



CCEE-SECAM Online Seminar
1 - 2 June 2021



Final Message

As representatives of the continental Bishops' Conferences of Africa and Europe, at the end of our meeting entitled "Solidarity in the promotion of human dignity in the light of *Fratelli tutti*", and in the context of the seminars organised by CCEE and SECAM to promote episcopal collegiality and strengthen communion among the bishops, we address all our brother bishops, priests, deacons, men and women religious and lay faithful of the Church of God throughout Africa and Europe.

The Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, on human fraternity and social friendship, is an invitation to human beings all over the world for a renewed commitment to universal brotherhood, friendship, solidarity and peaceful coexistence. Already in his second Encyclical, *Laudato si'*, the Holy Father observed that: "human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself" (LS no. 66), and thus the urgent need for communion and universal solidarity (cfr. LS no. 1, 89-92). This reflects the beautiful harmony of an orchestra that has been lost. We must always keep within us, and spread, the music of the Gospel.

As bishops and pastors, we reaffirm our communion and collegiality and commit ourselves to work to promote human dignity, fraternity and solidarity, which are at the heart of human life and peaceful coexistence. As children of the one Father, we must be open to one another and work hard to build genuine brotherhood not only among our local communities but also with people of different cultural backgrounds, racial and ethnic identities, religious and political positions, social and economic status.

In a world filled with good values, but also full of hatred, hostility, extremism, violence and bloodshed (cfr. FT no. 285), we invite everyone to welcome the Holy Father's heartfelt appeal for inter-religious dialogue as a way of stimulating "friendship, peace and harmony" and to guarantee religious freedom, which is a fundamental human right for all believers. Such dialogue should be motivated by a sincere openness to transcendent Truth, to God who is the Father of all humanity, with an authentic "worship of God and love for our neighbour" (cfr. FT n. 282) as the final outcome.

In promoting cultural, inter-religious and ecumenical dialogue, and aware that the Church is a mother, we ask that each local church be "a house with open doors", to sustain hope, build bridges, break down walls and sow seeds of reconciliation. In imitating Mary, the Mother of God, we commit ourselves to being a Church that serves, a Church that goes out to defend and accompany life. To this end, our mission will continue to be orientated towards the "progress of humanity and universal brotherhood", to help build a better world, and thus, reawakening the spiritual energy that can contribute to benefitting society (cfr. FT no. 276-278).

We call on political leaders, state authorities and bodies such as the African Union, the European Union and the United Nations, to ensure the practical implementation of laws and protocols that enhance solidarity and promote human dignity. In particular, the promotion of life, family, educational and religious freedom as well as the welcome and integration of migrants. Also, through fair and universal access to Covid-19 vaccines.

As pastors, we recommit ourselves to an inclusive culture and worldview, which for us Christians is that of Jesus Christ, where all members consider themselves 'one' and are at home with each other as the family of God, and where there is neither Jew nor Greek nor African nor European (cfr. Gal 3: 27-28). The salvific culture that comes from God “transcends all cultural traditions, because all cultures find in it their fullness of meaning” (Kampala Document, no. 141).

At the conclusion of this online CCEE-SECAM Seminar, we thank the Holy Father for the Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, and we believe that our two continental episcopal bodies will continue to study and share experiences for the good of our peoples, and work tirelessly to bring an end to prejudice, intolerance, hostility and violence everywhere. We call for peace especially in all countries that are currently experiencing conflict in Africa, Europe, the Middle East and throughout the world.

We entrust to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, and to Saint Joseph, our commitment, as well as that of our priests, deacons and all the faithful to pray and to promote peace, solidarity and human dignity, not only in our communities but also throughout society as a whole.