What is a brother?

Sr Margaret Atkins

Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli tutti* took as its theme 'fraternity and social friendship', and employed familiar but often under-explored language of brother- and sisterhood. As we mark the second anniversary of the text, Sr Margaret Atkins encourages us to think about the scriptural, cultural and social resonances of such language and thus enrich our relationships and encounters.

Sisters and brothers

The film *Woman in Gold* begins with its Jewish heroine, Maria (portrayed compellingly by Helen Mirren), paying her final respects at the funeral of her sister, Luise. 'My sister, Luise, we really loved each other,' she says, 'but the truth is that we were always competing. If life is a race, then she has beaten me to the finishing line. But if it is a boxing match, then I am the last one standing. Either way, we went through a lot together, and I will miss you. *Auf wiedersehen, liebe Schwester*.'

In her case, the 'lot' that they had been through together included fleeing Vienna, their childhood home, in the face of brutal Nazi persecution. Few of us, thankfully, have had that experience; yet very many of us will be familiar with the same elements of relationship between siblings: affection, rivalry, deep-rooted memories of a shared past, and a lifelong mutual loyalty, despite hardships and tensions. To be a brother or a sister is a complicated thing. It seems worthwhile, therefore, to explore what we mean when we use as a Christian metaphor this experience – taken for granted in its ordinariness, but rarely examined in its multi-layered depths – when we speak of brotherly love, of sisterhood, of fraternity.

What did St Francis mean?

The title and opening words of Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli tutti*,[1] 'All my brothers', come from St Francis' *Admonitions* to the brethren of his order. (The encyclical extends the original sense in interpreting it as referring to 'brothers and sisters'.) It is important, I think, to clarify, that the phrase was used by St Francis to *address* all his friars; it was not part of an indicative sentence declaring that they were, in fact, all brothers. Pope Francis' suggestion that these words were used to *propose* a way of life marked by the flavour of the gospel is pushing a point. I suggest, rather, that originally the saint's phrase assumed in his audience a concrete, public, commitment to a specific form of that way of life. The mores of the community, underpinned by their canons, defined what being a Franciscan friar meant. The reason that this is important is that we will need to do some imaginative work to see how the relatively clear, institutionally defined, meaning of 'brother' in the original context might be adapted for a far more extensive metaphorical use, and applied to people with whom we do not share our daily lives.

The pope continues by highlighting the counsel from the *Admonitions* (no. 25) in which St Francis declares blessed all those who love their brother 'as much when he is far away from him as when he is with him'. In the context, he is asking the friars to behave lovingly to members of the community who happen to be absent; he continues with the words: 'and who would not say anything about him behind his back that he could not with charity say in his presence.'

The pope again reinterprets this far more widely as speaking of 'a love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance' (*Fratelli tutti* §1). Once more, Pope Francis is pushing us to extend the original metaphor vastly, and we need to think carefully to see what this might mean.

In the next paragraph, the pope writes: 'Francis felt himself a brother to the sun, the sea and the wind, yet he knew that he was even closer to those of his own flesh. Wherever he went, he sowed seeds of peace and walked alongside the poor, the abandoned, the infirm and the outcast, the least of his brothers and sisters' (*Fratelli tutti* §2). This paragraph, clarifying the focus of the whole encyclical, recalls the obviously metaphorical use of 'brother' and 'sister' in the *Canticle of the Creatures*. It also reminds us of the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25: 'And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."' It provokes us to reflect on what it means to be a literal brother or sister; on the distinctive meanings of 'brother' in the New Testament and later Christian thought; and on how the multiple strands of meaning might be interconnected. In other words, it invites us to ponder the power and depth of the metaphor.

What is distinctive about (literal) brotherly[2] love?

Aristotle gives us one window into the thought of the ancient world, especially helpful as his philosophy was deliberately grounded in the common social understanding of his age. He reflected on the literal meaning of brotherly love as part of his extended discussion of friendship in *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which he carefully distinguished different kinds of friendship.[3] The love between brothers is characterised, he argued, by equality, similarity in age and usually in character, a common upbringing, and especially the tendency to identify with one another because of their shared love from and for their parents (see especially 8.9, 11,12). Brothers, like comrades, share 'freedom of speech and common use of things' (9.2).

Aristotle further argued that friendship was not really possible between unequals (specifically impossible between human beings and God), although parental and filial love was a kind of exception. He also took it for granted that duties to different kinds of friends differed: 'it is more terrible not to help a brother than a stranger' (8.9), while it is normal to invite relations more readily than strangers to a family wedding or funeral (9.2). Brotherhood, in short, is a privileged relationship marked especially by similarity, common experience and bonds of affection through ties of blood.

Aristotle was optimistic to take for granted easy relations between brothers. The Old Testament is perhaps more realistic, from Cain and Abel onwards. Even Moses' siblings complain about the Lord's favouritism to him, for which Miriam is cruelly punished with leprosy (Numbers 12:1-10). The patriarchal narratives explore in depth the human reality of fraternal relationships, in the development, for example, towards poignant reconciliations after devastating betrayals, as in the stories of Jacob and Esau or Joseph and his brothers.

Even in the New Testament, actual brothers are rarely in harmony, either real ones like those quarrelling over an inheritance in Luke 12, or literary ones like those in the story of the Prodigal Son. Moreover, many of these scriptural quarrels occur precisely because brothers in Jewish law were not straightforwardly equal, but had different rights of inheritance (and repeatedly the younger brother is portrayed as usurping those of the elder).

Scripture has surprisingly little interest in exploring the meaning of love between literal brothers and sisters. It seems as if we are rather meant to take for granted an understanding of love among siblings within a family. Nicholas Lombardo has helpfully pointed out that the Ten Commandments say nothing about some of the most basic principles of natural law, such as that parents should love their children. The very silence of the Decalogue shows how these principles are so ingrained in our humanity that we do not need commands about them.[4] Similarly, perhaps, the obligations of love between brothers and sisters are so much assumed that they do not need to be spelt out, even though we know how often siblings fail to live up to them. We are, it seems, expected just to know that Cain and Abel, or Moses and Miriam, are not role models in this respect.

Indeed, it is hard to find a positive fraternal role model described in scripture, apart from Joseph's exemplary forgiveness of his brothers after his long years in Egypt. Where Jesus's own brothers (perhaps

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half-brothers or cousins) are mentioned during his lifetime, they are never privileged, while at Mark 3:31-35, he specifically rejects their special claims upon him (cf. Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21). For ordinary family affections in the New Testament, we might look to Jesus's friends in Bethany, Martha, Mary and Lazarus, with their very recognisable mix of love and tension, kindnesses and anxieties, sorrows and joys.

What does fraternity mean in the New Testament?

In the Old Testament, 'brother' is commonly used (e.g. Deuteronomy 15:12) to refer to fellow Jews (conscious, perhaps, of their common descent from Abraham). In the New Testament, the language of the family is repeatedly appropriated for members of the Christian community. Interestingly, however, this metaphorical language is not so common in the gospels themselves. When it appears, it is on the lips of Our Lord. At Matthew 23:8 – 'You are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher and you are all brethren' – it reminds his hearers that they are equal under God. In the passage about anger and reconciliation in the Sermon on the Mount, it explains why we should foster peace (Mt 5:22-24).

At Mark 3:35 (with parallels in Matthew and Luke), Jesus defines his 'brother and sister and mother' simply as 'whoever does the will of God'. Most often, though, he uses it in contexts associated with his followers after his resurrection: twice in contexts of discussing discipline among the Christian community (Mt 18:15 ff., cf. Lk 17:3; Mt 7:3 ff., cf. Lk 6:41-42);[5] once commanding Peter to 'strengthen your brethren', implicitly after Jesus's death (Lk 22:32); in the parable of the Last Judgement (Mt 25:31 ff.); and otherwise in Resurrection narratives (Mt 28:10; Jn 20:17, cf. 21:23; cf. 1 Cor 15:6). Then suddenly it is everywhere, over fifty times in Acts, over 130 times in Paul's letters, and in nearly every other epistle. (In 1 Peter we also find *adelphotes*, 'brotherhood' [2:17, 5:9].) The contexts make it crystal clear that to be 'brothers' in this sense is to be expected to love one another.

We should note, then, the deeply theological nature of this use of the metaphor, in which all the strands of the early Christians' self-understanding are woven together. We are children of the one God, through our common creation (Acts 17:28-29) and through belief in God through the Spirit (Rom 8:14-17; Jn 1:12), or in Christ (1 Jn 5:1, cf. Jn 20:17); we are adopted as 'sons' through Christ's incarnation and redemption (Gal 4:4-7; 1 Pet 1:3); we are brothers and sisters of Christ through doing God's will (Mk 3:35); we are brethren as part of Christ's community, called by God and images of his son (Rom 8:28-30); we are united in kinship with Christ through his incarnation (Heb 2:11ff.); we are reborn as brothers in baptism and in the Holy Spirit (Jn 3:3-8; Romans 6:1-4; Gal 3:25-29; 1 Cor 12:12). All of this rich mix means that we are able to say together, 'Our Father' (Mt 6:9; cf. Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6).

It is this spiritual kinship in Christ that means that Christians should treat each other with 'brotherly love' (*philadelphia*, e.g. 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Pet 1:22). The writers, once again, assume rather than spell out the meaning of this, though St Paul includes it in a suggestive description of ideal Christian behaviour at Romans 12:9-21. At any rate, as the parables of the Good Shepherd and of the Sheep and Goats illustrate well, love in both the Old and New Testaments is primarily practical.

Jews and Christians were not alone in using family language for members of a religious society.[6] One consequence of such a strong adopted family bond is that non-believers are *not* 'brothers and sisters', in this sense, at least. Paul, for example, calls someone who calls himself a Christian but lives an openly immoral life 'a so-called brother' (1 Cor 5:11). On the other hand, Christians were called from the beginning to open their circle as widely as possible, and not only through their commitment to evangelisation. Jesus's identification of the needy with 'neighbours' and 'brothers', combined with his own example of embracing outcasts, led to his followers caring from the beginning for the needy without applying strict religious criteria. The *Didache*, one of the earliest summaries of Christian teaching, simply cites Luke 6:30: 'Give to anyone who asks of you'. St Pachomius, we are told, was so impressed by the generosity of local Christians to him when he was a conscript soldier, that he was led to his conversion. St Augustine comments: 'Who would not see that there is no exception to whom mercy should be denied, when it is extended even to enemies, with Our Lord himself saying, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you" (Mt 5:44; Lk 6:27)' (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.31).

The fraternity of religious communities

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In one context, the language of brotherhood became relatively precise. From the early centuries, organised religious communities, like the later ones of St Francis, consciously adopted Christian family language to describe themselves. So, for example, the Rules of St Augustine and St Benedict both take it for granted that their monks are described as '*fratres'*. Here, common experience makes for a rich use of the metaphor: those of us who are vowed to communal living as 'brothers' or 'sisters' dwell in the same place, share each other's day-to-day lives in intimate details, build close friendships, work to overcome frictions, provide constant mutual support, celebrate the events in each other's lives and so on. We eat and pray, work and relax, weep and laugh together, through good times and bad. In many specific ways, then, we are like an actual family. The difference is that we chose (or at least felt compelling calls to) our communities. As with our families, however, we did not choose the individual members of our communities, but have been called to love those with whom we find ourselves sharing our lives.

Other uses of fraternity

We should note that the language of fraternity, brotherhood and sisterhood has been used metaphorically in many other contexts, each shaped by its own cultural contours. It fits well with Pope Francis' commitment to dialogue that he is willing to allow central Christian terminology to be enriched by other associations. For example, *Fratelli tutti* refers to the combination of liberty, equality and fraternity[7] made famous by the French Revolution, during which the idea of *fraternité* was employed to make radical claims against the ruling classes in a society of great political, social and economic inequality. The pope argues that without the conscious cultivation of fraternity, liberty becomes mere self-will, and abstract claims to equality are ineffective (§§103-104).

Fratelli tutti also owes much to the *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, whose co-signatories were Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb.[8] This document fills out the idea of fraternity in concrete ways: it involves, for example, a commitment to dialogue; a rejection of all forms of violence, particularly religious; a determination to care for the poor and suffering; the recognition of the rights of women to education; and political freedom. Yet a note of caution is needed. The Grand Imam was not speaking for the whole of Islam, and in any case the concepts of 'fraternity' in Islam and in Christianity are not identical.

The primary metaphorical use of 'brotherhood' in the Islamic world is to refer to fellow Muslims. Interestingly, the word *uḫuwwa*, used in the Arabic title of the document, is not found in the Qur'an, though of course other words for 'brother' are. 'Brotherhood' also has a technical term in Islam to refer to structured religious groups who follow a particular master and are bound by specific practices of prayer. Muslims have some misgivings about referring to God as 'Father' (as it appears to them to qualify the divine transcendence), which means that the idea of being brothers and sisters as children of the one Father comes less easily to them than to Christians. Although they do sometimes acknowledge a universal sense of brotherhood, this is far from the most common use. It is perhaps worth stating explicitly, then, that in the Christian tradition, too, the less inclusive sense of 'brethren', referring specifically to fellow Christians, has been more common than the wider sense of 'fellow human-being'.[9]

Other related ideas

A further complication is that *Fratelli tutti* uses a range of related expressions to refer to positive human relationships. The title links fraternity with social friendship. The second chapter focuses on the parable of the Good Samaritan and the question, 'who is my neighbour?' Elsewhere, the pope writes of charity, social charity, political charity, solidarity, love and kindness (Italian: *gentilezza*, §§222-224). What exactly, we might ask, does each of these terms mean and how do they interrelate? Are any two of them interchangeable? More interestingly, can they enrich each other by association?

We can begin to answer these questions with the help of the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, who is acknowledged in a footnote in *Fratelli tutti*.[10] His essay, '*Le socius et le prochain*' (roughly translated as 'The associate and the neighbour') explores the distinction and connection between the love of neighbour and social friendship. This is especially helpful to those of us who are English-speakers living in an Anglo-Saxon culture, as the meaning of 'social friendship' is not obvious to us. It refers to 'friendship at the level of

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society, between institutions, groups, bodies, as opposed to one-to-one relationships'.[11] It includes the positive feelings and sense of obligation we might have towards fellow members of social groupings with which we closely identify ourselves, often used where we might refer in English to 'community'.

Ricoeur contrasts social categories such as those of the priest and Levite in the Good Samaritan story with the idea of neighbour as Jesus presents it there. For the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan is to be categorised also, in a purely negative way, as the foreigner, the one who cannot share 'our' way of life. The Samaritan, by contrast, sees the wounded man simply as an individual, fellow human being who needs help. He is moved by the direct encounter with him. It is not so much that he *sees* him as his neighbour; rather he *makes himself* the neighbour of the one in need. Jesus in fact inverted the lawyer's question, 'who is my neighbour?' and asked: 'Which of these three seems to you *to have become* [the Greek grammar is precise here] the neighbour of the one who fell among thieves?'[12]

When we limit our view of other people to the categories that are mediated by society, we can create strong bonds of social friendship. Indeed, such bonds are needed to structure communities in ways that allow the good deeds of individual encounters: the Samaritan, for example, needed the institution of the inn to complete his act of rescue.[13]

Ricoeur argues that we must not choose between being an 'associate' and a 'neighbour'. We need both the 'social friendship' of communities and institutions, which should be ordered ultimately to the good of individuals, and the personal care for individuals that should animate those institutions, to prevent their inspiration from growing cold. Pope Benedict XVI, in *Deus caritas est* had talked of justice and charity to make a similar point. 'Love – *caritas* – will always prove necessary, even in the most just society ....The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself, would ultimately become a mere bureaucracy, incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person – every person – needs: namely, loving, personal, concern' (§28). Pope Francis, in his turn, uses the language of fraternity, and his chapter on the Good Samaritan ends by speaking of 'the fraternal dimension of spirituality' and of 'loving and accepting all our brothers and sisters'.

What does 'fraternity' offer that is distinctive?

Cicero listed the minimal duties that we owe to any other member of the human race, things which would benefit others without costing us, such as giving light from our fire or showing them the way (*De Officiis* I.51-52). What is gained if we speak of brothers and sisters rather than merely fellow human beings? Do we then owe more than Cicero's basic duties? And if so, is it just that we need to do more, or to give more? Or are we to think differently, to feel differently?

My suggestion is that the Christian use of fraternal language begins by assuming the experience of real brothers and sisters within a loving family, with its instinctive assumption of what makes for happiness and peace. Indeed, the family as the 'school of the virtues'[14] is ideally the place where our characters are first formed to enable us to become brothers and sisters in the wider sense. Christian language builds on this by combining it with three distinct elements.

The first is the experience of actual local Christian families and communities, living shared lives, and thinking of themselves as an extended family. As Aristotle remarked, it is characteristic of friends that they live together. I think here, for example, of a moving presentation we were given by a Chinese sister whose community, living in an ordinary house, care, semi-secretly, for handicapped children who officially should have been aborted. When we asked her where all the resources that made this possible, material and financial, came from, she answered simply: 'The Christians [i.e. members of the local church] give them to us.' All extended experience of fraternity is based, I would argue, upon such concrete, face-to-face, day-to-day living of the gift of charity.

This basis makes possible the two further elements. The second is what I think of as the '*tis*-factor'. '*Tis*' in New Testament Greek refers to 'an indefinite particular person', someone who just happens to turn up, but is now there, in all his or her concrete reality. St Luke is fond of the word. The parable of the Good Samaritan begins '*anthropos tis*', 'a certain man' or 'someone' (Lk 10:30). He uses the word elsewhere to recount Jesus's chance encounters with people who

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ask him for help (7:2, the centurion whose slave was ill; 8:27, the Gerasene demoniac; 8:46, the woman with a haemorrhage [Jesus remarks here, '*Someone or other* touched me']; 14:2, the man with dropsy; 18:35, the blind man in Jericho). St John uses it similarly for his miracles of healing (4:45, the ruler with a sick son; 5:5, the cripple at the pool of Bethesda; 11:1, the dying Lazarus). *Tis* is also used for people who turn up to ask for Jesus's counsel (Lk 11:1, 18:18) or of would-be followers (Lk 9:57, 14:26; Jn 7:37, 12:20).

Perhaps the most striking use of *tis* is in the story of Martha and Mary, told by Luke. It begins: 'While they were travelling, he came into *some* village. *Some* woman called Martha received him' (10:30). It suggests that the intimate friendship of Jesus with the family of Bethany, in the house where he probably spent the dramatic last week of his life, began with a chance encounter made possible by Martha's generous welcome of a wandering stranger.

All of the gospel writers use other grammatical devices also to make the same point. For example, the word *idou* is common in stories of Jesus's healing; this is sometimes grandly translated as 'behold', but literally means 'look', almost in the sense of, 'look who then turned up ...' Indeed, Jesus's *noticing* of individuals is often emphasised by verbs of seeing and looking.

For the Christian, *tis* is our brother or sister. He or she is not seen as an abstract number, or even as an imagined hungry person elsewhere, but as this person in front of me, here and now, in need. But I do not respond to him or her on my own (*Fratelli tutti* §§87-90). Here, my second element builds on my first. I am able to assist (I hope and pray) out of the resources – moral, spiritual and practical – given to me by my membership of the concrete Christian fraternity, not least because this provides a real community into which *tis*, whom now I come to know by name, as Annie or Ahmed, can, if appropriate, be integrated. Such integration is possible at bottom because, for all our differences, we are one family under God, both naturally and spiritually. Perhaps the most striking example of this, one that ought to astonish us into gratitude, is the way in which babies from cultures utterly different to those of their adoptive parents can be nurtured and fully assimilated into a new family and community. Our shared humanity goes very deep.

Note how the combination of Jesus's parables of the Good Samaritan and of the Sheep and Goats, have allowed Christians to infuse the idea of 'neighbour' with family qualities. Your neighbour is not merely a help to you in occasional times of need, but someone with whom you have a standing relationship of affection and commitment, which makes sense of the emergency assistance. He or she is bound to you by family ties, mediated by your shared relationship with God, and, if you are a fellow Christian, with Christ.

It is this second element, the '*tis* factor', that holds in creative tension two contrasting dimensions of 'neighbour': the 'neighbour' is both right next door and (potentially) anywhere in the world. To quote Ricoeur again: 'Compared to love of neighbour, the social bond is never intimate enough nor wide enough. It is never intimate enough since socially mediated relations will never become the equivalent of immediate presence. It is never wide enough, because the group only affirms itself against another group and is closed in on itself.'[15] By welcoming 'a certain person', whoever he or she may be, we combine the warmth of personal encounter with the openness of human universality.

This leads on to my third element. My local community is part of a worldwide community, linked by the same ties of spiritual son-/daughter-ship of the Father and brother-/sister-hood of Jesus. Now, I can make an imaginative move: I have brothers and sisters across the world who are, in principle, just like the brothers and sisters in front of me. I find out about their needs through concrete channels (for example, the Aid to the Church in Need network). If I pray for someone in the next pew, why should I not pray for them? If I should feed a hungry person who turns up at the door, why should I not send them some money if they are in need? And if them, then why not the poor, even the non-Christian poor, who might turn up on *their* doorsteps. Note that always, there is a personal link, which brings the word 'brother' to life.

To sum up: our experience of the concrete 'family' of our local Christian community enables us to welcome actual strangers with the warmth and respect reserved in 'natural' societies for members of a family. This enables us further to imagine that any other human being could in principle be worthy of such a welcome, so that we begin to practise and to learn from the

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experience of such welcoming. This in turn expands our political outlook both theoretically and emotionally, with all that that entails for practical action.

Paul Ricoeur argued that, 'in the end, it is charity that governs relations with associates and relations with neighbours, giving them a common purpose'.[16] Personal charity without social charity risks becoming fickle and unjust; social charity without personal charity is liable to turn cold and institutional. The interconnection between my three elements of Christian fraternity suggests how we might move between these kinds of charity, connecting in our imaginations the abstract categories of people whom we try to help through social initiatives or political policies with the concrete individuals whom we could potentially know and love.

An invitation from a metaphor

At this point, three objections might come to mind. The first is this: does not 'brother' function as a contrast word? In calling you my brother, I distinguish you from others who are not. (Is Aristotle wrong that it is reasonable to invite my family – and perhaps fellow parishioners – to my wedding rather than strangers?)

The second objection is related to the first: does this idea of fraternity not have limits? My financial resources are certainly limited. So, surely, are my emotional resources: I cannot weep and laugh with and for every member of the human race as I weep and laugh with my actual biological brother.

I have already hinted at the third objection: what makes Christians brothers and sisters is not their humanity but their rebirth in Christ.

To answer these objections, we need to think about how figurative language might work. We can take examples from Our Lord, who was a master of the use of imagery. 'You are the light of the world' (Mt 5:14): we grasp what he means without even noticing what mental gymnastics are involved. We don't for a second think that he is describing us as physical torches set on actual lampstands. Rather, we begin to imagine how we may serve as an inspiration for others, encourage their insight and allow them to see God at work. The figure of speech works on our emotional intelligence, inviting us to *desire* to enable others to share the joy and understanding we have received in Christ. Similarly, with the parable of the vine in John 15, we do not for a moment fear that God is going to attack us with literal pruning-shears. Instead, our hearts and our imaginations are opened to the possibility of being deeply rooted in Christ, and of being cleansed (the Greek for 'prune' simply means 'clean') by growing afresh. I have used three more metaphors – 'rooted', 'cleansed' and 'growing' – and as you have been reading you have instinctively understood them as imagery.

On the one hand, then, we readily distinguish, without confusing, literal and figurative meanings of words and phrases. On the other hand, images invite us to connect the literal and the figurative by investing the second with the qualities and emotional associations of the first.

How might this work for 'brother'? First, we know that the language of brotherhood (sisterhood, fraternity, etc.) works at many levels, and we are able to negotiate these without too much confusion. While remaining aware of the tensions that exist between so many siblings, we also recognise that brotherhood traditionally implies the importance of shared origins and a shared nature, and the givenness of certain deep mutual obligations. Moreover, we know that a healthy fraternal love is characterised by respect and affection. Indeed, the warmer and more secure the relationships in our own family, or in small-scale communities to which we have, the easier we are likely to find it to imagine welcoming others, too, as 'brothers and sisters'. In this way, our grasp of the primary, literal, sense of 'brother' or 'sister' (and of those metaphorical senses closest to it) does not so much contrast with as nourish our understanding of expanded metaphorical uses. Such language stretches our minds and hearts imaginatively, so we can name as 'brothers and sisters' those whose kinship is less close.

In this way, following Jesus's own example and teaching, we are able to extend these terms of affection and respect beyond our fellow believers to all other human beings, without losing the sense that a fellow Christian is a brother or sister in a special way. This opening of our imaginations enables our intellectual and political attitudes towards those others also to be stretched, so that we care whether policies help them, too.

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It is a long journey from loving a family brother or sister to caring about, or even for, any other human being, whether in concrete encounters or through political beliefs. We need to recognise with honesty that this journey is far from easy. After all, our instinctive attitudes to strangers flip quickly between welcome and suspicion: the words 'hospitality' and 'hostility' share a common linguistic root. We need to feed our imaginations to assist us. The power of the metaphor, flexible and multi-layered, both invites us to begin, and inspires us to continue, on our way. The Christian moral tradition has always been dynamic: our desires need to be constantly educated and our characters developed. Meditating on the family language of Christianity can encourage us to examine the limits of our innate tribalism. It can extend our horizons beyond this, and opens our hearts and minds wide to the infinite, as yet unimagined, possibilities of love.

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[1] Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti* (2019): https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html

[2] What about 'sisterly' love? Another important set of questions deserve their own discussion: are there differences in kind between the love between brothers, the love between sisters, the love between a brother and a sister? For the purposes of this chapter, 'brotherly' means 'brotherly and/or sisterly', more or less! A full exploration of the meaning of 'fraternal' would also need to explore the situation of siblings who share only one parent and only part of their childhood experience, something known already to Abraham's children, but more common today, of course, than ever before.

[3] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books VIII and IX.

[4] Nicholas E. Lombardo OP, 'Deriving natural law from the Decalogue, natural inclination and God's silence', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (2019), 72, 265–276.

[5] Arguably, this context suggests a retrospective editorial modification of Jesus's words.

[6] Anchor Bible Dictionary (Doubleday, 1992), Volume I, pp. 782-784, 'Brother, Brotherhood'.

[7] §§103-105.

[8] Pope Francis and Dr Ahmad al-Tayyeb, *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together* (2019): https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

[9] For commentary on the document, see Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald M. Afr., 'Reflections on Human Fraternity', *IslamoChristiana* 45 (2019), 17-27.

[10] §101, n.80.

[11] I owe this definition to Austen Ivereigh.

[12] Cf. *Fratelli tutti* §§80-81; Paul Ricoeur, '*Le socius et le prochain*', *Histoire et Verité*. p. 114.

[13] *Fratelli tutti* §165.

[14] Cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §§238-239.

[15] Ricoeur, p. 125.

[16] ... 'c'est finalement la charité qui gouverne la relation au *socius* et la relation au prochain, leur donnant une commune *intention*' (Ricoeur, p. 127).

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