priority, which weakens the communitarian dimension of human existence (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 12); and

size the negative attitudes of rich countries and their often official policies towards migrants and migration.

2. State Borders in the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*

Discussing migrations, both directly and indirectly, implies discussing state borders. The concept of a border, or state border, has not had the same meaning throughout history, but it has always played an important role in the formation and survival of a state, as well as in preserving the identity of the peoples who live within it. In international law, a state border is defined as a line up to which a state territory extends or a surface that intersects the airspace, the surface of the Earth, and the subsoil between neighboring countries. Borders are divided into natural, artificial, and astronomical.¹⁴ Borders are always those lines that are determined by international treaties or are conventionally accepted as border lines between two neighboring countries.

The three constitutive elements of every country, as a kind of abstract creation, are the population, the government, and the territory. This means that the population on that same territory, in order to avoid anarchy, must create and organize its own rules by which the political government operates. Political power is often faced with the challenging and demanding establishment of a government that is completely equal and fair for all. The goal must be the preservation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, especially in the context of contemporary neoliberal predatory capitalism, the danger of corrupt behavior of citizens, and the present social inequalities caused by economic and social inequalities (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999, 599–263).

In addition to preserving internal peace and security, the authorities and society in the countries of the European Union, to which the Republic of Croatia belongs, also face the need to maintain state borders. The topicality of the issue of the Republic of Croatia's state borders is extremely important due to the geostrategic position of Croatia, i.e., the borders of the Republic of Croatia are also the external borders of the European Union, in which there is a system of generally unhindered crossing of state borders (Grobenski and Jakopović 2018, 265).

concern for one self, one's own group, and personal interests becomes a fundamental value of modern human being and society. (Cf. Francis FT 2020b, 166).

¹⁴ Historically, the border was not a line dividing territory under the sovereignty of certain states, but rather a specific strip of land with defensive purposes (Cf. Grobenski and Jakopović 2018, 264–265).

The encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, in its discussion on migrants, also addresses state borders. Aware that substantial immigration always leaves a mark and profoundly changes the culture of a place or region, relying on the exemplary life of St. Francis who had a »heart without borders,« a heart capable of transcending interpersonal differences of origin, nationality, skin color and religion, the Pope calls on Christians and all people of good will to welcome migrants who come not for political, but exclusively economic reasons, with open hearts, with outstretched arms, providing the opportunity for new growth, enabling them to be who they are (Francis FT 2020b, 3).

Pope Francis addressed state borders at the very beginning of his pontificate in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*. He pointed out that he is the shepherd of a Church that has no borders and feels itself the mother of all, and he calls on state authorities to open their borders to the most vulnerable, referring to migrants. »I exhort all countries to a generous openness which, rather than fearing the loss of local identity, will prove capable of creating new forms of cultural synthesis« (Francis EG 2013b, 210). For the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2015, he wished that the Church would be a Church without borders, a Church that is mother to all people, a Church that spreads a culture of acceptance and solidarity in the world, a Church that considers no one useless, unwanted or rejected, one that lives its motherhood, a Christian community that nourishes, guides and shows the way, patiently follows, becomes close in prayer and works of mercy. From the beginning, the Church has been the mother with a heart open to the whole world and without borders (Francis 2014).

In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, he sets out two fundamental principles that justify allowing migrants to settle or arrive in countries where they wish to work and live: (1) respect for the dignity of a human person and (2) social fraternity and friendship.

2.1. *Respect for the Dignity of a Human Person*

The dignity of the human person is the first argument from which Pope Francis begins when discussing the need to open state borders to migrants seeking better living conditions. Every person and every human being has the right to a dignified life and integral development, and no country can deny this fundamental right. »Every person has this right even if they are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations; namely, this does not detract from their great dignity as human persons, which is not based on circumstances,

but on the intrinsic worth of their being« (Francis FT 2020b, 107-108). It is necessary to open the borders so that everyone can become who they are because God has created all »human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters« (Francis FT 2020b, 5).

Respect for human dignity implies open borders so that no one feels »excluded because of his or her place of birth, much less because of privileges enjoyed by others who were born in lands of greater opportunity. The limits and borders of individual states cannot stand in the way of this. As it is unacceptable that some have fewer rights by virtue of being women, it is likewise unacceptable that the mere place of one's birth or residence should result in his or her possessing fewer opportunities for a developed and dignified life« (Francis FT 2020b, 121).

That respect for human dignity comes before closing borders to poor migrants was indicated by Pope Francis in the exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* two years before the great migrant crisis in Europe. »With due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity« (Francis EG 2013b, 190).

The exhortation *Christus vivit*, addressed to young people, calls for awareness that the Earth is our common home, all people are brothers, in God's plan every person is born to develop, and every life is a calling, therefore it is necessary to encourage, develop and nurture all that a person is within themselves, especially to discover the beauty hidden in every human being and their dignity (cf. Francis CV 2019, 163).

The world exists for everyone, because all of us humans come into this world with the same dignity. Differences in skin color, religion, skills, origin, residence, and many others cannot be pushed to the forefront or used to justify the privileges of a few at the expense of the rights of all. Consequently, we, as a community, are obliged to ensure that every person can live with dignity and have adequate opportunities for their integral development (Francis FT 2020b, 119).

According to Pope Francis, citizens of a country that accepts and integrates migrants, in addition to being aware that every person has inalienable dignity, that every human being is a brother or sister, and that the world belongs to everyone, are obliged to encourage the authorities of their own country to improve the living conditions in the country from which migrants come (Francis FT 2020b, 125). There are societies in which this principle is only par-

tially accepted. They agree that everyone should be given a chance, but they believe that it all depends on the individual.

The openness of state borders to migrants encompasses the integration of economic and political relations with neighboring nations, which should be accompanied by the educational process that promotes the fundamental value of love for one's neighbor as a universal principle of integration (Francis FT 2020b, 151). Investing effort in upbringing and education, developing habits of solidarity, the ability to think more holistically about human life, and spiritual depth are essential for achieving quality human relationships.

Sincere love of humanity, patriotism, and love of God are constitutive elements of respecting the dignity of migrants and openness to foreigners. To build a sense of community and view the world as one family, state and civil authorities need to develop a collective awareness that the world society is not the sum of different countries, but a society of togetherness that exists between them (Francis FT 2020b, 149).

In the context of the universal and the local, the Pope cites two extremes in relation to state borders, on the one hand, a fascination with abstract globalized universalism, and on the other hand, permeation with petty provincialism that wants state borders to become a folklore museum: »Just as there can be no dialogue with others without a sense of our own identity, so there can be no openness between peoples except on the basis of love for one's own land, one's own people, one's own cultural roots. There is a false openness to the universal that arises from the empty superficiality of those who are unable to fully understand their own homeland, or of those who harbor in their hearts an insurmountable resentment towards their own people« (Francis FT 2020b, 143). However, Pope Francis, as Milikić and Perica recognize, does not view this as a radical exclusiveness of these two positions, but rather as an opportunity that local friendship and openness nourish the universal one (Milikić and Perica 2022, 235-238).

2.2. *Social Fraternity and Friendship*

To walk the path of social friendship and universal fraternity means to understand that every person has value, at all times and in all circumstances. No one determines in which culture, society, region, or border they will be born, live, or grow up. Some regions are deprived of natural resources or are less economically developed, but this is no justification for people in these areas to live with less dignity or to *close borders* to them. Christians are obliged to respect

the right of every person to find a place where they can not only satisfy their basic needs and the needs of their family, but also fully realize themselves as a person (Francis FT 2020b, 106).

Social fraternity and friendship, by their very nature, also imply social and political love that opens borders to those who, for economic reasons, cannot achieve their goals in their own countries. It is not a top-down program of state welfare, but a common force of all people, open to differences and diversity, while maintaining their cultural and religious identity, in the name of human fraternity, both for immigrants and for the native population, in order to build cities, towns, and countries, while respecting every person and their dignity. Pope Francis's attitude and relation towards state borders should be viewed in the context of open fraternity that enables us »to recognize, appreciate and love every person regardless of their physical proximity, regardless of which part of the world they were born or live in, and the basis for the realization of such an attitude is manifested in universal love and its realization for all« (Francis FT 2020b, 8).

Cultivating a culture of encounter affirms social fraternity and friendship. A society and state of *open borders* strive to promote a culture of encounter that shapes a polyhedron with many faces and sides, in which all come together to form a unity rich in nuances. Citizens imbued with a culture of encounter mutually permeate, accept, complement, refine, improve, encourage, protect, integrate, enrich, seek consensus, and build bridges. In fostering a culture of encounter, along with the engagement of members of the Church, we need active state and civil society institutions whose vision reaches beyond the freedom of mechanisms aimed at the success of economic, political or worldview systems, and whose members are genuinely and sincerely oriented towards people and the common good (Francis FT 2020b, 30; 86; 129; 135; 187; 224).

The acceptance, protection, and integration of migrants, as well as the need for open borders to foreigners, are necessary, not only from the perspective of private property, but also from the awareness of the general purpose of goods. In this way, every country is a country of foreigners. »A firm belief in the common destination of the earth's goods requires that this principle also be applied to nations, their territories, and their resources. Seen from the standpoint not only of the legitimacy of private property and the rights of its citizens, but also of the first principle of the common destination of goods, we can then say that each country also belongs to the foreigner, inasmuch as a territory's goods must not be denied to a needy person coming from elsewhere« (Francis FT 2020b, 84).

Pope Francis expresses personal understanding for those who have suspicions and fears about migrants and who advocate closing borders or sending in military forces to protect state borders. He considers suspicion and fear to be part of our innate instinct for self-defense against the new and unknown. He is aware that universal social fraternity, friendship and openness without borders is a dream, but points out that this dream needs to be made concrete: »Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all« (Francis, 2020b, no. 8). He believes that in the hearts of today's humanity, there must be a change in the awareness of common origins, mutual belonging and a future shared with all. Such awareness will enable the development of new beliefs, attitudes, and lifestyles, both in relation to migrants and in understanding state borders (Francis LS 2020a, 202).

The greatest danger to social fraternity and friendship, as well as to the acceptance of migrants in general, lies in *local narcissism* that does not express a healthy love for one's own people and culture. Behind this is a closed spirit, born of a certain insecurity and fear of others, that prefers to build defensive walls to protect itself (Francis LT 2020b, 146). Since evangelization also includes dialogue in three areas – with countries, with society, and with culture – it is a particular challenge for the Church today to promote the full development of the human being, protect the dignity of every person, strive for the common good of each individual, and thus cultivate a culture of encounter by welcoming, protecting, and integrating migrants. In relation to migrants, every country should become an *Assistance State* as Pope John Paul II spoke of in his encyclical *Centesimus annus*, which seeks to understand, get to know, raise awareness, and especially help the socially vulnerable, including migrants, and to have open borders for their reception (John Paul II CA 2001, 49).

On September 10, 2020, Pope Francis addressed members of the European project »Snapshots from the Borders«, praising their three-year initiative that includes both local authorities and civil society organizations, noting that state borders should be windows, not barriers of divisions. »Borders, long considered as barriers of division, can instead become 'windows,' spaces of mutual knowledge, of mutual enrichment, of communion in diversity; they can become places where models are experimented with to overcome the difficulties that the new arrivals bring for the indigenous communities« (Catholic News Agency 2020).

On April 30, 2023, after a mass in Kossuth Lajos Square in Budapest, he criticized the policy of no migrants and closed borders. He emphasized that it is sad and painful to see closed state borders as closed doors. »It is beautiful when borders do not represent boundaries that separate, but points of contact, and when the believers of Christ emphasize the love that unites us, and not the historical, cultural, and religious differences that divide us. I pray for a world of brothers and sisters, not walls and barricades« (Wooden 2023).

In a one-hour interview on February 21, 2024, he called attempts by Texas officials to shut down a Catholic charity that provides humanitarian aid to undocumented migrants at the state's border with Mexico pure madness (Falconer 2024). Vatican News reported that on September 27, 2024, Pope Francis thanked the Catholic University of Leuven for opening its borders to accommodate refugees who had to flee their country. »What we need is a culture that opens up borders, that is not sectarian, that does not exalt itself above others – we need a culture that is mixed into our world like good yeast, that contributes to the common good of humanity« (Francis 2024).

Migration and the openness of state borders should be viewed as a reality that positively transforms traditional measures of stability, cuts into the psychology and human life of modern human beings, and determines new ways of thinking, acting, and living.

Conclusion

Pope Francis presents his most systematic views on the attitude towards migrants and state borders in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*. When discussing borders, Pope Francis begins with the premise that the Gospel embodies an essential principle of totality and comprehensiveness. He is the pope of migrants and open state borders, especially for those migrants who migrate to richer countries in search of a better life. Desiring systematic care for migrants, he established the Department for Migrants and Refugees within the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Another premise or argument to overcome the culture of walls, to overcome the creation of defensive attitudes in the policies of rich countries, to overcome fear and marginalization, and to cultivate a culture of encounter and openness of state borders is the need to build the awareness that human beings are bordered beings without borders, that is, that human beings have migrated and changed places of residence since the beginning, and consequently changed the borders they have determined. No one determines in which culture, society, region, or border

they will be born, live, or grow up. Pope Francis encourages fraternal gratuitousness based on God's gratuitousness of giving. Moreover, just as there is a social mortgage over every private property, so there is over every state a social mortgage of the dignity of every person, and there is God's plan for human beings. The common good and the dignity of every person must have a central role in social ethics, social fraternity and friendship. To walk the path of social friendship and universal fraternity means to understand that every person is valuable, at all times and in all circumstances. Social fraternity and friendship involve the efforts of all people in support of migrants, which can be summarized with four verbs: accept, protect, promote, and integrate. It is not a top-down state welfare program, but a joint effort of all people, open to differences and diversity, while maintaining their cultural and religious identity, in order to build cities, towns, and countries, with respect for each person and their dignity. The principle of the common good is transformed into a call to solidarity and a preferential option for the poor. It is the foundation of a heart without borders, a human heart capable of transcending interpersonal differences of origin, nationality, skin color, and religion. Dignity and love for one's neighbor must be genuine and sincere. It wastes nothing necessary for transformation.

In the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope calls on both political and state structures to respond to the globalization of migration with a globalization of mercy, cooperation, and acceptance. He expects all Christians to build a Church with an open heart, a Church without borders, a Church that is the mother of all people, a Church that spreads and nurtures a culture of encounter, acceptance, and solidarity, a Church that considers no one useless, unwanted, or rejected, one that nourishes, guides, shows the way, patiently accompanies, becomes close, a Church that opens its arms to receive everyone without distinction, one that strives to overcome defensive attitudes, fear, indifference, closed borders, and marginalization of migrants.

References

- Anderson, James and Liam O'Dowd. 1999. Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance. *Regional Studies* 33/7: 599-263.
- Baloban, Stjepan and Dubravka Petrović Štefanac (ed.). 2022. *Fratelli tutti: poziv na socijalno prijateljstvo i sveopće bratstvo*. Zagreb: Centar za promicanje socijalnog nauka Crkve – Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Bible. New International Version. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

- Bilandžija, Andrea. 2021. Dinamika afričkih migracija prema EU: geografski uzorci kretanja, geopolitički uzroci i sigurnosni izazovi. *Forum za sigurnosne studije* 4/5: 148-167.
- Catholic News Agency. 2020. Pope Francis: borders should be 'windows,' not barriers of division (2020, September 10). In: <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/45775/pope-francis-borders-should-be-windows-not-barriers-of-division> (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Dugalić, Vladimir and Igor Jakobfi. 2021. Migracije kao znak vremena - Doprinos pape Franje rješavanju problema suvremenih migracija i prihvata migranata. In: Mateo Žanić, Dražen Živić, Sanja Špoljar Vržina and Geron Marko Miletić (ed.). *Suvremene migracije u Republici Hrvatskoj - Uzroci, posljedice i aktualni trendovi*, 107-140. Zagreb: Institut Društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar.
- EUR-Lex. 2017. Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council. Tenth report on relocation and resettlement (2017, March 2). In: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52017DC0202> (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Falconer, Rebecca. 2024. Pope Francis on U.S. border crisis: Migration »makes a country grow«. *Axios*. In: <https://www.axios.com/2024/05/21/pope-francis-cbs-interview-highlights> (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis EG. 2013. *Evangelii gaudium*, Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Francis. 2014. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees (2015). Church without frontiers, Mother to all. In: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20140903_world-migrants-day-2015.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis. 2016a. Angelus Saint Peter's Square Sunday. 17 January 2016. *The Holy See*. In: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2016/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20160117.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis AL. 2016b. *Amoris Laetitia*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Francis. 2017a. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 104th World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2018. [14 January 2018] »Welcoming, protecting, promoting and integrating migrants and refugees«. *The Holy See*. In: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20170815_world-migrants-day-2018.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis. 2017b. Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the Celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace. 1 January 2018. Migrants and refugees: men and women in search of peace. *The Holy See*. In: https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/peace/documents/papa-francesco_20171113_messaggio-51giornata-mondiale-pace2018.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis CV. 2019. *Christus vivit*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Francis LS. 2020a. *Laudato si'*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Francis FT. 2020b. *Fratelli tutti*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Francis. 2024. Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Pope Francis to Luxembourg and Belgium. (26-29 September 2024). Meeting with University Professors Address of His Holiness. Promotiezaal of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Friday, 27

- September 2024. *The Holy See*. In: <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2024/september/documents/20240927-belgio-docenti-universitari.html> (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Francis and XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (2024) For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission. Synod 2021-2024. In: https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Gregurović, Margareta, Simona Kuti and Snježana Gregurović. 2024. Integracija na lokalnoj razini: iskustva »starih« i »novih« izbjeglica u Gradu Zagrebu. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 40/2: 367-401.
- Grobenski, Silvio and Eugen Jakopović. 2018. Nadzor državne granice. *Paragraf* 2/1: 261-282.
- Hrvatski sabor. 2007. Migracijska politika Republike Hrvatske za 2007/2008. *Official Gazette* 83. In: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2007_08_83_2613.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- John Paul II RH. 1980. *Redemptor hominis*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- John Paul II CA. 2001. *Centesimus annus*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Kim, Dennis. 2015. Papa na granici. *Concilium* 51/3: 139-145.
- Komušanac, Monika. 2023. Recentna imigracija radne snage u Hrvatsku: razmjeri, trendovi, obilježja. *Migracijske i etničke teme* 39/2: 183-207.
- Marčinko, Ana and Stanko Perica. 2023. Migranti među nama: refleksi otpora i refleksi prilike. *Bogoslovska smotra* 93/3: 431-455.
- Kovač, Nedjeljka s. Valerija and Denis Barić. 2021. *Teologija pred izazovima: Identitet – Migracije – Sveučilište*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost – Hrvatska sekcija Europskoga društva za katoličku teologiju.
- Mikac, Robert and Filip Dragović. 2017. Masovne migracije: izazovi, posljedice i put naprijed. *Forum za sigurnosne studije* 1/1: 130-152.
- Milikić, Tadija and Stanko Perica. 2022. Migranti i migracije u svjetlu sveopćega bratstva. In: Stjepan Baloban and Dubravka Petrović Štefanac (ed.). *Fratelli tutti: poziv na socijalno prijateljstvo i sveopće bratstvo*, 205-257. Zagreb: Centar za promicanje socijalnog nauka Crkve – Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Milikić, Tadija i Stanko Perica. 2024. *Migrantsko pitanje u svjetlu kršćanskoga nauka i djelovanja. The Migrant Issue in Light of Christian Teachings and Action*. Zagreb: Fakultet filozofije i religijskih znanosti Sveučilišta u Zagrebu – Filozofsko-teološki institut Družbe Isusove u Zagrebu.
- Papinsko vijeće »Iustitia et pax«. 2005. *Kompedij socijalnog nauka Crkve*. Zagreb: Kršćanska sadašnjost.
- Vlada Republike Hrvatske. 2009. Odluka o objavi Opće deklaracije o ljudskim pravima. *Official Gazette* 12. In: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/medunarodni/2009_11_12_143.html (Accessed 16. III. 2025).
- Wooden, Cindy. 2023. Borders should be points of contact, not separation, pope says in Hungary. *Catholic News Service*. In: <https://catholicreview.org/borders-should-be-points-of-contact-not-separation-pope-says-in-hungary/> (Accessed 16. III. 2025).

Žunec, Ozren. 2024. *Migratio perennis: ljudska kretanja i strukture vremena i društva*. In: Sandra Cvikić (ed.). *Ilegalne migracije i (ne)sigurnost na hrvatskim granicama - Programska knjižica - 26. znanstveno-stručni skup »Vukovar '91. - Trideset i tri godine poslije«*, 6. Vukovar: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar.

Language editor: prof. Damir Latin